



Evangelism – Sunday School

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Section 2

Foundational Matters of Evangelism

Foundational matters are often considered the unattractive part of whatever one is studying, and hence people often prefer to skip over them. They are in a hurry to get on to the study of things they think are practically relevant to their particular situation. However, any wise builder will tell you that if there are defects in the foundation, they will only become worse as you build on top of it. And this will affect everything supported by the foundation! Therefore, the foundation, even though often unpopular, deserves the highest degree of attention.

Before we dive into the practical elements of evangelism, I want us to consider 6 foundational matters that must govern our practice. Each of these matters is important to all that we are going to study later in this course. If we get one or more of these wrong, it will have a significant negative affect upon our evangelism. The 6 foundational matters we will consider include the following. First, what governs all matters related to evangelism? Second, what is the definition of evangelism? Third, what is the nature of evangelism? Fourth, who is to engage in evangelism? Fifth, who should we evangelize? Sixth, what is the relationship of the church to evangelism?

Because of time, we will not look at the fifth and sixth items just listed. These will be covered on the mp3 that will be made available tomorrow.

I. What governs all matters related to evangelism?

As with all other subjects related to our faith and practice, Scripture must be viewed as having supreme authority in all matters related to evangelism. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read that “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.” Scripture is sufficient to equip us for every good work, including the good work of evangelism. Therefore, in this course we will be using Scripture as our only certain, infallible rule for what we believe about evangelism and for how we conduct evangelism.

II. What is the definition of evangelism?

First, I want everyone to take two minutes to write down what you understand to be the definition of evangelism. If there is someone nearby, no peeking at his/her answer!!! When you finish, you can come up and write your answer on the board.



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

Lets look at your answers on the board. What do you think about each of these answers?

Thank you for your answers. These answers have a lot of good stuff in them.

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.” We see this in Acts 14:7, where we read, “And there they preached the gospel.” Here Paul and Barnabas are preaching the gospel in the area of Lycaonia. The term “preached” in Greek is “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι” from which we get our English word “evangelism.” This links the idea of evangelism with preaching the gospel. Later in 17:3, when Paul is visiting the synagogue in Thessalonica, he says, “This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ.” Paul is speaking with a group of Jews who are not believers in Christ, and he is proclaiming to them Christ, whose person and work is the core of the gospel. Thus, both of these texts confirm that evangelism involves taking the message of the gospel revealed in Scripture and telling it to others. It aims to continue to extend the reach of the message further and further out to those who have not yet heard or not yet believed. And since the message shared is the gospel of Jesus Christ, the focus of that which is shared is Jesus Christ and what He has done to save sinners.

Does this mean that when we share our personal testimony of trusting in Christ that we are not evangelizing? We will return to this question later in the class, but please understand that evangelism, strictly speaking, is about Christ and His work.

Special Note: Evangelism is communicating the correct information about **the gospel**, which means we should not be talking about supra or infralapsarianism and divine simplicity! And leave out debates about whether or not to baptize infants. Those kinds of things come later!

Second, evangelism is accomplished “through public preaching or personal witness of the gospel.” In Acts 20:18-21 we see **both** in the ministry of Paul. “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.” The message of repentance and faith in Christ is first mentioned as having been taught “in public.” This would indicate that evangelism may be done within the church or in some other public building or even in the open air. Second, this message was taught “from house to house,” this referring to private settings. This would indicate that evangelism may also be done in a home, at a coffee shop or a restaurant, or wherever you can find a place to talk with non-believers in a more personal, private manner.

Third, the goal of evangelism is “to glorify God and convert sinners.” The first aspect of this goal obviously fits into the scope of Paul’s exhortation: “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” (1 Cor 10:31) When we preach the gospel to the lost, we should desire that God be glorified through our efforts. In order to accomplish this, we must make sure that we proclaim the gospel as He has revealed it in Scripture, and that we do so with a heart that loves Him and is thankful to Him for having loved and saved us. A false gospel or a cold heart towards God will dishonor Him when we speak of Christ to others; the first (that is, a false gospel) blurs or hides the glory of God revealed in Christ’s work of redemption, while the second (that is, a cold heart towards God) causes the gospel to appear unimportant to us and hence makes listening to our message seem of little value to our hearers.

I would argue that the glory of God is our ultimate goal in evangelism, and therefore, knowing that God is glorified when His people declare the wonders of His grace is sufficient. Even if the person we preach to does not believe, the fact that the gospel has been proclaimed (in a sense) is enough. That is to say, even when no one is converted, we can rejoice that God’s grace **in Jesus Christ** has been declared to someone and His name lifted up through it. In this way, evangelism is first and foremost God-centered and not man-centered.

