



## Core Seminar How to Grow Class 8: Evangelism

### Introduction

This week we turn to evangelism. Today we'll be talking about the *aim* of evangelism. The aim of evangelism is to reconcile sinners to God through Jesus Christ, so that they can worship Him, who is their Creator as well as Redeemer.

In our first two classes we gleaned from Scripture that all the spiritual disciplines are part of our all of life worship. Jesus, in His witness to the Samaritan woman in John 4, establishes the link between evangelism and worship:

#### John 4:23

But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him.

God's glory is the goal of evangelism. He is most glorified when redeemed sinners praise and worship Him for His saving grace from their hearts. These are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

So, we see that the call to be a follower of Christ is a call to all-of-life worship. This all of life worship then includes evangelism. In regard to missions then one author has written, "Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."<sup>1</sup>

### I. Origin and Content of Evangelism

So what is *evangelism*? A simple definition is that evangelism is *communicating the gospel*.

"Evangelism" comes from the Greek word "*evangelion*". *Evangelion* is the word that we call the "gospel". Here is an older definition of *Evangelion*, "[This word] is a Greek word; and signifieth good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that maketh a man's heart glad, and maketh him sing, dance and leap for joy."<sup>2</sup>

So "evangelism" is a sharing of this good news that makes men sing, dance, leap, and so on.

Did the idea of heralding "good news" pop up randomly in the New Testament? No, the "good news", or the "gospel", in the New Testament is directly linked to what "good news" would have meant in the Old Testament.

#### Isaiah 40:6-11

6 A voice says, "Cry!"  
And I said, "What shall I cry?"  
All flesh is grass,  
and all its beauty is like the flower of the field.

<sup>1</sup> (Piper Let the Nations Be Glad!, 11)

<sup>2</sup> (Tyndale, *Doctrinal Treatises* (Cambridge: Parker Society, 1848), p. 8)

**7** The grass withers, the flower fades  
when the breath of the LORD blows on it;  
surely the people are grass.

**8** The grass withers, the flower fades,  
but the word of our God will stand forever.

**9** Go on up to a high mountain,  
O Zion, herald of good news;  
lift up your voice with strength,  
O Jerusalem, herald of good news;  
lift it up, fear not;  
say to the cities of Judah,  
“Behold your God!”

**10** Behold, the Lord GOD comes with might,  
and his arm rules for him;  
behold, his reward is with him,  
and his recompense before him.

**11** He will tend his flock like a shepherd;  
he will gather the lambs in his arms;  
he will carry them in his bosom,  
and gently lead those that are with young.

Just before this passage in verses 1-3 it describes the one who was sent to make paths straight. This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 40:1-3 ~ John the Baptist).

Then in verses 9-11 we see that the voice crying out was announcing of “good tidings” (particularly 40:9). This is what the gospel writers pick up on when they speak of the “good news” of Jesus Christ. The gospel accounts apply the idea of this “good news” toward the coming of God Himself in Jesus Christ. Chapters 39 through 40 of Isaiah are all about how the exile of Israel is over and God is coming in grace...so prepare yourself! Likewise, John the Baptist is saying that God is coming in Jesus Christ, so prepare yourself: “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.” (Matthew 3:2)

It is no surprise then that Jesus starts His ministry quoting Isaiah 61:1-3. This is an example of Jesus Himself applying the meaning of “good news” from Isaiah directly to Himself!

The main point of these passages as they relate to Jesus Christ is that we are all under exile. The Bible says that we are slaves to our sin and that it rules us apart from Jesus Christ. But through Jesus Christ we have the gospel or the good news.

What is the gospel then? Here is a good way to explain it from our pastor:

The good news is that the one and only God, who is holy, made us in his image to know him. But we sinned and cut ourselves off from him. In his great love, God became a man in Jesus, lived a perfect life, and died on the cross, thus fulfilling the law himself and taking on himself the punishment for the sins of all those who would ever turn and trust in him. He rose again from the dead, showing that God accepted Christ’s sacrifice and that God’s wrath against us had been exhausted. He now calls us to repent of our sins and to trust in Christ alone for our forgiveness. If we repent of our sins and trust in Christ, we are born again into a new life, an

eternal life with God.<sup>3</sup>

The **gospel** calls sinners to repent and believe in Jesus Christ for forgiveness of sin. We cannot earn God's favor with our works. But we can be reconciled to Him through faith alone in Christ alone. God promises to receive all those who come to Him through Jesus.

J.I. Packer, in his book *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, has given us a fuller definition of evangelism: It is to *present **Jesus Christ** in the power of **the Holy Spirit** to sinful people in order that they may come to put their **trust in God through Him**, to receive **Him as their Savior**, and serve **Him as their King** in the fellowship of **His Church**.*<sup>4</sup>

## II. Evangelism Is Inseparable from the Life of a Believer

As we have talked about growing in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ entails all of life worship. Evangelism is part of this all of life worship. As we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, we will reflect His very character.

