

# “Evangelism”

## Summer Series 3

### Lesson 3

## “Who is called to Evangelism?”

**Objective:** To understand what we are called to believe as followers of Christ more precisely and more deeply. This is not just an exercise in mental acumen, but a quest to deepen and enrich our relationship with God, our relationship with His people and how we relate to His mission.

We hope to understand more deeply and fully what it means to be Christian, how this means we are called to be unique. We are called to be the people of God. We are called to this mission by Jesus Himself (Matthew 28:18-20). We have a purpose and we are to fulfill the purpose of God.

**Materials:** The Bible, Books, journal articles, dictionaries, the internet and other resources as may be appropriate.

#### Procedures

1. To explore what we believe that Evangelism is and why it is important.
2. Next we will hope to understand more fully the nature of our existence and in so doing comprehend God’s call upon our existence in order to fulfill our destiny as His image-bearers.
3. We will seek to find out how these beliefs have played a role in the history of Christianity and how they continue to impact our existence and service to Him today.
4. We will provide a sheet to take home as a reminder of what has been examined and to provide additional opportunities for consideration of these truths and application in our daily living out of our eternal destiny beginning now. This sheet can be used as a discussion guide for small group discussion. We have several groups using this effectively.

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So often today the call of the discipleship and evangelism is seen by many as a call to something that was akin to what Dietrich Bonhoeffer referred to as “cheap grace.” He says, “Cheap Grace is the deadly enemy of our Church. ...Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks wares. ... Grace is represented as the Church’s inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits.”<sup>1</sup> When it comes to the call for us to be involved in “evangelism” I wonder if we are often not saying, “I am really glad that you did this for me Jesus, but I am really not willing to suffer any hardship, or inconvenience for others myself; thank you for making this easy, convenient, and cheap for me?” Surely this cannot be correct. Surely those who have truly been touched by what Jesus did for them, people in-dwelt, and empowered, by the Holy Spirit could never have such thoughts? Yet, I know my own heart and it is treacherous and deceitful seeking to convince me that I am truly following Jesus as His disciple while I sit in comfort, in luxury, and often times in selfish relaxation making excuses, while Jesus would not.

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York NY: Collier Books Macmillan Publishing Co., 1963), p. 45.

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I am continually challenged by people that I know who seem inspired, empowered, and absolutely propelled into “evangelism.” People like Bryan and Elizabeth Harrison who have had to be evacuated from their home twice now in the last ten years, the last time with three small children. They evacuated to Uganda where they were beaten and robbed in their so-called “safe house.” They have chosen to live in the midst of danger among people that have not heard about the love of Jesus in war-torn countries of north Africa. Others, people like Tim and Rebecca Talley who live in the United State but still have that same spirit, labor more hours continually loving people, caring for people, sharing with people, feeding people, proclaiming the love of Christ. They are constantly opening up their home for weary travelers, at all times, when it is convenient, and when it is not, when it is easy, and when it is not. I often wonder, if Jesus were in my place, in my shoes, what would He do? What does it look like for me to “Take up my cross and follow Jesus”.<sup>2</sup>

I see so much pain, so much suffering, and so many people that do not know their right hand from their left, when it comes to

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<sup>2</sup> Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-25; Mark 8:34-35; Luke 9:23-24; 14:27-33.

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Jesus, and I wonder why someone does not do something about this situation? I sometimes look in the mirror and think, maybe I could do something, maybe I could do more, maybe I could do something better, or just do something. Then I think, there are people in this world that are so much better at this than I am. I think maybe I should wait until someone better than me comes along and leads me into a better way of doing “evangelism,” a better way of loving people, a better way of serving God. I sometimes pray hard for a revival and I long for a time when people will turn to God by the thousands. I want God to do something, and so often I feel a deafening silence in the depths of my soul that says either nothing is happening, or that far too little is happening. I squelch the voice within that comes in the stillness and the quiet moments in the midst of all the busyness and noise that says, “**you**’ do something.”

I long for those past days when there were Gospel meetings and door knocking (maybe not door knocking for me, but I am okay if you do it, I never really liked door knocking, though I have done a lot of it), but I know the times have changed and such methods are seldom affective and probably even harm the cause

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of Christ today. The last thing I would ever want to do is harm the cause of Christ and doing nothing is easier and safer than doing something. So often I have heard people and perhaps sometimes believe it myself that we should be “safe” when it comes to the things concerning God and what we should do and what we should not do. I wonder if Jesus talked to His Father about safety before He came to Bethlehem all those years ago. I am certain that the infant mortality rate was very high and being born in a stable surely was not safe. I wonder if He thought He should wait until there were good hospitals, highly trained doctors, pediatricians, or at least a new state of the art Bethlehem Inn with ample rooms with cots for babies, and air-conditioned rooms. Surely it was not “safe” to be lain in a trough covered in animal slobber, and who knows what?

