

What is the church's role in evangelism?

-Tom Withers, covenanted member, GBC

The King of the church, the Lord Jesus Christ, commanded His bride, as is recorded in Matthew 28:18-20 and Luke 24:47-48, to go into all the world to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. While His followers are obediently going to proclaim His message, they are to continually make disciples and baptize them into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and to continue to teach them all the things Jesus commanded His disciples. For most, that work starts in their home, workplace, and as they go about their daily lives. This is a self-replicating, self-sustaining type of movement. This is the essence of evangelism, which is an English transliteration of a Greek word which means simply the proclaiming of a message of good news.

At Grace Baptist Church, our mission is "to equip the gathered saints to do the work of the ministry." (Eph 4:12). The members of GBC recognize the joyful privilege we have in participating with the Holy Spirit in evangelizing the world.

We also recognize evangelism and discipleship must start in the local church. The person who benefits most from the gospel message is the Christian believer hearing and being taught by it. We recognize that "the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Cor 1:18) As such, we must constantly be reminded of the Gospel on a daily, if not more frequent basis, having our hearts and minds renewed by it.

The church is also to keep in step with the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:25), and that includes active participation in His ministry, which is foremost focused on the local body of Christ, but also as He works in the world outside the church to bring the elect, but still lost ones, to faith in Jesus Christ (see John 16:8-11).

We affirm the elect are the only ones who will be saved, but at the same time, God has not revealed to any of us who are among the elect. Only God Himself knows those whom He chose from before the foundation of the world to be His own possession. Therefore, we must go into all the world and proclaim the Gospel to all creation. (Mark 16:15)

As an outflow of our relationship with, and love of, Christ; we believe all Christians are to be Jesus' witnesses out in the greater world. As Jesus commands, every Christian is at a minimum to "let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16). How will anyone know your good works are the good works of Christ (Eph.2:10) if you don't mention the name Jesus as the reason for your good works? As Paul rightly states in Romans 10:14, there must be a preacher who speaks the message or the lost won't know there is even a message to be believed (so they can be saved)! Even the newest, and most timid believers have the resources to proclaim to the lost the work that has been done in them. If not verbally, there are many sound gospel tracts available which contain the essential elements of the Gospel message to be simply handed out.

At Grace Baptist Church, we believe the burden to evangelize beyond the Gospel preaching (which takes place in the weekly meetings) rests upon each individual member. There is no formally

organized “evangelism program” except that which is organized by the members and heartily supported and overseen by the elders of the church. Believers are continually exhorted to carry out their charge from the Lord to tell others His soul-saving message! They must do so with the prayerful support of the whole body.

There are some members, so gifted and called, who team up as a Gospel cohort of sorts, who go together to do public ministry on an informal but consistent basis. Sometimes within that group, there is also informal evangelism training (which is an important form of discipleship). While this effort is limited only to the immediate local area of GBC, we also recognize that the mission of evangelism extends beyond the local area to the unreached, un-Gospeled people throughout the world.

Missionaries, when raised up and supported by the local body, play a key role in spreading the Gospel to other cultures. Often, this calling to the mission field begins with a desire to evangelize locally. GBC formally supports missionaries and gospel work in Pakistan and Africa. Her members individually support others throughout the world.

One thing biblical evangelism is not motivated by is adding numbers to the church’s rolls. May that never be the case! False conversion is usually the result of such “numerical” efforts and therefore must be avoided at all costs. Ultimately, the goal of evangelism (and going on mission with God to a different people group) is to see all the elect come to know God in a saving faith way and which will end in their worshiping this Great and Awesome God of the Bible. We long to see Christ’s churches filled, wherever they may be.

Jesus said in Luke 10:2, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.” See also Matthew 9:37-38 and John 4:35.

But before you can evangelize others, you yourself must be saved. Do you know the Lord Jesus Christ, or rather have you come to be known by Him? Has His finished work of salvation on the cross for the atonement of your sins, and His resurrection from the dead for your justification, been applied to your eternal account before God and therefore your sins are fully forgiven? Do you have the faith once for all given to the saints for which you are willing to contend for and perhaps even suffer? Do you know you are a child of God by the new birth of the Holy Spirit of God? Are you no longer afraid of death? And, do you have the gift of faith and therefore know you are justified by that faith as a free gift of God’s imputed righteousness? If you cannot confidently answer these questions, you should thoroughly examine yourself to see if you are in the faith or if you fail the test. If you find you are failing the test, may the Lord grant you repentance and faith unto the saving of your soul.