

Foundations: Bible Truths For Christian Growth

Chapter 12: Evangelism

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Unless otherwise noted, all Bible quotations are taken from the *New American Standard Bible* : 1995 Update. LaHabra, CA : The Lockman Foundation, 1995.



DISCIPLESHIP SERIES

Foundations: Bible Truths for Christian Growth

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Your Message to the World

The emphasis which the New Testament places on evangelism can hardly be overstated. Indeed, one could argue that every book of the New Testament—and of the Old—contains a command or example of evangelism.

Evangelism is of utmost importance to God and must therefore be of utmost importance to His people. Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the great English preacher of the 19th century, writes, “Soulwinning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer.”³⁸ God has entrusted the gospel message to human messengers (like you!). Therefore, it is essential that you learn what it is, why it is important and how to do it effectively.

The Meaning of Evangelism

The first step in our study of evangelism is to define it. We cannot obey a command which we don’t understand. What exactly is evangelism? The word “evangelize” is the English equivalent of the Greek word *euangelizo*. Both the English and Greek words mean “to proclaim good news.”

(Note: The term gospel comes from the same Greek root and means “good news.”)

A few clarifications are in order regarding the meaning of evangelism:

1. **The work of evangelism is proclaiming.**

Many well-meaning Christians substitute a number of activities for biblical evangelism. They mistake evangelism for “getting someone saved.” They believe that the work of the evangelist is to argue, convince or manipulate a sinner into praying the sinner’s prayer. Yet, the Bible teaches that

³⁸ *The Soulwinner* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), p. 9.

evangelism is simply the proclaiming of the good news of Jesus Christ.

Telling is the work of the believer...*convicting* and *saving* are the works of God.

2. The message of evangelism is God's message.

Part of the Greek word *euangelizo* comes from the word *angelos*. What English word do we get from this word? _____

Hint: They often are portrayed with wings.

The general meaning of the word *angelos* is "messenger." A messenger is sent with a message by someone else; he does not develop his own message.

2 Corinthians 5:20 uses a similar title for Christians who share Christ's message. What is it? _____

What important message has Christ committed to our care (v. 19b)? _____

The job of an ambassador is not to be creative with his message. Rather, it is to be accurate with his message.

A prominent and influential American church boasts in its literature that they give the gospel a "softsell." Compare that statement with your previous answer. Is something wrong? _____

The message of the gospel is God's, not yours. You do not have the right to alter it or tone it down. How

arrogant it is to assert that God was too firm when He wrote the Bible, included too many objectionable elements, and therefore needs us to serve as His filter! God's message must not be changed.

3. The message of evangelism is good.

Although the gospel contains hard things such as sin and judgment, it is vital that you remember that evangelism is sharing *good* news. Christ's death and resurrection to save sinners is good news, not bad! Unfortunately, some Christians present the gospel with little joy or tact. Sin and judgment are an essential part of the gospel, but they are only a part. You must tell people that God is holy and that they are deserving of hell, but you must immediately follow those facts with the love of God that caused Him to send Christ.

How does **Romans 6:23** balance the positive and negative aspects of the gospel? _____

How does **Romans 5:8** do the same? _____

How does **John 3:16** do the same? _____

Some may object to the Bible's teaching on hell by saying that a loving God would not send anyone to hell. However, Scripture teaches that many people will choose to reject Christ and will therefore spend eternity apart from God in hell.

What important fact does **2 Peter 3:9** teach about God's desire? _____

People who spend eternity in hell do so in spite of God, not because of Him. The message of the gospel is good, and it needs to be heard.

The Motivation for Evangelism

What motivates people to evangelize? At least two reasons for evangelism are prominent in the New Testament.

The Great Commission

A person's parting words are often very significant. Just prior to Jesus Christ's ascension into heaven, He gave His disciples important instructions, which are often called the *Great Commission*. Read the records of the Great Commission in **Matthew 28:19–20**; **Mark 16:15**; **Luke 24:46–48** and **Acts 1:8** and answer the following questions.

(Note: A commission is a responsibility and the authority to carry it out.)

