

Three Types of Churches

A Biblical Perspective of Evangelism

Matthew 16:13-18

13. When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?"
14. So they said, "Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."
15. He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"
16. Simon Peter answered and said, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
17. Jesus answered and said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.
18. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.

CASTLE MENTALITY

- Inward Focused
- Preservation of the status quo becomes paramount
- Leads to institutionalism
- Tradition overrides principle
- Kills evangelism
- Example – Jewish leaders at the time of Jesus
- Function under the banner: "Preserve at any cost"

RESORT MENTALITY

- Focus on drawing large crowds
- De-emphasis of distinctive Adventist truths
- Leads to entertainment instead of worship
- Compromising truth for the sake of popularity
- Tolerating sin for the sake of unity
- Functions under the banner: "To please at any cost"

SEEK AND SAVE MENTALITY

- Church exists to save the lost and reveal God's character
- Evangelism becomes the focus of the church
- Clear understanding of mission and message
- Every member involved in soul-winning
- Focus in on conversions and not simply baptisms

- Victory in Jesus and His righteousness
- Training and equipping lay-members for service
- Functions under the banner: "To save and any cost"

The local church is on the frontline of the battle against the forces of darkness and in order for the church to be successful, she must be fervent in prayer, strong in faith, and well trained for evangelism.

EVANGELISM: THE HEARTBEAT OF THE CHURCH

"The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world." (Acts of the Apostles, p.9).

A good way of thinking about the church is to see it as missionary. When we talk about the church as a hospital, then we should see it as a *missionary* hospital. When we talk about the church being a ship, it's not just any ship, it's a *missionary* ship. It's a hospital *for* saving sinners and it's a ship *for* reaching the lost. It exists not for itself but for others. This moves us away from being a programmed institution to being a dynamic missionary movement.

We also need to understand that evangelism is a heart passion of God and therefore not an optional requirement for those dedicated to His cause. As someone has said, the Great Commission was not a suggestion - it was a command! The church exists to tackle the strongholds of the Devil and to bring back captives for the Lord Jesus!

In this presentation we will look at three vital questions and answer them from both a Biblical and historical perspective.

- a) What is evangelism?
- b) Who does evangelism?
- c) Why do we do evangelism?

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

How many times does the Bible use the word evangelism? None!

The Bible prefers verbs to nouns when talking about evangelism.

This means evangelism is an activity. Too many people have seen the church as a light or a fortress or even an entertainment center. But here we see that the primary nature of the church is that it is missionary. In fact, the church is commanded to Go!

This means that the church cannot simply wait for the world to find it – the church must find the world! God did not simply ask us to look for Him – He came looking for us!

Euangelizo is a Biblical word which means to **preach the Gospel**.

The heart of evangelism is *sharing* and *preaching*. Because people are afraid of evangelism, they have softened it and shaped into a "silent" witness. Biblical evangelism is not only active – it's noisy! We cannot neglect the active, public preaching of our faith. If we concentrate too much on being a "friendly church" we can lose sight of the fact that we are to actively and publicly share our faith.

Personal Story of First Evangelistic Series

What is the gospel? The gospel is the **Good News!**

There are two reasons why people hate evangelism. They see evangelists as:

1. Doomsayers ("Hell is licking at your heels")
2. Propagandists ("My way is the right way and I want you to follow me")

Evangelism is the active preaching of God's good news to those who need Christ. Evangelism is therefore focused more on the world than it is on the church.

WHO DOES EVANGELISM?

The Bible is very clear. Every member is a minister. Every person should be involved in saving souls. Not only is the church a missionary church, but every person in the church is a missionary. Notice the following comments from the pen of inspiration:

"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary." *The Desire of Ages*, p. 195.

"God expects personal service from every one to whom He has entrusted a knowledge of the truth for this time. Not all can go as missionaries to foreign lands, but **all can be home missionaries** in their families and neighborhoods. --*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 30.

Every believer is a missionary. Every believer recognizes the powerful obligation resting on him or her to reach the world and preach Jesus.

According to Ellen White, the saving of souls should be the supreme interest of every Christian.

"The work above all work,--the business **above all others** which should draw and engage the energies of the soul,--is the **work of saving souls** for whom Christ has died. Make this the main, the important work of your life. **Make it your special life work.**"--*Messages to Young People*, page 227

Both ministers and laity should be involved in the work of saving souls. The fascinating story of Adventist history teaches us the importance of both the minister and the congregation being involved in evangelism. The early years of the Adventist church, following its organization in 1863, saw remarkable growth of at least 12% per year! Between 1870 and 1880 we grew from 5,000 to 15000 members. The Seventh-day Baptists, amazed at how quickly the Seventh-day Adventist church was expanding, researched our methods and made the following observation:

"All Seventh-day Adventist clergyman are missionaries, they are not located pastors, they are busy teaching, preaching and organizing churches."
December 28, 1898, Baptist Report on SDAs.