**We evangelize because we have been evangelized.** Our desire to share the gospel comes from the very character of God. To look at this we should consider God's call to us in Isaiah 55:1.

### Isaiah 55:1

Come, everyone who thirsts,  
come to the waters;  
and he who has no money,  
come, buy and eat!  
Come, buy wine and milk  
without money and without price.

Our desire to herald the good news that people might be reconciled to God comes from His own nature to call us to be reconciled to Himself. To come with no money and to quench our thirst.

In this vein, then, we are not all expected to use the same methods of evangelism, but we are all expected to evangelize. To that end, the following are four truths about evangelism that show how it is inseparable from the life of a Christian.

### A. Evangelism is a matter of *obedience*

The Lord Jesus Christ Himself has commanded us to witness.

### John 20:21

Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you."

<sup>3</sup> (Mark Dever *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, p. 43)

<sup>4</sup> My emphasis. Packer, J. I. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

**Matthew 28:19-20**

**19** 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, **20** teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

These commands were not given to the apostles only. Jesus' words “*And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28:20) make it clear that His command to evangelize has relevance for all Christians today. And this relevance will not end until he comes back. The question for us is: Are we obedient to our Lord in this matter?

**B. Evangelism is a matter of *gratitude***

The Bible speaks of worship and evangelism as the right responses to God's saving grace, and further a trust in God's future grace. As those who have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, should it not be our joy to proclaim His love and mercy to those around us?

Our attitude should be that of the psalmist in Psalm 116.

**Psalm 116:12-14**

**12** What shall I render to the Lord  
for all his benefits to me?  
**13** I will lift up the cup of salvation  
and call upon the name of the Lord,  
**14** I will pay my vows to the Lord  
in the presence of all his people.

Verse 13 speaks of the response of worship, while verse 14 focuses on the *public* praise of God's grace.

**C. Evangelism is an expression of *godliness***

As God's people, we ought to commend the gospel to those around us by the way we live. Our lives should consistently be characterized by holiness, in such a way as to make our Savior more attractive to unbelievers.

**Proverbs 11:30**

The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is wise.

In a sermon preached on this verse, Spurgeon said it teaches us two key points: “*The first is, the life of the believer is, or ought to be, full of soul-blessing. In the second place, the pursuit of the believer ought always to be soul-winning.*”<sup>5</sup>

Do our lives reflect Christ? Are we, through our witness, a blessing to those around us?

**D. Evangelism is every Christian's calling as a part of all-of-life worship**

Some Christians think that evangelism is a gift and the responsibility of only those with that gift. Ephesians 4:11 is often appealed to for support.

**Ephesians 4:11**

<sup>5</sup> Spurgeon, C. H. ???

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers,

The point of this verse, however, is not that only those who have the gift of evangelism should evangelize. Rather, the verse speaks of how God has graciously given different gifts to different men in a variety of ministries so that His Church can be built up.

So while not all of us are specially gifted to carry out the vocational ministry of an evangelist, the fact remains that **all** of us are called to be witnesses for Christ. We should think of our responsibility for personal evangelism from the perspective of 1 Peter 2:9.

### 1 Peter 2:9

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.

According to this verse, God has chosen us in Christ for a purpose. This is in order that we may proclaim the excellencies of Christ to a dying world enslaved by the darkness of sin. All of us ought to witness because our evangelism glorifies God by proclaiming the glories of His grace.

The verse also establishes the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers. The Church is a kingdom of priests. And what is our priestly duty? As those who have been reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ, a ministry of reconciliation has been given to us. We are commissioned by God Himself to be His ambassadors. In 2 Corinthians 5:18-21, Paul speaks of how Christ makes his appeal through us because we are his ambassadors. This should fill us with a sense of duty and urgency.

## QUESTIONS –WHY WE DON'T EVANGELIZE AS MUCH AS WE OUGHT?<sup>6</sup>

### III. Evangelism is Empowered

Perhaps one of the most common reasons why many of us fail to be better witnesses for Christ is because of fear. This can take several forms: We might be afraid of our own lack of ability, we might be afraid of rejection, or we might be afraid of the sheer seriousness of the message. The best way to overcome such fears is to have a biblical view of evangelism. A good starting point is understanding that God is sovereign in the salvation of sinners.

