

Missions & the Mission of the Church

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 Title: Mark 16:15, Evangelism, and the Mission of the Church
 Text: **Mark 16:14-18**; Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 24:45-48; John 17:17-19; 20:19-23; Acts 1:6-11
 Theme: Everything we do and say should be a portrayal of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ to lost sinners.

It is our God given responsibility to preach the gospel to every creature. As a fellowship we are identified as a teaching church. What does this mean? Does this mean that we are not evangelistic? Is teaching in contrast to evangelism? Is the sovereignty of God and understanding the cross of Jesus Christ and who we are in Christ antithetical to the evangelization of the lost?

My short answer is an emphatic “No!” All biblical preaching points to Christ crucified. My long answer is what follows.

The purpose of this paragraph is . . .

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- Intellect – to help you *understand* the importance of evangelism in the mission of God.
- Volition – to help you *chose* to evangelize those within your circle of influence.
- Emotion – to help you *love* the mission of Christ and His people who are yet to be reached.

Why is this study important?

Jesus told His disciples to follow Him and He would make them fishers of men (Mark 1:16-18).

¹⁶ “As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ And Jesus said to them, **“Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men.”** ¹⁸ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him” (Mark 1:16-18).

“**Become** (genesthai). Mark has this word not in Matthew. It would be a slow and long process, but Jesus could and would do it.” (Robertson Word Pictures)

I do not want us to be a place where we are always discussing the latest lures or fishing poles. I want us to go out and fish. I was listening to a fishing show and the fishermen were discussing the rules. And one of the rules was the fish they caught had to remain alive and be released. Any dead fish would work against them. This story’s application is apparent. Churches are to be fishers of men who catch and release so that those fish become fishers of men.

ILLUSTRATION:

The *Times-Reporter* of New Philadelphia, Ohio, reported in September, 1985 a celebration of a New Orleans municipal pool. The party around the pool was held to celebrate the first summer in memory without a drowning at the New Orleans city pool. In honor of the occasion, 200 people gathered, including 100 certified lifeguards. As the party was breaking up and the four lifeguards on duty began to clear the pool, they found a fully dressed body in the deep end. They tried to revive Jerome Moody, 31, but it was too late. He had drowned surrounded by lifeguards celebrating their successful season. *Times-Reporter*, September 1985. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/e/evangelism.htm>

Let us fish with the intent of releasing them back into the world. We are not interested in eating our catch or in stuffing our catch. We want to catch and release. This study will answer some initial thoughts, but its ultimate design is for us to fish. One of my ministry mottos is “delegate or die.” Perhaps another is equally true as we approach this study “duplicate or die.”

TRANSITION:

My desire is to unpack this idea of evangelism through a series of five questions. Our first question is, “What is evangelism?”

I. What is evangelism?

The idea of evangelism involves both a subject and a verb. The subject is the gospel and the act of declaring the gospel is to evangelize. The word is the same in both cases. The word itself means “good news.” The gospel is “good news.”

The word *evangelist* comes from the Koine Greek word ευαγγελιον (transcribed as "euangelion") via Latin "Evangelium", as used in the canonic titles of the four Gospels, and thus *The Evangelists* are the authors of the four Gospels -- traditionally known as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (also known as the Four Evangelists). The Greek word ευαγγελιον originally meant a reward for good news given to the messenger (ευ = "good", αγγελω = "I bring a message"; the word angel is of the same root) and later "good news". The latter term gives rise to the word "Gospel". <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelism>

Evangelism is always gospel based. Such a statement forces us to define the gospel. The medium is secondary to the message. The conduit through which the gospel comes is secondary to the content of the gospel. Evangelism is not defined by the result of the evangel. Evangelism is defined by the message and its proclamation.

Evangelism is just preaching the gospel, the evangel. It is a work of communication in which Christians make themselves mouthpieces for God’s message of mercy to sinners. Anyone who faithfully delivers that message, under whatever circumstances, in a large meeting, in a small meeting, from a pulpit, or in a private conversation, is evangelizing.” (J.I. Packer, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, 41)

What is the gospel?

- A. The gospel is the Word of the Cross (1 Cor. 1:18).
- B. The gospel is the Power of God (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 1:18).
- C. The gospel is Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23; 2:2)
 - i. The death (1 Cor. 15:3)
 - ii. The burial (1 Cor. 15:4a)
 - iii. The resurrection (1 Cor. 15:4b)

Question: Is repentance a part of evangelism? Is obedience a part of evangelism? These are aspects of the gospel but they are consequences not causes. They are a part of its fruit, not its root.

My appeal to the sinner is to believe the gospel. Inherent in the appeal is a turning from who and what they are to who and what He is.

ILLUSTRATION:

To be saved from a burning building demands that I leave the building.

To be rescued from drowning demands that I surrender myself to the rescuer.

The theology of the gospel is a glorious truth to be known after the fact, but until you come to Christ for the salvation of your immortal soul you will never understand the height or depth or width or breadth of the gospel.