However, while some are satisfied with making the glory of God the **sole** goal of evangelism, we should not be. Paul also yearned for his fellow Jews to be saved, writing, “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved.” (Rom 10:1) He also said as much to King Agrippa, “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) Paul sincerely hoped the people he preached the gospel to would believe and be saved. This should be our heart as well. When we proclaim the gospel, we should be hoping that the person we are speaking with will actually trust in Christ and be saved (**remember the quote we read from Calvin last week**). Indeed, to evangelize without this goal makes the whole activity of evangelism superfluous, and reveals us to be violators of the second great commandment.

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. **In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 we see that all the work of the sower was considered sowing even though each kind of soil had a different response.** What this part of the definition is emphasizing is that without the **goal** of seeing the person converted, our activity is no longer biblical evangelism or is no longer evangelism done according to the will of God.

Allow me to issue two words of caution here. When you get into the heat of a discussion with someone about the gospel, always seek to remember what your goal is –

- You **are not** seeking to simply win an argument. You are seeking to plant and water the seed of the gospel, hoping that God will glorify His name through saving the person.
- 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. You are seeking the **conversion** of a person to Christ, where they not only trust in Christ so as to receive forgiveness of their sins but also submit to Him as their King. We are to seek what Paul sought – that they would turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God (Acts 26:18).

So, let us rehearse our definition together. **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 me encourage you to rehearse this definition often so that it shapes your thinking about evangelism and hence your engagement in evangelism.

One last note. I hope it is clear here that evangelism is not the stealing of members out of another church (which is bad) or the bringing in of wandering Christians who have no church (which is good). Evangelism seeks the conversion of the **lost**. Therefore, we should heed the admonition of many from the past who have been displeased with churches that are content with growth due to transfer of membership but have not been earnest for the conversion of the lost through the ministry of evangelism.

III. What is the nature of evangelism?

When I speak of the nature of evangelism, I am referring to those elements that comprise its essential essence. Below I am going focus in on just two of the elements that comprise the nature of evangelism:

A. Evangelism is verbal.

There is a statement attributed to Francis of Assisi¹ which says, “Preach the gospel at all times; when necessary, use words.” Such a sentiment is felt by many today, some even citing 1 John 3:18 to validate this perspective, which reads, “Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.” But in context John is speaking of loving the brethren, not preaching the gospel to the lost, and he is exhorting his readers that simply speaking a word of blessing to someone when there is need for an act of kindness is not enough.

Now, it is clear from passages like Matthew 5:13-16 that our lives affect our witness before the world. 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.” This passage makes it clear that the attitudes of unbelievers toward God are in some real measure affected by genuine godliness in the lives of believers. But this does not negate the fact that it is essential that we also speak the gospel to the lost.

As noted above, the Greek term “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι” links the idea of evangelism with speaking the gospel. Evangelism takes place through verbal communication. Without verbal communication, there is no evangelism in the true sense of the word.

Litfin writes:

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

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.’ 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

Remember what we read in 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?” If someone is going to believe, they must hear the gospel. And in order for them to hear the gospel, it must be verbally communicated to them. Therefore, evangelism is, by nature, verbal.

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. For example, the doctrine of the trinity is true and unchanging no matter how I might feel about it or how poorly I understand it. We may not say, “the doctrine of the trinity means this to me,” or “I understand the doctrine of the trinity in my own way.” One’s understanding of it should be regulated by the objective truth of the doctrine as revealed in Scripture, and not by one’s subjective feelings or preferences. But 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. The objective element is the content of the gospel message. That message is revealed in Scripture and no one has the liberty to ever dilute it or change it, no matter the situation. Moreover, like other aspects of Christian ministry, evangelism is regulated by biblical principles. That is, biblical principles must guide how we do evangelism and how we handle the challenges we face related to evangelism. These principles may never be ignored for the sake of convenience or preference. Thus, for example, our evangelism should always be birthed out of a love for the person with whom we share and not a desire to win a debate. However, many of the details of how we conduct evangelism are to be worked out within the framework of biblical principles, depending upon the

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>

situation and the people involved – this is the subjective element. For instance, there is nothing in Scripture that commands us every time we share the gospel with someone to do so only inside a church building. Instead, within the framework of biblical principles, there is freedom to conduct evangelism according to the opportunities God gives, the abilities He gives, the background of the people we are sharing with, and more.