Notice the four verbs used by Christ in **Matthew 28:19–20**. He first assumes immediate action: *Go* (literally "*having gone*"). He then commands them to *make disciples*. To whom are they commanded to take the gospel? _____

The Great Commission does not end with making disciples. In this passage the Holy Spirit assumes that the new believer will desire to be baptized without delay. Remember from Chapter 4 that baptism is a physical demonstration of a spiritual reality.

The last command presented in verse 20 is the ongoing work of the church. What is it? _____

Compare Mark's account of the Great Commission (**Mark 16:15**) with Matthew's account. What are the similarities? _____

According to Luke, what is the content of the gospel (**Luke 24:46–48**)? _____

What is the proper *response* to the gospel and the result of that response (v. 47)? _____

Where was that message to be preached (v. 47)? _____

What were the disciples called by Christ, and what does it mean (v. 48)? _____

Finally, compare **Acts 1:8** with Luke's account. Notice the similarities: "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Christ's blueprint for the spread of the gospel was specifically carried out in the book of **Acts**:

- *Jerusalem* (local)—**chapters 1–7**
- *Judaea* and *Samaria* (regional)—**chapter 8**

- *The remotest part of the earth* (international)—**chapters 9–28**

How does this command relate to you? What are your specific local, regional and international mission fields? _____

How can you carry out the Great Commission in each of those places? _____

The Great Commission was not merely a responsibility laid on the disciples; it is a continuing responsibility of the church. Read **Acts 8:1–4**. The word *euangelizo* appears five times in this chapter, first in verse 4. Who “went about preaching the Word”? _____

(Hint: the people “scattered” in verse 1.)

Evangelism is the job of every believer, not merely pastors! You are the Church’s outreach program! Scripture uses many pictures to highlight your ministry of evangelism. Fill in the blanks using the following verses:

Acts 1:8; Luke 24:48—*I am a* _____
so I should _____.

2 Corinthians 5:19–20—*I am an* _____
so I should _____.

Matthew 4:19—*I am a* _____
so I should _____.

Matthew 5:16—*I am a* _____
so I should _____.

A Genuine Compassion

The first motivation to evangelism is the Great Commission. Evangelism is done in obedience to Christ. A second motivation is compassion on the unsaved.

“The most sobering reality in the world today is that people are dying and going to hell today.”
Bob Jones III ³⁹

How should compassion motivate evangelism? _____

How are sinners described in **Ephesians 2:1–3, 12** and **Luke 19:10**? _____

According to **Luke 19:10**, why did Christ come? _____

Although the Great Commission and compassion are strong motivators, few Christians are faithful in carrying out the ministry committed to them. What do you think are some reasons that some believers neglect evangelism? _____

Let’s list a number of *obstacles* to effective evangelism:

³⁹ Dr. Bob Jones III of Bob Jones University often repeated this statement in the school’s chapel services to remind the students of the desperate condition of lost men.

HYPOCRISY prohibits evangelism. Many people are embarrassed to give the gospel because the way they live would not support their words. How does **Matthew 5:16** address this excuse? _____

FEAR prohibits evangelism. Perhaps the most common hindrance to evangelism is fear. How does **Proverbs 29:25** address this excuse? _____

What was the disciples' prayer amidst persecution in **Acts 4:29**? _____

"...the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it."

Matthew 7:13

Fear to speak out is certainly real. However, it is no excuse for silence. Indeed, Christ's description in **Matthew 7:13** of the "many" people who are on the wide road to eternal destruction demands that you move past your personal inhibitions and give a bold warning to lost friends, family members, and acquaintances. Richard Baxter,

the 17th century English preacher, writes, *"It should cast us into great distress to see so many men in such plain danger of being everlastingly undone. And if we by faith did indeed look upon them as within a step of hell, it would more effectively untie our tongues."*⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *The Reformed Pastor* (Marshallton, DE: The National Foundation for Christian Education), p. 15.

