

Seeking to Apply God's Word to Our Lives

Evangelism

This paper seeks to examine the biblical view of evangelism as it pertains to the gospel, the believer, the evangelist, and missionaries.

Evangelism and the gospel:

Evangelism is sharing the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ:

1. Evangelism centers upon the gospel message – The gospel includes the following truths: Every person has sinned and fallen short of God's standard of perfection (Romans 3:23). The wages of sin is death, separation from God (Romans 6:23). God demonstrated His love by sending His Son Jesus to die upon a cross for the sins of each person (Romans 5:8). Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). By faith, an unbeliever must believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to be saved from his sins (Acts 16:30-31).
2. The gospel message is the power of God for salvation – Romans 1:16 reads, "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.*"
3. Only those whom God has chosen will respond to the gospel - Even though we urge unbelievers to believe in the gospel (2 Corinthians 5:17-21), it is important to recognize that only those whom God has chosen will respond to the gospel and come to saving faith (Ephesians 1:4; Acts 13:48).¹

Evangelism and the believer:

God uses the believer to communicate the gospel message through spoken or written form (Romans 10:17). In Colossians 4:3-6, Paul emphasizes the importance of prayer in sharing the gospel. In verses 3-4, He asks the Colossians to pray that God would provide an open door for him and Timothy to speak the mystery of Christ. In verses 5-6, Paul writes, "[Continually] *conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, [continually] making the most of the opportunity.*² *Let your speech always be with grace, as though [having been] seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.*"³ Every believer is to continually look for opportunities to prayerfully share the gospel with unbelievers.

Evangelism and the evangelist:

What role do evangelists play in evangelism today? Three passages speak of the evangelist and his ministry:

1. In Ephesians 4:11-12, the apostle Paul writes, "*And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;*"
2. In Acts 21:8, Philip is called an evangelist. It reads, "*On the next day we left and came to Caesarea, and entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven, we stayed with him.*"
3. In 2 Timothy 4:5, Paul writes to Timothy, "*But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*"

From these passages, the following observations can be made:

- Evangelists were men appointed by God to equip the saints – The ministry of the evangelist is not a spiritual gift. Like apostles, prophets, and pastors and teachers (elders),⁴ evangelists were men given by God "*for the equipping of saints for the work of service*" (Ephesians 4:11-12).
- Evangelists also shared the gospel and were validated by signs and great miracles – As an evangelist, Philip's ministry included sharing the gospel, casting out demons, and performing signs and great miracles. In Acts 8:5-7, Luke writes, "*Philip went down to the city of Samaria began proclaiming Christ to them. The crowds with one accord were giving attention to what was said by Philip, as they heard and saw the signs which he was performing. For in the case of many*

¹ For further discussion, see the paper "The Depravity of Man and Sovereignty of God in Salvation."

² The Greek words for "*conduct*" and "*making the most*" are present tense verbs, denoting an ongoing action.

³ The word "*seasoned*" is a perfect passive verb, denoting that our speech is to have been seasoned by God. As we prayerfully rely upon God, He will direct our speech when sharing the gospel with unbelievers.

⁴ The Greek phrase for "*pastors and teachers*" is literally translated "shepherds-teachers." Since only elders are instructed to "*shepherd*" a congregation (1 Peter 5:1-2; Acts 20:28), and one of the qualifications for elders is that they are "*able to teach*" (1 Timothy 3:2), "*pastors and teachers*" denotes elders.

who had unclean spirits, they were coming out of them shouting with a loud voice; and many who had been paralyzed and lame were healed.” Like the apostles (2 Corinthians 12:12), God used signs and miracles to authenticate the evangelists’ appointment and message (Acts 8:6, 13).

- Timothy was an evangelist – Apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers (elders) were the only men appointed by God to “equip the saints for the work of service” (Ephesians 4:11-12). For Timothy to have been commanded to “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Timothy 4:5), he must have been appointed by God as an evangelist.
- There are no instructions for perpetuating the position of evangelists – God gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service (Ephesians 4:11-12). Among these four groups of men, only pastors and teachers (elders) were given instructions for perpetuating their ministry.⁵

Based upon these observations, evangelists no longer exist today.

Evangelism and missionaries:

Since every believer is to continually look for opportunities to prayerfully share the gospel with unbelievers, what role do missionaries play in evangelism? The following observations can be made:

1. The modern day concept of missions is not found in the Word of God - The words “missions,” “missionary,” and “missionaries” are not found in the major translations of the New Testament. The word “mission” is found in Acts 12:25 (only in the New American Standard Bible and the NIV Bible). The NASB reads, “*And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their mission, taking along with them John, who was also called Mark.*” The context of this verse is found in Acts 11:27-30. Barnabas and Paul were sent to Judea with a contribution for the relief of the brethren (Acts 27:30). After delivering this contribution, they returned to Antioch (Acts 12:25). In verse 25, the word “mission” is the Greek word “diakonia,” which should be translated “service or ministry.” This verse should read, “And Barnabas and Saul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled their service, taking along with them John who was called Mark.” Based upon these observations, the word “mission” is not found in the New Testament.
2. Churches sending missionaries to share the gospel are not found in God’s Word - Men who were sent out by the early churches served the apostles and ministered under the Apostles’ authority (2 Corinthians 8:18-19; Acts 20:1-44; Acts 19:29).
3. Personally supporting missionaries who evangelize is not found in the Bible - 1 Corinthians 9:14 is often cited as the passage that endorses the financial support of missionaries who evangelize. It reads, “*So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.*” Please note the following observations about this passage and its context: In verses 1-12, the apostle Paul discusses the right for Barnabas and him to be supported financially like the other apostles. In verses 13-14, Paul gives two examples of people supported in ministry: The priests that serve in the Jerusalem temple (v. 13), and the historical events where Jesus personally directed individuals to be supported while sharing the gospel (v. 14).⁶ In verses 15-18, Paul chooses not to use this right as an apostle, but offers the gospel without charge. Since the context of this passage is not reproducible nor transferable, 1 Corinthians 9:14 does not teach the personal support of missionaries who evangelize.

Based upon these observations, missionaries, churches sending missionaries and the personal support of missionaries who evangelize are not found in God’s Word and are not to play a role in evangelism today.

Conclusion:

Every believer is to continually look for opportunities to prayerfully share the gospel with unbelievers. Many individuals and churches have adopted the practice of supporting self-proclaimed evangelists and missionaries to share the gospel with unbelievers. These cultural practices are not found in God’s Word.

“Seeking to Apply God’s Word to Our Lives” papers represent an overview of various Bible doctrines. Each paper contains biblical truths that often set TVBC apart from other churches and religious organizations. We invite the congregation’s biblically based feedback as we seek to accurately handle the Word of God.

Revised: 11/1/2018

⁵ The Bible provides qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), a selection process (1 Timothy 3:10; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9), specific responsibilities (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-2), and accountability (1 Timothy 5:19-20).

⁶ In Matthew 10:1-14, the 12 apostles were directed by Christ to be supported while sharing the gospel. In Luke 10:1-10, Jesus directed the 70 to be supported while preaching the gospel to the cities He would soon visit.