

What evangelism is *not*

Kevin Shrum

Let's define evangelism by what it is not and then by what it is.

Evangelism is not ...

1. Evangelism is not denominational renewal, reconstruction or even de-construction. Sometimes these are necessary to advance the cause of evangelism, but they are not evangelism. Denominations and ecclesiastical structures need occasional, healthy upheaval. But unless we're careful we may end up thinking that one more meeting and a new way of doing things constitutes evangelism. Structural re-organizations may end up being commensurate with re-arranging chairs on the deck of the Titanic.
2. Evangelism is not inviting people to church or an evangelistic event. Inviting people to events is important, but it's not evangelism -- it is pre-evangelism.
3. Evangelism is not imposing our will or beliefs on another person. We make no apologies for attempting to persuasively make the case for Christianity. But in the end only God can change the human heart.
4. Evangelism is not personal testimony. A personal testimony does not save a sinner. The Gospel does. It's quite right to support a Gospel presentation with what the Gospel has done in one's life. Yet, we must never confuse the Gospel itself with a personal testimony.
5. Evangelism is not social work/justice or political involvement. There's absolutely nothing wrong with seeking social justice, feeding the homeless, clothing the naked, and addressing institutional-political injustices. But social justice, food in a hungry belly, and a jacket on the back of a homeless man do not prepare that soul for eternity. Good deeds complement the Gospel enterprise; they do not replace it.
6. Evangelism is not doing apologetics in order to win an argument. Apologetics is a necessary part of the Christian mission. Apologetics can help answer questions and remove intellectual objections, but only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can change the heart.
7. Evangelism is not the results of evangelism. It is very easy to get caught up in numbers in the church business. And numbers are important. Even Jesus told three successive stories involving numbers in Luke 15 -- one lost sheep, one lost coin, and two lost sons. But souls are not notches in our belt or numbers on our denominational charts. "One" represents a precious soul for whom Christ died. This means that we are to communicate the Gospel regardless of the results -- God alone takes care of the results.
8. Evangelism is not church planting. Church planting is biblical and necessary. Many church plants succeed at a higher rate of growth than already established churches. But it's not because of the magical words -- "church plant." The reason church plants grow fast for a season is because the believers of that new church have been reminded of the basics of one person sharing the Good News with another person.

Evangelism is ...

So, what is evangelism? Evangelism is a believer sharing the person/claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ with a person who has yet to believe the claims of the Gospel or trust the person at the center of the Gospel -- Jesus Christ. The Gospel is *"that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, and that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures."* (1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Romans 10:9-13)

The Gospel is clearly stating what God has done in Christ for the sinner, calling for repentance and belief. To fail to do this is to fail at evangelism. All the other dimensions of church life are but outgrowths and/or complements to the Gospel itself.

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Demographic Profile on our Mission Field

Federal Way, WA (2015)

Land Area: 22.26 square miles

Elevation: 500 feet

Incorporated in 1990

Population: 93,425 (2014 - #11 in WA) – 7,061,530

Under age 5: 7.1% (6.4%)

Under age 18: 25.6% (22.9%)

Over 65: 10.3% (13.6%)

Males: 48,240 (51.5%)

Females: 45,185 (48.4%)

Median age: 36.4 years (37.5 years)

Race and Origin

White: 51.6% (72.5%)

Black: 9.7% (3.6%)

Asian: 14.2% (7.2%)

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders: 2.7% (0.6%)

Hispanic/Latino: 16.2% (11.2%)

Foreign born: 23.9% (13.2%)

Language other than English spoken at home: 32.4% (18.4%)

Education:

High School Graduate or higher: 90.3% (90%)

Bachelor's degree or higher: 25.1% (31.9%)

Graduate or professional degree: 8.1%

Economy:

Labor force (age 16+): 66.6% (64.2%)

Unemployed: 4.5% (4.8%)

Workers who live and work in the city: 9,764 (21.5%)

Health:

With a disability (under 65): 8.6% (8.6%)

Without Health Insurance: 19.7% (16.1%)

Veterans: 6,262 (582,265)

Transportation: Avg travel to work – 30.9 (25.7)

Housing and Living Arrangements:

Housing Units: 35,444 (avg value: \$249,000)

Owner occupied: 55.1% (63.2%)

Multi-unit housing: 40.6% (25.6%)

Persons per household: 2.67 (2.67)

Median house or condo value: \$274,700 (\$284,000)

Median gross rent: \$1,067

Income and Poverty:

Median household income: \$62,174 (\$64,129)

Persons below poverty level: 12.5% (13.4%)

Businesses: 6,419

Marriage Status:

Never married: 35%

Married: 46%

Separated: 1.7%

Widowed: 4.5%

Divorced: 12.7%

Unmarried partners: 7.6%

Crime Rates:

Murders: 4

Rapes: 43

Robberies: 151

Assaults: 170

Burglaries: 662

Theft: 3,698

Auto thefts: 746

Arson: 14

Crime index: 397.8 (US – 288.6)

Law Enforcement Officers: 124

Local Government:

Full-time employees: 274

Part-time employees: 128

Churches in FW: 62

2 – Catholic

3 - Presbyterian

3 – Mormon

7 - Lutheran

1 – JW

1 - Episcopalian

10 – Baptist

2 - 7th Day

14 – Charismatic

7 - Independent

3 – Methodist

8 - various denominations

Religion:

Nones: 62.4%

Catholic: 14.4%

Evangelical Protestant: 10.6%

Other: 6.2%

Mainline Protestant: 5.4%

Orthodox: 0.6%

Black Protestant: 0.4%