In short, we need to give careful attention to the relationship between evangelism and experimental theology, and make sure that, while we do not budge on the objective elements like the content of the gospel, we at the same time do give a proper degree of freedom on the subjective elements, always making sure this freedom is regulated by biblical principle.

So, in sum, the nature of evangelism includes (1) verbal communication, and (2) a careful handling of evangelism’s objective and subjective elements.

IV. Who is to engage in evangelism?



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

- Who is to engage in evangelism?

- What Scripture would you use to support your answer?

What are your answers to these question?

Thank you for your answers.

In many Christian circles this question is never even considered. They assume that all Christians have a responsibility to engage in evangelism. To them it is a basic element of the normal Christian life.

But there are some circles among reformed churches that 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. The laity, they insist, are not so called, and therefore should not do it. They believe that the laity’s calling is to have a secular job, and to share their faith only if they are asked to defend the hope they have (1 Pet 3:15). Preaching, including evangelism, “strictly speaking,” is for ministers only.
- Others argue that, in most cases, pastors can “do a better job” at evangelism than the rest of

³ Joel Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism*, 4.

the congregation, and so it makes most sense to have them do it all. They assert, “you certainly would not ask your second-grade son to balance your family budget.” So, they conclude, “should we not have the person who knows the most and can answer questions the best do all the evangelism?”



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

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- Answer:

- 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. They assert, “you certainly would not ask your second-grade son to balance your family budget.” So, they conclude, “should we not have the person who knows the most and can answer questions the best do all the evangelism?”
- Answer:

What are your answers to these questions?

My response to these two arguments is as follows.

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. They will be called upon to visit the sick or asked to counsel a couple

⁴ Joel Beeke, *Puritan Evangelism*, 4.

where only one spouse is a Christian, in such cases having opportunity to share the gospel. Some will have gifts and a calling like Philip (Acts 21:8) to engage in evangelism as their primary work. And obviously some will have opportunity from the pulpit to proclaim the gospel to the many lost who attend church meetings. So, yes, the church officers will often be engaged in evangelism more than the rest of the congregation.

However, this does not mean that the work of evangelism is limited to just the officers.

2. I would secondly assert that there are several passages that confirm that all believers should be involved in evangelism.

First, look with me at 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.” Here we read that when persecution arose and the saints in Jerusalem were scattered, they went about **“preaching the Word”** (v.4), the term “preaching” being the word “εὐαγγελιζόμενοι,” which, as noted above, means to “evangelize.” Significantly, the apostles were not among those scattered here (v.1), indicating that they were not among those preaching the Word in the regions of Judea and Samaria. It was the “laity” of the church of Jerusalem who was doing this work.

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. It would be most natural to understand that they had already made evangelism a normal part of their lives and thus when persecution arose they just continued to practice it as they were scattered. In fact, it is, in part, because the early Christians did not keep their faith a secret but shared it freely that persecution came upon them **all** and not just the apostles.

Furthermore, if we read ahead, we see that those who were scattered **continued** to preach the word. In Acts 11:19-21 we read the following. 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.” In this passage we see that the Lord greatly blessed their evangelism so that many believed, especially in Antioch. And then what? Since there were no leaders among them, when a report reached Jerusalem about this, they sent Barnabas to Antioch (v.22). Barnabas then got Paul and brought him to Antioch, where the two of them ministered for a whole year (v.25-26). Now, if those who were conducting the evangelism were church officers, it would not seem necessary for the church in Jerusalem to send Barnabas, nor for Barnabas to get Paul, for the church in Antioch could very well just carry on on its own. Instead, the sending of Barnabas and then his getting Paul to come indicate that the church in Antioch did not have a leader among them at that time who had been scattered from the Jerusalem church by persecution. **And so it must have been the “laity” who had conducted the evangelism in this situation.**

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. Nor is there any passage in Scripture that establishes such limits. I do believe that as in other aspects of church life the congregation should receive training and guidance from the church officers in this matter. **But I no see biblical evidence to discourage or restrict the “laity” from active participation in proclaiming the gospel.**

Sometimes the Christians who are not officers in the church actually have opportunities that church officers may never get. And sometimes their personal evangelism is even more powerful than the pastor’s preaching in church because they are able to adapt what they emphasize more personally to their audience. So, we should never underestimate the value of the congregation’s participation in the work of evangelism!!!

Second, 1 Peter 2:9 says, “⁹ But 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.” Here we see that all Christians are saved for a purpose: to “proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” This responsibility belongs not just to pastors but to all believers, as the context makes absolutely clear. It is not only the elders and deacons who are “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession,” but all believers, and thus in the flow of thought it is all believers who are to be involved in proclaiming the excellencies of God revealed in Christ, which in essence is the gospel.

