



Evangelism – Sunday School

Section 2 **Foundational Matters of Evangelism**

I. What governs all matters related to evangelism?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 - “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.”

II. What is the definition of evangelism?



1. Take two minutes to write down in the space below what you understand to be the definition of evangelism.

Biblically speaking, I believe we should define evangelism as follows:

Evangelism is the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ through public preaching or personal witness with the goal of glorifying God and converting sinners.

Let us look briefly at each part of this definition according to the following outline.

- What is evangelism
- How is evangelism accomplished
- What is the goal of evangelism

First, evangelism is “the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Acts 14:7 - “And there they preached the gospel.”

The term “preached” in Greek is “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι” from which we get our English word “evangelism.”

Acts 17:3 - “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.”

Does this mean that when we share our personal testimony of trusting in Christ that we are not evangelizing?

Special Note: Evangelism is communicating the correct information about _____.

Second, evangelism is accomplished “through public preaching or personal witness of the gospel.”

Acts 20:18-21 - “And when they came to him, he said to them: ‘You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you **in public and from house to house**, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.’”

Third, the goal of evangelism is “to glorify God and convert sinners.”

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor 10:31)

I would argue that the glory of God is our _____ goal in evangelism, and therefore, knowing that God is glorified when His people declare the wonders of His grace is sufficient.

However, while some are satisfied with making the glory of God the **sole** goal of evangelism, we should not be.

“Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” (Rom 10:1)

“Whether short or long, I would to God that not only you but also all who hear me this day might become such as I am - except for these chains.” (Acts 26:29)

Please do not misunderstand: This second goal does not mean that the proclamation of the gospel is no longer evangelism if the person to whom we speak does not believe in Christ.

Allow me to issue two words of caution here.

- You **are not** seeking to simply win an argument.
- You **are not** seeking merely to get a person to make a decision to pray a prayer or agree they will believe in Jesus to escape hell and go to heaven.

One last note.

Evangelism seeks the conversion of the _____.

III. What is the nature of evangelism?

A. Evangelism is verbal.

Francis of Assisi¹ - “Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.”

1 John 3:18 - “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.”

Matthew 5:13-16 - ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

The Greek term “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι” links the idea of evangelism with speaking the gospel.

Litfin:

The stakes are surprisingly high in how we deal with this matter. This is not some esoteric debate reserved for theologians or Bible scholars. The belief that we can ‘preach the gospel’ with our actions alone represents muddled thinking. However important our actions may be (and they are very important indeed), they are not ‘preaching the gospel.’

¹ A mystic Catholic friar, Assisi was founder of the Franciscans and is one of the most venerated figures among Catholics.

The gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching it is an inherently verbal behavior. If the gospel is to be communicated at all, it must be put into words.

Nonverbal channels are inadequate for conveying cognitive content. While nonverbal channels are extremely effective in communicating moods, feelings, relationships, and attitudes, they are largely incapable of conveying cognitive, abstract, and historical information.

Just try, for instance, to convey the meaning of the gospel as outlined in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 to a lost person without words. "...that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me."

The cognitive content of the message renders communicating this nonverbally impossible. That's why the notion of "preaching the gospel" with our deeds is foreign to the Bible. The biblical gospel is inherently verbal, and by definition, communicating it requires putting it into words.²

Romans 10:14. "And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?"

B. Evangelism includes a mix of the objective and the subjective.

In the study of systematic theology, we are dealing with objective truth and there is no subjective element within.

When we talk about evangelism, we are dealing with a subject that falls into the realm of experimental theology. Because of this, we run into a mix of both the objective and the subjective.

² Duane Litfin, "Works and Words: Why You Can't Preach the Gospel with Deeds," <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2012/may/litfin-gospel-deeds.html>

IV. Who is to engage in evangelism?



2. Take a few minutes to answer the following questions:

- Who is to engage in evangelism?
- What Scripture would you use to support your answer?