A similar observation was made by one of our early leaders, Elder George B. Starr, when interviewed by a local Indiana newspaper. He was asked, "Elder Starr, by what means have you carried forward your work so rapidly?" His response is amazing:

"In the first place, we have no settled pastors. Our churches are taught largely to take care of themselves, while nearly all of our ministers work as evangelists in new fields. In the winter they go out into the churches, halls or school houses and raise up believers. In the summer we use tents, pitching them in the cities and villages where we teach the people these doctrines. This summer we will run a hundred evangelistic meetings throughout the United States of America in tents.

"Besides these we send out large numbers of colporteurs with our books and tracts who visit the families. Last year we had 125 colporteurs across the country. Also, our workers go from house to house holding Bible readings with people from 1 -20 individuals.. Last year we gave 10,000 Bible readings. At the same time we had employed about 300 canvassers. **Every church has a missionary society. Last year we had 10,500 members going out. Last year these people that went out made a 102,000 visits, they wrote 40,000 missionary letters, they got 38700 subscriptions to our missionary magazines. In addition to that, we distributed 15 million pages of literature, 1,600,000 periodicals...**"

Every member was involved in active evangelism. The minister played a vital role in both organizing and equipping the laity as well as in planting churches. A.G. Daniells, one of the General Conference Presidents in the early 1900s, in looking back on the organization in its early years felt that this was the successful trademark of the church:

"From the beginning our work we have recognized a very important division of the work for our ministers. **We have not settled our ministers over churches as pastors to any large extent.** In some of our very large churches we have elected pastors, but as a rule our pastors have held themselves ready for field services and evangelistic work.... **I hope this will never cease to be the order of affairs in this denomination.** For when

we cease our forward movement and we settle over our churches and stay by them and do their thinking and praying and their work, then our churches will begin to weaken and lose their life and spirit and become paralyzed and fossilized and work will be weakened."

What an incredible perspective – every minister an evangelist. While we need to recognize that times and circumstances have changed, we need to start catching a vision of the church as being a place where every member is involved in evangelism. Ellen White, on returning from Australia, while traveling across the States was dismayed at how the early fires of evangelism were beginning to burn low. She wrote:

- "As I traveled through the South on my way to the conference, I saw city after city that was unworked. What is the matter? The ministers are hovering over churches which know the truth while thousands are perishing out of Christ.
- If the proper instruction were given, if the proper methods were followed, **every church member would do his work** as a member of the body. He would do Christian missionary work." --Manuscript 150, 1901. (Evangelism, page 381).

The life work and life blood of every minister and of every believer is evangelism!

WHY SHOULD WE DO EVANGELISM?

There are five good Biblical reasons to do evangelism:

1. Evangelism is God's means of saving lost people.

Can people be saved if we don't do evangelism? The Bible teaches the lostness of those without Christ, but also shows that God can save non-Christians through a Christ they have not yet met (Zech 13:6 and Acts 17).

If we do not do evangelism, the reality is that some people will be lost, because we didn't give them their best chance to see God and to hear the good news.

2. Evangelism is God's means for building His church.

The New Testament church was built on evangelism. The rapid growth of the church was a direct result of preaching and sharing the good news. This was God's plan. When Peter and John were asked to stop "evangelizing" they responded that they would rather obey God than man. When a church stops evangelism it starts dying.

3. Evangelism is God's means for unifying His church.

Some people argue that the church should be unified before it engages in evangelism. But it's the mission and the commission that brought unity to the early Christian believers. Which came first? Unity or commission? Acts 1:8 shows that it was the commission. The task was so big that they unified around the mission.

4. Evangelism is God's means of personal, spiritual growth.

- a. Acts 20:20, 35 – it's more blessed to give than to receive
- b. John 21:15 – 17 – Peter would grow as he fed the lambs

Who were the most spiritually mature in Jesus' time? Those who read the Scriptures all day and prayed all day? No – these were the Pharisees! The greatest spirituality was seen in those who worked for and ministered to the lost!

5. Evangelism is God's means of finishing the work.

- a. Matthew 24:14 – the Bible is very clear that the end will not come until the gospel is preached to the world.
- b. 2 Peter 3:9 – God waits for people to come to repentance and to faith. And this faith will not come without the preaching of the Word of God.

SUMMARY

Evangelism is the active preaching of the good news of salvation to a dying and lost world. Evangelism is the work of every believer and should be the priority of ministers and laity alike. We do evangelism because it is the heart passion of God and it is necessary to save the lost, build and unify the church, achieve personal spiritual growth and finish the Work.