Third, I would argue that 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. Indeed, announcing the good news is here portrayed as part of our participating in spiritual warfare. Wherever we go, we should be speaking of this gospel by which alone sinners can be delivered from the dominion of Satan and have peace with God.

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. After her encounter with Christ, she went to her town and told the people about Him, and many believed (John 4:39). Later, Jesus did not rebuke her, saying she was brazen for doing the work that belonged to the apostles alone. Instead, He allowed it, for it is a natural part of the life of one who has been changed by the gospel.

Fifth, I would argue that the teaching and example of Christ Himself proves that all believers are to be involved in evangelism. For example, we read the following in Matthew 9:10-13, “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. All Christians are responsible to show mercy, and if evangelism is the greatest form of mercy one can show to a lost person, then all Christians really should be involved in evangelism.

All this Scriptural evidence persuades me that it is not only the officers of the church who should be involved in evangelism, but all Christians who should be.

But there is more...

3. I would thirdly assert that 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. All Christians should hold that salvation in Christ is the greatest treasure they possess (Matt 13:44-46), and if that is so, then they should want nothing less for their neighbors than that they too be forgiven of their sins and reconciled to God through Christ. And if that be the case, then how can any Christian not be involved in evangelism in some way? Not to do so is to fail to love our neighbor as ourselves in a serious manner.

Interestingly, even atheists are able to see the logic of this deduction. A few years ago, atheist 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.”⁵

Even an atheist can deduce that for Christians to fail to share the gospel with others is to fail to love, [at least according to what he understands to be the Christian definition of love](#). What a shame it is for us Christians to fail to see this connection between the second great commandment and evangelism, or to fail to act in obedience to the will of God revealed in this commandment and love our neighbors through evangelizing them.

In sum, I believe that evangelism is a church responsibility. While the officers of the church may in many instances engage in evangelism more than most of the laity, and do have the responsibility to plan, lead and equip the rest of the church for this task, the above arguments conclusively show that each person in the congregation has a responsibility to be involved in the work of evangelism in some manner.

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. Some may do more of the speaking, while others do more of the hospitality to bring non-believers into an environment where they can hear the gospel, and still others may give more time to praying for God’s blessing on the church’s evangelistic efforts. In other words, according to our gifts and abilities, our time and opportunities, engagement in evangelism will vary from one person to another. But whatever be the case with respect to these differences, we should all be involved in some real way in the church’s work of evangelism and should all be prepared and bold to speak the gospel to the lost around us.

⁵ <http://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/justintaylor/2009/11/17/how-much-do-you-have-to-hate-somebody-to-not-proselytize/>.

Also I would like to make a quick note here on different personalities. Some wrongly think, “Brother Wang has the right kind of personality for the work of evangelism. He is very outgoing. But I am not...” The implication is that the introvert is exempt from evangelism based on his personality. But “no one character type qualifies or disqualifies us.”⁶ No one is released from this duty just because of his personality. Yes, extroverts and introverts will often handle opportunities for evangelism differently. And among introverts (as well as among extroverts) you will find evangelism is done differently too. But for those who are not so inclined, we must not allow them to think they have a legitimate exemption from evangelism because of their personality. All Christians are to engage in evangelism in some way, and all should be ready at all times to give an account of our hope in Christ to anyone whom God providentially brings into their lives.

And let me say that I know some Christians who are very introverted (I am one such Christian) who are very active in evangelism. Introversion alone does not prevent a person from sharing the gospel with others.

B. More briefly, 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. If all Christians are called to participate in evangelism, then it does not matter if they are not as skillful at it as the pastors. All, including the newest believers, just like the Samaritan woman, may and should participate.

Second, even general revelation teaches that you do not have only the captain on the basketball team play in the game. He may be the best player, but all the others players have something to contribute to the goal of the team – winning games. In like manner, the pastor may be the best equipped for evangelizing the lost, but all the members of the church have something to contribute, and the greater success of the work depends upon their contribution.

In sum, there is no biblical basis for holding to the position that only ministers are to engage in evangelism. On the contrary, there is plenty of evidence to prove that all Christians are responsible to be involved.

If we look at Acts 4:23-33, I think we find a biblical balance for the proper handling of this matter.

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

⁶ Jeremy Walker, *The Brokenhearted Evangelist*, 52.

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.

