

PASTORS

# Vol. 11 -- Do the Work of an Evangelist

*Pastoral evangelism: preaching the Gospel clearly, building evangelistic relationships, equipping the congregation, and modeling the evangelistic life*

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*Equipping pastors and leaders to serve with excellence, integrity, and lasting Kingdom impact.*



# The Evangelistic Pastor

Paul's charge to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 -- "do the work of an evangelist" -- is addressed to a person who is clearly a pastor-teacher by gifting, not a traveling evangelist. The command does not say "be an evangelist." It says do the work. This distinction matters enormously for pastors who do not have the evangelistic gift as their primary calling but who lead congregations that will become inward-focused, self-sustaining spiritual clubs unless someone models and champions the work of reaching those who are not yet in the room.

Paul himself described his evangelistic compulsion in the most visceral terms: "Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16). It was not a duty he performed -- it was a fire he could not suppress. The evangelistic pastor does not need to replicate Paul's particular personality or approach. But he does need to recover something of that compulsion -- the sense that the Gospel is so important, so urgent, so genuinely good news -- for genuinely lost people, that not sharing it is a form of cruelty by omission.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."*

-- Romans 1:16

Churches grow in two ways: transfer growth (believers from other congregations joining) and conversion growth (people coming to faith who were previously outside the Kingdom). Transfer growth makes a church bigger but does not make the Kingdom larger. Conversion growth does both. The church that is not regularly seeing people come to faith is not fulfilling the Great Commission regardless of how full its pews are on Sunday morning. The pastor who is not personally engaged in evangelism will typically lead a congregation that is not engaged in evangelism, because the congregation tends to mirror the pastor's actual priorities rather than his stated ones.

## A Theology of Evangelism That Actually Motivates

Most pastors know they should evangelize. Very few are doing it consistently. The gap between the "should" and the "am" is not primarily a strategy gap -- it is a motivational and theological one. The pastor who is not evangelizing has usually either allowed the busyness of ministering to the existing congregation to crowd out engagement with those outside it; developed a social world composed almost entirely of Christians; or lost some of the evangelistic urgency that came from a fresh understanding of what is actually at stake.

The recovery of evangelistic motivation begins with a theological recalibration: recovering the conviction that the Gospel is actually the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16), that apart from faith in Christ people are genuinely lost (Romans 3:23, 6:23), that the harvest is real and plentiful (Matthew 9:37-38), and that God has chosen to accomplish his saving purposes through the spoken word of human witnesses (Romans 10:14-17). The pastor who has lost his evangelistic urgency has usually lost not his belief in these propositions but his felt conviction of their reality.

## Building Evangelistic Relationships

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Most contemporary evangelism training focuses on technique. But techniques solve a secondary problem. The primary problem is not that Christians lack a method for presenting the Gospel; it is that they lack the relationships in which the Gospel can be naturally shared. Research suggests that the average Christian who has been attending church for five or more years has virtually no close friendships with non-Christians. Their entire social world has migrated inside the church. This makes evangelism nearly impossible, because there is no one to share the Gospel with.

The evangelistic pastor must first address this in his own life: Who are the non-Christians in his world? Not acquaintances, not incidental contacts -- genuine relationships characterized by mutual interest, shared activity, and the kind of repeated contact that builds real trust. If the honest answer is "very few," the first evangelistic step is relational, not theological. Join a gym, a neighborhood group, a civic organization, a hobby community. Develop friendships before you have a ministry agenda. Earn the right to speak about what matters most by demonstrating genuine interest in the other person.

#### **PRACTICAL STEP**

This week, write the names of five non-Christians with whom you have a genuine ongoing relationship. If you cannot name five, that is the most important evangelism data you have received. Your first evangelistic act is not a Gospel presentation -- it is initiating a relationship.

### **Listening as Evangelism**

The best evangelism begins with listening. Not listening for an opening to make your pitch, but genuine curiosity about the other person's experience of life, meaning, suffering, and transcendence. Most non-Christians have a spiritual life of some kind -- experiences they cannot explain, longings that nothing material has satisfied, questions they have never had a safe space to ask. The pastor who approaches evangelistic relationships with genuine curiosity rather than a predetermined script will find far more openness than the one who is waiting for the right moment to deliver a memorized presentation.

### **Preaching the Gospel Clearly**

The evangelistic pastor also preaches evangelistically -- not exclusively, but consistently. Every sermon series should have a Gospel thread woven through it. The invitation to respond to Christ should be a regular feature of the worship service, not a special event. The language of the Gospel -- grace, forgiveness, redemption, new life, reconciliation -- should be the default vocabulary of the pulpit rather than insider theological jargon that assumes everyone already believes.

Preaching the Gospel clearly means preaching it fully: not just the benefits of Christianity but its demands; not just the love of God but the reality of sin; not just the peace available in Christ but the surrender he requires. The Gospel that costs nothing, that asks nothing, that merely improves the life you were already living, is not the Gospel of the New Testament. The full Gospel is costlier and more beautiful than any partial version of it.

### **Equipping the Congregation for Evangelism**

The pastor who wants an evangelistic congregation must equip and release the congregation for evangelism, not just model it himself. Effective congregational evangelism equipping involves: preaching that regularly celebrates conversion and creates evangelistic vision; small group structures where members share about their non-Christian relationships and pray for them by name; training in the basics of sharing one's faith naturally in conversation; and a celebration culture that makes a significant event of every person who comes to faith.

The most powerful congregational evangelism tool is the personal testimony. Training members to tell their story -- what life was like before faith, what led them to faith, and what is different now -- in two to three minutes gives them an evangelistic tool that is inherently non-threatening, deeply personal, and immune to intellectual argument. Testimonies cannot be argued against; they can only be received. Build a culture of testimony-sharing within the congregation and watch the evangelistic culture shift.

## Reflection Questions

1. Who are the non-Christians in your life with whom you have a genuine ongoing relationship? When did you last have a substantive conversation about faith with any of them?
2. When was the last time someone came to faith through your congregation? What were the circumstances? What does your answer reveal about the evangelistic culture of the community?
3. What does your congregation understand to be their role in evangelism? How are you equipping and releasing them for it?
4. How does your Sunday service communicate (or fail to communicate) welcome to a spiritual seeker who has never attended church before?

*The Gospel is the most important news in the history of the world, and you have been entrusted with it. Not to keep it safe inside a beautiful building on Sunday mornings, but to take it into every relationship and every conversation where human beings are carrying the weight of their lostness. Do the work of an evangelist -- because the harvest is real, and the harvesters are few.*

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