MONASTICISM prohibits evangelism. Religious men and women over many centuries have demonstrated a supposed godliness by leaving the normal life of the world and entering monasteries. The monastic movement is absolutely unbiblical. Yet, many Christians have placed themselves into a type of modern monastery—they allow themselves no contact with unsaved people for fear of being defiled. The Bible, however, calls for separation from the world, not isolation. In **John 17:11–16**, Jesus says that we are still *in* the world, though not *of* it. For what was Christ criticized in **Matthew 9:10–11**? _____

"Those men who keep themselves to themselves, like hermits, and live a supposed sanctified life of self-absorption, are not likely to have any influence in the world, or to do good to their fellow-creatures. You must love the people, and mix with them, if you are to be of service to them."

C. H. Spurgeon⁴¹

What was His response in verses 12 and 13? _____

⁴¹ *The Soulwinner* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), p. 72.

Christian author John Stamm has rightly said that “every relationship into which one enters becomes an evangelistic opportunity.”⁴² List several practical ways that you can develop such friendships with unsaved people as a means of giving them the gospel. Be specific. _____

EXCUSES prohibit evangelism. Many Christians—perhaps for one of the reasons just mentioned—have a list of reasons why they cannot or should not share the gospel.

- “It’s none of my business” or “It’s a private matter.”

How does **2 Corinthians 5:19b** address these excuses? _____

- “I just live a Christian life.”

Christianity was shaken several years ago by a philosophy called “Lifestyle Evangelism.” Its proponents argued that a verbal witness was not necessary if a living witness was maintained. Certainly we are commanded in Scripture to live a godly life before the world. However, your lifestyle should be a support of your verbal testimony, not a substitute for it.

⁴² *Evangelism and the Christian Experience* (Board of Publication, Evangelical Church, 1930), 62.

What is the specific command given to believers in **Mark 16:15**? How does that address “Lifestyle Evangelism”? _____

From where does faith come, according to **Romans 10:17**? _____

How does that address “Lifestyle Evangelism”? _____

- “I don’t know enough.”

This excuse may be true, but it does not exempt you from your responsibility. Whether or not you feel qualified, the fact is that God has “committed to us the word of reconciliation” (**2 Corinthians 5:19**). Ready or not, God has commanded you to tell the good news of salvation through Christ to lost men. Here is a suggestion: If you don’t know enough to present the gospel to the unsaved, get busy learning! The next section will help address the “how-to’s” of evangelism.

The Method of Evangelism

There are many methods of personal evangelism. This book will not propose a particular method which you must use in evangelism. Rather, it will present basic principles and their biblical bases. Probably the most effective method is one which incorporates these principles but which fits your particular personality. All sound methods of evangelism have at least three things in common:

1. **A commitment to the importance of Scripture.**

People will not be won to Christ by your explanations or illustrations. While both of those may be helpful, they are legitimate only if they clarify Scripture. The power of the gospel is in God’s Word, not yours.

What is the Bible called in **Romans 1:16**? _____

What does Paul say regarding his presentation of the gospel in **1 Corinthians 2:1–5**? _____

(hint: He did not use _____, but rather used _____.)

According to verse 5, why was he so careful? Explain his concern. _____

What promise is given regarding Scripture in **Isaiah 55:10–11**? _____

How does it apply to the work of evangelism? _____

2. **A clear presentation of Biblical truth.**

The following six basic truths and their Biblical references should be included in your presentation of the gospel:

(Note: It is best to show the verses to your hearer rather than merely quoting them. Also, pause regularly and ask if your hearer understands what you’ve said.)

- **God’s Purpose (1)**—Man was created by God to honor and serve Him (**Revelation 4:11 and Colossians 1:16**).
- **Man’s Problem (2)**—All men are sinners, both by birth and by choice (**Romans 3:10, 23**).
- **Sin’s Consequences (3)**—Sin separates man from God (**Isaiah 59:2**), keeps him from heaven (**Rev. 21:27**) and makes him deserving of hell (**Romans 6:23a and Rev. 20:15**).⁴³
- **Christ’s Payment (4)**—Because of His great love, God sent Jesus Christ to die on the cross as our sinless substitute (**John 3:16; Romans 5:8 and 1 Peter 3:18**).

⁴³ Notice that you must show the sinner his dreadful condition *before* you show Him Christ’s wondrous solution. As Spurgeon writes, you must “throw sinners down in utter helplessness, that they may be compelled to look up to Him who alone can help them.” Charles Haddon Spurgeon, *The Soulwinner* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1895), p. 18.