In verse 24 we read that all who heard the report of the apostles (who had just been released from prison) lifted up their voices to God in prayer. Then in verse 31 we read that these same people were all (not just the officers) filled with the Holy Spirit “and continued to speak the Word with boldness.” Later, however, we read in verse 33 that it was especially the apostles who were testifying to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The point? All should be sharing the gospel, but the officers will often be doing it more regularly.

Thus far in this section of our course we have looked at (1) what governs all matters related to evangelism, (2) what is the definition of evangelism, (3) [what is the nature of evangelism](#), and (4) who is to engage in evangelism.

Because of time, I will upload Parts 5 and 6 on GoogleDrive for you all to listen to.

What I would like us to do now is to break into small groups with your Team Evangelism Partner to discuss the question in the box below as well as discuss anything else you would like from today’s lesson. (Is there anyone who does not yet have a partner for the Team Evangelism Plan?) Then I would like to you pray together, especially asking 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.

Make sure to keep working on your Personal Conversion Story and to read both of the books for this class.

V. Who should we evangelize?

This question may seem ridiculous to ask and simple to answer, especially seeing that we last week looked at Section 1 “A Biblical Theology of Evangelism,” but since this question has indeed given rise to controversy within much of Christendom, I believe it is wise for us to take a look at it.

Below we will examine, first, who should be the **objects** of our evangelism, and, second, some debates over who should be **exceptions** to our evangelism.

A. Who should be the objects of our evangelism

First, we should evangelize a **certain kind** of people. Jesus said He did not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance (Luke 5:31-32). And again, He said that He came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). If we are going to follow in Jesus’ footsteps, we should obviously evangelize those who are sinners and lost. But, who are the sinners and the lost? According to Scripture, sinners are those who have broken God’s law, those who transgress God’s commandments. As a result they are condemned and under a curse. The lost are those who have strayed from the way of God and are therefore separated from Him, walking in the darkness, and headed towards certain destruction. It is such people as these that Jesus came to save and thus to whom we too are to preach the gospel.

Second we should evangelize **all** people. The Bible is clear that the condition of every person is the same, that is, all alike are sinners and lost. First, in Romans 3:10 we read that there is no one righteous, not even one. That means that every single person is alike guilty of having violated God's law. Second, in Isaiah 53:6 we read that all have gone astray and wandered from the path of God. That means that every single person is alike lost. Therefore, whether a person is ...

- rich or poor,
- a doctor or a peasant,
- educated or not,
- healthy or handicapped,
- male or female,
- Jew or Gentile,

all are the same in the eyes of God –

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

Thus, all need to hear the gospel without exception.

Some pause here and ask: “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?” How would you answer this question? First, take a few moments to answer the question in the box and then we will talk about it together.



1. 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.

First let me hear your answer to this.

General revelation is the testimony God gives about Himself through the things He has made and the things that He does in creation. This testimony declares the glory of God (Ps 19:1-6), telling us things like God is eternal, wise and all-powerful (Rom 1:20). This testimony is seen and heard everywhere and at all times. Furthermore, we have general revelation within us, most loudly declared by our consciences. This testimony speaks to us something about God's law (Rom 2:15-

16) and speaks of a judgment to come (Rom 1:32).

Some have argued that a person can be saved if he responds correctly to all this light of general revelation. However, Romans 1:21-23 plainly tells us that all humans alike have turned from the true God to worship idols of their own imagination. Romans 3:19-20 asserts that no one can be justified before God by keeping the law (including the law written on the conscience), but instead all are accused by the law and proven guilty. In short, since the Fall, there has never been anyone who has “lived perfectly according to the light they have received,” but instead all have in some measure sinned against the light they have received, even if they have never seen the written law, for such have violated the law on our conscience (Rom 2:14-16). That is why we read in Romans 3:10 that there is no one righteous, not even one. Finally, general revelation was not designed by God to reveal to us Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection, and thus it is not able to lead anyone to salvation.

This does not mean we cannot point to general revelation when preaching the gospel to someone. Using general revelation as a means of apologetics is often very helpful when trying to convince someone of the existence of God, for example, so do use it when you think appropriate. However, it must be remembered that general revelation **cannot** tell someone about Christ and so it is not sufficient to lead someone to salvation. If someone is going to be saved, they must hear the message of the gospel, which means there is need to evangelize every person on the face of the earth.

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

There are debates within Christendom concerning different groups of people who some believe we should not evangelize. Let us consider below the main groups usually mentioned and you tell me what you think.

