

## Evangelism Training, Part 1

### Introduction

#### I. What is Evangelism?

##### a. Definition

Evangelism refers to the proclamation of good news. This meaning is evident from the word itself and from the various contexts in which it is used in the New Testament. The verb (euangelizō) is formed by combining the particle “eu” (“good”) with a verb that means “to announce.” It can therefore refer to any kind of good news, and the specific message must be derived from the context. Timothy, for example, brought good news back to Paul about the Thessalonian church (1 Thess 3:6). However, the New Testament most often uses this word to refer to the proclamation of the Christian message, the good news of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The description of our message as “good news” helps keep us on track. We have “news” to announce that contains divinely revealed truth. There is real intellectual content to relate. This news is described as “good” because it offers the ultimate gift to humanity.

##### b. Examples

###### i. The Preaching of Jesus

*Luke 4:43 But He said to them, “I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also, for I was sent for this purpose.”*

###### ii. The Preaching of The Apostles

*Acts 5:42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.*

###### iii. The Personal Evangelism of Christians

*Acts 8:4 Therefore, those who had been scattered went about, proclaiming the good news of the word. 5 Now Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began preaching Christ to them.*

Although the book of Acts focuses on the preaching of the apostles, it also implies that the gospel spread through ordinary Christians. Notice that two different verbs are used above. Philip's activity in verse 5 is described as "preaching," implying that he was standing up before crowds, raising his voice, and positioning himself as a herald. This is why he is elsewhere referred to as an "evangelist" in the official sense (Acts 21:8; cf. Eph 4:11). The verb in verse 4, however, seems to be more general, referring to the spreading of the message through a variety of means by ordinary Christians. See also Acts 11:19 for another example of this.

## II. How do we evangelize?

Jesus and the apostles show us that evangelism requires both teaching and exhortation. Teaching communicates truth to the mind, and exhortation seeks to impel the will to act upon that knowledge.

- a. We teach them about the holiness of God, the sinfulness of man, and the person and work of Christ.

The evangelist is fundamentally a teacher, and teachers exist because ignorance exists. The hearer is either completely ignorant of fundamental biblical truths or, more likely, has a partial and erroneous understanding of them. Imagine if an evangelist were to jump right in and say, "If you believe in Jesus, you will go to heaven." Consider how that statement might be interpreted by the average college student who has never read the Bible or attended church. He may be thinking to himself, "Huh? Jesus? Heaven? Believe? What in the world is he talking about?" As you begin engaging people with the Christian message, you will discover that they are not blank slates but rather a confused amalgamation of opinions derived from experience, intuition, and tradition.

Just as bad students make lousy teachers, they also make lousy evangelists. For that reason, we must acquire a firm mental grasp of the biblical doctrines mentioned above. We must be serious students of God's word. You may not be gifted to teach in the formal sense, but we should all at least be able to help someone understand biblical truth on a personal level.

- b. We urge them to repent and believe.

The gospel is the most urgent of all messages, that salvation from judgment is freely offered to all in the name of Jesus Christ. As such, evangelism ought to

include persuasion and appeals to the conscience. When Peter was preaching the gospel to the crowds, he “kept on *exhorting* them, saying, ‘Be saved from this crooked generation!’” (Acts 2:40). Likewise, Timothy was to give attention to *exhortation* as well as teaching (1 Tim 4:13). The evangelist imitates Moses and says, “Choose life in order that you may live!” (Deut 30:19).

- c. We offer the promise of forgiveness and eternal life.

The evangelist seeks to persuade the hearer to receive Christ by appealing to the promises and threats of Scripture. On the positive side, the sinner who repents and believes will receive the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. He will enter into a new state of peace with God. His conscience will be cleansed from guilt. He will obtain the right to eternal life through faith in Christ apart from good works.

- d. We warn them of the judgment to come.

But there are also threats to deliver, and the greatest threat is that of death, condemnation, and eternal punishment in hell. This sobering reality is seldom mentioned in most evangelistic conversations. Yet, if we want to pattern our evangelism after Scripture, unbelievers must be warned of the judgment to come. Jesus Himself mentioned hell to everyone He spoke to, including the crowds of Galilee, His own disciples, and false teachers (Matt 5:22; 10:28; 23:33).

