

Evangelism, “My life mission should mirror Jesus’ life mission”

Jeff Burden / Westwood Church 12/31/2023

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Before I begin, let me tell you a quick story:

Recently, someone asked me to go to Starbucks, simply because he was newer to Westwood and wanted to connect with people.

- For the first 30 minutes, we both sort of told our life stories and how God had moved and choreographed our lives, our families and our hearts over many decades.
- Then our conversation moved to how awesome God is.
- How He is so amazing to be able to do that same thing with millions of people while balancing every molecule of the universe.
- It became a conversation of awe.
- Being in awe of God’s sovereignty and giving Him the glory for it.

And, that’s exactly what we’re going to be talking about today.

The topic is evangelism, **but the motivation for evangelism must be our awe of God!**

Now, that’s the end of the message, but we need to rewind and first talk about some basics of evangelism.

We’re going to cover 5 points:

- What is the Gospel message?
- What does it mean to “evangelize?”
- The mission of Jesus.
- Our mission as followers of Jesus.
- The role of the Holy Spirit in evangelism.

### 1. What is the Gospel message?

- There may be a few that has never heard it explained.
- Some of you may not have heard it outlined the way Joe read it.
- And, many of you could go much further than that and give even more depth to the Gospel.

Joe did a very good job of reading through the passages that outline the Gospel!

It was very conversational.

- Sometimes we shorten the Gospel to say, “It is that Christ lived, died and was raised on the 3<sup>rd</sup> day to save sinners.”
- And, that’s all true, but there is so much more to the Good news, isn’t there?

Now, let me ask you a question... how many of you, if asked, could share the full gospel message with a friend? I'm not saying with every verse memorized, but give more than a one sentence explanation? You could fully explain it.

*If you would like to have a copy of what Joe read, here's a QR code for downloading that exact outline.*



The word "Gospel" means "good news!" And it is good news!

- The story of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the answer to our greatest question,
  - **"What will I do with my sin?"**
- It is God's response... God's solution to our problem!

Joe went through,

- Scriptures that explain that God is holy and we are not!
- Meaning that we all come into this world with sin, which means we are born with a built-in barrier between us and God.
- Which is exactly why every human born on this planet has to wrestle with the question of our sin.

The Gospel explains that,

- Sin has a cost... and that sinners that come before a holy, perfect God are sent away, permanently!
- **But, God has a solution!** He became a man, in Jesus, to rescue us.
- He lived a perfect life (unlike you and I), meaning He was the perfect sacrifice.
- He died... but then the BEST PART... He rose from the dead!

Why is that important?

- Because, according to 2 Timothy 1:10, Jesus *"shows us a way to have a life that cannot be destroyed!"*

Next is the part that a lot of people struggle with.

- It is the "how" part of salvation.
- Being made right with God isn't us being good enough.
- Being made right with God requires faith in Jesus to be good enough to make us right with God.
- In other words, we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone, through God's grace alone.

in Romans, chapter 10, Paul tells us that we must bring our sin to the Lord, confess it, be willing to walk away from it and claim Jesus as your Lord. It says,

*"That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved."*

That's what you do with your sin! You give it to God. You swap out places with Jesus.

- God became an ordinary man to swap places with you, on the cross.
- That is where he was treated **as if he was us** and punished for our sin.
- So, we can be treated **as if we were Jesus** and accepted as God's child in Heaven.

**One final point:** While the gospel... *Jesus' death, burial and resurrection...* does provide personal salvation to us as sinners, that is not where it ends!

- **In the bigger picture, the gospel is the mission of God to set things right!**
- While changing hearts from death to life, we wait for His kingdom to come.
- He will come and eliminate all sin,
- He will right every wrong,
- bring light to darkness and bring order to this chaos!
- Jesus will come again and bring all things and all history to its proper conclusion.

**And, that's good news... that's a conversation of awe... that's the Gospel!**

## **2. What does it mean to "evangelize?"**

The word "evangelism", simply put, is **sharing** the good news of the gospel.

- I'm sure we could break down the Greek definition, but the bottom line is that when we share the good news with another person, we are evangelizing.
- It literally means "Gospeling." When we evangelize, we are Gospeling!
- In fact, you might notice the word "angel" tucked inside that word —
- All throughout the Bible, we see angels sharing messages.
- They are bringing an announcement... they are messengers, evangelizing!

So, we have our definition.

