

Do you know what evangelism really is? Do you know who should evangelise? Most Christians believe what they are told by misled pastors who, in turn mislead church members. By way of contrast, Jesus' approach might seem brutal! So, let us settle this matter biblically – which is the ONLY way to deal with ANY Christian issue; or, to put it more aptly, any biblical and godly issue! (Why the distinction? Because 'Christian' is not necessarily the same as 'biblical').

What is Evangelism?

Just as 'Christianity' is what believers do when they obey God, and is not itself an object, so 'evangelism' is what evangelists do. We come across this activity in Acts 21:8...

"And the next day we that were of Paul's company departed, and came unto Caesarea: and we entered into the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and abode with him."

This is the same Philip who spoke to the eunuch (8:40) in Caesarea. The text tells us he was "one of the seven". That is, he was one of the original seven deacons chosen to serve at tables (6:5). In this present text we find him having years of experience as an evangelist, whose task it was to begin new churches and nurture them. However, he was NOT an Apostle. He lived in Caesarea and thus hosted Paul and his several followers for a while.

Philip, then, was an 'evangelist'. The word is the masculine noun, **euaggelistēs**. This is Philip's role, and so is the role of all evangelists. It has a very simple meaning – to be a bringer of good news (the evangel). Thus, Philip preached the Gospel of salvation. The root verb is

euaggelizo:

the act of bringing good news, and a similar word is used in the Old Testament of anyone who brought good tidings. In the New Testament it referred to the proclamation of the kingdom of God (spiritual), and so of the wondrous goodness and grace of God in showing mercy to sinners. This included speaking of everything to do with the Gospel. So, it was far more than simply saying

"You must be saved"

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The evangelist, then, is one who preaches the truth of the Gospel and how it is given to

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mankind. **Euaggelistēs** is based on two roots – **eu** and **aggelos**. This is a noun speaking of one *who is sent* to bring good tidings, an envoy, and can be an angel from Heaven or an human being who delivers messages to other human beings. In this sense it can also apply to Apostles and pastors (in the words to the seven churches in Revelation, ‘angels’ refers to the pastors).

Notice that the evangelist is ‘sent’. But, sent by whom? It cannot mean ‘sent by a local church’. It can only mean sent by God. The message they carry can only be from God, via the Holy Spirit.

2 Timothy 4:5

“But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”

In this text Paul urges Timothy to fulfil his spiritual role of evangelist. The role is one of the offices given by God to specific persons. Many can copy this office, but few actually have it in their possession given by God. That makes them fakes.

As one called by God to office, Timothy is to be on his guard against heresies and evils, marking those who deceive. For this he will be attacked by those who hate God and Christ’s Gospel, so he will need to endure what is to come. He is, then, to show the world his ministry is from the Lord, so he must *“do the work of an evangelist”*.

To ‘watch’, **nēphō**, is not just to observe and warn against error, it means specifically to be ‘sober’ (serious), ‘calm and collected in spirit’. Elsewhere we are warned not to have mental aberrations, for one who is always anxious, afraid, mentally unbalanced etc., cannot be followed or listened to in all seriousness. Such an office requires a man to be even tempered, dispassionate and circumspect. In today’s language he cannot be hot-headed, or swayed by novelties and the demands of others. In many ways the evangelist must also be a watchman (re ‘to watch’) who is always awake to coming errors and false teachers. Thus, he is morally and spiritually alert.

This activity is the evangelist’s ‘work’, **ergon**. That is, preaching the Gospel is an activity given to him by the Holy Spirit and is his sole occupation. In this he is to toil and so is never ‘off duty’.

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When he thus fulfils his office, he is showing 'full proof',

pl
ērophoreō

, of his ministry. This means he does not just evangelise part-time, or only teaches partially, but in everything, including his words, thoughts and behaviour. Because he is utterly persuaded by the things of God, this is conveyed to those who hear him speak.

In Our Day

How does this office translate into our modern lives? It does not simply mean being zealous; zealousness does not always mean truth-telling! One definition today is that the evangelist 'specialises' in evangelism. No – specialisation indicates a human activity, when evangelism is a spiritual activity prompted solely by the Lord. However, 'evangelism' is not a word found in scripture – only the word for the office of evangelist. As with all things godly, a believer must only do what scripture says, and not what his zeal or human desire causes him to do. And, as with ALL offices given by God, the person MUST have full knowledge of what God says in all things.