Some circles among reformed churches insist that only “ministers” should evangelize. For example:

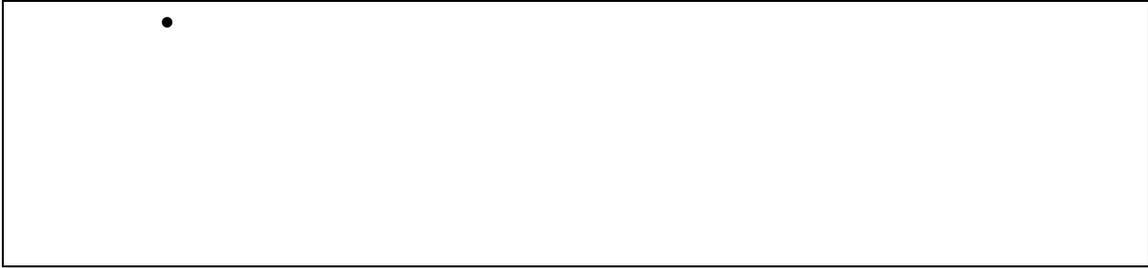
- Some argue that only those called to the ministry, that is, pastors, may “preach” the gospel. Their thinking is that evangelism is one aspect of the “preaching of the Word,” that it is “a Word-centered task of the church, particularly of her ministers,”³ and so belongs to the ordained minister alone.
- Others argue that, in most cases, pastors can “do a better job” at evangelism than the rest of the congregation, and so it makes most sense to have them do it all.



3. How would you respond to these two arguments? Take some time to write down your answers.

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³ Joel Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism*, 4.



My response:

A. Concerning the argument that only those called to the ministry may preach the gospel, I would say the following.

1. I would first acknowledge that in many cases evangelism will be carried out more by the officers of the church.
2. I would secondly assert that there are several passages that confirm that all believers should be involved in evangelism.

First,

Acts 8:1-4 – “¹ And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. ² Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. ³ But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison. ⁴ Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.”

The term “preaching” in verse 4 being the word “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι,” which means to “evangelize.”

Contrary to what some argue, I am not able to believe that the laity only “preached the word” on this occasion because of persecution or because it was a period of persecution, but never did so otherwise.

Furthermore, if we read ahead, we see that those who were scattered **continued** to preach the word.

Acts 11:19-21 - ¹⁹ Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except Jews. ²⁰ But there were some of them, men of Cyprus and Cyrene, who on coming to Antioch spoke to the Hellenists also, preaching the Lord Jesus. ²¹ And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number who believed turned to the Lord.

Thus, my argument is, if there was no limitation on the non-officers of the church evangelizing during the time of the apostles, I see no reason to place such limitations upon them now.

Sometimes the Christians who are not officers in the church actually have opportunities that church officers may never get.

Second,

1 Peter 2:9 - “⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

All Christians are saved for a purpose: to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

Third, the requirement for all Christians to be “shod with the sandals of the gospel of peace” (Eph 6:15) indicates that we all should be gospeling as we walk through our pilgrimage in this world.

Fourth, I would argue that the example of the Samaritan woman in John 4 shows that there are no limits on who can preach the gospel.

Fifth, I would argue that the teaching and example of Christ Himself proves that all believers are to be involved in evangelism.

Matthew 9:10-13 - ¹⁰“And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. ¹¹ And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?’ ¹² But when he heard it, he said, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. ¹³ Go and learn what this means, “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

First, if we are **all** to imitate Jesus, we should **all** express compassion towards the lost by sharing the gospel with them.

Second, Jesus quotes this phrase from the OT to emphasize that showing mercy to the lost through sharing the gospel with them is more pleasing to God than mere religious activities.

3. The second great commandment to love our neighbor as ourselves cannot include anything if it does not include a desire for our neighbor to be saved.

Penn Jillette, of the magician duo, Penn & Teller, expressed indignation at evangelicals who do **not** share their faith, asking, “How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?” He continued:

“I’ve always said that I don’t respect people [Christians] who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think people shouldn’t proselytize and who say just leave me alone and keep your religion to yourself are failing to understand this matter from the Christian’s worldview—how much do you have to hate somebody to *not* proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that? I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn’t believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is *more* important than that.”⁴

In sum, I believe that evangelism is a church responsibility.

Before we move on to our next point, allow me to make a clarification. It is certainly important to note that not everyone has the same gifts, and so our participation in evangelism will differ.

A quick note on different personalities.

B. Concerning the argument that only those who can do the best job at evangelism should do it, I would say the following.

First, all the assertions used to overturn the first argument make this argument irrelevant.

Second, even general revelation teaches that you do not have only the captain on the basketball team play in the game.

⁴ <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2009/11/17/how-much-do-you-have-to-hate-somebody-to-not-proselytize/>.

Acts 4:23-33 – ²³ When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, “Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, ²⁵ who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, “ ‘Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? ²⁶ The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed’— ²⁷ for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, ²⁸ to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. ²⁹ And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, ³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” ³¹ And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness. ³² Now the full number of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one said that any of the things that belonged to him was his own, but they had everything in common. ³³ And with great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.



4. With one other person, discuss something in this section that has been helpful to you.

V. Who should we evangelize?

A. Who should be the objects of our evangelism

First, we should evangelize a **certain kind** of people.