I wonder if He thought about all of those germs, the rodents, the fleas, the lack of air conditioning, the lack of showers and flush toilets. It was not “safe.” There was also a murderous crazed king on the throne who was willing to do anything to gain power and to hold onto power. He had his brother-in-law drowned, switched sides in the Roman conflict from Mark Antony to support Octavian

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(who became known as Augustus Caesar), puts his wife on trial for adultery, executes another brother-in-law, has his own sons put on trial for treason and executed three of them. Herod was truly a monster, he was married 9 times, he ordered the execution of young children when the star appeared over Bethlehem. It was not “safe,” and yet Jesus still came. He knew it was not “safe” and that it would cost Him His life and yet He still did what I, we, needed, all the while knowing it was not “safe,” or convenient. That challenges me to think I should consider what others need rather than what is “safe” and convenient for me.

All the time I am thinking these things, and more, I know that the call of Christ, the Spirit of God, burns in my bones and I feel deeply a compulsion to reach out to others as Jesus did. I try, and I think about ways to reach out to others. I try when I go to breakfast to sit in the same place and hopefully have the same person serve my food so I can build relationship and watch for opportunities to share the Good News. So far I have not baptized anyone in this way, but I still hope and I still try, and I still plant seeds, and most of all I still pray. I have had a number of deeply spiritual conversations and sometimes Mariah asks me spiritual

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questions and shares with me spiritual concerns. I pray for her. I pray that God will bring other people into her life, and the other people I meet each week, and that all of us serving our Father together can be a part of Him delivering His message of love powerfully into the lives of these people, powerfully enough for them to truly see Jesus.

I learned long ago that I cannot convince anyone of the truth of the Gospel, but God is great enough, powerful enough, and gracious enough, that He can use even me to do what I cannot do alone. He can use me, if I am willing, to proclaim His message of love; He can use you too if you will let Him. Sometimes that means a long and deep relationship with someone and at other times it may be just a moment, a note of kindness, a kind word, a bigger tip, or a smile (a quote I found says that, "Love begins with a smile, grows with a kiss and ends with a tear drop."). When I truly remember what Jesus did for me I cannot help but desire to be more like Him. His Spirit compels me and flares as a brilliant flame in my very soul challenging me, calling me to try to walk in step with Him more fully each day. Certainly it is the case that I often stumble and fall, but He is always there to help me, to dust



off the dirt, to bind up the wounds, and to encourage me onward in this journey of becoming, of becoming more like Him.

Here are some words from Ephesians that challenge me, inspire me, and fill me with a sense of belonging, a sense of belonging to something bigger, greater, and more important than “myself.” A sense of being part of a family, of having a Father who loves me and sacrifices for me, who longs for me to fulfill what He knows I can become. **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. <sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>3</sup>** We have more words from Paul like this in Romans 8:12-17, **“<sup>14</sup> For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. <sup>15</sup> For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> it is that**

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<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:3-6, NRSV.

very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that **we are children of God**,<sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ—if, in fact, **we suffer with him** so that **we may also be glorified with him.**

I got up this morning and I began to pray; my first word was “Father.” It struck me that this is not just a name, or a title, it is a name that honors me, blesses me, calls me, and challenges me. The Creator of the universe allows me to call Him **Father**. More than I deserve, more than I could hope for, more than I could have dreamed as even a remote possibility. I lost both of my earthly parents some years back and Michele and I lost her parents in 2006. I remember many times feeling the loneliness, the sense of being vulnerable, and small when I remembered that they are gone from this earth, but I am not alone. In this vast universe, I am not alone, My Father is here, loving me, calling me home, and while I wait He calls me to be a part of His calling of more of His children home. There are no orphans in God’s Kingdom, there is no word for orphan in God’s vocabulary, just children that have yet to be adopted.



As I was contemplating writing this curriculum I searched for articles to help me to articulate some truths about “who” is called to evangelism. I have explored the “what” and the “why” and now I am exploring the “who.” I can tell you that articles on this subject are in all too short of supply, at least in the places that I looked. Maybe it is because this subject is so well-addressed in the Scriptures themselves and should just be obvious. In this I am reminded of one of my favorite, and one of the most revered Scriptures, in the New Testament from John 3:16 **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”**<sup>4</sup> I love this Scripture, because it reminds me that God loved the world and He desires that none should perish. How awesome is that?