#### A. God's Sovereignty

God, in His grace, has elected sinners for salvation. He has promised that He will gather a people for Himself from every tongue, tribe and nation. It was this knowledge of God's sovereignty that gave the missionary **Adoniram Judson** the confidence to labor almost 40 years in Burma:<sup>7</sup>

- Despite being told on his way that Burma was impervious to Christian evangelism,
- Waiting years before seeing any conversions,<sup>8</sup>
- Enduring a 17 year imprisonment,<sup>9</sup>
- And many other hardships including, "a life-long battle in the 108-degree heat with cholera,

<sup>6</sup> What do Christians put forth as reasons for their disobedience in the area of evangelism? Fear? Lack of knowledge? The seriousness of evangelism frightens us. The consequences are eternal and we don't want to misinform anyone. Not knowing more than the person you're evangelizing. High stakes? Lack of time? Apathy? Cold-heartedness? Laziness? Lack of discipline?

<sup>7</sup> All of this information was taken from Piper, John, Swans are not silent book.

<sup>8</sup> After 6 years they baptized the first convert under their ministry, Maung Nau, and after 12 years they saw 18 conversions.

<sup>9</sup> Which included being bound with torture thongs, and dragged off to the infamous, vermin-ridden "death prison" of Ava. Spending Twelve agonizing months there then he and Price, along with a small group of surviving Western prisoners, were marched overland, barefoot and sick, for six more months of misery near Mandalay. Of the sepoy British prisoners-of-war imprisoned with them, all but one died. The sufferings and brutalities of those long months and days in prison, half-starved, iron-fettered, and sometimes trussed and suspended by his mangle feet with only head and shoulders touching the ground, is described in unexaggerated detail by his wife, Ann, shortly after his release.

malaria, dysentery, and unknown miseries that would take two of Judson's wives and seven of his 13 children, and colleague after colleague in death.”

The same knowledge encouraged Paul while he labored in Corinth. God assured Paul that his evangelism would not be in vain, because His elect were in the city.

**Acts 18:9-11**

**9** And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, “Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, **10** for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.” **11** And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

We can therefore witness with confidence, knowing that our efforts will bear fruit. God uses us as instruments to call His elect to faith in Jesus Christ through the proclamation of the gospel. God's sovereignty should spur us on in our evangelism.

**B. The Power of the Holy Spirit**

Our sovereign God draws sinners to Jesus Christ. But there’s more: He has also equipped His people for the task of evangelism. We read earlier in the Great Commission how Jesus promised to be with His followers always, indeed to “the very end of the age”. He has fulfilled this promise by giving us His Spirit, who was poured out upon Christians at Pentecost.

**Acts 1:8**

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Looking at the context of Acts 1, we find that the apostles were told to wait in Jerusalem for the promised Holy Spirit. In doing so, they would realize that the power for evangelism did not come from their own strength, but from God who enables them.

What an encouragement this is for us in our witness! If evangelism depended upon our own natural ability, there would be cause for despair. Which one of us can say with full confidence that we are sufficient for such a serious responsibility?

But the power of evangelism comes not from us, but from the Holy Spirit. From the instant the Spirit indwells us, He gives us the power to witness. Be confident that if your life has been changed by the gospel, you are equipped to share the gospel.

Some of us might feel that we are too sinful to be good witnesses for Christ. It is true that evident sin hinders our Christian witness, it does not mean that we must delay evangelism until we reach sinless perfection.

God delights in using weak instruments so that He alone gets the glory. Do you feel lacking in your ability to witness? Then ask God for grace to do so! He has promised in His Word to give grace to the humble. We should depend upon Him, and not on our own strength. May the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians be ours also.

**2 Corinthians 3:5**

Not that we are sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,

**2 Corinthians 4:7**

But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

**C. The Power of the Gospel to Save**

The Holy Spirit not only indwells us, the message of the gospel itself is powerful, able to save all those who believe it.

**Hebrews 4:12**

For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

**Romans 1:16-17**

**16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. **17** For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith."

The gospel is a powerful message – it is able to save because it reveals how we can obtain a righteousness that justifies us in the sight of God, a righteousness that comes from faith in Christ alone.

The gospel is not some kind of magic wand we can wave over unbelievers so that the power of God will spring from it and automatically convert all of them.

But it does mean that the gospel is the power of God for salvation and not our own eloquent power or persuasiveness. God has His elect whom He will call through the gospel.

We can trust that God will apply the gospel powerfully upon the heart of unbelievers. By His Spirit, He regenerates sinners who are dead in their sins and trespasses. He takes away their hearts of stone and gives them a heart of flesh so that they are able to believe in Jesus Christ for salvation.

**COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS**

How should we measure success in evangelism?

Success in evangelism is sharing the gospel. Our job is just to be faithful in pointing men and women to Jesus Christ. Conversions are the fruit that God alone gives, according to His own counsel. Some of us will plant the seed, others will water, but it is God who gives the growth.

Be faithful and trust God for the results. Let Ecclesiastes 11:4-6 and John 4:35-37 be an encouragement to us.

