

Evangelism

Evangelism was a task given to all of Christ's disciples that lived with Him in His earthly ministry, and it is a command given to us today. It is the task of communicating the message of the gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ to mankind that is alienated from God. The message begins with information about man's great need, then proceeds to God's provision to meet that need, and then ends with an invitation. The invitation is to come to their Savior and find eternal life based on the atoning work of Christ on the cross done on their behalf. God promises forgiveness and reconciliation to all who will invite Him into their life. Every Christian is seen as Christ's ambassador representing Him to a fallen world in need of a Savior. It is our duty because God commands it, and our love for our neighbor provokes it. Our job is simply to share the gospel at every opportunity trusting in the power of the Holy Spirit to give us the opportunity, the words, and to convict our audience of the truth, and then leaving the results to God.

The Great Commission

Most people think of Matthew 28:19-20 when you say the great commission, but I think Acts 1:8 is even better because it introduces the presence and necessity of the Holy Spirit in evangelism. In Acts 1, the risen Christ has been teaching His disciples for about 40 days since the resurrection. Jesus gathered them together in Jerusalem and told them to wait there for "what the Father had promised...you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit". This happened a few days later on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. Jesus' disciples seemed to be most interested in when He would set up the Kingdom which they viewed as the restoration of Israel, but Jesus admonished them and redirected their attention to the coming great event of the Holy Spirit indwelling them and empowering them for ministry. In Acts 1:8, Jesus said, "you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Then Jesus, right before their eyes, was lifted up to heaven. As they were looking up at His ascension, two angels told them that in the future Jesus would come back in just the same way. The idea was that Jesus left to be glorified in heaven, and sit at the right hand of God, and be our advocate with the Father for an extended time until He would return for the church and set up His kingdom. In the interim, it was their responsibility to carry out the ministry given them to preach the gospel everywhere.

The question has to be asked, "How can this small band of clueless disciples hiding in the upper room, ever develop the boldness to venture out to preach the gospel to a hostile world?" Acts 1:8 and Jesus' teaching in the Upper Room Discourse of John 14:16-17, 26; 16:7-15, provide the answer. When the Holy Spirit came, He both gave them the boldness to go and preach, but also convicted the hearts of the people that heard their message. Power supplied by God, and the witness from them produced the church on that first day that the Spirit came upon them. Jesus had told them before His crucifixion that they would do "greater works" than they saw Him do, and sure enough that was fulfilled when 3000 people believed in Jesus as their Savior that first day. In this crowd there were no doubt some of those same people who had yelled "Crucify Him", but in Acts 2:37, we

read that they were “pierced to the heart” after Peter said “this Jesus whom you crucified” God has made both Lord and Christ. What could have changed their hard hearts to convicted hearts ready to receive their Savior? It was exactly what Jesus promised the Holy Spirit would accomplish.

Share Jesus Without Fear

I recommend a short book by William Fay entitled, **SHARE JESUS WITHOUT FEAR**, in which he gives good insight into the importance of being a witness for Christ, but also a very good method for sharing Christ. The point of the title is that we should not fear rejection because it is the best thing we can do for anybody, and this is God’s determined way to reach out to the world—through us, we are His ambassadors. There can be no failure because our job is to show up and share the gospel, and it is the Holy Spirit’s job to convict and call the audience.

The most common fear of sharing Christ is rejection, and the most common objection to sharing is “I don’t know enough”. Statistics show that on average, non-believers hear the gospel 7.6 times before they receive Christ. Therefore never be discouraged because anyone you share with may just be in process. I think this is what we mean by “seed planting”. We just keep planting seeds, and by faith believe that sometime God may use someone else to actually lead that person to Christ, but still we were a part of the process. Anytime someone seems to reject you, just remember you may be setting them up for the next presentation. In response to the objection that you don’t know enough, Fay says that you only need to know a short presentation of the gospel, and then tell your own story about the difference Jesus made in your life. One of the great testimonies of all time was the blind man in John 9:25, “I was blind, and now I see”. We tend to emphasize major events like a Billy Graham Crusade, but statistics show that 75% of new believers come to Christ through a friend or family on a one to one basis.

William Fay writes that people struggle with starting spiritual discussions so he offers the following probing questions that he calls “The share Jesus questions”.

1. Do you have any kind of spiritual beliefs? At this point don’t mention Jesus yet.
2. To you, who is Jesus Christ? Asking their opinion will tell you where they are.
3. Do you think there is a heaven or hell?
4. If you died, where would you go? If heaven, why? Why would God let you in?
5. If what you are believing is not true, would you want to know? Usually they say yes which gives you opportunity to go on and share the gospel.

If after you share the gospel they are not committed, he offers 5 “Bring them to decision questions”

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1. Are you a sinner?, 2. Do you want forgiveness?, 3. Do you believe Jesus died on the cross?, 4. Are you willing to surrender your life to Christ?, 5. Are you ready to invite Jesus into your life and into your heart?