I am also reminded of that first Gospel sermon, on the Day of Pentecost, delivered so long ago by Peter, the man who ran and hid when they arrested Jesus in the Garden; the man who denied Jesus three times and now boldly and powerfully proclaims the love of God, empowered by the very Spirit of the living God. To

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<sup>4</sup> NRSV.

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those that heard that first Gospel message and were cut in their hearts hear the words of response from Peter: “ **Peter said to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. <sup>39</sup> For the promise is for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, **everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him.**”<sup>5</sup>** Notice how this message is for all that the Lord our God calls to Himself. What a remarkable thing that He would allow Peter and the other Apostles to be a part of that calling: What an honor and a privilege, and at the same time a challenge. Jesus took this rag-tag group of fishermen, tax collectors, murderers, zealots and simple people and He shook the universe to its core with their courage and with His power conveyed through them.

I sometimes think, if God can do that with these men, maybe there is hope that He can use me to be a part of His mission to mend what is broken, to restore what is lost and to fill what is empty. So often we perhaps see “evangelism” as something that is burdensome, a responsibility, or something that needs to be done,

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<sup>5</sup> Acts 2:38-39. NRSV.



but in reality this is the **call of a Father** to His children to join Him in the most exciting, the most important, and the most loving thing ever to hit the stage of the universe. This is God calling us to Himself, to engage with Him in this great action of redemption and restoration. There is no greater honor than to walk with God.<sup>6</sup> We no longer need to hide from the face of God, we are no longer naked and ashamed as were Adam and Eve in the Garden. We can come when He calls; knowing that our shame and our reproach has been removed by the love of God, by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God calls us in His gospel as individuals and as communities to Himself, to engage with him, to become what He knows we can become, what He always intended us to become. It really is everyone that God calls to Himself. His call is to all the world. He is calling those who hear His voice to join in His work of redemption, to be a part of His “evangelism.” The characteristic response to the creator by all that God has created is to give praise and obedience (that is, active engagement in the doing the will of God and doing our part in making the world what God intends it

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<sup>6</sup> Genesis 3:8.

to be). In Revelation there is this great passage of praise that comes in response to Jesus. **Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, <sup>12</sup> singing with full voice,**

**“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!”**

**<sup>13</sup> Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, singing,**

**“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!”**

**<sup>14</sup> And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.<sup>7</sup> Notice how all the creatures worshipped.**

Another way of saying all that I have written is that we are called to discipleship, we are called to be followers of Jesus.

People that emulate and become like Jesus in every way are His

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<sup>7</sup> Revelation 5:11-14. NRSV.



disciples.<sup>8</sup> A part of that calling then is to do what Jesus did, to evangelize, to proclaim to people the love of God, to suffer for others, to live a life of service to others and a life of death to self. How can we be disciples of Christ if we are not doing what Christ did? Christ was the great proclaimer of the love of God. As we become more and more like Jesus, as His disciples, we cannot help but be involved in “evangelism.” Who is called to evangelism? All whom the Lord our God has called as His children.

In 1 Peter 2:9 it is written: **“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”**<sup>10</sup> **Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”**<sup>9</sup> Our purpose in this world is to proclaim the mighty acts of the one who called us out of the darkness into the light. Today, tomorrow, and for as many days as God gives us life and breath in our mortal bodies we are called to be agents of His grace, loving people,

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<sup>8</sup> Walter Brueggemann, “Evangelism and Discipleship: The God Who Calls, the God Who Sends,” *Word & World* 24:2 (2004), pp. 121-135.

<sup>9</sup> NRSV.

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proclaiming the message of Jesus not only with our words, but with our every breath: What an exciting life our Father has given to us. What will we choose to do with that life? “Love begins with a smile, grows with a kiss and ends with a tear drop,” though for the children of God, love never ends, love is eternal: **“Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant <sup>5</sup> or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; <sup>6</sup> it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. <sup>7</sup> It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 13:8 Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. <sup>9</sup> For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; <sup>10</sup> but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. <sup>11</sup> When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. <sup>12</sup> For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. <sup>13</sup> And now faith,**

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**hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.<sup>10</sup>**

All who are touched by the love of God will seek to touch others with the love of God. Who is called to “evangelism?”  
Everyone who has been touched by the love of God.

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<sup>10</sup> 1 Corinthians 13:4-13. NRSV.