First, what about Catholics? [Should we evangelize them?](#) There are some who argue we should not. For instance, 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.”⁷ 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.”⁸

⁷ J.I. Packer, *Christianity Today*, “Why I Signed It,” Dec. 12, 1994, 34-37.

⁸ <http://www.rapidnet.com/~jbeard/bdm/exposes/packer/general.htm>.



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

- 1.
- 2.

Ok, let us go around and share our answers to this question.

What is my view? 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. For example, in their catechism they write, “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,**”⁹ 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.”¹⁰ 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.**”¹¹

Close your notebooks for a minute. What do you think of these quotes?



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

⁹ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P6Y.HTM

¹⁰ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P6Y.HTM

¹¹ http://www.vatican.va/archive/ENG0015/___P66.HTM

Ok, let us go around and share our answers to this question.

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. Thus, their hope is built on **Jesus Christ plus** baptism and good works rather than on Jesus Christ and His work of redemption alone.
- 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. In this way they transfer the foundation of our justification from Christ’s righteousness to our being conformed to righteousness.

Thus I believe we should view Catholics like those whom Paul spoke of in Galatians 1. They teach a different gospel, a gospel of grace plus some ritual and human good works, and so they fall under the anathema pronounced by Paul. They too, then, need to hear the gospel.

Now, I will concede that there may be some within the Catholic church who are trusting in Christ alone, and if that is the case, they are saved. However, the Catholic system of doctrine is in error, and if anyone holds to the gospel as taught by the Catholic church, they are not saved.

Second, what about Jews. **Should we evangelize them?** There are some within Christendom who would say “no.” For example, 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.”¹² Two professors from Duke University Divinity School wrote of Jews as “our brothers and sisters.”¹³



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

- 1.
- 2.

Ok, let us go around and share our answers to this question.

What is my view? 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

¹² <http://www.ucc.org/ucnews/nov02/christian-scholars-say-jews.html>

¹³ Stanley Hauerwas and William H. Willimon, *Resident Aliens*, 91

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." Since Paul was an apostle and those "Christian" scholars are not, I will side with Paul – the Jews too, including faithful Jews who are zealous for God, need to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ without which they cannot be saved.

Third, while we are discussing this topic, allow me to ask: [Should we evangelize the heathen?](#) There is a group who call themselves "Evangelical Universalists," who would argue that being a universalist makes evangelism easier. The reason? 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.¹⁴



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

- 1.
- 2.

Ok, let us go around and share our answers to this question.

What is my view? 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. In contrast with their teaching, Jesus said very clearly that there would be many to whom He would say on the Day of Judgment, "Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." (Matt 25:41) That is, not everyone is going to be saved. What is one chief characteristic of those who will **not** be saved? Paul tells us in 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 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." On the day Christ returns, He will judge all those who do not know God and who do not believe the gospel with eternal destruction. Obviously, since the heathen do not know the true God and do not believe His gospel, they will perish. Therefore, they too need to hear the gospel.

Finally, what about those who profess faith in Christ but live in rebellion? Perhaps they are like the Corinthians, who were in danger of following a different Jesus (2 Cor 11:2-4). Should we evangelize them?

¹⁴ <http://www.evangelicaluniversalist.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=26&t=2963>



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

- 1.
- 2.

Ok, let us go around and share our answers to this question.

What is my view? **I would argue we should evangelize them, but this requires much wisdom.** Paul called these Corinthians “brothers” in several places (2 Cor 1:8; 8:1; 13:11), indicating that he still charitably viewed them as Christians. Yet, he also exhorted them to examine themselves and see if they were in the faith (2 Cor 13:5), and he implored them to be reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:20), indicating that he was concerned about the state of their souls. Thus, if someone who professes faith in Christ is showing signs of following a different Jesus or of not having new life in Christ, **we should not be quick to call them false brothers and disown them, but we should at the same time preach the gospel to them, aiming to show them who is the true Christ, and to warn them that a faith without works is a dead faith (James 2:18-22).** We need to press them to examine themselves to make sure they are truly in Christ. Therefore, I believe that all who profess faith in Christ but do not live out that faith in their lives or show signs of turning to a false Christ or false gospel should also be the object of our evangelism.

In sum, we are to evangelize all people, seeking to win them to Christ. There should be **no** exceptions to our efforts. All who are outside Christ are perishing and in need of hearing the gospel that they might be saved, and even many who profess to believe in Christ are in need of hearing the gospel if they show signs of apostasy or of no life.

In this section we have tackled the question of who we should evangelize. While this question may have at first appeared simple to answer, I hope that our discussion here has been helpful in clarifying matters.