Second we should evangelize **all** people.

All are the same in the eyes of God –

- All are guilty of _____ His commands and hence under His wrath, and
- All are walking in _____ and on the broad way that leads to destruction.

Thus, all need to hear the gospel without exception.



5. Granted that all people are sinners and lost, isn't general revelation sufficient for pointing them to God so they can believe in Him and be saved? Do they really have to hear the gospel to be saved? First answer yes or no. Then explain why you answered that way.

1.

2.

General revelation is the testimony God gives about Himself through the things He has made and the things that He does in creation.

Some have argued that a person can be saved if he responds correctly to all this light of general revelation.

This does not mean we cannot point to general revelation when preaching the gospel to someone.

B. Some debates over who should be exceptions to our evangelism

First, what about Catholics?

J.I. Packer signed the 1994 ECT Accord between Catholics and Evangelicals that included the statement “we should not evangelize each other.” He later defended this cooperation, saying: “evangelicals and Catholics who actively believe are Christians together ... united in the one Body of Christ, joint-heirs not only with Him but with each other. ... ecclesiastically divided Christians should not settle for doing separately anything that their consciences allow them to do together.” He went on to say: “We need to put sola fide in small print because it is no longer one of the large-print issues that ought to divide us, nor should it divide us in common mission.”⁵ Then in 2002 Packer said at a conference held at Wheaton College: “What I dream of and long to see is evangelicals and Roman Catholics standing together on the same platform to tell the world that Jesus Christ is the Savior whom everybody needs.”⁶



6. What do you think? Should we evangelize Catholics? Why?

1.

2.

While Catholics believe in the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity, that is, their understanding of God in general is correct, they do not believe in the orthodox doctrine of the gospel – by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone.

Their catechism - “The grace of the Holy Spirit has the power to justify us, that is, to cleanse us from our sins and to communicate to us ‘the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ’ and **through Baptism**,”⁷ and again, “Justification has been merited for us by the Passion of Christ who offered himself on the cross as a living victim, holy and pleasing to God, and whose blood has become the instrument of atonement for the sins of all men. Justification is **conferred in Baptism**, the sacrament of faith. It (baptism) **conforms** us to the righteousness of God, who **makes us inwardly** just by the power of his mercy. Its purpose is the glory of God and of Christ, and the gift of eternal life.”⁸ Moreover, they assert, “We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere ‘to the end’ and to obtain the joy of heaven, **as God's eternal reward for the good works accomplished with the grace of Christ.**”⁹

⁵ J.I. Packer, *Christianity Today*, “Why I Signed It,” Dec. 12, 1994, 34-37.

⁶ <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/packer/general.htm>.

⁷ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P6Y.HTM

⁸ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P6Y.HTM

⁹ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/_P66.HTM



7. What do you think of these quotes? Why?

These quotes from their official documents show us the following.

- Catholics do not believe in justification by faith alone but add on **baptism** as necessary for justification and **good works** as prerequisite to receiving the “reward” of heaven.
- Catholics confound justification with sanctification, saying that justification “conforms us to the righteousness of God,” rather than that justification is a declaration that we are counted by God as righteous because Christ’s righteousness is counted as ours.

Thus I believe we should view Catholics like those whom Paul spoke of in Galatians 1.

Second, what about Jews.

A group of ecumenical “Christian” scholars said in September 2002 that because faithful Jews are already in right relationship with God, “We renounce missionary efforts directed at converting Jews.”¹⁰ Two professors from Duke University Divinity School wrote of Jews as “our brothers and sisters.”¹¹

¹⁰ <http://www.ucc.org/ucnews/nov02/christian-scholars-say-jews.html>

¹¹ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 91



8. What do you think? Should we evangelize Jews? Why?

1.

2.

If it were true that “faithful” Jews are all saved and do not need to hear the gospel, then Paul’s grief expressed in Romans 10:1-3 is wrong and should be renounced, for there he writes: “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness.”

Third: Should we evangelize the heathen?

“Evangelical Universalists,” who argue that being a universalist makes evangelism easier. They only tell pagans that God loves them and that they are definitely going to heaven after they die, and do not tell them they are going to hell since they do not believe in hell.¹²



9. What do you think? Should we evangelize the heathen? Why?

1.

2.

While the “gospel” of the “Evangelical Universalists” might make evangelism easier because it does not arouse the ire of the lost as does the true gospel (which calls the heathen to repent and believe in Christ or perish), yet, since it is not the true gospel, it cannot save.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-10 - “and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance

¹² <http://www.evangelicaluniversalist.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=26&t=2963>

on those **who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus**. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed.”