**Evangelism is the act of sharing the good news of the gospel with the hope of glorifying God and unveiling salvation through faith in Jesus.**

Often, people ask the question, "*When I witness to someone and share my personal testimony, isn't that the same as evangelism?*"

- No. Our testimony is us telling and showing others how our conversion has impacted **our own** lives.
- But, it is not the same as sharing the Gospel message.

30 plus years ago, Ronda and I went through a two-year course by the Navigators that taught us how to share the Gospel with others.

- It was an intense time of training.
- A large part of that process was writing out and memorizing our testimony, how we came to accept Christ as our Savior.
- But, our testimony is merely a warm-up to the bigger story of the full Gospel!

A great example of a simple testimony can be found in John 9:24-25.

- Jesus had healed a man of his blindness on the Sabbath, and the Pharisees had come to the conclusion that Jesus must be a sinner to do such a thing... on a Sunday!
- They were more concerned with His breaking the Sabbath, than they were with the miracle He had performed.
- v24 says, *"...they summoned the man who had been blind. "Give glory to God," they said. "We know this man is a sinner."*
- In other words, give glory to God, but not to Jesus.
- But this man had been changed! And, so with just a few words, he shares his personal testimony, he said, *"Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!"*

You see, sharing our personal testimony is not evangelism.

- It can be a very important lead in to evangelism.
- But, the Gospel is not about what happened to the blind man.
- The Gospel isn't about me, the Gospel message is about Jesus.

**Evangelism is sharing the good news with the hope of glorifying God and unveiling salvation through faith in Jesus.**

### **3. The mission of Jesus.**

- I think it is important that we take some time to talk about this because, if the Gospel is about Jesus, and He is who we follow... we need to examine His purpose, His mission.

He was certainly a man on a mission and was very focused on doing it.

All through His life, Jesus was criticized for rubbing elbows with "sinners."

- The high and mighty Pharisees questioned why Jesus would hang out with the most despised "lowlifes" of society.
- Jesus made this next statement right after calling Matthew (a low-life tax collector) to become a disciple and to follow Him.
- Jesus responded to His critics by stating His mission.
- He said (in Matthew 9), *"It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick... For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."*

Jesus' mission was to save.

- The worldly Pharisees proved their religion by keeping clean.
- Jesus proves his love by getting dirty.

He said it another way, just after an interaction with another tax collector, Zacchaeus, In Luke, chapter 19,

- Again, He reaches out to someone who is marginalized, and says,  
*“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

It is that simple! His mission is not complicated!

**Jesus came to preach the loving message of the Gospel.**

**His mission is to call sinners, to seek and save the lost.**

**To break down that sin barrier and restore communion with God!**

#### **4. What is our mission as a follower of Christ?**

Obviously, like Jesus, we also have a God given purpose.

- No, we cannot do what Jesus did.
- His mission was different in some ways. He was the only one that could die on the cross.
- **But, we have a mission to emulate our hero, to mirror the life of Jesus Christ!**

In John 17, Jesus was very specific about our mission. He was praying for His disciples, and said,

*“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.”*

#### **Our mission is to mirror Jesus’ mission!**

So, make no mistake about it...

- We’ve been sent into the world to evangelize, to share the Good news!
- This is a direct command, so evangelism is not optional.
- And, Jesus is not after passive surrender.
  - The cross was His instrument of world salvation, that’s NOT passive!
  - So, evangelism means that we take up our own cross and actively devote our lives to his mission.
- We are sent to share Jesus and the good news about Him.

The call and command to evangelize is found in several places in Scripture.

Of course, we must look at the great commission found in Matthew 28:16-20.

- This is just after His resurrection, Jesus tells them to gather at a specific mountain where He will appear to the disciples. v16 says,  
*“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”*

Despite a few initial doubts, they finally believed!

In another version of this story, Luke 24 says that Jesus *“opened their minds to understand.”*

- **They saw the risen Christ!**
- They realize fully now, they are before God Himself!
- How do I know? Because it says *“they worshiped Him!”*
- They likely fell on their faces, fully aware of their sinfulness, yet in full communion with their Lord!

Have you experienced that kind of worship?

- When I think of that kind of moment in my own life, I think of the moment that I surrendered my life to Christ.
- I was literally in the bathroom at my office.
- The Holy Spirit was weighing heavy on me.
- And, I finally came to the end of myself, and I surrendered.
- I fell on my face in worship, in that bathroom and cried, fully aware of my sin, and at the same time in full communion with the Lord!

