

How to Be a Real Evangelist

These days, everyone's an evangelist—and not in a biblical sense. Until recently the word *evangelist* was reserved for a Christian who shared the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet in today's marketing-driven corporate culture it's become an everyday term for anyone fervent about sharing a "message"—which could be anything from buying TOMS shoes to avoiding sushi to growing your stock portfolio.

While the secular world waters down the term, the church in America is showing early signs of returning to its roots of spreading the Good News. Evangelism—relegated in recent years as a function primarily for those in the office of an evangelist—is making its way back as a fundamental part of the Christian walk for everyone.

That's right, we're *all* called to be evangelists in the purest sense as we share the life-changing message of Christ. And as we reawaken to this calling, we would do well to take notes from Jesus' very first evangelists. Though technically the first evangelist was the angel announcing Christ's birth, the first *human* evangelists were those who heard that message: the shepherds. Despite being regarded socially as the lowest of the low in that day, these down-and-outers still serve as a model for evangelism 2,000 years later. And their response upon hearing the Good News reminds us of four key aspects of our calling to spread the Word.

1. They took action. Immediately. Luke 2 says, "When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about'" (v. 15, NIV). As soon as the angels left, the shepherds didn't sit around "processing" the news or keeping it on the down-low. They bolted for Bethlehem!

How quickly do we respond today to the call to share the gospel? Is the evangelistic fire in you burning as strong as when you first followed Jesus? I hope it's even stronger, but if not, ask God to reignite that urgency. The key thing, whether you're a new or old believer, is to do *something*!

2. They spread the word. Luke's account says, "When they had seen [Jesus], they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child" (v. 17). The shepherds didn't complicate things; they simply repeated what they'd been told by the angel. These outdoorsmen weren't the wisest guys around (those would show up on the scene later), but they also weren't the idiots we sometimes hear them portrayed to be. They were culturally informed enough to understand what the angel spoke to them about, and they shared with others what they knew.

But let's not overlook the importance of what they shared: It wasn't their own knowledge, insight into the situation or personal opinions. They simply repeated "what had been told them about this child" by the angel. How often do we hear the Holy Spirit's words of direction and add our two cents' worth every time we relay the message? Or how often do we feel the need to embellish the gospel when we share it with others, subconsciously (or maybe consciously, God forbid) fearing that maybe it's inadequate as is and needs a touch of relevance and modern-day marketing so we'll get better results? Our job as messengers of the Good News is simple: We are to repeat what we've been told. Let's not let our concern for how we present the gospel trump the fact that the gospel speaks for itself.

3. They let the message be the focus, not them. Upon hearing the Good News, "all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them" (v. 18). Notice this verse doesn't say those who heard were amazed that a group of social outcasts were the messengers. The focus was purely on the message, just as it needs to be for us.

4. They continued to worship. Can you imagine hearing and seeing that night's unforgettable encore session sung by the heavenly host? It's as if heaven couldn't contain the thrill of this moment's eternal meaning and the veil between the seen and unseen was, for a brief time, peeled back just for the shepherds. The angelic worship left such an imprint on them that they were still "glorifying and praising God" when they got back to their fields (v. 20). And I doubt their countenance would've changed whether others had believed their message or not; their hearts were too full of worship to bother with public opinion.

Not everyone accepts the Good News when we share it. But do our hearts remain filled with worship in the face of rejection?

We bear the same life-changing news the shepherds carried that night. This Christmas—and beyond—let's respond with the same passion to spread the gospel.

Marcus Yoars *is the editor of Charisma. Check out his blog at or connect with him via Twitter at @marcusyoars or on Facebook (marcusyoars).*