

THE EVANGELIST

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What is an evangelist?

The word evangelist comes from the Greek word *euangelistés*, which means 'proclaimer of the gospel' or 'a bringer of good tidings'. It is found in only three places in the New Testament, but the fact there are only a few references does not imply that this work is not important — if God said it once that would be enough!

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Ephesians 4:11-13

How is the body of Christ built up through the person who has the gift of an evangelist?

Evangelists have the same purpose as pastors and teachers – to help mature saints, to do the work of the ministry, for the building up of the Lord's work. We are not called to do a different work; we are working together with Christ and with one another for God's purposes.

What is the work of an evangelist and how do they build the church?

The primary function of an evangelist is to teach others how to share the good news about Jesus. It is not only to do the work of evangelism for the church, it is to prepare believers so that they can evangelise to non-believers.

The New Testament gives us examples of those who have the gift. We read of Philip who is called 'the evangelist.'

Leaving the next day, we reached Caesarea and stayed at the house of Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven. Acts 21:8

God used Philip to picture what an evangelist is to be:

- **The evangelist is a servant** (Acts 6:3-5). The first time we meet Philip he is not preaching, he is serving! Philip was one of the first deacons.
- **The evangelist preaches about Christ** (Acts 8:5, 35). The message of the evangelist is simple: Jesus.
- **The evangelist follows the Lord's leading** (Acts 8:26). Each time the Holy Spirit prompted Philip he followed the divine leading. Only as we follow Christ are we able to lead others to Him.
- **The evangelist helps others in the work of the Gospel** (Acts 21:8). It is inspiring to see Philip interested and invested in the work of others as long as that work was connected to the Gospel.
- **The evangelist is to train the next generation to carry on the work** (Acts 21:9). Philip obviously taught his own daughters to live in tune with God and to share God's truth with others. We are to begin this work in our own home.

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 2 Timothy 4:5

Paul instructed Timothy to 'do the work of an evangelist'. This must mean that though only some will be evangelists by calling, all of us are called to do the work of an evangelist and bring people to Jesus (Mark 16:15).

Why do we hesitate to evangelise?

We are not soul conscious: Any time we come into contact with someone we must be sensitive to the fact that they will spend eternity somewhere. Being soul conscious should provoke us to witness (Luke 19:10).

We don't believe in eternal punishment: Jesus says that hell is a place of punishment. The misery and torment of hell point to the wickedness and seriousness of sin (Matthew 25:41, 46). There is a final judgment awaiting those who are not in Jesus Christ.

Failure to understand God holds us accountable if we don't witness: God told Ezekiel he was a watchman for Israel (Ezekiel 3:18-19). You are to warn the wicked. Someone may say, 'Wait a minute this, is talking about an OT prophet warning Israel. Does this really apply to an NT believer sharing the Gospel? Does this have an NT application? Read what Paul wrote in Acts 20:26. Paul draws on Ezekiel to declare his accountability to preach the Gospel.

Fear of failure: Some of us think that if we witness and preach to people and they don't get saved that we have failed. We hesitate to share our faith because:

- We are afraid we might do more harm than good
- We don't know what to say
- We are scared to offend others
- We may not be able to give answers to tricky questions
- We are invading someone's privacy
- We are not good enough; God can't use us
- We are not living right with God, we live a life of compromise
- Perhaps the most common fear, however, is that of being rejected

We must understand that we don't control the results. We can't make a person come to Christ! That is not within our power. It is God who gives the increase. Success in witnessing is simply taking the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, then leaving the results to God.

Can anyone be an evangelist?

Yes! Anyone can become an evangelist. In fact, everyone is called to evangelise. It is our responsibility. When Jesus was leaving, He commanded us to go into the world and preach the Gospel to all creatures, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:16-20). This command was given to all believers. The work of preaching the Gospel to all nations is what we are called to do. So, if God has called us to be evangelists, how do we do it?

The different types of evangelism

There are many ways to evangelise, and no one way is superior. One's personality, gifts, and circumstances should be considered when choosing a method:

- **Direct evangelism:** This is what we see in Acts 2 where Peter addresses the crowd on Pentecost.
- **Relational or friendship evangelism:** This comes from one's natural ability to relate to people. The love of being with others is a wonderful way to share Christ. The story of the calling of Matthew in Luke 5:27-29 is a great biblical example of this approach.
- **One-to-one or personal evangelism:** Personal evangelism is the most common form of evangelism in the present-day. It involves talking to someone about Jesus or the Gospel in a one-on-one setting.
- **Street evangelism:** Sometimes known as open-air or public preaching, it is the act of evangelizing in public places.
- **Door-to-door evangelism:** This involves going door-to-door in your community to share the Gospel.
- **Media evangelism:** In this approach, a person uses various forms of media to spread the Gospel, e.g. television, radio, social media.
- **Service evangelism:** Acts of kindness, meeting one another's needs and by showing them Christ's love through acts of service.
- **Invitational and leafletting evangelism:** This is similar to the relational approach, however, it is characterized predominantly by inviting people to church events such as services, ladies / men's meetings, picnic and praise, etc.

In conclusion

God designed evangelists to equip the church for evangelism to happen at all levels by all people who believe in Jesus (Acts 1:8).