Have you believed the gospel?

TRANSITION:

This leads us to our second question, "Who is an evangelist?"

II. Who is the evangelist?

There are two answers to this one question.

- A. Specifically, in the New Testament an evangelist is a church planter/missionary (Eph. 4:11).

Our stereotypical evangelist is someone with a handful of sermons who blows in, blows up, and blows out of a local church or area. This is not a biblical evangelist. A biblical evangelist is one who sees himself as a part of a process called discipleship. He is spiritually gifted to make the appeal to believe with passion and conviction. Yet he has placed himself firmly inside the context of local church ministry.

Why this constant appeal to a local church context? No one gives birth to a child and then abandons it to the elements. Every child born is to be nurtured in the context of a loving and caring family. This is the biblical ideal. This same thought exists for evangelism and the local church. The local church is the loving and caring family that is to nurture newborns.

- B. Generically, in the New Testament every believer is a witness to the gospel (Acts 1:8).

Throughout the New Testament there is a generic appeal made and description given of all believers as being witnesses to the gospel. I am a witness verbally and visually of God's saving grace. No Christian can escape being a witness. The issue is not am I a witness? The issue is am I a good witness or a poor witness? Listen carefully to this thought on the importance of evangelism.

ILLUSTRATION:

The New York Times Thursday, October 5, 2006 Theological Graffiti Found in Monument Published: July 17, 1994

Nineteenth-century graffiti discovered by workers renovating the Washington Monument have quite a different tone from those usually found today on the sides of buildings and subway cars.

"Whoever is the human instrument under God in the conversion of one soul, erects a monument to his own memory more lofty and enduring than this," reads the slightly misspelled inscription, which can now be viewed by visitors to the monument.

It is signed B. F. B. No one knows who that is, or who left the small drawings and 19th-century dates on other walls. But Park Service historians have decided to save the scribblings.

The markings in the lobby of the monument were covered when it was decorated at the turn of the century. They were found when workers removed marble wainscoting as part of a yearlong, \$500,000 renovation that was just completed.

Gary Scott, a National Park Service regional historian, says B. F. B. probably carved the message between 1854 and 1880, when construction stopped on the monument because money had run out. The monument, begun in 1848 with public donations, was completed in 1884 after Congress provided financing.

What are the obstacles to evangelizing?

The importance of evangelizing cannot be overvalued yet there are many obstacles to its communication: (1) our flesh is too proud and self-absorbed to preach Christ. We are afraid of what others might think, (2) the world has softened the urgency of the hour by making us believe everyone (pluralism) and everything (relativism) are okay, (3) and the devil will do whatever he can to stop the gospel from being preached.

APPLICATION:

- Intellect – who can you think of right now that needs to hear the gospel?

TRANSITION:

This leads us to our third question, “Why evangelism?”

III. Why evangelism?

A. For the proclaiming of His name among all nations

This is the general intent of evangelism. God wants and will have His name proclaimed among all the nations of the world. This is the consistent theme of the entire bible.

B. For the securing of His people from among all nations

This is the specific intent of evangelism. God wants and will have His people secured from among all nations. God has clearly given the outcome of His eternal purpose. Revelation 4 and 5 tell us that He will have gathered worshippers from every tongue, tribe, people, and nation. This end is certain. The means to that end is a global proclamation of His name among all nations. We are a part of this eternal purpose. This is what drives us as a fellowship. Everything we do is for the fulfillment of this purpose.

Discipleship of the nations presupposes that the nations are non-disciples. Evangelism and discipleship are the two sides of one coin. They are inseparably linked. No ministry is completely biblical that focuses just on one in the absence of the other.

Evangelism calls people to believe the person and work of Jesus Christ. Evangelism has an inherent goal of seeing sinners converted by a life changing encounter with the living Christ.

APPLICATION:

- Intellect – do you understand that your entire existence is declaring the grace of God to those around you?
- Volition – today God would want us to choose His glory over everything else.
- Emotion – may the Holy Spirit ignite within us a passion to preach Christ to our neighbors and to the nations.

Is this truth significant for the dying?

Ultimately the only question that needs to be answered correctly is “where will you spend eternity and why?” The importance of this one question and its answer cannot be overvalued.

TRANSITION:

This leads us to our fourth question, “Who are we to evangelize?”

IV. Who are we to evangelize (Acts 1:8)?

Acts 1:8 is not giving us an either/or idea. It is a both/and statement. Effective evangelism is happening locally, nationally, and globally.

A. Locally (In Jerusalem)

What are we doing to reach our present context for Christ? Every program we run is simply a means to an end. We are here to preach Christ crucified.

1. Our children's ministry has as an objective the evangelization of the lost.
2. Our youth ministry has as an objective the evangelization of the lost.
3. Our church wide events have as their objective the evangelization of the lost.