Doing good deeds for others is not evangelism. Nor is witnessing to others we meet. Defending our faith is not evangelism, though it might be part of the process. In our modern churches are many people who are told they must 'evangelise', but this is not how God distributes His gifts and offices! As with every office, only God can confer it on a person, and He also gives them spiritual gifts to carry it out. No church or pastor may call a member, or a whole church, to 'evangelise'!

When an evangelist speaks to a person or a group, his intention should be to persuade them to think about God's word and demands. On the other hand, if those individuals or groups refuse to listen, the evangelist must simply walk away and not return. This does not sit well with Arminian-style Christians who think that if they only speak well, go over the same claims in different words, and keep at it, then surely their listeners will virtually 'give in'. I used to think this, and now regret my activity, because some thought they had become saved, when they did not. Any persuasion must come not from our human zeal but from God's word through us.

It is an error to think we can learn to evangelise in a Bible college or course. We might learn interesting things, but none of it can prepare a man to evangelise. This is because the calling to be an evangelist comes solely from God, by way of the Holy Spirit. He will cause a man to take up the office, and will gift him to carry it out. This will include huge 'chunks' of knowledge about and in the Lord. His understanding of scripture will be superb. And this means he should read

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suitable Bible versions – for me it is the KJAV – and not fake versions, or those weak and bad versions written in modern language (because they are paraphrases and not translations). He must mull over God's word and come to logical and spiritual conclusions, not driven by the views of others. So, when he speaks, his words will come direct from God.

The evangelist is not, then, a product of zeal, or human desire, or Bible schools, or one of a multitude of courses. Rather, he is a man called by God for the purpose, and he will show his godly core in everything he says, thinks and does.

What Is NOT Evangelism!

Most Christians are as sloppy in their thoughts about evangelism as they are with other aspects of church life. That is a fact. Christians tend to exist in a fantasy world built from bits and pieces they hear or read in popular magazines or from preferred preachers. And some of those bits say we can witness by saying nothing and simply showing everyone we are living a righteous life. Where does that myth come from?

How is an unbeliever supposed to know what a 'righteous life' is? And why should they link that with God or the Gospel? Witnessing is vital in any Christian's life. It means telling others of your salvation, sometimes when asked and sometimes when not asked. It is the Holy Spirit Who prompts us to speak. And how we speak, too, is determined by Him, not us, making every witness opportunity different and unique. This is how I write and speak, whether or not others like it.

Some think their part is done if they ask people to attend church. This is a very odd activity, because the local church is (or should be) ONLY for believers. That is what the *ekklesia* are all about! I have had unsaved people brought along to our meetings by Christians, probably in the hope that God will speak to the unsaved person. But, why? It is the responsibility of the Christian bringing the unsaved person to the meeting to witness to the Gospel, not the pastor or speaker! And how can an unsaved person even understand what is being said in the meeting?

I have come across a number of these unsaved folks and those who bring them have said I should 'adapt' what I say to suit the unsaved visitor! NO!! I speak as the Lord guides and I am not a respecter of persons whose speaking is determined by unbelievers. I am more than happy to have these folks in our midst, but they must adapt to us, not we to them. This is because the unsaved are outside the remit of a local church and pastor. I have had these visitors before and

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because of my unique position, where I can see every face and person, I see the utter boredom and even the anger on their faces and in their body language.

I have even had visitors who profess to be believers, and so their hosts bring them along, assuming the claim to be true. Sadly, it rarely is! Simple saying he or she is a Christian is not enough. And, it takes very little time to realise they are not true believers after all. In such a case, they last only a short while before they stop coming, given my habit of probing beyond the simple statement "*I am a Christian*". Trusting such a statement at face value is foolish and can lead to bitter disappointment in those who trust them.