Just like my recent Starbucks meeting, I was in awe of God’s sovereignty and was giving Him the glory for it.

- In fact, my worship of God is my motivation for evangelism.

If you’ve surrendered your life to Christ, if you’ve experienced this kind of worship,

- You won’t worry about offending someone, being shunned by people, or having enough knowledge to share the Gospel.
- **Your worship will be your motivation.**
- We want others to experience God.
- To be forgiven of sin, to have eternal life with a God that loves them.

Next, after a time of worship on that mountain, Jesus stepped up and spoke.

He said,

*“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me (that’s a powerful statement!).  
Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

If Jesus has all authority and Jesus lives in us (His church), don’t we have all we need to then *“go and make disciples?”*

- We do! This is a direct command... go! Share the Gospel! Make disciples!
- In fact, He says *“teach them to obey everything I have commanded you”*
  - What has He commanded us to do? Evangelize!
  - We are to teach other new Christians how to obey Christ’s command to evangelize!

- He says, *“surely, I am with you always!”*
- See, sending implies authority.
- Anyone that is sent must obey the commission of the sender.

Listen, sharing the Gospel (evangelism) is our responsibility!

- Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:16,  
*“Telling the Good News is my duty - something I must do. And how terrible it will be for me if I do not tell the Good News.”*
- We cannot say we believe the gospel and then do nothing about our neighbors who do not have a relationship with Jesus.
- It is our responsibility to tell the people in our lives about Jesus.

And, at the same time it is our privilege!

2 Corinthians 5:18 says,

*“And God has given us the privilege of urging everyone to come into his favor and be reconciled to him... This is the wonderful message he has given us to tell others. We are Christ's ambassadors.”*

But, most of all, evangelism comes from a heart of worship.

- And, the only way you'll ever know that kind of passion is when you are so inter-mingled with the person of Jesus Christ that He can then love others through you.

**Our mission is to mirror Jesus' mission!  
And our awe of Him must be our motivation.**

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So, we now have a clear outline of the Gospel message.

- We have a working definition of “Evangelism.”
- We understand the mission of Jesus and that our mission must mirror His.

So, that leads me into our final point, 5. What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

The main reason I wanted to include this point in today's message is that there can be an uneasy feeling in our gut when we go to share the gospel.

- *“What if it becomes a point of conflict?”*
- *“Will it push them away?”*
- *“Will I know enough to answer their hard questions?”*

Many people, when thinking about evangelism think it's going to be difficult.

- We've all seen videos of street evangelism and it looks very confrontational.
- Or, we've seen Christians that share with a highly intellectual person, debating the finer points through apologetics.
- So, we mistakenly think we either have to be bold and confrontational OR we have to outsmart them with our knowledge.
- But, in reality, neither are true.

When you go to the Scriptures, it's very different.

- Earlier, we read the great commission and nowhere in there did it call us to have some kind of argument or some kind of evidentiary presentation.
- **We're simply called to proclaim the Gospel.**

Now, about the role of the Holy Spirit... Let's look at Acts 1:8.

This is just before Jesus' ascension into heaven, where He said, I'm going up... so, I'm sending the Holy Spirit down, and He said,

"You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Isn't that amazing? *"You will receive power..."* In other words, as Christ's followers, you have the power of the Holy Spirit in you for evangelism!

- This is why you are able to say no to sin, when you didn't before.
- This is why you are able to understand Scripture, when you couldn't before.
- This is why you are able to love others, when you didn't before.
- This is why your worship of God is intimate, when it was not before.
- **And, this is why**, supernaturally, you are able to share the Gospel in a powerful way, like never before!

This passage doesn't say whether or not the Gospel message you share will be accepted or rejected... that's not important.

- He simply says, *"you will receive power... you will be my witnesses."*
- **We are simply called to proclaim the Gospel out of obedience.**

So, remember, the impact of our witness is not reliant on us.

- Yes, we are called to share, but it is the Holy Spirit that saves!
- He is the one that convicts us of sin.
- He is the one illuminates Scripture.
- He can be the only one that draws people to Christ.

We should not become obsessed with "doing it right," but **obsessed with being obedient.**

And, yes, we need help with courage.

- Sometimes the fear of man gets in the way.
- But, that is pride oriented, self-oriented.
- Fear of what they might think of me, fear of how I might look.
- But, as I said earlier, the Gospel isn't about me, it's about Jesus.