**Ecclesiastes 11:4-6**

**4** He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap.

**5** As you do not know the way the spirit comes to the bones in the womb of a woman with child, so you do not know the work of God who makes everything.

**6** In the morning sow your seed, and at evening withhold not your hand, for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

#### **John 4:35-37**

**35** Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. **36** Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. **37** For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'

#### **IV. Evangelism is a Discipline**

Evangelism is a natural overflow of the Christian life, but we *must not just wait for witnessing opportunities* to happen.

God intends for every Christian to find ways to share the gospel with unbelievers. In whatever context the Lord places us to live our lives, He calls us to find ways to fulfill the Great Commission.

Some opportunities are ours by nature of our responsibility as parents.

#### **Ephesians 6:4**

Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

However, not all opportunities for witness come naturally. Evangelism is a *discipline that we must cultivate in our lives*. It involves a deliberate effort on our part to invest time and energy in the lives of unbelievers in order to share the gospel with them.

In Colossians, we learn about the excellencies of the all-sufficient Christ. He is "the image of the invisible God". In Christ, "all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of the cross" (Col 1:15). And Paul keeps going.

These great truths about Christ should stir our hearts to bear witness for Him. So it is no surprise that towards the end of the epistle, Paul exhorts Christians to be fervent in evangelism.

#### **Colossians 4:3-6**

**3** At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— **4** that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. **5** Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. **6** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

From these verses, we learn several ways by which we can discipline ourselves for evangelism.

**First**, we should **pray**. Paul asked the Colossian Christians to pray for opportunities for him to share the gospel and that he would proclaim the message clearly. We should pray for these things as well. Do we ask God for opportunities to witness?



**Second**, we need to “be wise in the way we act towards unbelievers” (Colossians 4:5). We need to **watch our lives** and make sure our actions do not undermine the credibility of our Christian witness. Do we discipline ourselves to live godly lives that commend the gospel, or are we careless in the way we live before a watching world?

**Third**, Paul urges us to “make the most of every opportunity” (Ephesians 5:16). The sense of this exhortation is this: Do not just sit there waiting for an opportunity to fall into your lap, but **actively pursue opportunities** for witness.

The time is short and we ought to be filled with a sense of urgency in sharing the gospel. This means making time for others. All of us have busy schedules that revolve around work, family, friends and church. That is why we need to discipline ourselves to spend fruitful time with unbelievers.

A **fourth** way we can discipline ourselves for evangelism is to **be careful in what we say**. We should discipline our tongues such that what we say is consistently “full of grace” (Colossians 4:6). Our words should be a blessing to unbelievers, pointing them to Christ.

“Seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6), in the words of one commentator, means that our speech has flavor. It is not empty or insipid, but thought-provoking and worthwhile. Our speech should also be winsome, as we persuade unbelievers to come to Christ.

The aim of all this is so that we may “know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:6). Knowing what to say as we witness involves forethought and preparation. One way to prepare ourselves is to read good books that help us in our evangelism. There is a list of some good ones on the back of your handout.

We might also consider taking a core seminar on *Explaining Christianity* or *Two Ways to Live*.<sup>10</sup> These classes help us to think through ways we can present the gospel clearly and concisely to non-Christians.

And, of course, we need to know the gospel well. Meditate often on gospel truths. And not only will this deepen our understanding, it will also inspire gratitude to God and a heart for evangelism.

## QUESTIONS

### V. More Application

Here are three questions for us to reflect upon:

- Since evangelism is expected, will we obey the Lord and witness?
- Since evangelism is empowered, will we believe God can use our words in the salvation of others?
- Since evangelism is a discipline, will we plan for it? Will we commit yourself to at least one way of intentional evangelism in the near future?

In closing, I'd like to read out a quote from one of Spurgeon's sermons:

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<sup>10</sup> These are core seminars that are part of the Capitol Hill Baptist Church's curriculum. They can be found here for a free download: <http://www.capitolhillbaptist.org/we-equip/adults/core-seminars/>

I count nothing to be worthy of your pastor's life, and soul, and energy, but the winning of you to Christ. Nothing but your salvation can ever make me feel that my heart's desire is granted. I ask every worker here to see to this, that he never turns aside from shooting at this target, and at the center of this target, too, namely that he may win souls for Christ, and see them born to God, and washed in the fountain filled with blood.

Let the workers' hearts ache, and yearn, and their voices cry till their throats are hoarse; but let them judge that they have accomplished nothing whatever until, at least, in some cases, men are really saved. As the fisherman longs to take the fish in his net, as the hunter pants to bear home his spoil, as the mother pines to clasp her lost child to her bosom, so do we faint for the salvation of souls; and we must have them, or we are ready to die. Save them, O Lord, save them for Christ's sake!<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Spurgeon, C. H.