

SESSION 5



KEY DEFINITIONS

Introduction

Imagine opening up the dictionary and finding more than thirty different definitions for the word you were looking for. It wouldn't be much help when you're seeking a definitive definition. When it comes to 'evangelism' it is important that we have the correct definition. After all, if we are confused about the meaning of the word and about our aims and objectives, how can we expect to effectively engage in it?

With so many different ideas and definitions of what evangelism actually is, there is little wonder that Christians flounder and ultimately fail in any unified attempt to this most vital of Scripture-commissioned tasks.

Focus

As we have previously discussed, evangelism should be correctly defined as 'the act of announcing or spreading the Gospel'. This is something that *all* of us can be a part of. It's not just something for those gifted in speaking. It isn't just for those with the 'gift of evangelism' as described in Ephesians 4. No! It is the responsibility, and privilege, of *all* Christians to evangelise. Jesus said 'Go into all the world and preach the Gospel.' How can we imagine that we might be exempt from doing this, from sharing the good news. And why would we want to be exempt anyway? After all, the message that we have the joy of sharing with others is the same message that saved us from spiritual death, sin and Hell. Don't our friends, neighbours and acquaintances deserve the chance to make that same decision?

Remember, in sharing the Good news we must be mindful of the content of our message. As we've seen, there are four main topics that 'the Gospel' seems to cover:

- 1. Why we must be saved**
- 2. How Jesus can save us**
- 3. What we must do to be saved**
- 4. The cost of discipleship**

The content of the message is defined and clear, but there are many different ways in which we can take part in evangelism. We don't all need to be Billy Grahams. God created each of us as a unique individual with our own unique skills. This inevitably means that we can, and should, spread the Gospel in our own way with our own words and analogies, based on the Scriptures.

Some people find it difficult to articulate the Gospel message or to speak face-to-face with anyone about their faith. In that case, use a tract. There's very little to stop us handing over – or even anonymously dropping – a piece of literature containing the message of the Gospel. This is still 'evangelism'. There are many ways in which we can participate in the Great Commission. Few of us would consider ourselves natural orators, however, the Bible issues a good challenge to all:

Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

1 Peter 3:15

Discussion

1. Why is it essential that the Church works with a shared definition of evangelism?
2. Consider the four topics the Gospel should cover. Can you think of scriptures that can be included in each of these sections?
 1. Why we must be saved
(Romans 3:23; Romans 4:4-5; Romans 5:12)
 2. How Jesus can save us
(John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Romans 6:23)
 3. What we must do to be saved
(Matthew 16:24; Romans 10:9-10; Acts 3:19)
 4. The cost of discipleship
(Mark 8:35; Luke 9:57-62; 1 Corinthians 6:20)
3. Discuss different methods of spreading the Gospel in different circumstances.
4. Think up some creative ways in which you could distribute tracts? E.g. phone booths, pay machines etc.
5. ***An idea for homework:*** Write out a Gospel presentation in your own words. Use the four topics mentioned above to help you structure it.

Bible Parallel

Read: Acts 17:22-34

Ignorance is bliss, but a little knowledge is a very dangerous thing. This is certainly the case with the people in Athens. They were lovers of wisdom who had sincere inklings about the existence of God, as demonstrated by their religious actions of worship. Yet, at the same time, they were admittedly ignorant of the God they were worshipping in relation to His ways, His nature and His message.

In proclaiming Christ, it is not enough to just acknowledge that there is a God. Rather it is essential to reveal, to the best of our ability, the comprehensiveness of God in His fullness as Creator, Redeemer, Sustainer and Judge. We cannot preach the cross without creation, or salvation without judgment.

Also, most obvious for the Christian believer is that our God is not like gold, silver or stone of which idols (gods) are made by human hands. Instead, He is living and it is through Him that we live, move and have our being. It is very important in our witness therefore that we try to demonstrate and speak of this so that if we are called to address our own 'Areopagus' we can point people back in repentance to the One true God and turn them from all forms of idolatry.

Further discussion and personal contemplation

It is in human nature to seek God, and reach out to Him. This means taking on a completely different worldview. Discuss the current worldviews that present themselves in society today. Consider whether, rather than engaging in intricate debate on such subjects, you might instead be able to simply proclaim God and the truth of the Gospel.