

Preface

Evangelism—what a loaded word! This endeavor can evoke a wide range of emotions. Some people enjoy it, while others tremble at the mere thought of it. But why such fear? Often, this stems from the challenges and resistance anticipated in sharing the gospel, a lack of understanding of the gospel itself, or uncertainty about how to effectively communicate its message. How then can we be motivated and equipped for this most vital task? What can drive us to feel as compelled as the apostle Paul, who said, “Necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16)?

Over the past three decades, I have had the wonderful privilege of sharing the gospel in various settings. During this time, I have encountered individuals who feel hesitant to speak about their faith. To address this, I have given a series of sermons on evangelism at my church, which now form the basis for this book. The feedback on these messages has been positive, and they have succeeded in stirring up fellow Christians to open their mouths confidently for Christ. This is exciting because evangelism should be a joy for all believers.

When we share the gospel, we tell others the good news about our Lord Jesus. Out of love, He willingly paid the penalty for our sins against God by taking them upon Himself and being punished for them on the cross. He then rose again from the dead, demonstrating the accomplishment of His mission. We also get to tell them that those who turn from their sins and trust in Him alone for life and salvation will be forgiven by God and reconciled to Him.

Truly, this is good news! It is magnificent news that I hope will encourage everyone reading this book to become more eager to share with others for their eternal benefit and for the glory of our great God.

Introduction

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines a foundation as “a basis (such as a tenet, principle, or axiom) upon which something stands or is supported.” As Christians whom God has called to evangelize the lost, we must have a solid foundation for why and how we are to do this if we are to do it properly. This foundation not only supports our mission but it also ignites our zeal and guides our methods.

To evangelize biblically, we must be grounded in a deep, unwavering understanding of the life-changing gospel of Christ. Sadly, many believers do not share the gospel because they do not fully grasp the comprehensive instruction underpinning this vital endeavor. This greatly hinders their ability to tell others about Jesus, often killing their desire for the work. This book has been written to address and remedy this issue. It is meant to be a practical, systematic manual rooted not in popular evangelical techniques but in Scripture, which alone is to be the standard and substance for all that we do.

As an author, my writing is not born from mere theory but from decades of hands-on evangelism, both in and outside

the church. My understanding of the Bible, coupled with real-life encounters, forms the backbone of this material. The content of this volume reflects my deep convictions—it is the heart and soul of what compels me to do what I do.

My prayer and desire is that this new volume on evangelism will equip, encourage, and embolden the church globally to carry forward her task of preaching the gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15), remembering that our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!” (John 4:35).

The Need for Biblical Evangelism

Could a mariner sit idly by if he heard the drowning cry? Could a doctor sit in comfort and just let his patients die? Could a fireman sit idle, that men burn and give no hand? Can you sit at ease in Zion with the world around you damned?

—Leonard Ravenhill

You don't need to look very far to realize something is horribly wrong in our world. Depression, suicides, school shootings, drug overdoses, murder, and divorce rates are at an all-time high. Then there is abortion, transgenderism, the homosexual movement, same-sex marriage, the adverse marginalization of the Christian faith in culture, especially in the West, and the various false beliefs that fill people's minds, such as humanism, secularism, atheism, relativism, and postmodernism. Underlying all of these problems is the more profound matter, theologically speaking, that men and women who are not true Christians are spiritually lost, blind,

dead in trespasses and sins, having “no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12). There is a sad condition that hangs over the streets and homes of many like a deadly fog. It is persistent. It is lethal. It is grim.

There are many theories proposed regarding the cause of our current situation in the world and just as many theories detailing how to fix it. Thankfully, the Bible diagnoses the problem and gives us its own solution, one which we can know is accurate and certain. It’s not a complicated solution. In fact, it’s something every Christian can engage in and is called to. It doesn’t cost much money. Indeed, it is free. In most cases, it doesn’t require a whole lot of training or schooling. People such as the tombstone demoniac in the Bible engaged in it from the moment of his conversion (Luke 8:26-39). But what solution am I talking about? The answer is, of course, biblical evangelism.

What Is Biblical Evangelism?

To illustrate why this solution is “simple” yet imperative, let’s consider both what biblical evangelism is, and is not. If someone were to ask you to define evangelism, what would you say? What would you include in the definition? What would you leave out? As we will see, how we define evangelism will have profound practical implications on how we practice it. Poor definitions of evangelism can keep people from doing it at all, or even worse, they could inspire the unbiblical, and compromised types of evangelism that are so in vogue today.

For example, how many readers think evangelism means seeing converts? Or growing our churches? Or winning souls? Or getting people to say a prayer? The ideas of decisions, results, altar calls, and “sinner’s prayers” are

deeply ingrained in the minds of most Christians living in America, but this has created a severe problem. Today, particularly in the West, we are not necessarily living where new converts are being made left and right. The ground into which we are sowing gospel seed is often rock-hard. At worst, people refuse to engage with the gospel at all, and at best, they are indifferent or skeptical. We aren't happy about this, but facts are facts. Thus, for those who understand and define evangelism as seeing converts, decisions, or tangible results, what is generally bound to happen? They will begin to manufacture them. They will water down the message in order to get the results they so desperately seek. They often introduce gimmicks and pragmatism into evangelism. They leave out the difficult parts of the gospel message or the call to follow Christ in a life of biblical discipleship. They wind up with sophomoric and even squeamish presentations of Jesus, such as those on popular TV shows or bad commercials during the Super Bowl. This kind of evangelism doesn't help the current state of things. In fact, it only worsens the situation by creating large numbers of false converts in churches and neighborhoods, making the task that much harder. It also leads to idolatry since the Jesus that is presented is no longer like the one we see in the Bible. He is packaged and marketed more as a life coach, therapist, or someone to get us through tough stretches of life rather than the Almighty God who is mighty to save His people from their sins (Matt. 1:21).

But poor definitions of evangelism don't just affect those who are receiving the gospel. They also affect those Christians who genuinely want to share the gospel but feel discouraged because they don't see the results they hoped for when they evangelize. If we define evangelism in terms

of its success, the Christian comes to think it's not worth it to even try, believing that his or her efforts have been wasted if no one was converted. This is why, for example, I would reject definitions such as those put forth by "Church Growth" advocate Peter Wagner, who says "Evangelism has only been accomplished when disciples are made."¹ Darius Salter is another who defines evangelism in terms of success, stating that our definition must leave room "for the evaluation of effectiveness."²

Such definitions are odd to me, considering that conversion is one of the most challenging areas of all Christianity to evaluate. Even Christ implies this in parables such as the "Parable of the Sower," where what looks like genuine evidence of conversion proves to be counterfeit (Mark 4:1-20). While we certainly can evaluate people's fruits to see if they are in a state of grace, ultimately, only God knows whether a person has been truly converted, so how can we limit evangelism to what is known to produce converts? Such thinking led Charles Spurgeon to deep lamentation: "What mean these dispatches from the battlefield? 'Last night 14 souls were under conviction, 15 were justified, and 8 received full sanctification.' I am weary of these public braggings, this counting of unhatched chickens, this exhibition of doubtful spoils. Lay aside such numberings of the people, such idle pretense of certifying in half a minute that which will need the testing of a lifetime."³

1 C. Peter Wagner, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 56.

2 Darius Salter, *American Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996), 22-23.

3 As quoted in Iain H. Murray, *Revival & Revivalism* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 408.