



The Christian Woman *and* Evangelism

Key Verses:

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2

Evangelism (a time to plant, a time to reap). Solomon, the Old Testament teacher who devoted himself to study and wise exploration of everything done on earth, found all of man's labors to be meaningless (Ecclesiastes 1:12-14). In the midst of his ruminating, Solomon declared, "There is a time for everything: a time

to plant and a time to pluck up" (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2b). Obviously, planting and harvesting are the literal meanings to be drawn from this section.

God set seasons in motion, and those who plant must follow a general schedule if a harvest is intended. Many modern gardeners refer to *The Old Farmer's Almanac* to get long-range weather forecasts and predictions about the best times to plant. These predictions are about 80% accurate.

In Christian studies, we often use gardening symbolically as we consider sharing Christ with others. *Planting seed* relates to telling others about Christ, and *harvesting the crops* relates to the actual experience of individuals coming into a relationship with Christ.

There is a time to plant (share the Gospel), and that time is now. It is the only time we can be sure of. Christian women must be involved in both phases of this gardening. We are to spread the seed of the Gospel and be involved in the harvest.

The Meaning of Evangelism

After studying everything done on earth, Solomon stated that the whole duty of mankind is to fear God and keep his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13). Shortly before His ascension, Jesus told His followers to make new disciples in all nations and to teach them to keep

all His commandments (Matthew 28:18-20). Obviously, mankind keeping His commandments is important to God. It is not just a simple wish, but rather a plan that influences the eternal destiny of humankind.

In Christianity, a disciple is someone who believes in Jesus as Savior and obediently follows Him as Lord. Modern followers of Jesus are disciples, though that label is not typically used. Each modern disciple inherits this command to make disciples, and the first part of fulfilling that commandment is what we call evangelism.

The dictionary defines *evangelism* as: "The spreading of Christianity, especially through the activities of evangelists." Thanks to such a simple definition, with a finger pointing to the part about activities of *evangelists*, people often claim an excuse often used for not sharing the message of Christ with others. A better definition for evangelism is this: "Telling the good news of Jesus Christ to other people. It is done with the goal of leading people to salvation through belief in Jesus. All believers are commanded to tell others the gospel (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)".¹

Although Paul wrote that God gifts the church with some people who are called to be evangelists,

he did not state or imply that all other Christians are not to do evangelism (Ephesians 4:11-13). Sharing the Gospel does not take special gifting and is not limited to those called to ministry leadership roles.

Exploration and Interaction With the Word

Read the following passages and write a comprehensive paragraph that summarizes the evangelistic responsibilities Jesus gave to His followers. Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8

Based on Matthew 28:20, how can we know Jesus meant this commission to be for all His followers of both present and future times?

¹Debbie Dodd. *Dictionary of Theological Terms in Simplified English*. (Wheaton, IL: EMIS, 2003)

Part of the task of making disciples in Matthew 28:20 involves “teaching them to observe (i.e., obey, keep) all things I have commanded you.” If every new generation of Christians obediently keeps His commandments, then discipling will continue until the end of time. Thankfully, this commission has been taken seriously down through the ages, for you and I got the message from someone. Now, it’s our turn to pass it on.

Reflection and Response

What does this study mean to you personally? Focus on this question as you pray and ask God to give you direction and opportunity to be His witness to the people in your circle of influence.

The Power of Evangelism

How do you feel when the pastor delivers a sermon on the need for all Christ followers to share Christ with others? Do you shake your head in agreement but feel pangs of guilt because of a weakness in this area? Do you pray for boldness but secretly avoid opportunities to speak of Christ to others?

Many people experience anxiety and fear with the very thought of doing evangelism. The image of going door-to-door or a fear of failure scares many would-be-witnesses into paralysis regarding the important ministry of sharing Christ with those who do not

know Him. Consequently, many of us think our life of service to Christ and good moral living is enough, while an actual verbal witness is something for professional ministers or skilled speakers.

Yes, living a good and exemplary life is important in our witness for Christ. It provides a positive influence on others. Yet, more is needed if people without Christ are going to be introduced to Him properly. Many people seem to lack the ability to speak publicly about their faith, but they usually manage to speak casually to family and friends about other subjects of importance.

The purpose of this study is to help you realize the following:

- Speaking boldly for Christ requires more than natural ability, it requires Holy Spirit empowerment.
- Praying for boldness and opportunity to share Christ is the first step toward becoming enabled and emboldened by the Spirit.

In his letter to the Roman believers, Paul asked some very pointed questions: “How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?” (Romans 10:14-15)

In the second question of verse 14, Paul clearly indicated that

belief in Christ rests on hearing about Him. In verse 17, he stated, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Obviously, the Jesus story must be shared with people if they are going to come to Him by faith and receive His gift of salvation.

Exploration and Interaction With the Word

Review the words of commission in Matthew 28:18-20, especially the last phrase. Read the following passages and answer the related questions below: Acts 1:8; 2:1-41; 4:23-31.

What did Jesus promise and what was the purpose? (Acts 1:8).

How was the promise fulfilled, and what were some of the early results? (Acts 2:1-41).

Fill in details regarding prayer for boldness to speak His story:

Affirm God's sovereignty (Acts 4:24-28).

Make specific requests (Acts 4:29-30).

Receive and act on God's answer to the prayer requests (Acts 4:31).

The key to the ability and boldness of those who witnessed and the reception of those who believed and began to follow the risen Christ was the Holy Spirit. None of the people who preached or taught or simply shared the story of Christ with friends and family could have convinced people to turn to Jesus. Only through the power of the Spirit could this message be conveyed effectively and could lives be changed (John 16:5-14; 1 Corinthians 2:4-5; 1 Peter 4:11).

