

It's That Simple

By Rev. Paul Orritt

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I was particularly proud of myself. I had promised my wife that I would take care of things at home in her absence and I was diligent in keeping that promise. Having dropped her off at the airport the night before and getting home very late [actually early in the morning] I nevertheless awoke early, made sure the children were ready for school, and after driving them to their respective institutions of learning, I decided to take care of the animals my wife had entrusted to my care (that is, when my youngest daughter would not be available). I really thought I had taken care of everything - the goats, the donkey, the chickens and the rabbits - expeditiously and effectively as I sat at my desk and began to catch up on email.

Shortly thereafter, a dark form passed by the family room windows. My curiosity was piqued, and I moved to investigate further. I opened the back door just in time to see the donkey charge through my wife's spice garden (I am sure I heard the theme from "Born Free" playing in the background). My gaze followed this free spirit as he galloped past, and then focused on the four goats casually leaving the paddock through the gate I had forgotten to latch. I confess to being engulfed immediately by a sense of utter panic!

As it turned out, the wild cavorting of the donkey actually chased the goats back through the gate whereupon I cleverly latched it tight. The donkey, however, was not to be returned quite so easily. So, here's a question: how do you get a donkey who is relishing his freedom to return to relative captivity? He didn't answer to "here, boy" (we should have taught him better). I would have attempted to entice him with a handful of treats from the 'barn' but I was concerned that whenever he stopped moving, which he did when I was not on the chase, it was only to taste another newly-planted bush or flower (I just knew my wife would be pleased when she returned). So, I peacefully approached him, and when close enough, captured him in a headlock. At the time, it seemed the right thing to do. With some effort, I did manage to get him back within a few feet of the gate from whence he came - but no further.

Donkeys don't move when they don't want to move, even though you have them in a firm headlock! Eventually I decided to go easy on him. I let him go and watched while he wandered down our driveway to wistfully gaze at the horses in the distance. I returned to the 'barn' and got his bridle and lead rope. Once I had those on him, I walked by his side, just like the old friends we were to one another, and returned him to the paddock. Job done!

I think that our strategy for evangelism (if we even have one!) is often like my initial attitude and attempts in the scene I have just shared with you. We begin in an induced state of panic, thinking we are simply not up to the task. We don't



know enough and besides, perhaps we are (let's be honest) just a bit embarrassed. If we are successful in overcoming this attitudinal impediment, then our basic approach is similar to putting a donkey in a headlock. We think a good argument that will silence our opponent (sadly, that is how we often view our quarry) will win the contest. But folks can be stubborn can't they? Word wrestling with others doesn't work very well at all.

John 1:35-42 describes the coming of the first disciples to Jesus. John the Baptist merely pointed to Jesus - refocused his own disciples attention towards Jesus and off of himself and themselves [this could be part of our problem in our evangelistic strategies], and they saw enough in Jesus to want more of Him. Then, we are told, Andrew went in search of his brother Peter and brought him to Jesus. It all seems so normal and, dare we say it, natural. Could evangelism be so simple?

I think it is. I think it is as simple as pointing to Jesus by way of sharing what He has done in my life and can do in someone else's life. I think it is as simple as walking beside another person - no headlocks here - and telling your own story as the two of you walk alongside one another.

Walking alongside suggests a wonderful kind of harmony that arises from an unstated equality: I am not leading you, but I am intensely interested in sharing with you all that I have come to know about who Jesus is for me and could be for you. And I am sharing this with you, not because you are a trophy to be gained, but because, in Him, I love you and I want to share with you the greatest treasure in my life.

Indeed, He is my life. Can there be any more compelling reason to share Him with others?

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