

The background of the entire page is a vibrant blue sky filled with large, fluffy white cumulus clouds. Sunlight rays are visible, breaking through the clouds and creating a bright, glowing effect. The overall atmosphere is bright and hopeful.

THE CALL TO EVANGELIZE

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“Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” Acts 8:4

As followers of Christ, we are called to share the good news of salvation. The responsibility of every believer is to spread the fruitful seeds of the gospel. We cannot afford to postpone or ignore the important call to evangelize. It is imperative that we share with others our wonderful experience of salvation Christ!

Many believers have this idea that when they tell somebody about Jesus Christ that they are doing Him a big favor. The Bible tells us that when we do that, we are only doing what is required of us (Matthew 28:16-20). Others think that Evangelism is limited to special weekend outreach events, where everyone goes out to distribute tracts or invite people to an evangelistic meeting. If we take part in one or two of these evangelistic interventions, we have done our part in evangelizing.

The call to evangelize is more than a one-time event. Luke states in Acts 8:4, that the believers of the early church wherever they went, they shared the Good News. These followers of Christ as they were migrating, to settle down in unfamiliar places, communicated the gospel.

Evangelism must be a way of life for us. Our responsibility is to be ready, in season and out of season, to share the Gospel wherever we go, in our daily course of life, with family, friends, colleagues and acquaintances we come into contact every day. The apostle Peter said that we should honor Christ and let him be the Lord of our lives, to always be ready to give an answer when someone asks us about our hope, 1 Peter 3:15.

Here are some key points regarding or call to evangelize, to be the witnesses, ambassadors of Christ wherever we may be given the opportunity to share the good news of salvation in Christ.

I. EVERY DISCIPLE SHOULD EVANGELIZE

Many believers think of evangelism as a chore, a burden, or unavoidable evil; nevertheless, when we evangelize, we are being obedient to Christ. Should every disciple of Christ evangelize? The simple, scriptural answer is “yes.” It is true that some believers argue that the Great Commission was only given to the apostles and therefore does not apply to us today. While it is true that contextually the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) was given to the apostles, it was not only for the apostles. It is to be obeyed by all followers of Christ.

Others claim that since only some people have the “gift of evangelism,” not everyone is called to evangelize. Evangelism is not recorded in the common spiritual gifts’ listings in Scripture; instead, the office of evangelist is mentioned in Ephesians 4:11.

In addition, even if evangelism is a spiritual gift, it is also a command for all believers, just like giving, serving, among other commands. Not having “the gift of evangelism” does not excuse a believer from his or her call to share Christ with others.

The commands to witness are given to all followers of Christ. Acts 1:8, for example, reads, ***“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”*** This verse gives a command from the risen Lord to all his followers.

Moreover, it is not only apostles that have the ministry of reconciliation and the role of Christ’s ambassadors—all believers do! Other verses that reflect on this ministry of witness for all believers include Matthew 5:14-16, 1 Peter 3:15, Philippians 2:14-16, Colossians 4:5-6 and 1 Peter 2:9.[3]

Similarly, consider the example of “ordinary believers” in the early church. As we follow the storyline of the early church, it is obvious that the apostles looked to evangelize and disciple others. But we see ordinary believers sharing the gospel as well.

In Acts, we see that the primary people involved in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession or a major part of their occupation, but men and women who earned their livelihood in some purely secular manner and spoke of their faith to those whom they met in this natural fashion.

The New Testament shows us that disciples of Christ were normally and naturally involved in evangelism as much as in study, prayer, and corporate worship. From the brand-new Christian to the elderly saint, sharing the gospel is essential and vital to a maturing life in Christ.

Many of us have often heard and in some instances even preached sermons that focused on the Great Commission’s theme of “making disciples” (Matt. 28:18-20). We have also taught those around us that they should be disciple-makers themselves. Nevertheless, we need to be clear that “making disciples” also involves helping people who are not yet disciples to become disciples. Jesus modeled it (Mk. 1:14, 15; Matt. 9:35) and instructed his apostles to do the same (Mk. 6:7-13; Lk. 10:1-12). A few days after His resurrection, Jesus said that they would be his “witnesses...to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

The apostles’ teaching in Acts 2 includes the fact that the newly Spirit-filled church should devote themselves to the normal and regular sharing of the gospel with family, friends, and strangers (Acts 2:42). Immediately after the powerful outpouring of the Holy Spirit in Acts 2, people were saved every day (Acts 2:47). Evangelism was at once a part of the new life experience. It was in the DNA of the Church.

II. THE BLESSINGS OF FULFILLING THE CALL TO EVANGELIZE

There are several blessings that we can expect in the fulfillment of our call to evangelize. Here are some samples of those blessings:

A. It helps us keep the gospel central in our lives and churches.

When we fulfill the call to evangelize, we are engaged in the task of building Christ's Church.

Paul states in Colossians 1 that *"the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you. In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace"* (Colossians 1:5-6).

The Church's main message is the gospel: *"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word, I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures"* 1 Corinthians 15:1-3.