- **Our Pardon (5)**—Scripture commands us to **turn** from sin and to God (*repentance*—**Acts 3:19**) and **trust** in Christ as our only hope of salvation (*faith*—**Acts 16:31**). The sinner must place his confidence in Christ alone, not his own good works (**John 14:6** and **Ephesians 2:8–9**). Salvation must be received as a free gift (**Romans 6:23b**).

Must Sinners Repent?

Contrary to the teaching of many Christian leaders, repentance is a condition of salvation. If a sinner does not repent of his sins, he remains unsaved.

(Consider **Acts 3:19; 11:18; 17:30; 20:21; Luke 13:3 & 5; 2 Timothy 2:25; 2 Peter 3:9** and many, many others.)

- **God's Promise (6)**—God promises eternal life to all who receive Jesus Christ as Savior (**John 5:24** and **1 John 5:11–12**).

3. **A personal testimony and invitation to respond.**

God will often use your testimony of salvation to cause others to realize their own need. A changed life is a strong tool to show people their need of salvation. Even baby Christians can echo the words of the man whom Jesus healed of blindness: “one thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see” (**John 9:25**).

The Miracle of Evangelism

One word of caution is appropriate as you prepare to share the gospel with others. Salvation is a work of God, not men. Only God can bring conviction...only God can draw men to repentance...only God can do the work of regeneration.

In your zeal to see people saved, do not usurp the authority and function of the Holy Spirit! The result can be disastrous—you may pick fruit that is not yet ripe and the person may make a *profession* of faith without a *possession* of faith (see **Matthew 7:21**). That person will then be even less likely to come to genuine salvation because of a false assurance.

Gospel Vaccinations

Pressing for a decision when a person is not genuinely under conviction and ready to repent of his sins and trust Christ is like giving him a vaccination.

He will have only enough of the truth to make him “immune” to it in the future! Far better to allow him to sit under the convicting influence of the Spirit for a time and finally embrace Christ as his personal Savior!

What does **Jonah 2:9** teach regarding salvation?

What responsibility does Jesus assign to the Father in **John 6:44**? _____

How should those two passages affect your presentation of the gospel? _____

In conclusion, a review of Chapter 1 will be helpful as you prepare to share the gospel with others. Also, there are many effective tracts available that can be a tremendous help both as you give the gospel and as a reminder to your hearer when you have finished. Two particularly useful tracts are *The Bridge to Eternal Life* and *God's Simple Plan of Salvation*. Ask your pastor for help in obtaining these and other resources. Finally, you would do well to participate in a more thorough evangelism training course through a solid, Bible-teaching local church.

Scripture Memory

Acts 1:8

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Mark 16:15

And He [Jesus] said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.

Luke 24:46-48

And He [Jesus] said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.

Check Your Progress

What are the three most significant lessons that you have learned in this Bible study? Why are they important?

1. Which portion of the work of evangelism is given to believers? Which is given to God? (pp. 218–220) _____

2. How does Scripture—and how must you—balance the “good news” and “bad news” of the gospel? (pp. 220) _____

3. What are the two main motivations for evangelism? (pp. 221, 224) Describe each of them. _____

4. Which of the obstacles to evangelism listed on pages 225–228 most affects you? Why? What will you do to overcome it? _____

5. Why is simply “living a Christian life” before the lost only sufficient to support an actual gospel presentation? (p. 227–228)

6. Why is it essential that the person to whom you give the gospel place confidence in Scripture rather than in

you personally? (pp. 228–229) _____

7. List and briefly explain the six basic truths that should be included in every gospel presentation. (pp. 230–231) _____

8. What is the “disastrous” result of pressing for a salvation decision when there is no conviction? (p. 232)

9. How should Jonah 2:9 and John 6:44 affect your evangelism? (p. 232–232) _____

10. Check off the following verses only when you can say them from memory:

Acts 1:8 Mark 16:15 Luke 24:46–48

Do you believe that you know this material well enough to teach it to someone else? _____ If not, review it until you do!