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# Synopsis

The fact that we even might consider asking the question about “Who is called to evangelism” betrays the fact that perhaps some might believe in cheap grace and that salvation is an insurance policy rather than a transformative calling. The call to discipleship is a calling out of safety, security and convenience. It is a calling of death to self and of sacrifice for the other. It is a call to be like Jesus and to take risks because others need us to take risks for them. We are called in the midst of the mundane and everyday things of life to see these things as other than mundane and ordinary. We are called to walk as Jesus walked, think as Jesus thought and to be Jesus for the people we encounter each day.

This is not a task that is ours alone, we serve with our Father, empowered by the Holy Spirit with the example of Jesus always before us. We are adopted as children of the Most High God, the creator, our Father. We belong to something greater than we are, something bigger than we are. We are not alone, never alone, we are not orphaned. We have a great Father who loves us. Our Father seeks for all of His children to come to Him and for

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relationship with them to be restored. This is not just a hope for some it is what God hopes for all and something He seeks for all.

We are all called to engage with Him and be like Jesus. We are called to be willing to sacrifice our lives for others, as an act of worship and praise God. This is the natural response of all that God has created. Anything other than a response of worship, praise and obedience is unnatural; in truth is an act of dishonor and disobedience to God. God calls us into His Royal family as a Royal Priesthood as an act of love. That love generates love in our heart; the heart in which God's love resides cannot help but reciprocate with a selfless, sacrificial love in return. That reciprocal response is a calling to become like God in His love, to love like God, to seek the salvation of others like God. All who have been the beneficiaries of the love of God are called to join in "evangelism."

# Questions

1. Why do you think people are hesitant to be evangelistic?
2. What are some things that you think stop people from being involved in evangelism?
3. What are some things that you see as being “unsafe” in being involved in evangelism?
4. Who are some people that you see as heroic examples of being “evangelistic?” Why do you see them as heroic?
5. Why do you think God sent His son to the earth when He knew it was unsafe?
6. What are some ways that you could be deliberate about in being evangelistic in your daily routines?
7. What are some reasons that you think people are hesitant to be share the message of Jesus with people?
8. What does it look like for people today to be “disciples” of Jesus?
9. What do you think it means to be part of a “family?”
10. Why do you think “family” is important?
11. What are some things that are expected of you in being a part of your earthly family?
12. What are some things that are expected of you in being a part of the family of God?
13. What do you think it means for you to be able to call God “Father?”
14. What do you think it means to be “called” by God?

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15.What are some things that need to change in your life to allow you to be more evangelistic?

16.How is “evangelism” related to “worship?”

17.What do you think it means to be chosen by God to be a part of the “royal priesthood?”

18.What are some of the ways that you experience “love” from others?

19.What are some ways that you can show others that you love them?

# To Take Home

## **What is Important to know?**

It is important to know that we are called to be a part of God's redemption of this world and its people. The call to discipleship means we are called to be like Jesus. Very often it means not making the safe choice in life. We are called to be a part of the family of God and with that honor there also are responsibilities and expectations. Jesus did not die so that we could enjoy an easy and relaxed life on this earth. When was the first moment that you can really remember having a personal faith in Jesus?

## **Where is God in these words?**

For Jesus evangelism means sacrificing and doing unsafe things for the benefit of others. He takes great risks in order to reach out to those that were lost. His love is expressed by His presence, He came, and by His willingness to sacrifice that which is most precious, most personal and most powerful for the most helpless. In Jesus, God shows us what we might become as image-bearers of God. What are some words from Scripture that most inspire you to serve others? Why?

## **What does any of this mean for how I live my life?**

The call of Discipleship is a call to become like Jesus. This means being prepared for danger, discomfort, and inconvenience. If we are not willing to suffer these things and even the loss of our very lives we cannot truly be disciples of Jesus, we cannot be like Him. Jesus offers no cheap insurance policies, no cheap grace. What Jesus offers is transformative and dangerous. It changes our hearts and our spirits so that we now have hearts inscribed with the laws of God in living flesh. This means that it does not matter as much what we believe, as it matters what we do, because we believe. What are some of the barriers in your life that hinder you in following Jesus?

## **What is the word of God calling us to do?**

The word of God calls us to be something other than what is instinctual and natural to us. The word of God is a supernatural calling that comes from our creator who wants to be our Father, leading us and guiding us to fulfill our destiny. The word of God calls us into a love that is dangerous for "self" and may even prove fatal, as it did for Jesus. The call of Christ is calling us "to take up our cross and follow Him" in death, and in life. Jesus calls us to put the needs of others above our own needs. What would be the greatest aid the Church could provide for you to become more evangelistic?