

Is Much of Today's Evangelism Doing More Damage Than Good?

Here are four reasons why much of today's evangelism is actually hurting the advance of the kingdom.

The Great Commission is such a serious mandate that we have no option but to get it right. In fact, with Hell growing larger and innumerable people flooding into that unspeakable place every day, we must sound the alarm, preach the truth and rescue the perishing.

Yes, evangelism is critically necessary—if done rightly.

1. It Lacks a Spirit of Prayer

I was flown into a church in a large city many years ago to help with some video work. I had some free time the night I arrived, so I decided to check out the church and to see if they had anything going on. I was happily surprised to see a sign announcing a prayer meeting that was underway. I was saddened by what I saw as I stepped into the large sanctuary.

There was no spirit of prayer at the prayer meeting. In fact, there were only a few people standing around in that massive auditorium. It was dead, which was markedly different from what I expected based on the size of the church and the fact that it was a Spirit-filled congregation.

I quickly learned that prayer was not job one in that place. Evangelism was. I've never been in a church that emphasized soul winning to such a degree, and one would think I should have been thrilled. I was not.

As I spent time with people and pastors in that church, I witnessed very well-intentioned but awkward, forced, scripted and manipulated gospel presentations to anyone who would

listen. While it's true that God's Word can work wonders with no additional help from you and me, it's also true that our delivery of the Word can be dead or alive, weak or powerful, tainted by our human spirit or anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Evangelism efforts that don't emerge from the white-hot furnace of intercession will most often be dead, weak and tainted. Those who hear what we are saying will most often resist, sensing no vibrancy or activity of the Holy Spirit at all. People who could have surrendered all if evangelism was done rightly, delivered with a burning unction, results instead with people being repelled by whatever stench just emerged from our souls.

2. There's No Mention of Sin, Repentance, Hell or the Cross

Much of today's prophetic evangelism zeros in on how wonderful God thinks people are to the exclusion of acknowledging their depravity. They are awakened to the possibility of love without understanding the radical surrender that's necessary.

It's quite possible many of these people are saying yes to the invitation and begin following Jesus in an unsaved condition. They don't understand how deadly their life of sin was because the evangelist didn't mention it. A false-grace theology can drive gospel presentations like this, presuming a revelation of God's love is sufficient to draw people out of their old life and into the new. That's not biblical evangelism, and it puts the hearers at great risk of adopting a compromised religion.

It wouldn't surprise me if multiplied millions of people who have "gotten saved" this way are currently lost, seduced by a version of love that's not legitimate. They are convinced that God's love is what seals their position when it's actually their radical response that is key.

3. It Becomes Primary for Every Christian

There are many verses in Scripture that make it clear that we should be ministering, sharing truth and advancing the kingdom. Yes, we are to do the work of an evangelist; however, that verse makes it clear that not everybody is an evangelist. It would do us well to understand this.

The church I mentioned above put strong pressure on everyone in the body to evangelize always in every environment. The problem? Evangelists are wired, gifted and anointed to do this. The rest are gifted in other areas, and they should be free to minister mostly according to how they are put together by God.

Teachers, for example, are called by God to mostly reveal powerful truths to believers. Their anointing will be most pronounced in that realm, and it would be smart to allow them to study and relay what they discover to the church.

On the contrary, if you put some evangelists behind the pulpit, you may cringe as they attempt to communicate scriptural truths beyond the mission to win the lost.

Simply, we all have our calling. Yes, there is cross-training involved, and we should be “instant in and out of season,” about to “do the work of an evangelist” and to preach truth in any setting. However, outside of the call for all to pray as a primary life focus, everybody has a different gift mix and calling.

4. It Displaces the Focus on Revival

I personally believe the faster route to the harvest is revival. Just as I shared in point one that it's important to start in the prayer room, a focus on revival will lay a foundation that can withstand the influx of hungry, repentant people.

It's not either/or. It's both/and. However, if we focus initially on prayer and revival, and if we prepare the people

in both of these disciplines, the anointing to do the work of the ministry, including evangelism, will be electric.

Evangelists often (not always) struggle with the idea that the primary call is to pray. An evangelist who had the most tender heart and who could be found on the streets witnessing night after night asked me, "John, your church is so focused on prayer. Where will I bring people when they get saved? I can't expect them to come to such an environment."

I challenged him. I said this is precisely the environment they need to experience the moments after they meet Jesus! This supernatural, vibrant atmosphere where the Holy Spirit is brooding and moving will result in a baptism of power they will never forget!

Simply, we want people to meet Jesus in the place of raging, searing, life-altering revival!

Final Thoughts

You might argue, "Well, at least people are doing it! At least they are sharing the gospel!"

I get it. That makes sense. And, again, I do want to applaud those who are taking those bold steps to share truth. However, I believe it's important to analyze our motives and methods. After all, we are dealing with human lives, and their eternities very well may be determined by our ministry. We should feel the sobering, weighty intensity to that reality.

We absolutely need a vibrant, active spirit of prayer when we are talking about Jesus.

We need to communicate the truth of sin, hell, repentance and the cross.

It's important to appreciate and activate people in their specific gifts and offices.

And, by all means, a mass movement of revival will result in an introduction to Jesus that will be conducted by the Holy Spirit with supernatural, otherworldly precision.

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