

WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

by George W. Robertson

TO THE GROUP LEADER: This resource is designed to help you lead others to better understand one of the “Basics of the Faith” booklets published by P&R. The numbers in brackets indicate the page number in the booklet. Below each question is an answer based on what the author presents, or advice on how to discuss the question. You have the freedom to adapt the questions to best fit your group.

A good teaching technique is to distribute the questions to the group and have them write down how they would answer BEFORE reading the booklet. After reading, members can refine their answers based on their reading. As a group, members can discuss their views to affirm or modify what they wrote.

1. What do you mean by *evangelism*? Try to give more than a simple “Sunday School” answer. (5)
The word means “good news.” Therefore, evangelism is sharing the good news of what Jesus has done for us through his life, death, and resurrection.
2. Is it our responsibility to convince people of the truth of the gospel? (6)
Thankfully, the responsibility is not on us to convince them. We are called to proclaim the gospel with a desire that it would persuade them. Only the Holy Spirit has the power to change the heart from one of stone to a heart of flesh. This takes the burden off of us to convince, but we are still called to proclaim the gospel and pray for its effective application to the heart by the Holy Spirit.
3. Does the truth of the gospel only seek to reach the spiritual side of people? (7-8)
No, the gospel reaches every part of human needs. Therefore, we are able to approach people where they are hurting the most and show them how Jesus cares and can meet every need.
4. You have a story of how you came to Christ. On a separate piece of paper, write your testimony with the idea of limiting it to three minutes. A good testimony has three parts: First, what my life was before Christ. (Keep this short. Don’t exaggerate. Don’t get into too many details.) Secondly, how Christ wonderfully transformed my life through the gospel. Thirdly, the difference Christ has made in my life since he saved me. (8-12)
Go over these with each person. Help them to state it clearly and keep within the three minutes.
5. What do you think have been the two most effective ways God has used to bring people to him? (13-17)
Dr. Robertson, on page 15, refers to Thom Rainer’s study, which shows the two most effective ways have been: each of us sharing our testimony directly to an unbeliever, and the second is by bringing them to church. Also, point out the methods that have been shown to be less effective – but still useful.
6. Since you are able to invite people to come with you to church, then how far should you be willing to go to where they are or they invite you to go? (17-21)
We should be willing to go almost anywhere, even places that make us uncomfortable. If these are the places they are comfortable, then we should be willing to go for the sake of the gospel. However, if we know the place or activity is forbidden by God, or is too tempting for us, then we should gracefully thank them and suggest an alternative.

7. What keeps you from freely sharing the gospel? Be honest!
Rather than spend a lot of time on this, get their answers and try to work on some practical solutions.

8. What things can you do to try to open up an opportunity to dialogue about your faith? (22-26)
Go through some of the ideas mentioned in the text. Also collect the ideas coming from the group. See if there might be some mutual ideas the group might be able to implement for sharing the gospel, either individually or as a group.

9. Read John 1:43-51. What two mistakes did Philip make in witnessing to Nathanael? (26-30)
 - a. Philip said Jesus was from Nazareth. Nathanael knew the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem.

 - b. Philip said Jesus was the son of Joseph when he was the son of God.

What encouragement can we get from Philip's mistakes?

The story ends with Philip simply telling Nathanael to come with him to meet Jesus, and Nathanael does. We will make mistakes, and we will not know every answer to every question or argument presented to us. We must remember, it is the Holy Spirit who is at work and will make any changes in the heart of the one hearing the gospel. If we don't know an answer, that is okay. We can always tell them we will check it out and get back to him or her. God can and does use us in spite of our shortcomings.

After going through these questions, read the text and fill in the answers in preparation for class, noting other questions you might have. [By the way, if you do have any other questions about what you read, write them down here so you remember them at class time.]

APPLICATION

As a Group:

Each member of the group should make a list of 5 people they know with whom they can share the gospel. The whole group is to commit to praying for each person on someone else's list, as well as their own. Each person, during this next week, is to set up a time to meet with one person on that list within the next two weeks. The person praying for that individual is to stay in contact to help encourage the other to follow through on this. Each week the group is to continue praying together for the Holy Spirit to be working in the lives of those you want to reach, as well as your own hearts.

For Further Study

Powerful Evangelism for the Powerless, C. John Miller. P&R, 1997.
Evangelism Explosion, D. James Kennedy. Tyndale, 1996.
Living Proof: Sharing the Gospel Naturally, Jim Peterson. NavPress, 1988.

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