The bottom line is that in sharing Christ you are obedient to the stewardship that Jesus has given you, and you cannot fail.

Three Different Activities or Ways of Evangelism

Proclamation evangelism involves organizing big events where hundreds or even thousands of people attend, and one or more famous speakers present the gospel to large crowds at a one time event. Examples of this are Billy Graham Crusades, Louis Palau Festivals, Joe Gibbs Breakfasts. Usually the audience is invited to pray along with the speaker and/or they are asked to fill out cards with boxes to check whether they have received Christ, want more information, or want to attend a Bible study.

Aggressive evangelism is a method focused on approaching small groups or individuals where they are. This was made popular by Campus Crusade for Christ and other organizations who disciple individuals to share their faith. They go wherever people are and confront them in a nice way asking them if they can share the gospel with them, at the end of which they call for a decision. Acts 8:26-40 is a great example of this when Philip went south to Gaza to the Ethiopian eunuch, and preached Jesus to him.

Relational evangelism is a method of slowly, methodically building relationships. As the trust and familiarity develops in the relationship, the gospel is shared as a natural result of the relationship. In 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12, Paul reminded the Church at Thessalonica how he and Timothy had come there, and through hard work and good deeds they had gotten to know the people there, after which they were “well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”

Some Good and Proven Presentations of the Gospel

Larry Moyer’s Good News and Bad News presentation is effective and easy to remember. He starts by asking the question, “Has anyone ever shown you how you can know that you’re going to heaven? Let me give you the bad news first—we are sinners. Romans 3:23 says “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”, and Romans 6:23 says that “the penalty for sin is death”. Since there is no way you can come to God, God has come to you, which is the good news—Christ died for you. Romans 5:8 says, “God demonstrates His love toward us, in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.” This grace of God can be received through faith alone as Ephesians 2:8-9 says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and not of yourselves, it is the gift of God, not as a result of works, that no one should boast.”

Romans Road is an easy and proven method of evangelism. You just mark in your Bible or copy down five passages from the book of Romans and then go through them: 3:23; 6:23; 5:8; 5:10-11; 5:1-2 in that order.

Evangelism Explosion uses two “diagnostic questions” that reveal quickly what people actually believe, so if someone said, “Oh sure I’m a Christian” you could easily find out what they mean. If you were to die today, do you know for certain you would go to

heaven? (1 Jn.5:13) The second question is, If you were to die today and stand before God, and He asked, Why should I let you into heaven? What would you say? The typical answer is “I think I would go to heaven, I want to. I have lived a good life, done good things, I am a good person so I hope so. Of course the only correct answer is that we can know that we are going to heaven because it is based solely on what Jesus has done on my behalf.

Last but certainly not least is the Campus Crusade presentation from The Four Spiritual Laws: 1. God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. Jn.3:16, 10:10

2. Man is sinful and separated from God. Thus he cannot know and experience God’s love. Rom.3:23;6:23

3. Jesus is God’s only provision for man’s sin. Rom.5:8, 1 Cor.15:3-6, John 14:6

4. We must individually receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. Jn.1:12, Rev.3:20

The Importance of Personal Testimony

The most important and effective tool in personal evangelism is your personal testimony. All of us can do this, and explain the impact that Jesus has had on our lives. No one can refute your story because it happened to you. They might debate theological questions, or dispute the Bible, but there is no debate about what Jesus did for you. Telling your story involves fitting your story into God’s greater story.

Remember when you prepare your testimony that even though it’s about you, the hero in the story is Jesus, not you. Also this is not a therapy session for you or a chance to talk about yourself, and don’t tell some spiritually freakish thing to someone who doesn’t believe in God. All of us have a weird miracle story, but remember perfect strangers will think you are nuts. Tell one clear story—don’t use 6 plot lines with 16 characters and four rabbit trails. You are simply presenting the gospel of Jesus Christ through your personal story. It is an evangelical testimony, therefore make sure that the gospel is the emphasis. Your testimony should have three parts—who I was (a sinner in need of a Savior), my conversion experience (what happened to bring me to Christ), and the difference Christ made in my life.

Many people have told me that they don’t have a testimony since they have been a Christian since the age of 5. Wrong, you just have a different less dramatic testimony, but the gospel is the same for you as it was for me. Even as a child you were in great need of a Savior. You just had not had the opportunities to reveal your sin that I had at the age of 22. Jesus made a major impact on your life as you were raised a Christian. Tell your story in a way that gives God all the glory.

Whatever you do, don’t leave them with the idea you have your act together, but they are pathetic lost people. Tell your story with a sense of humility. Remember, the most important part of evangelism is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Always pray before and after you share your faith, because at the end of the day, unless God convicts them and opens their heart, they will not believe.

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