### III. Why do we evangelize?

- a. Our Sense of Duty

The Sermon on the Mount and the Great Commission in Matthew’s gospel teach that evangelism should be part of the lifestyle of every Christian. The church is “the light of the world” because we possess the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, who is Himself the true “light of the world” (Matt 5:14; John 8:12; Acts 13:47). Of course, this light shines when the gospel is preached in a formal sense by men like Paul, Philip, or Timothy. But this light should also shine through ordinary Christians in their day to day lives. For instance, the New Testament teaches that fathers should evangelize their children (Eph 6:4). Consider also the example of Cornelius. When he knew that Peter was on his way to proclaim the good news of salvation, he invited his close relatives and friends to come and hear (Acts 10:24). The point is not that every Christian must go “soul-winning” in the neighborhood on a regular basis. Rather, the point is that every Christian ought to involve himself *somehow* in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ.

But what if we don't feel capable? When we consider any Christian duty, our first question should not be, "Am I capable?" but "What has God commanded?"

Moses did not *feel* capable to lead the Jews out of Egyptian bondage (Ex 4:10), and Jeremiah did not *feel* strong enough to confront his rebellious generation (Jer 1:6). Yet God commissioned them anyway and urged them to rely upon Him.

Remember, the Christian life is a life of *faith*, and faith responds to the commands of God with *total submission* and *total dependence*. Submission embraces the command, even those that seem impossible, because faith is convinced that "all things are possible with God" (Matt 19:26). Dependence then cries out to God in prayer, trusting that He will provide the power. For this reason Jesus followed the Great Commission with the greatest of all promises: "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt 28:20).

b. Our Compassion for Sinners

While a sense of duty should be a powerful motivation to evangelize, it should not be the only motivation. Jesus fulfilled His ministry in a spirit of dutiful obedience, but He also felt real compassion for sinners. "Seeing the crowds, *He felt compassion* for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd" (Matt 9:36). Their misery affected Him deeply and moved Him to action. He did not only preach because He *had to*. He also preached because He *wanted to*. He sincerely desired the salvation of His hearers.

One reason why many Christians do not evangelize is due to a hardened heart. We care too much about our own comfort and social status to take any risks. We are like men who see an old lady or child being abused but can't be bothered to intervene. We rarely think of the eternal torment that awaits our lost neighbors. We pray for an easy and comfortable life but not for the lost. Most of our thoughts are selfish, revolving around our appearance, health, finances, pleasures, etc. This worldliness is the fastest way to stifle and kill evangelistic zeal.

c. Our Desire to Glorify God

The desire to glorify God should always be the Christian's fundamental motivation for everything he does. Paul told the Corinthians to focus on this motivation as they were trying to sort out their congregational problems. He said, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor 10:31). In other words, "When in doubt, do whatever would bring the most

glory to God!” The same principle can be applied to evangelism. What would most glorify God, to proclaim Christ or not to proclaim Christ? The answer is self-evident.

Yet, this desire to glorify God can wax and wane in our Christian experience. Therefore, it must be cultivated daily through our personal communion with God. Just as you are eager to glorify those whom you respect and love by talking about them, so you will also become more eager to evangelize as you acquire a deeper personal knowledge of God and Christ. We cannot help but speak of what we love. As Jesus said, “The mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart” (Matt 12:34).

## Homework

- Memorize the “How do we evangelize?” card.
- Read *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, pgs. 1–5.
- Read *Essential Christian Doctrine*, pgs. 102–108. Pay special attention to the section at the top of page 106 called “God’s Holiness and Righteousness in Salvation.”
- Write down the names of three unbelievers in your life that need to hear the gospel. Commit to praying for them every day. Pray for opportunities to speak to them about the gospel and pray for their salvation (Rom 10:1).

#1: \_\_\_\_\_

#2: \_\_\_\_\_

#3: \_\_\_\_\_

- Reflect on the motives that we reviewed in class. Were you convicted by these? How so? Spend some time in prayer and ask God to grow you in these areas.