Reflection and Response

Consider what you've learned or reviewed in this study. Spend some time in prayer affirming God's sovereignty and asking for boldness to be His witness. Pray in faith, believing He will answer, then trust Him (Hebrews 11:6).

The Simplicity of Evangelism

One reason some women hesitate to share their faith story with others is their concern over not knowing what to say. That is a legitimate concern, but if you have a relationship with Christ you have something to share. You have a story, so get ready to tell it!

Do you remember hearing about a Samaritan woman who met Jesus at a well outside her city? You can

read about that meeting in John 4:1-30, 39-42. One approach to the study of this passage might direct us to consider methods Jesus used to approach this woman. Pay particular attention to what the woman did after spending time with Jesus in verse 28.

Shouldn't she have been embarrassed? Did she expect the people to believe her? This woman's simple story, and the power of the Holy Spirit working through that story, resulted in many Samaritans believing in Jesus as the Christ.

When a woman tells someone her personal story of relationship with Christ, something about that story might pique the hearer's curiosity. Then what? If that friend asks questions, the witness should be ready to give answers (1 Peter 3:15). There are other helpful options: take the inquiring friend to a church service or small group; introduce her to another friend prepared to share more of the Good News; offer to join her in a Bible study where the Gospel is clearly presented in the lessons.

Exploration and Interaction With the Word

From John's story of how the first disciples came to follow Christ, we can draw out a few key principles regarding evangelism. Read the following Scripture passage and jot down the names

of the witnesses and the simple words they used when sharing Christ. John 1:35-51.

Based on what you've found here, what principles can be drawn about evangelism today?

Andrew and another man asked Jesus a question because of their interest in the one John the Baptist had pointed out as the Lamb of God. Jesus just invited them to come and see. Then, after a few hours with Jesus, Andrew went to his brother, Simon Peter, told him about finding the promised Messiah, and led him to Jesus.

The next day, Jesus found Philip, and invited him to follow. Philip then found Nathanael and told him about finding the One who had been promised in Scripture. Philip invited Nathanael to come and see for himself who this teacher was. Nathanael met Jesus, believed, and began to follow Him.

These are not long elaborate testimonials. What we have in the written Word of God is the record of people meeting Jesus, spending some time with Him, and then

telling others about Him. They don't stop there, however. They also invite them to come and see, to find out for themselves who this man really is.

Reflection and Response

These studies are not here to help you simply learn or review information about evangelism. If you need to share Christ more than you have in the past, ask your Christian friends to pray with

you about this. Pray, rely on the Lord's power, share your story of a relationship with Christ, share His story, and invite others to find out for themselves who this Jesus is, so they, too, might know Him as Savior and Lord.

Evangelism For All

We know God truly loved the world because He created it, and He gave His Son, Jesus, for the redemption of those who would believe (John 3:16). We know Jesus identified with humans by "incarnating" or becoming human (John 1:14; Philippians 2:6-11). We should also know that God wants us to have the same "mind" or "attitude" as Jesus (Philippians 2:5). So, what does this mean?

Since we are specifically dealing with the role of women in evangelism, consider what it means to be like Christ in our approach to the unbelieving population of the world. We need to remember that the followers of Christ are to be making disciples among all people groups (Matthew 28:19). Obviously, we are not all meant to be foreign missionaries, but we are all to be involved in making disciples.

A beneficial resource, in print and DVD lessons:

Bill Hybels, *Just Walk Across the Room: Simple Steps Pointing People to Faith*. (Zondervan Press, 2006). ISBN 0-310-26669-6

DVD Series for group study produced by Zondervan with Willow Creek Association.

With whom in your community might you have an evangelistic influence?

To help you answer this question, consider the following:

Who are the people you spend most of your time with? Are there any non-Christians among them?

Do you have any friends outside the church? If your answer is no, then perhaps you should look for ways to meet and get to know non-Christians. (Ideas: PTA involvement, senior citizen organizations, snack room breaks at work, etc. Consider your unique environments.)

Are there any colleges or universities in your area? Did you know

there are thousands of international students at these institutions who would love to have an American friend? (You can get more information about becoming friendship partners with international students via International Students, Inc: www.isionline.org)

Exploration and Interaction With the Word

Read the following suggested Scripture passages and answer the related questions:

Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24; John 4:22. What can we know about the concern of Jesus for His own people, the Jews?

Matthew 8:1-4, 5-13; 15:21-28; Luke 9:55; 10:25-37; 17:11-19; John 3:16-17; 4:4-42; 10:14-16. What can we know about the concern of Jesus for all peoples, even those outside Judaism?

If we are to be like Christ in our evangelistic concern and passion, what principles must we understand? (Base these principles from your review of Jesus' concerns in questions 1 and 2.)

Unless we embrace the population around us, develop friendships with people who need Christ, and share our best friend (Jesus) with them, we are missing opportunities to obey the Great Commission, in spite of our participation in sending missionaries to foreign lands. Jesus was especially concerned about His own people, regardless of their rejection of Him. His concern and love did not stop with His own, as we know. He died for the world, people of all ethnicities. We must get this Good News out in an understandable way, to all who haven't heard it.

Reflection and Response

Do you believe the message of John 3:16? Aren't you glad someone told you the Good News of Jesus Christ? Please pray for boldness, opportunities, and the words to say as you share the message of Jesus with others. The commandment (Matthew 28:18-20) has rolled forward to each of us. Now, what will we do with it?

About the writer: Janice Banks has been active in Christian ministry since graduation from Welch College. She recently retired from teaching full-time at Hillsdale FWB College.