
CHAPTER 12 : EVANGELISM

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28 : 19,20)

A. The Evangelistic Dilemma

It is generally accepted that the world is experiencing what theologians are calling, “a crisis in evangelisation.” Christians are finding themselves pressed for answers by a world with empty philosophies and so are pressured into retreating their morality into a private enclave in fear of rational and objective debate.

On the contrary, this is the hour where the Church cannot fail to make notable contributions. Lapide the theologian, calls Jesus “The Rebel of Love” and refers to his ministry as “boundary breaking.” This same Jesus is still here and working in and through His Church, through His Holy Spirit. God’s desire is for the Church to rise up and be a shining witness of His goodness, grace and love to a world that is lost in utter darkness. He wants us to “shine like stars in the universe” as we “hold out the word of life” (Php 2:15b-16a). Can we resist His challenge to arise and let the light of Christ shine?

In His famous sermon on the Mount, Jesus says:

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Mt 5:14-16)

B. Three Characteristics Of Evangelism

We will briefly examine three characteristics of evangelism. This list is not meant to be exhaustive.

B.1. The Calling and Commission

“Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall.” (2Pe 1:10)

“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (Eph 4:1b)

The purpose of the following points is to highlight the importance of our call—which is a call to all:

- There needs to be a “confidence of calling”: There has to be a clarity of call in each of us. Chris Wienand has said, “If there is a confidence of calling in you, you will lead and others will follow.”
- Fulfilling the great commission is not an option, nor is it an issue of convenience, it needs to be a conviction of the urgency of the call. “Genius” has been defined by some as “complete and utter attention to the job at hand.” Wayne Meyers says that some “need a sanctified kick,” that we need to put the capital “C” back into the “great omission,” that we cannot move at the speed we moved at last year—we have to hasten the pace and that Jesus’ second coming depends on our first going. God has not omitted anyone from the great commission (Mt 28). He qualifies, Satan disqualifies. Jesus has this to say in Mt 12:30, “He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters.”
- In the midst of worship (Isa 6, Ac 13:2) in His presence, He gives us instruction for service and we make ourselves available for service. Examples include Elijah, Paul, Barnabas and Isaiah.
- Understanding your commission will put passion in you for purity, give you a heart for people and prepare you to pay the price. We need to ask God for a soul-winning spirit.

B.2. The Cost and Challenge

The following points are intended to issue a challenge to us to move beyond counting the cost of our calling in God, and into paying the price to usher in God's reign and to do it willingly and faithfully:

- God is recruiting an “emergency task force” willing to pay the price. A “Polyanna world-view” (David Bosch) will not be willing to dig the trenches of war on its knees. Will we too go from counting the cost to paying the price? “Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, ‘This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Lk 14:28-30) Wayne Meyers said that God is looking for an army not, an audience, to leave big footprints in our history books.
- God uses the ordinary but available and transforms them into the extraordinary but submitted. He chooses the foolish things of this world to shame the wise so that no one may boast before Him. (See 1Co 1:27-31.) He is raising up a people from among the “foolish” with faith in the unseen who carry the testimony of God's amazing daily acts—believing beyond belief that “with God all things are possible” (Mt 19:26, Heb 11). C T Studd said, “Some will live under the shadow of a church bell but let me build a mission one step from hell.”
- We need a people undaunted by the challenge. When asked what was the secret of his success, William Duma replied, “by being indulgent to others and very hard on myself.” Courage is defined by Ernest Hemmingway as “grace in adversity.” If Paul Yonggi Cho had not uttered those commissioning words, “If not me then who, if not here then where, if not now then when?” there would have been a gaping hole in South Korea where there are now millions of believers.

B.3. The Character and Capacity

Without the “character” we won’t have the capacity to cope with the call to “go and make disciples of all nations.” The following, however, represent only a very brief list of certain necessary character attributes and principles:

- Witnesses, labourers, harvesters and those who sow are made, not born. We are not born with love and compassion. Like enthusiasm, says Gordon Macdonald, it comes only with obedience (1Jn 4).
- We are not born with the desire to sow and preach the gospel of the Kingdom: “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field’ ” (Mt 9:37-38). But God is in the transformation business. He transformed prostitutes into women of God, weaklings into mighty men of valour.
- We must be a tender-hearted people, experiencing compassion for the lost, the unreached and the forgotten.
- We are to be a people leaping out of ourselves. Smith Wigglesworth said that there are two things that will cause us to leap out of ourselves: purity and faith. He also said, “God has no room for the person who looks back, thinks back or acts back” (from the book *The Secret of his Power*). In Luke 9:62 Jesus said, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
- We cannot be focussed on ourselves, but rather we must be humble. Ed Silvoso writes, “Whenever you focus on yourself and your work, even if it is your work for God, you make it very easy for your enemy to make you focus on the many less-than-perfect details in order to ruin your victory celebration.” It is reported that God spoke to Smith Wigglesworth once and said to him, “Wigglesworth, I am going to burn you all up, until there is no more Wigglesworth, only Jesus.”

C. Practical Principles For Evangelism

Here are a few things to remember:

- We are called to make disciples of Christ and not decisions for Christ. We labour not only to bring people to Christ but also to present them mature in Him, reflecting His image with glorious clarity.
- We are called to be witnesses—this means that our lifestyle as well as our words should reflect God’s goodness, grace and love.
- We must make disciples of Christ, not disciples of ourselves.
- Remember that Jesus’ life has to do with both presence and power.
- Overcome fear, apathy and tiredness. It was John Wimber who said: “Most major miracles happen after almost everyone has gone home.”
- Alf Cooper says there are two keys of evangelism: concern for the people and zeal for the Lord.

D. Practical Helps For Evangelism

- The key to each area is not necessarily a “method” but a person.
- The method must meet the need. Every door has a key: find it.
- Work in teams.
- Tell people who you are and what you are doing (common courtesy).
- Don’t peddle your Christianity (see 2Co 2:17).
- Ask questions. If you are not sure, don’t guess.
- Follow up.