

What Is Evangelism, and Are We Doing It Wrong?

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“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” ([Matthew 28:19](#)).

Hopefully if you have been a Christian for any length of time this is not the first time you have heard this verse. (You are excused if you just got saved.)

Before Jesus left the earth, he gave his disciples a charge which we refer to as the Great Commission. This is a command for us to share the gospel and to make followers of Christ, which is what a disciple is. For many churches and many people, this verse is central to their evangelism efforts. The idea or command of spreading the gospel is really what evangelism is.

However, is there more to it? Are there some why’s and how’s we need to focus on, or is it as simple as being a witness and sharing the gospel? Let’s take a look at what evangelism is, along with some ways we get it wrong.

What Does Evangelism Mean?

Evangelism is a derivative of the Greek word evangelist which is most often used to refer to someone who preaches and proclaims the Gospel. Ironically, the word evangelism does not appear in the [Bible](#), but the word evangelist does. It appears three times in the New Testament.

“Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven” ([Acts 21:8](#)).

“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” ([2 Timothy 4:5](#)).

“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” ([Ephesians 4:11](#)).

We see from Scripture that evangelist is the title, but evangelism is the role or function. This alone leads to an interesting question, who is responsible for evangelism? Even though there is a title of evangelist, every Christian is responsible for evangelism. Some will do it on a bigger scale than others, but we are all responsible for sharing the gospel.

4 Ways We Get Evangelism Wrong



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1. We Make It Someone Else’s Responsibility

There are many Christians who never tell anyone about their [faith](#) in Christ because they believe it is the pastor’s job. While it is true that one of the responsibilities of being a pastor is to proclaim the gospel, that responsibility does not just lie with the pastor.

If the church in Acts only depended on the twelve disciples to spread the gospel, it would not have moved as quickly or been as impactful. Everyone plays a role – and so do you. By the way, your role in sharing the gospel is just as important as the pastor’s because there are people you can reach that they could never reach.

2. We Try to Bring People to the Gospel

I know this thought might initially sound strange so let me explain. Many times, we limit our evangelism efforts to inviting people to church. Now there is nothing wrong with inviting people to church and if you are doing that, keep doing it. But I do have a question for you. What if they don’t come? What do you do?

Inviting people to church is trying to bring them to the gospel, again nothing wrong with inviting. However, the command is not to bring people to the gospel, but to bring the gospel to people. Look at this wonderful passage from Romans.

“For, ‘Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” ([Romans 10:13-15](#)).

The emphasis here is that people cannot respond to a gospel that they have not heard. Let’s make sure we are using our feet to bring the good news to people. There are many people who will never step foot in a church, and you probably know some of them. That is why we need to bring the gospel to them.

3. We Focus on Getting People Saved

On the surface, this might sound contrary to evangelism so allow me to clear up any confusion. There is something I want you to understand that many people miss. When you think about what evangelism is, it is proclaiming the gospel. God never asked us to save anyone. He asked us to preach the gospel. We cannot get people saved because that is a choice and decision they must make. Therefore, we are not responsible for getting people saved because that is beyond our control and our ability. We are responsible for sharing the message and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their hearts. That is what Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow” ([1 Corinthians 3:6-7](#)).

When you think about what evangelism is, it is planting and watering. The seed that you are planting is the gospel. When it comes to the gospel, sometimes you are planting the seed and sometimes you are watering the seed. Whichever position you are in, it is God who makes the seed grow. All you must focus on is planting and watering, and if you do that you have done what God wants you to do.

This does not mean we do not care if a person gets saved because we do. It does mean we are responsible for sharing the message and leaving the outcome in God’s hands.

4. We Make People a Project

One of the biggest mistakes I have seen people make in their evangelism efforts is they make people their salvation project. What I mean is they are only interested in them because they want to share the gospel and if they do not respond the way they want then they lose interest in them. When we do that, we have made that person a project, and in the process, we have forgotten about the person. This is not the heart of evangelism.

Sometimes evangelism requires you to play the long game where you don't just share the gospel and leave, but you invest yourself in the lives of those you are trying to reach. This will include praying for them, loving them, and genuinely caring about their lives and their situation. Doing this and showing real interest in who they are will open the doors to share the gospel.

Many times, what wins people to Christ is simply loving them and showing concern about who they are and what they go through. This is when you become Christ's hand and feet extended. Remember people are not projects, they are people, and we need to see them in that light.



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How Can I Reach Others and Tell Them about the Gospel?

Most people are never going to travel the world preaching the gospel, and honestly that is not what the world needs more of. For most of us, we are going to reach others in our circle of influence. So I want to give you some ways you can reach others with the gospel, and in a sense be a “mini” evangelist. I want to use a verse of Scripture which will help you.

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” ([Acts 1:8](#)).

Depend on the Holy Spirit

You do not have to attempt to reach others in your own strength. That was not the plan Jesus had. His plan was to fill people with the Holy Spirit, which would empower and embolden people to go forward and proclaim the gospel. That was true then and it is true now. If you are a little shy or don't know what to say, the Holy Spirit can help you with that. He can give you boldness to be willing to share the gospel and can give you the words to say in the right moment.

“After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly” ([Acts 4:31](#)).

“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say” ([Luke 12:11-12](#)).

Start Where You Are

If you look at the second part of [Acts 1:8](#), Jesus told them they would be witnesses in Jerusalem and then ultimately to the ends of the earth. They started in Jerusalem first because that is where they were at the time.

For us, this simply means to start where you are. You need to define your Jerusalem. This could be your home, your neighborhood, your job, your school, your family, your friends – any place where you are and there are people that do not know Jesus and need to hear the gospel. That is where you begin.

Tell Your Story

Your personal experience with Jesus can be the best testimony you can share with others. Letting them know what he has done in your life can have a profound impact on other people. This is important and can be an amazingly effective witness.

In [John 9](#), Jesus heals a man who was born blind. This man was not a biblical scholar, but what he had to share was his story of how Jesus healed him, and that is what he did. If you are a Christian, you have a story of how Jesus has changed your life or made a difference in your life. Tell that story. The message of the gospel is about repentance and it is about relationship. When you share that with others it can entice them to want to know more.

When it comes to evangelism, there is one thought left I want to leave with you. Just do it. There are no specific formulas or tricks of the trade. All that you must do is make yourself available and be willing to share the gospel. When you do that, you position yourself for God to use you to bring the good news to those around you. That is the goal all along.

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