

What Is Evangelism?

By Brandon Kiesling

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read Matthew 9:35 and then turn to the comments related to Matthew 9:35 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: Based on the specific actions Jesus performed in the text, what actions should believers take when evangelizing nonbelievers?

Assignment Two

Read Matthew 9:36 and then turn to the comments related to Matthew 9:36 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What feelings should believers have toward nonbelievers?

Assignment Three

Read Matthew 9:37–38 and then turn to the comments related to Matthew 9:37–38 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What elements would you include in an evangelism prayer?

Scripture to Memorize

"For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!" 1 Corinthians 9:16

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit - by the end of this session, disciples will comprehend the characteristics of biblical evangelism as practiced and commanded by Jesus Christ.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real Life Scenario

Imagine you are at a baseball game and you see a guy on the street corner with a bullhorn in one hand and a Bible in the other hand. You and your friends stop and listen to him as he yells, "Repent or go to hell!" Some people stop and listen, others laugh at him, but most people simply ignore him and go on with life. You decide to approach him and ask him what he is doing. He tells you he is doing evangelism. Is this evangelism? If not, what does evangelism look like?

Read Matthew 9:35-38 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Jesus not only commanded His disciples to evangelize, but He also provided a model of evangelism. His commands and actions provide a template that is helpful for disciples in their practice of biblical evangelism. Observe some of the specific components of Jesus' evangelism in the passage.

Verse 35. Jesus went. Jesus didn't sit and wait for people to come to Him. Jesus actively sought after men and women, both in highly populated areas (cities) and less populated areas (villages). **teaching.** Jesus explains, clarifies and applies the message of God to those who are already familiar with what has already been announced. **synagogues.** These were places of instruction as well as worship and, thus, a natural place in which a teacher of God's truth would work. **proclaiming.** Jesus also proclaimed a message to those who were not familiar with what had already been announced. **gospel of the kingdom of God.** Jesus' message on earth was that God's kingdom is not something that is just a future reality in heaven. The good news of an intimate relationship with God was being offered right now through Jesus, the Messiah. This is the good news, or "gospel," that Jesus proclaimed. **healing.** Jesus often demonstrated His divine power over human affliction by healing people. Here Jesus demonstrates His mastery over *every* disease and *every* sickness.

Jesus' evangelism was filled with action. He went, taught, preached and ministered to people on a regular basis. The goal of biblical evangelism is to actively seek the lost and share the gospel with them as passionately, persistently and persuasively as possible.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now report on the specific actions believers should take when evangelizing nonbelievers.

Discussion Questions

What is the significance of the different actions Jesus demonstrated for His disciples while on earth? In what ways can we, as disciples of Jesus Christ, follow His example today?

Studying the Passage

Verse 36. compassion. Jesus was deeply moved with a love for those around Him. In order to become like Christ, His disciples must begin to see people as Jesus saw them. The feeling of compassion is more than an emotional attachment or pity for a person. Jesus' compassion for those around Him was so strong it caused Him great sadness and sorrow to see people in their present condition. **harassed and helpless.** Jesus could see the suffering of those around Him. He knew they were looking for happiness in the things of this world when true joy only comes through a relationship with Him. **sheep without a shepherd.** Jesus saw the people wandering through life with no one to lead and protect them. Without a shepherd, sheep are helpless, hopeless and in grave danger of attack.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now report on the feelings believers should have toward nonbelievers.

Discussion Question

How do you see the people around you? Do you see them as helpless and hopeless apart from Christ? Who is someone you know that does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ?

On Your Own

In the space below, identify one person you know (family member, friend, neighbor) who does not have a relationship with Jesus Christ. Begin to ask God for compassion for this person and that He would help that person enter into a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Studying the Passage

Verse 37. harvest is plentiful. Jesus knew the people were too numerous for Him to reach by Himself. Just as Jesus saw the people as sheep without a shepherd, He also saw them as a vast field of crops waiting to be gathered into God's house. Just as crops cannot be harvested unless someone is sent into the fields to gather them, people cannot be saved unless someone is sent to where they are to tell them the good news. **laborers are few.** The problem is not that people are not ready to be brought into God's house. Jesus understood that the real problem was too few workers to go after the people.

Verse 38. pray earnestly. Jesus called His disciples to immediate, urgent action and prayer. Jesus didn't say, "Look at the plentiful harvest . . . now go!" Instead, Jesus said, "Look at the plentiful harvest . . . now pray!" Disciples of Jesus Christ ultimately need to go, but must first learn to drop to their knees and ask the Spirit for help in reaching those outside of Christ. **send out laborers.** The specific request of our prayer should be for more workers. Praying for the harvest is biblical and important, but here Jesus instructs His disciples to pray for harvesters, not for the harvest. Jesus understood that

without harvesters, there will be no harvest.

Disciples encounter two common problems regarding prayer and evangelism. The first problem arises when disciples attempt to evangelize without prayer. Evangelism does not work unless God is involved in the process. Evangelism without prayer is powerless evangelism.

The second problem arises when disciples pray but forget to evangelize! Some disciples ask God to save people but forget that God's primary method to reach nonbelievers is through disciples who evangelize! Disciples must begin on their knees, asking God to send more workers to the field to save those outside of Christ. At the same time, disciples must also get off their knees and on their feet in order to go after those outside of Christ with the gospel.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now report on the elements of an evangelism prayer.

Discussion Questions

Why should disciples of Christ first pray for the Holy Spirit's help to reach those around us? Why can't we just go and share without first praying?

On Your Own

In the space below, write an evangelism prayer. Be sure to ask God to save those outside of Christ and ask Him to call more Christians to share the gospel with those outside of Christ.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share that with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue, I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Evangelism is more than merely telling people what the Bible says about heaven and hell. Biblical evangelism that was taught and demonstrated by Jesus Christ includes going to nonbelievers, teaching the truths of Scripture, preaching the gospel and ministering to physical needs (Matthew 9:35). Also, biblical evangelism involves a deep love for others, which motivates believers to share the gospel with nonbelievers (Matthew 9:36). Finally, the practice of praying for both nonbelievers and believers is also an essential component to biblical evangelism (Matthew 9:37-38).

Scripture says, “The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9). Therefore, the need for biblical evangelism is great in our world today because this is the primary means by which God reaches those who do not know His Son, Jesus Christ. People will never become followers of Jesus Christ without believers first getting serious and stepping up to the task of biblical evangelism.

Today, biblical evangelism for a disciple of Christ includes the following:

- Believers actively seeking opportunities to share the gospel with nonbelievers.
- Believers actively making new relationships with nonbelievers.
- Believers actively speaking to God for assistance in this task of reaching nonbelievers.

Disciples who practice biblical evangelism as practiced and commanded by Jesus Christ are ready to join the mission of God to bring all people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Follow-Up Question

What are the major characteristics of evangelism that Jesus demonstrated and how should you practice them in your own life?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.