In this second section of our course, we have considered several important foundational issues related to evangelism. We have looked at (1) what governs all matters related to evangelism, (2) what is the definition of evangelism, (3) what is the nature of evangelism, (4) **who is to engage in evangelism**, and (5) who we should seek to evangelize. Now we will look at ...

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

Because of time, this material will be on that same mp3 that will be posted tomorrow.

What I would like us to do now is answer the question in the box below.



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

This is all I have planned for us to cover today.

Are there any questions?

Lord willing, in the next section we will examine what is needed in order to prepare for evangelism.

Let us close with prayer.

There is a great deal of confusion today about what is the relationship of the church to evangelism. Some have never seen any relationship between the two, but have always seen the church as a place where Christians get together on Sunday to worship and evangelism as something done through a parachurch organization. Others have heard that the church should engage in evangelism but have never seen how that actually plays out.



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

Please pause the video and answer the questions in the box. When you finish, turn back on the video and listen to the next section.

Below we will attempt to examine what is the relationship of the church to evangelism.

First, preparation for evangelism should be done within the local church. Much of the growth that we are to experience as Christians in preparation for doing good works, including the good work of evangelism, is obtained through the ministries of the church (Eph 4:11-16). Via the preaching and teaching of God's Word our faith is nourished, through corporate worship and prayer our faith is expressed and strengthened, and by the fellowship of the saints our faith is encouraged and comforted. And all this is necessary to prepare us to evangelize. A strong faith empowers us to speak with conviction and courage. Therefore I would urge all of us to seek to gain the grace God wants to dispense into our lives through this local church in order that we might be more enabled to serve effectively in the ministry of evangelism.

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. The leaders of the church should make this a part of the church's discipleship plan. They should aim to get the congregation equipped in the basics of the gospel and in how to communicate it to the lost. This training should include not just lectures, but also practical help such as those who have experience taking out those who do not to engage in some form of an evangelistic effort with a lost person. Such modeling helps to reinforce what is learned in the classroom.

So, preparation for the work of evangelism should be done within the local church through the normal means of grace, and through intentional training via things like seminars or classes.

Second, the work of evangelism should be done through the local church. Many believe the church has failed in evangelism and has no ability to engage in the work effectively anymore. As a result, evangelistic organizations have sprung up which are independent of local churches, attempting to fill in the gap. I am, for the most part, not in favor of such organizations. Now, I believe that God has used many of these organizations to do much good work in the realm of evangelism and that many people have been converted through their ministries. This is obviously not evil but something to thank God for. However, in Scripture we see that all evangelistic activity is conducted through the local church. Whether it is people coming to church and through hearing and seeing what is going on exclaiming that God is there (1 Cor 14:23-25), or a local church sending people out to preach the gospel (Acts 13:1-3), in all cases we see evangelism directly connected to the local church. There are no evangelism organizations outside the church to be found. Thus, I am convinced that this is the best model for today as well.

Third, the life of the local church should enhance the church's evangelism. The local church is an apologetic in evangelism. Its life is designed by Christ to serve as a corporate witness for Him, whereby our evangelistic efforts are enhanced. How so?

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). As Jesus noted in John 17:21-23, our unity testifies to the world that He truly is the Son of God sent into the world to save sinners. That is to say, if the church abounds in love for one another so as to maintain and promote our bond of unity, non-believers will often be attracted to the gospel and more willing to listen. Interestingly, many testimonies confirm that it has often been the bond of love among the Christians that opened their hearts to listen to the gospel and consider its claims.

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.¹⁵

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

In contrast with this, when the church is marred by division, gossip, or cliques, unbelievers will be persuaded that they are right not to believe in the Jesus of the Christians. Thus, if we are not a community characterized by **unity in love**, we will not be able to evangelize effectively.

The second way in which evangelism is enhanced by church life is through **purity** in the church. Look, for example, at 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.” Here we read of what happened after Ananias and Sapphira were disciplined for their lying. 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. Notice especially the third point. The purging of sin from the church did NOT hinder the work of evangelism. Instead, purity in the church promoted evangelism. On the other hand, when we fail to deal with sin in the church but allow it to remain undisciplined, its insidious effects spread (1 Cor 5:6), resulting in the blemishing of our testimony before the world and the weakening of our evangelistic ministry. When a society knows some of the members of the church to be backbiters or adulterers, and the church does nothing to correct such problems, the community will question our integrity and be much less interested in the gospel. In short, if we are not a community of

¹⁵ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/simple-evangelism-in-the-church/>

purity, we will not be able to evangelize effectively.

