



What the Bible REALLY Says About Evangelism

**Breaking Through Church Growth Myths
and Excuses**



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What we do and teach about evangelism should reflect and be in harmony with:

- The explicit statements of the Bible
- The examples of the New Testament Church of God
- Decisions that are based upon Biblical principles

What Is Evangelism?

Evangelism is preaching the Gospel such that the message can be used by God the Father to draw new disciples to Him and Jesus Christ. Those new disciples are baptized into the name of the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit and then taught to obey all things Jesus commanded.

Matthew 28:16-20:

¹⁶Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in^[1] the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Who did evangelism in the New Testament?

- John the Baptist – Mat. 3:1-6
- Jesus – John 4:1
- John 4 – the woman at the well
- The disciples – Luke 9:1-6
- The 70 – Luke 10:1-11
- The demoniac – Mat. 5:15-19
- Pentecost – Acts 2
- The members:
 - When scattered – Acts 8
 - Each a representative
 - Each a seed containing the DNA for a new congregation
 - Taking the gospel to the Gentiles in Antioch – Acts 11:19-24
- Saul when newly converted – Acts 9:20-22
- The Apostles
- Apollos when knowing only the baptism of John – and was sent on to churches – Acts 18:23-28



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How did they evangelize?

- Jesus in the synagogues controlled by the Pharisees
- Jesus in the temple controlled by the Sadducees
- Jesus in the towns and villages controlled by local officials
- Jesus was “out of control” in the minds of the religious leaders of the day –
 - His healings on the Sabbath were against their doctrines/religious laws – Matt. 12:9-14
 - The Pharisees determined that a person could not be righteous without agreeing with them on all doctrines. Doctrinal purity = righteousness
 - Jesus disagreed with them doctrinally; therefore He was of Satan, unrighteous, a false minister, of the devil and worthy of death for the good of the nation.
 - Jesus was accused of everything – being a sinner because He ate with sinners (birds of a feather vs those who are sick need a doctor), of being a bastard child to being a pawn of the devil (casts out demons because he is in league with demons)

Different Approaches to Evangelism:

First, second and third person evangelism

- First Person Evangelism: I/we do it
- Second Person Evangelism: I/we pay someone else to do it
- Third Person Evangelism: I/we pay for some form of printed or electronic media does it
 - The Bible itself is a form of third person evangelism
 - Booklets and magazines
 - Radio, television and Internet
 - Sermon tapes
- Combinations:
 - I (first person) give away a sermon tape (third person) to a friend
 - A Website (third person) gives a telephone number to call to talk about questions (first person)
 - An evangelist is hired (second person) to preach (first person) to the public that is invited through newspaper ads (third person)
 - A mailing is sent (third person) that contains an offer of a booklet (third person) of potential interest.

Point of Understanding: Growth occurs in healthy organisms “All by itself.”



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Mark 4:26 – 29

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground.
²⁷Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. **All by itself** the soil produces grain--first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

Harvesting *IS* the Goal. Harvesting *IS* the Mission. Harvesting *IS* Making Disciples

- Why did Jesus come?
 - Luke 19:10 "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."
- In virtually all cases, God works through His WILLING people to fulfill Jesus' mission "to seek and to save what was lost"
- Parable of the talents = God expects us to work and to produce fruit – a return on His investment – Luke 19
- Now IS A Day of salvation – 2Cor 6:2
- Problem of the second resurrection = "Why do anything now? Why not wait?"

- Problems: When weak understandings prohibit first person evangelism
 - Weak understanding:
 - "We do not proselytize" – unfortunately, this is true!
 - Proselytizing" Definition:

pros·e·ly·tize (prŏs'ē-lī-tīz')

v. pros·e·ly·tized, pros·e·ly·tiz·ing, pros·e·ly·tiz·es

v. *intr.*

1. To induce someone to convert to one's own religious faith.
2. To induce someone to join one's own political party or to espouse one's doctrine.

v. *tr.*

To convert (a person) from one belief, doctrine, cause, or faith to another.

- What does the Scripture say about inducing people to change their beliefs?
 - Did Jesus induce people to change their beliefs?