Some think giving cash to missionaries means they no longer have to witness. I can give many reasons for talking about this. For example, giving cash to ANYONE is NOT the same as witnessing! Rather, it is a very convenient 'get out' clause. Also, WHO are the missionaries you give to? Do you personally know them and what they actually do? Are they those missionaries who build up trust in foreigners and then start to bring God into conversations, slowly? Hm. Not my idea of what a missionary is. I would counsel NEVER to give to people just because others call them 'missionaries'. Before handing over cash you MUST know the people who receive the money, know what they actually do, and know any outcomes (including salvation).

Many local churches have the usual soup kitchens, or beds for itinerants. Those churches think they are doing good and that this is equal to witnessing. Oh no it isn't! Mostly these actions are substitutes for genuine hard-graft witnessing. They also spend church money for little or no real spiritual reason. We are not here to be social workers! Any help given to the unsaved, homeless or not, MUST be clothed in hard-nose facts and reasons. True 'helps' are ALWAYS the result of God moving an individual Christian to speak to an *individual* unsaved person, or to do something for him or her. And such witness can only last one or two 'sessions'... because if the unsaved person does not respond well, the Christian must stop his or her 'help'.

Telling an unbeliever you will "*pray for them*" is another way to avoid actual witnessing and helping. It has happened to me, and I know such an offer is rarely enacted, and rarely genuine. It is another way to avoid contact and real witnessing. On many occasions praying for someone is inappropriate. At other times something more is needed – such as involvement if the Holy Spirit deems it necessary and good. As I used to tell psychiatric patients, their only hope is salvation, and this meant telling them the Gospel. It might also include how my own life was changed. But, "*I will pray for you*" rarely happens and does almost nothing. Some instances might be genuine, but most are not.

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Telling someone to pray a prayer is also useless, because God does not listen to the prayers of the ungodly. How can they pray if they are not even born again? It also gives false hope, and when that hope is dashed because God will not answer, the person will storm off or just give up, because God has not answered their wishes. Besides, uttering a ready-made 'prayer' is Arminianistic, of no value. If God has elected a person He will allow a prayer to be made, but not one based on a formula.

And what of telling people you are a Christian? Is that witnessing? No, it isn't. It is just words without substance unless it is backed up with real intent and proofs. Most will just say the words in a single phrase, and then say nothing the rest of the time. Thus, unbelievers say and do whatever they wish, even if it causes spiritual pain to you, and you remain silent, afraid to speak.

Witnessing is not Evangelism

And guess what? I have talked about witnessing. Do not be confused – witnessing is NOT the same as evangelism! Witnessing is what every believer must do in their lives. Evangelism is a very special task given to men elected by God to be evangelists. They will be given gifts pertinent to their role, and they will speak out as and when the Holy Spirit tells them to, whether to an individual or a group or a large crowd. And the pastor is rarely also an evangelist, at least not regularly. This is because a pastor looks after people who are already saved, whereas evangelists speak to the unsaved who are NOT members of a church, nor can ever be members, until they repent and are saved.

Christians can witness to anyone, including fellow believers. It is showing others what God has done in your life, so it is not necessarily the same as giving wise counsel. There must be a readiness to witness, no matter how briefly, and such a witness must be observed in every aspect of our lives. The evangelist will ALWAYS know a great burden for unsaved souls, so he must not just be ready, he must perform his God-given task all the time.

Like the pastor, teacher or preacher, the evangelist is specially chosen and gifted for his role. And they must all know God's word, not just learning it by rote, but, essentially, they must understand it. Huge numbers of Christians come out of Bible schools thinking they are equipped to teach others. Rarely is this true! It is my view that Bible schools should not exist as 'reverend-and-office-makers'. Only God can prompt a man to learn His word and be guided by the Holy Spirit. He can be guided to meet together with mature believers who have similar callings, but Bible schools do not fulfil this purpose.

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Many years ago at BTM we had Bible courses and even issued certificates; in God's economy certificates prove nothing! But, I stopped it because it is not how God equips fellow Believers. We might easily gain factual knowledge, but this is not Holy Spirit gain in understanding. The evangelist has both knowledge and understanding (sometimes the same Greek word is used for both), and his calling proves to be of God not of himself. Do you understand any of this? I know I will receive counter-arguments about this subject... but, I am very used to it by now! Just search your heart and if what I say is fruitless, then ignore it. If worthy, act appropriately.

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