

MAGNOLIA MINDS: Be like Patrick

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It was a dream come true when my wife and I traveled to Ireland in celebration of our 25th wedding anniversary. Since both our ancestral histories passed through Ireland, we were mesmerized by the scenic views, Gaelic culture, and medieval history of the Emerald Isle.

One of the highlights of our journey was a visit to the Rock of Cashel, which was once the seat of rule for the high kings of Munster. It was here that Patrick, the great missionary to Ireland, converted and baptized King Aengus in the fifth century.

About 700 years later, an elaborate cathedral was built on the rock to commemorate the event. As we walked through the ruins of the cathedral, I was struck with a deep sense of awe for Patrick's missional commitment. I think it's quite unfortunate that the holiday bearing his name has become a celebration of Irish lore including shamrocks, leprechauns, and all things green including beer (gross).



Rock of Cashel

Patrick himself was not even Irish. In fact, he was kidnapped from Britain as a teenager by bandits who sold him into slavery in Ireland, from which he escaped after six hard years of misery. Sometime after he returned to his home and family, he had a dream of his Irish captors begging him to bring them the Gospel.

Reminiscent of the Apostle Paul's response to the Macedonian Call in Acts 16, Patrick left the comfort and safety of Britain on his own to carry the Good News of Jesus Christ to the pagan tribes of Ireland.

How can we not be impressed with such a display of sacrificial obedience to the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)? Hopefully, you aren't only impressed but also inspired to be a more obedient witness yourself.

Push through the fear!

Fear is the top reason most Christians cite for not witnessing. These fears range from being afraid of rejection or offending, to not knowing what to say, to doing it wrong. We must learn to push through these fears because eternity is on the line for those who are perishing.

Even the great Apostle Paul struggled with fear. In 1

Corinthians 2:1-5 he told the members of the Church at Corinth that he had ministered there “in weakness and in fear and in much trembling.” His witness was dependent upon the Holy Spirit rather than his own speaking ability, wisdom, or power of persuasion.

Seize every opportunity!

Please don't interpret “opportunities” as permission to wait on perfect witnessing situations. While it's true that God often orchestrates opportunities for us to share our faith, we ought to be intentionally pursuing opportunities ourselves. We should be making the most of every opportunity to practice relational, lifestyle, and planned personal evangelism.

– Relational evangelism is witnessing to those with whom we have relationships: family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers.

– Lifestyle evangelism is more impromptu. It happens “as you go” (Matthew 10:7) through life and encounter people on the way.

– Planned evangelism happens when you intentionally schedule encounters for witnessing. Don't miss these opportunities!

Share with expectant hope!

Patrick could have easily dismissed the spiritual needs of Ireland by deciding the pagans there would not receive the Gospel. In bitterness over his enslavement, he could have concluded they didn't deserve forgiveness and salvation.

Instead, his expectant hope for their salvation compelled him to proclaim the mercy of Jesus to thousands, including the High King of Munster seated upon the Rock of Cashel!

We can share boldly with hopeful assurance because Jesus has declared, “The harvest is plentiful...” (Matthew 9:37). The only question is whether we will faithfully labor in the harvest.

Prayerfully, you and I can live and serve with the passion and evangelistic fervor of men like Patrick. As we “beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:38), are we laboring in the harvest ourselves? Let’s go together!

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