New Testament Evangelism

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- Jesus preached in synagogues – like going from church to church. People came to “church” to hear him preach
- Paul went into synagogues with the express intention of making disciples – often splitting the synagogue/congregation into Jewish and Christian groups
- Acts 17:1-5: ¹When they had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ²As his custom was, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³explaining and proving that the Christ^[1] had to suffer and rise from the dead. "This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Christ,^[2]" he said. ⁴Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.
⁵But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city.
- Paul went into Gentile areas and took people away from the worship of pagan gods and goddesses
- Is your church NOT a “proselytizing” church? Unfortunately, this has been too true.
 - We don’t need to “steal sheep” from other Christian congregations (though people should be free to attend where they want to attend)
 - The New Testament Church of God DID proselytize from non-Christian groups
- Churches that are against proselytizing from non-Christian groups are against the very commission Jesus gave to His true disciples – to make disciples from all peoples. The New Testament Church of God DID proselytize
- Matthew 4:19-20 ¹⁹"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰At once they left their nets and followed him.
- “Ministers do the evangelism, not members”
 - Contrary to the example of Scripture
 - Assertion that the great commission in Matthew 28 and elsewhere is only for the ministry
 - Is it said by ministers who do not do it themselves and forbid their members to do it either?
 - Is it working? How many are they baptizing? How much are they spending?
- Our Job Is to Warn the World as a Witness, Not “Save Souls”
 - Probably a fair description of what they are actually doing
 - It is a misrepresentation of the mission of the church
- “If God is calling someone, they will find us.”
 - Does happen on occasion
 - Is it justification for the neglecting of other forms of evangelism are neglected or preached against

New Testament Evangelism

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- Not the method of the New Testament Church of God
- Most churches today that practice this teaching to the exclusion of the New Testament methods of evangelism will not exist in their present form in 15 years. They will be much smaller, absorbed by others or cease to exist.

Church Growth Myths:

- Evangelism is setting a growth goal “10% growth this year in attendance”
 - Numerical growth is not in your control – God gives the growth
 - We can control quality of our congregation
 - We can control the kind and frequency of our planting and watering activities
- Churches that grow are lowering the bar so much that anybody can be a Christian with them.
 - An anecdotal statement that is unsupported by research or a validated study
 - This is really a fools argument: If only one congregation grows while having high standards, the myth is exploded
 - What constitutes high standards?
 - Keeping the Sabbath and the commandments of God?
 - An expectation to be a full-time Christian, not just a Sabbath Christian?
 - Abstaining from immorality?
 - Following the Biblical food laws?
 - Dressing in a suit or nice clothes for church?
 - Not smoking or “doing” drugs?
 - Tithing?
 - Being industrious and not slothful?
 - Encouragement to marry within the faith?
 - Seventh Day Adventists expect these things of new disciples and more.
 - What have they done?
 - In 1984 – six times the revenue of WCG – 144 times the number of baptisms
 - Today: 211 times the baptisms of WCG in 1984
 - SDA’s are THE expert in evangelism among the Sabbath keeping communities of faith.
 - Low standards attributed to other churches are not a justification for churches in decline, but rather an excuse
- “Evangelism is really just marketing yourself better”
 - Good marketing of a bad product can kill a company

New Testament Evangelism

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- Growth that is a result of good marketing does not necessarily produce a quality congregation – or a quality Christian
- Evangelism is not better marketing
 - It is following God's lead and guidance in planting and watering activities
 - It is improving the quality of our congregations so we reflect God's love and new people can see a difference
 - It is improving the quality of our congregations so our members love it and are excited and passionate about church and their faith.
- "Our church is growing exactly as fast as God is calling people"
 - Generally said by churches that are not growing very much – or are shrinking
 - Self-justification mixed with fatalism: What is happening is what was destined to be and we have no control over it.
- "Jesus said His would be a "small flock" – large flocks are not Godly."
 - Said recently by ministers who are pastoring congregations 1/10th the size they were 10 years earlier.
 - Said by those same pastors when they were pastoring congregations that were 10 times the size of their current congregations
 - Little flock = a relative term justifying the lack of growth?
 - Matt. 26:31 and Luke 12:32 "Little flock" of apostles – did they understand it to mean it would only be 12, or 120, or 3,000 or 10,000 or ???
 - When did Paul think he had done enough evangelism?
- Is evangelism trying to talk someone into becoming a Christian?
 - New Testament Evangelism is giving people a reason for hope for now and in the future
 - New Testament Evangelism is planting and watering seed and looking for God to give the growth through His Holy Spirit
 - God calls best through people who are willing to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit
- Is evangelism talking someone into going to my church and not another?
 - False value: My church is the only true church
 - True value: My job is to lead people to Christ. Where they attend church is not the concern. They should attend where they can make the best contribution to the work of the Church.
- Horrible Truth: Lack of growth = a lack of interest
 - The Christian truth is a wonderful truth and a great message
 - If there is a problem, it is with us
 - Wrong emphasis in what we say
 - Infertile seed = platitudes in speaking and in writing
 - A message that lacks relevance to the community



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- Unhealthy congregations
- Unhealthy examples
- "I wouldn't invite people to my church because it is boring and I would be likely be embarrassed by what they would hear."
- Question: "Will our congregation become a great place for me to invite people to come?"
