

Evangelism Is ...

Why our call to share the gospel involves more than words and theology

People talk about presenting the gospel in a nutshell, but actually it can only be in a person. It is more than a formula for getting to heaven when you die—a few texts from John and Romans are enough for that. The gospel offers life, not just a life belt. Because of this, the essence of evangelism—sharing this life—is to say and show who God is.

Evangelism is not a matter of simply mouthing words of God's pitying love to spell out theology. An evangelist's heart should beat in tune with the heartbeat of God, sensing His longings and compassion. Because God's longing is to find the lost, an evangelist's job is to win people for Christ, not to preach to sleeping Christians and revive dead churches. In fact, an evangelist's ministry is misdirected if it is aimed at the saints of God. The gift of **evangelism is** given for him to make contact with unconverted men and women for Christ.

The disciples did not just pray and sit around waiting for God "to enter the field" to convert the world independently by direct contact with unbelievers. It was their job to make contact with people. They went out into the world so that the Holy Spirit could go out into the world. Mark 16:20 says: "The Lord worked with them" (NIV). It does not say they went with the Lord. They went, and He went along. If we truly follow Jesus, then Jesus follows us. When and where they moved, God moved also. The Holy Spirit's workings go with our workings. Natural effort releases divine effort. Not all **evangelism is** revival, but there's never yet been a revival without evangelism. Man needs God's power and God needs manpower.

The New Testament from Acts onwards makes evangelism the natural function of all who follow Christ. In fact, **evangelism**

is following Christ, for that is what He mainly did. Faith and its propagation are two sides of the same coin. **Evangelism is** part of Christianity as light belongs to the sun. A believer has no option: He must be engaged in telling others about his faith. The church is the society for the propagation of the gospel. **Evangelism is** nothing less than God loving people through us. The beginning of the Christian church was an outpouring of the Spirit that moved the apostles and moved the people who heard Peter preaching. The only facts they knew were that they had killed Jesus seven weeks earlier and were being accused of His death. Peter had been with Jesus. He adored Him, imitated Him and had picked up His accent—or so I would believe. But one thing seems clear: Though Peter accused the crowd, he didn't get their backs up. His tone was not hostile. Perhaps his words were reproachful, yet he spoke the truth with love. These people had killed his best friend, but he told them that God forgave and washed away their sin.

Evangelism is the preaching *of* the Word, *by* the Word. On that point I'm not worried about overemphasis, because there is a massive emphasis in another direction. There are mountains of books, articles and sermons from Christian sources, but they seem to be just what writers and preachers think, and these outpourings seem to have little or nothing to do with the Bible. Yet ministers are *ministers of the Word*, not of moral reflections.

Evangelism is spiritual warfare. Paul talks about the weapons of our warfare being the Word of God. The world is occupied territory in rebel hands. The whole world was under satanic rule, but when Christ came the forces of the kingdom of God began to assert themselves. For the first time demons were expelled by order as a sign of the kingdom authority in Christ.

Evangelism is not a desperate business. It is a joy. Preach it—and watch it work! It's as simple as that. The way into the experience of spiritual life is not by mysticism, meditation,

deprivation and fasting. It is not by sacraments or learning or suggestion of church architecture or music or poetry. It is by the Word of God, the gospel. We are not preaching a *process* but a finished work, simply to be put into effect.

Reinhard Bonnke, *an evangelist and author, is founder of Orlando, Christ for all Nations, which since the start of the new millennium has recorded 55 million decisions for Christ. His latest book, Taking Action: Receiving and Operating in the Gifts and Power of the Holy Spirit, released in May 2012.*