

The Gift of Evangelism (5)

A gifted story: Dale doesn't like to give up on anyone. When he learns of a new visitor to the church, he wants to pay them a visit as soon as possible. He likes to just drop in on them and surprise them with a warm loaf of freshly baked bread. Then, with his foot in the door, he offers a warm and welcoming smile and a chance to learn more about the church. Dale's genuine concern for each person he visits comes through in a way that spells "LOVE." Often Dale returns for another visit or checks back by telephone just to keep the invitation open and renew the relationship. Dale's power of persistence is a natural outgrowth of his gift of evangelism.

Biblical references:

Eph. 4:7,11— *Each one of us has received a special gift in proportion to what Christ has given....It was he who “gave gifts to mankind”; he appointed some to be apostles, others to be prophets, **others to be evangelists**, others to be pastors and teachers.*

2 Tim. 4:5...*you must keep control of yourself in all circumstances; endure suffering, do the work of a preacher of the Good News, and perform your whole duty as a servant of God.*

Matt. 28:18-20— *Jesus drew near and said to them, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”*

Definition and comment:

The gift of Evangelism: the special ability that God gives to believers to present the Gospel to unbelievers in a clear and meaningful way, which calls for a response. This gift enables one to present the story of Christ's death and saving resurrection with simplicity, clarity, and effectiveness. The individual possessing this gift not only understands the Gospel, but feels a deep burden for those entrapped in the darkness of sin.

There are several dimensions to this gift that become evident from reading scripture. Sometimes the gift is embodied in an individual referred to as an “evangelist”—Philip is called that, and he is clearly a man on a mission to baptize. John, the Evangelist, is another example—he is known as the Baptist. In other references, however, people are called to “do the work of an evangelist.” Timothy falls into that category. In all cases the admonition is clear—effective evangelism brings people to Christ.

To evangelize is to bring the Good News of Christ's salvation to unbelievers. To the degree that many Christians claim to believe is more in the category of “lip service” rather than discipleship, the gift of evangelism is needed greatly in the church to enable members of the body to develop ministries for true discipleship.

Affirm that you have this gift; questions to ask yourself:

Do you like to talk about Jesus to those who do not know him?

Do you are able to share the Gospel in a way that makes it clear and meaningful?
Do you wish to relate to non-Christians so you can share your faith?
Are you are at ease in sharing how Christ has changed your life?
Do you get frustrated when others do not seem to share their faith with unbelievers as much as you do?
Have you been instrumental in leading others to believe in Christ as their Savior or in helping believers find their ministry?

Areas for study and personal growth:

Because of the poor reputation of so-called “televangelists,” many people today equate evangelism with quackery, and that is very unfortunate. Seek out the writings of reputable evangelists of today (such as Billy Graham), and strive to learn how they respond to God’s call in the use of this gift.

Scripture gives some wonderful examples of evangelism, both on an individual level (see Acts 8:26-40, where Philip performs his ministry), and in larger groups (see Acts 2:14-42, where Peter exercised his gift with a crowd of thousands). Study these passages to fully understand how these disciples used their gift of evangelism.

To evangelize effectively one must be able to communicate the Gospel story in the vernacular—that is, in today’s language. Read and internalize the story of Christ’s life, rising from the dead, and saving grace, and discover ways to speak about it from the heart.

Attend some workshops on evangelism to learn techniques and discover tools that may help you in this ministry. Seek to learn methods of reaching out to the unchurched as well as programs that will help church members connect with personal ministries. Plan to be a catalyst for change where it is needed.

Since approaching people effectively is critical if you hope to convey your evangelizing message, look for ways that will improve your appeal. Appearance, humor, tolerance, kindness, patience—learn what attributes and virtues need strengthening within yourself to enhance your acceptance by others. Remember how Paul sought to fit in with all people to gain acceptance.

General ways to use the gift of evangelism:

Personally: be involved in one-to-one evangelism wherever the need is present; lead your own children to Christ

Within the church: participate in a church visitation program, lead an evangelistic Bible study group, serve on the evangelism committee (see more specific church service opportunities in the Booklet *Channels for Using the Gifts*).

Within the wider community: become involved in marketplace ministry; give an evangelistic message at a rescue mission; offer counseling at an evangelistic crusade.

For reflection:

The charge to evangelize is clear, the need is present, and yet many fear even the word “evangelism” because of the negative connotations involved. There are too many images of “Brother, have you been saved” on the street corner or high-pitched TV evangelists seemingly ranting and raving as they “pitch” the word of God as they see it. It makes one want to shrink from the duty of using this gift—“Please, God, give me a different one—I can’t be one of those people.”

But you have something really special. You have a unique spiritual gift of evangelism. The words you use, the style you employ, the approach you make— these will be born of keen insight, reason and intelligence, and inner peace. Trust that God will empower you in appropriate ways to do his work. The way you operate will not be a “canned” approach; it will be all you, and it will be effective because you are gifted.

To some degree the exercise of all spiritual gifts should have evangelistic implications and bring people to the saving knowledge of Christ. Indeed, all Christians are subject to Christ’s great commission to spread the Gospel. But those who are spiritually gifted in evangelism have an even greater level of responsibility because evangelizing is what God has especially equipped them to do. Perhaps it is even more critical that you accept and use this gift because of the reluctance of so many others to do so. It is truly a life-changing gift that is also life-saving. Fulfilling Christ’s great commission is the result when this gift is effectively employed. Is there really anything that would be more important to do?