B. Nationally (In Judea and Samaria)

What are we doing to reach our nation for Christ? We are here to preach Christ crucified to the continental United States of America. Our missions ministry has as its objective the support of those who are seeking to win the lost for the establishment of local churches.

C. Globally (In the Remotest Areas of the World)

What are we doing to reach our world for Christ? We are here to preach Christ crucified. Missions is not defined by geographical location. Missions is defined by activity and intent. "Are we determined to shout the supremacy of God in all things by finding, celebrating, and declaring that Jesus Christ is enough?"

The means to that end is churches planting churches through the disciple-making process.

APPLICATION:

- Intellect – Am I committed to the work of God in and through His church?
- Volition – Am I willing to work so that His name might be proclaimed among our neighborhoods and nations?
- Emotion – May the Holy Spirit enflame us with a passion to preach Christ.

TRANSITION:

This leads us to our fifth and final question, "How are we to evangelize?"

V. How are we to evangelize?

- A. We evangelize by praying to a God who works in and through the will of people

We are begging God to bend the will of those whose hearts are set in rebellion against Him. Only God can bend the will of man. Listen to how J.I. Packer states this idea.

“When we are on our knees, we know that it is not we who control the world; it is not in our power, therefore, to supply our needs by our own independent efforts; every good thing that we desire for ourselves and for others must be sought from God, and will come, if it comes at all, as a gift from His hands.” (J.I. Packer, Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God, 11)

We must be passionate about having the life of Christ cast His shadow across the canvass of our life. Your ministry involvement has only one objective and that is to preach Christ crucified through whatever means have been placed at your disposal.

1. Pray for your personal life
2. Pray for your family
3. Pray for the ministry of WBC
 - a. Children
 - b. Youth
 - c. Adult
 - i. Locally
 - ii. Nationally
 - iii. Globally
4. Pray for the proclamation of the gospel and its impact on the audience

- B. We evangelize by having the love of Christ work in us and through us to those around us

I have said this a million times but “the high point of Christian virtue is our love for one another.” In the absence of Christ’s love nothing we do will matter. The unbelieving will be evangelized when they see our love for Christ and for one another.

- C. We evangelize by stewarding our resources of time, talent, and treasure to this biblical purpose

You and I are stewards of everything we possess. God gives us what we have so that we might proclaim His name among the nations. Our wealth is not for our immediate comfort or convenience. Our wealth was never meant to be a

sign of status and/or spirituality. Our wealth exists to proclaim His name among all nations.

- D. We evangelize by a willingness to go wherever for the purpose of making disciples of all the nations

Every believer is a witness, but not every believer is being called upon to be involved in the planting of churches where the gospel has not yet gone. The burden of going is not defined by gender or generations. It is a burden that is to be shared by all. Every young person, middle aged, and older person is to be a part this continuum. You and I at WBC are to be the anchor that digs deep and sets its foundation down so that those who are sent by us have roots of stability. You are being called to be a part of the mission. Simply showing up without participating in praying and giving is non-participation. You must pray and you must give and some will go.

Perhaps God is awakening in you this passion. We are here to help. Make this desire known to those who can help you in its development.

APPLICATION: (Where do we go from here?)

While in preparation for this study I came across a song by an anonymous writer who perhaps captures many churches. It is a sad commentary on the church of Jesus Christ. May this idea embolden us to set our sights on Him who fulfills His promise to build His church.

Backward Christian Soldiers

Backward Christian soldiers, fleeing from the fight,
with the cross of Jesus, Nearly out of sight.
Christ our rightful master, Stands against the foe;
onward into battle, we seem afraid to go.

Like a might tortoise, Moves the church of God.
Brothers we are treading, where we've often trod.
We are much divided, many bodies we,
having different doctrines, but not much charity.

Crowns and thrones may perish, Kingdoms rise and wane,
but the cross of Jesus Hidden does remain.
Gates of hell should never 'gains the Church prevail,
we have Christ's own promise, but we think it might fail.

Sit here then ye people, Join our sleeping throng.
Blend with ours, your voices in a feeble song.
Blessings, ease and comfort Ask from Christ the King,
But with our modern thinking, we won't do a thing.

Chorus:
Backward Christian soldiers, fleeing from the fight,
with the cross of Jesus, Nearly out of sight.
Anonymous

1. Who can you right now identify as needing Christ? What family member, friend, or fellow employee do you know that needs Jesus as their Savior?
2. What can you use to reach out this week and touch them? Perhaps the Swift concert could be a bridge, or a letter, or card?
3. In your bulletin there is a postcard invitation to attend WBC. Jot a note and send it to someone who needs Jesus. Start the process of reaching out and touching your world for Christ.
4. We have a tract rack that is filled with gospel tracts. Use one this week.
5. All evangelism has as its objective the proclaiming of Christ crucified.
6. Are you aware of the mission of God as it is being played out to the nations? Perhaps you should become involved in our missions ministry? May God make us bold for Him.