So be honest with the Lord, pray that His Spirit will give you confidence to share the Gospel.

- Pray that your words are His words and that they would be impactful.
- Each morning, as you wake, get in a habit of asking the Holy Spirit to give you boldness to share whenever He asks you to share.

With evangelism, there are times when we are to stand firm and share the Gospel and times that we are kept from sharing and should NOT speak up.

- So, we must listen to and follow the lead of the Holy Spirit as He speaks to our hearts!

A moment ago, I said, “we shouldn't be obsessed with “doing it right.””

- **Which stirs another question... does style matter?**
- Should I be prepared?
- Should I memorize certain verses or practice a certain method of evangelism?
- The answer is ‘Yes”, but obedience comes first, and after that comes preparedness.

2 Timothy 4:2 says,

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season.”

And, in 1 Corinthians, chapter 9 (v19-23), Paul talks about adapting to each person that you share with. It says,

“Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible (to Christ). To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law... so as to win those under the law... To the weak I became weak, to win them to Christ. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel.”

Paul is not suggesting that we compromise the Gospel message!

- But, he is suggesting an approach that accounts for different social or religious backgrounds.
- If you are sharing the Gospel with a friend that has a compassionate heart, you will want to put the focus on God's compassion for mankind.
- If you are sharing with an educated intellectual, you might want to approach that conversation with apologetics.
- **So, obedience comes first... and, yes, we should do all we can to be ready to share the message of Jesus!**

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**In today's message** I wanted to focus on the command, the privilege and the obedience of evangelism.

- But, as a church, we want to go further.
- Over the next 3 weeks, I will be leading a Bible study hour class on evangelism at 8:45 am each Sunday morning.
- In those classes, we will talk more about the method, or “how to” of evangelism.

Important things like,

- How to share the Gospel in a way that points to Jesus.
- How to listen to people and their stories.
- The power of introducing your non-Christian friends to your Christian friends.
- The importance of asking simple, safe questions.
- How to share Christ by telling stories, in memorable ways.

In fact, let me give you an example of that last one.

- Tim Keller once said that an unbeliever told him that salvation sounded complicated.
- So, he responded by telling a story from the Bible, in a simple and impactful way.

He said, you know that thought reminds me of when Jesus shared a story from the book of Numbers.

- There was a moment where the children of Israel had fallen into sin, and God sent His wrath against them by bringing a plague of venomous serpents.
- So, there's a plague of serpents that come into the camp of Israel and they bite people and people are dying from the venom.
- So, the people turn to God and say, “save us!”
- And, God says to Moses, go get a pole and put a bronze serpent up on it and just let them look at it.
- And when they look at it, they'll be healed!
- **Then, Jesus says, “That's me.”**
- Because, in the book of John, chapter 3, Jesus said, *“Just as the serpent was lifted up on the pole and all you had to do was look, I will be lifted up and I will save you.”*

So, this guy says to him, “That's really interesting. What did Jesus mean by that?”

- Tim Keller says, Well, what's fascinating about that is that when God says, *“Just look at the serpent,”* what He is saying is really saying is that you will be saved by faith.
- You don't have to DO anything... just look and believe.
- What Jesus is actually saying is, *“See, I save you, not by anything you do, but just looking at me in faith.”*

Isn't that an awesome illustration? Such a simple way to share the Gospel?

In that short story,

- You've shared Scripture,
- You've talked about the consequence of sin,
- You've used the word "Jesus" without getting punched in the face,
- And you've opened the door to a deeper conversation about salvation by faith and not by works!

Listen, here at WW, we want to create a culture **of evangelism**.

So, what does that look like?

- Well, it can't be dictated from the pulpit.
- It has to be a grass roots movement, from the bottom up.
- Church leaders can and should model it, but the members have to own it.
- If we attend week in and week out aren't passionate about sharing our faith individually, then the church as a whole has not been obedient.

So, we want to create a culture that is,

1. Motivated by love for Jesus and His Gospel.
2. A culture that sees people clearly.
3. One that pulls together as one, learning from each other.
4. A culture that models evangelism.
5. A culture in which people who are sharing their faith are celebrated.

We must understand and grasp the fact that the church only becomes evangelistic as its members become more evangelistic!

So, your homework for our first class is to print the full Gospel from our QR code and read over it several times this week!

And, as you go from here today, please make it your mission to mirror Jesus' mission and lovingly share the Gospel.

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Prayer