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?¹⁶

One thing that often disturbs me is seeing those who are zealous to share the gospel with others living really bad Christian lives. They argue even publicly with their spouses, speak harshly to their children, cheat at work, lie to their neighbors, and more, but then think themselves to be great Christians because they zealously evangelize the lost. Well, the sad thing is, their lives and speech are often a big deterrent to others believing, for there is nothing attractive in their lives that would make others want to believe. We need to learn to carry out evangelism in the way prescribed in Scripture, and in large part this involves living godly lives before the lost.

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. All improvement of our methods or our apologetic skills will be seriously hampered if we do not have within our church a unity and a purity that are born out of love for God and for one another. Thus, we must pray that God would powerfully work that all members in the church would together seek to promote unity and purity, so as to confirm the truth of His message to the world and so draw people to believe.



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

- Have you thought before about how unity and purity affect evangelism? Please explain.

- What can you do so as promote greater degrees of unity and purity within the church?

¹⁶ Jerram Barrs. *The Heart of Evangelism* (Kindle Locations 772-778). Crossway Books.

Please pause the video and answer the questions in the box. When you finish, turn back on the video and listen to the next section.

Please understand that these elements of the church's witness do not circumvent the definition we looked at above. Evangelism is enhanced and reinforced by unity and purity within the church, but it is not accomplished in this way. Instead, evangelism must have proclamation to be achieved, and specifically the proclamation of the gospel of Christ. Therefore, do not look at efforts to build up the church in the love of Christ as an excuse for **not** intentionally participating in the evangelism of the lost. The witness of unity and purity among the brethren in the church will enhance our evangelism, but it must never replace it.

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

Paul asked for the Colossian church to pray that God would open doors of opportunity to preach the gospel and that Paul would preach it clearly (Col 4:3-4), and asked the Ephesian church to pray that God would give him boldness in the proclamation of the gospel (Eph 6:19-20). And when Peter and John were released by the council and returned to the brethren, we read in Acts 4:23-30 that they all together lifted up their voices in prayer (v.24), pleading not for escape from persecution, but for boldness in the face of persecution to preach and do mighty works in the name of Christ (29-30). Paul asks local churches to support his evangelistic efforts with prayer, while Peter and John gathered with the local church in Jerusalem and prayed to the Lord about their evangelistic efforts. In both cases we see that even apostles viewed the prayers of local churches as critical to the success of evangelism. It is therefore essential that all churches follow this example and make prayer for evangelism a **central matter of their corporate praying**.

Sadly, all too often the primary place of prayer in the work of evangelism is either forgotten or just added on as a postscript to all our efforts to prepare. We act as if God's intervention is not needed, or as if we can persevere in the work by our own zeal alone without the constant provision of strength and wisdom from God. But as did the apostles, so do we need the church to corporately lift up pleas to God for grace to persevere in evangelism and for fruit in our evangelism.

Every church should make this a priority.

Finally, celebration of evangelism should be done within the local church. What I mean here is that 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.

If the angels in heaven celebrate whenever a sinner repents (Luke 15:10), and if the Father celebrates whenever a sinner repents (Luke 15:22-24), we should too. The celebration of God's work in our evangelism and of His glory exhibited through our evangelism should be a frequent part of our corporate activities.

For example, I know of several churches where the pastors encourage small groups to take some time each week to share stories about evangelistic efforts during the week and to pray about those opportunities. Other churches do the same during the weekly prayer meeting. Doing so does not take up a lot of time during the meetings, but it does cultivate a heart for evangelism in all the saints.

Remember: What is celebrated is cultivated. Celebrating evangelism will cultivate a passion for it in the hearts of God's people. And a cultivated culture of evangelism will be far more effective in

promoting **continued** evangelism than will simply having people go through an evangelistic program.

In sum, there is a real relationship between the church and evangelism, which includes:

- the church should prepare their members for effective engagement in evangelism,
- the church should be the main conduit through which evangelism is conducted,
- the life of the church should enhance the effectiveness of evangelism,
- the church should support evangelism through corporate prayer, and
- the church should promote evangelism through celebration.

In this second section of our course we have considered several important foundational issues related to evangelism. We have looked at (1) what governs all matters related to evangelism, (2) what is the definition of evangelism, (3) what is the nature of evangelism, (4) who is to engage in evangelism, (5) who we should seek to evangelize, and (6) what is the relationship between the church and evangelism.

Lord willing, in the next section we will examine what is needed in order to prepare for evangelism.