The gospel helps power our growth in Christ (Phil 1:6). We should do everything within our reach to keep it central. Evangelism helps us keep the message of the gospel as the force of a growing life in Christ.

B. It expands our understanding of the most fundamental truths of Scripture.

Our conversations with non-believers about the Gospel force us to have a better understanding of the central, foundational truths of God's Word. Important topics like God's character, His promises, our dependence on Him, His holiness and wrath, man's creation in God's image, sin, grace, the cross of Christ, judgment, and future all come into sharp focus. It reminds us of his character, promises, our dependence on Him, and our future together. It familiarizes us with, and helps us grasp, the whole story of Scripture, and it keeps our minds and souls energized.

We must think through as to how to explain these concepts to different people in different circumstances. And as we do so, we learn better how these truths connect all of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

Paul shared with Philemon a prayer for him about this matter: *"I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ"* Philemon 1:6.

Knowing the essential truths of the Bible and explaining them to someone who does not understand them or believe them are two different things. These treasured truths become clearer to us as we explain them to others.

C. It motivates us to love God and our neighbors.

We are called to wholeheartedly love God and other people (Mark 12:28-31). Sharing our faith because we love God and people strengthens the power of this love.

It is an indescribable experience to see firsthand the transforming power of the gospel take effect in a person. To see their heart broken for their sin breaks our heart more fully for our sins. To see them rejoice in the freedom of forgiveness makes us want to evangelize even more. Leading someone to Christ reminds us of how much more powerful, holy, and merciful God is than we often think Him to be.

Likewise, when we share the message of hope with others, Christ promises us that sometimes they will reject it and perhaps reject us as well (John 15:18-20). Rejection is part of following Jesus. Sometimes we believe that if we evangelize impeccably or live flawlessly everyone will like us. Not so. If Jesus was rejected, we can expect to be rejected as well.

Let us not second-guess ourselves so much. Instead of focusing on what others think, let us remain near to the Lord and do what He shows us to do and let the chips fall where they may.

D. It provokes unanticipated questions and objections from non-Christians, which can deepen our faith.

We should expect objections and questions when sharing our faith. When we share, people will often disagree with us. In fact, some of them won't even understand us. The Bible says we should expect this. And it is fundamentally not about us, or our explanation. It is about them. Paul said: "*...for the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God*" 1 Corinthians 1:18

This was the reality for Jesus, the apostles and every believer that wants to fulfill the call to evangelize. People rejected what Jesus, Peter and Paul said then and they will object and question what we say now. But accepting this truth makes us stronger. It galvanizes us. It motivates us to prepare for people's questions.

Furthermore, the Bible tells us to respond with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15). How we answer is just as important as what we say. Colossians 4:6 says, "*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*"

We should be gracious and loving toward people with questions and objections. Let us remember that God's saving power is in the Gospel, not our apologetics.

E. It increases the joy of being fruitful in Christ

Fulfilling the call to evangelize allows us to experience the joy of bearing fruit. The Bible often categorizes the Christian life as developing fruit. While many references include the development of proper attitudes of godliness and true character (cf. Gal. 5:22-23), another such method of doing so is evangelism. The apostle Paul looked upon those whom he taught and led to their conversion to Christ as being his fruit (cf. Rom. 1:13; Phil. 1:22; Col. 1:6).

Our call to evangelize invites us to pray for lives to be changed. We should expect that God will bear fruit through our lives when we walk in the steps of the Master and are mentored by Jesus. When we reach out naturally, as Jesus did, the Holy Spirit will move in power, Jesus will draw people to Himself, and God will be glorified. Here is a Scripture that affirms this truth: ***“The fruit of a righteous person is a tree of life, and a winner of souls is wise”*** Proverbs 11:30.

FINAL THOUGHTS

We were born again for evangelism. Jesus said if we follow him, we will be fishers of men (Matt. 4:19). He also said we would receive the Holy Spirit and be his witnesses (Acts 1:8). Both passages remind us that Christians should be evangelists.

Jesus said to his disciples, ***“Just as the Father sent me, so do I send you”*** (John 20:21). God has given us the incredible opportunity to take part in His mission of reconciliation through announcing the good news of Jesus Christ to the world. Our lives have been changed by the gospel, and we are contented disciples.

We do not share Christ with others to earn favor with God. We tell others of the hope, joy, forgiveness, and purpose we have found in Jesus because we love Him. We have tasted and seen the goodness of the Lord.

The specific greatest encouragement to your brothers and sister and Christian friends to be actively engaging their call to share their faith is for the leaders and pastors of your church to be seen and heard sharing their faith. If the pastors and leaders are excited to share their faith, the congregation will learn to evangelize and find pleasure in sharing their faith. In doing so, they will grow as disciples of Jesus.

Evangelism is more of a lifestyle than an event. Try these simple practices for everyday evangelism:

Pray daily for open doors and confidently take advantage of them.

Create an impact list of people you pray for daily.

Plan regular times to spend with lost friends.

Let us remember the commission: ***“Make disciples...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”*** (Matt. 28:19). Let us be sure to model and teach them all that he commanded, including the immense joy, and blessing of realizing the call to evangelize.