Finally, what about those who profess faith in Christ but live in rebellion?



10. What do you think? Should we evangelize those who profess faith in Christ but live in rebellion? Why?

- 1.
- 2.

I would argue we should evangelize them, but this requires much wisdom.

VI. What is the relationship of the church to evangelism?



11. What do you think should be the relationship between the church and evangelism?

What is the relationship of the church to evangelism.

First, preparation for evangelism should be done within the local church.

As in all areas of the Christian life (Eph 4:12), I believe the local church is responsible to **intentionally train** its members in both the **content and methods** of evangelism.

Second, the work of evangelism should be done through the local church.

Third, the life of the local church should enhance the church's evangelism.

The first way in which evangelism is enhanced by church life is through our **unity**, not mere ecclesial unity but that bond of love which binds us together (Eph 4:2-3).

Consider the following testimony (admittedly a “campus group” and not a local church, but the principle is the same):

As a freshman college student and self-declared atheist, I attended a campus Christian fellowship to fulfill a promise to a Christian friend. I only had the intention to go once. It was merely duty and upholding my word, nothing more. I went begrudgingly, but I went. My life was never the same.

I walked into a room full of Christians and was struck by what I observed. Here was a diverse group. They were from every walk of life. I remember scanning the room and labeling people in my mind, “There is a jock, over there is a geek, and walking in the door is a boy scout.” But what struck me was that they were together. They weren't just together in the same room, they were together in every sense of the word. They were actually talking with each other and genuinely seemed happy to be together. There didn't seem to be division. Even in my atheist mind, I knew what I was seeing: they loved one another.

I had no categories for this, so I kept returning to find out why they had love like this for one another. Over the course of a few months I found the answer, or more accurately stated, the answer found me.

One of the best evangelism programs you can start at your church is to pursue loving one another well. At some point non-Christians will have to hear the gospel proclaimed from your lips or the pulpit, but that “strange love” will set the table before them. People will know that you are His disciples, because it is a shocking love. It has a gravitational attraction, because it is a love that is foreign to this world. A love that the inquirer, if seeking an answer, will find

comes from heaven.¹³

Love for one another is a powerful tool by which our witness to the world is magnified.

The second way in which evangelism is enhanced by church life is through **purity** in the church.

Acts 5:11-14 – “¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard of these things. ¹² Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon’s Portico. ¹³ None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem. ¹⁴ And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women.”

First, fear came upon the church and those outside the church who heard about this matter.

Second, the believers were held in high esteem.

Third, many were added to their number.

Consider the following.

Think of the damage done to the Gospel by every scandal in which a minister is accused of adultery or a prominent Christian businessman is shown to be dishonest in his business dealings. An unbelieving friend said to me one day, “Jerram, why are so many of the Christian businessmen in this city so lacking in integrity in their business practices?” I will never forget those words, for this non-Christian is honored for his integrity by the business community, and he is right to ask such a question.... Why should he pay any attention to a message that claims to bring forgiveness and new life to people if he sees no evidence that we are living a new life and if he sees no indication that we are becoming forgiving, forbearing people ourselves?¹⁴

One thing that often disturbs me is seeing those who are zealous to share the gospel with others living really bad Christian lives.

Purity, then, is another powerful tool by which our witness to the world is magnified.

So Scripture shows us that the **best** (not only) way to enhance our evangelistic efforts is to pursue unity and purity.

¹³ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/simple-evangelism-in-the-church/>

¹⁴ Jerram Barrs. *The Heart of Evangelism* (Kindle Locations 772-778). Crossway Books.



12. Take a few minutes to write down your answers to the following questions.

- What are some ways your church fails in unity? How about in purity?
- Have you ever thought about how such failures affect your evangelism? Please explain.
- What should you begin doing so as help the church make needed changes in those areas of failure?

Please understand that these elements of the church's witness do not circumvent the definition we looked at above.

Fourth, the support of evangelism should be through corporate prayer within the local church.

Finally, celebration of evangelism should be done within the local church.

Churches should corporately rejoice ...

- that God is honored through evangelism,
- that members have been faithful to bear witness for Christ before others, and
- that people are being saved through the church's evangelism.

Remember: What is celebrated is cultivated.

Pray: Ask God...

- to deepen your confidence in His word as sufficient for equipping you to engage in evangelism,
- to give wisdom in the proper balancing of biblical principle with freedom in how you conduct evangelism,
- to fill us with the Holy Spirit so that we would speak the word of God with boldness.