

## EVANGELISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

*“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” – Acts 1:8*

### THE POINT:

From start to finish, the Bible is God’s love story to us and is all about the good news of the Gospel.

### GOALS:

- Examine evangelism examples and methods in the book of Acts, New Testament letters to churches, and the book of Revelation
- Analyze how the New Testament teaches that all people have sinned against our holy God, deserve his wrath and that the only way anyone can be saved from the judgment they deserve is to hear the Gospel and believe it
- Understand why we must share the Gospel with the world and make disciples of all peoples

### KEY THOUGHTS:

- The book of Acts explains the beginnings of the Church and is an excellent source of evangelistic wisdom for believers today.
- The letters to the early Church make it clear that we activate Jesus paying for our sins by placing our full faith in what Christ has done alone.
- When all things come to an end, every bit of God’s word will be fulfilled, including the promise that the Gospel would reach the very ends of the earth.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

Ask students to keep the following questions in mind throughout the lesson...

- How did Jesus communicate the Great Commission to the disciples in the book of Acts? How does that apply to us today?
- What do we learn in the New Testament letters about the apostles’ motives and methods for evangelism?
- According to Revelation 5:9, what was the purpose of Jesus shedding his blood on the cross?

### INTRODUCTION:

How bad is our sin problem? Why does God care about sin so much? What are the consequences of sin? Do you think of your sin as a very big deal? The average person sees them self as a good person, and would probably believe God would say the same. Unfortunately, God’s standards are higher than ours. God cares about sin so much because he is holy. Our sinfulness and God’s holiness are the most opposing natures in the universe! The consequences of sinning against an infinite God merit an infinite penalty. Every person needs the Savior Jesus. The disciples knew this, and it gave them the motivation they needed to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

If someone asked you, “Do people have to hear the gospel to escape eternal condemnation,” how would you respond? If there were another way to be made right with God, he wouldn’t have had to send his only begotten son into the world to be the sacrifice for our sin. Jesus did his part, and now he has instructed his followers to share this good news with the world.

Some have said, “Share the gospel, and if necessary use words,” thinking that just living out the Christian life will lead people to Christ. The saying should read, “Share the gospel, it’s necessary, use words.” The New Testament writers understood this (Romans 10:13-15) and urgently proclaimed the good news to the world. That was the mission that Jesus gave his followers then, and it’s still the mission he expects his followers to fulfill today. Today, will you follow Jesus’ command and the disciples’ example that they lived out and taught in the 1<sup>st</sup> century?

### BRAINSTORMING ACTIVITY:

**Watch:** “The Multiplication Song” (2:17)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xi2Nc1UicQ>

**Discuss:** How do germs spread so fast? It's not by addition, rather multiplication. One germ splits into another, and then those germs do the same, and so on and so on. Things can turn ugly fast. We all know that germs multiply exponentially. The principle of multiplication is what Jesus had in mind for spreading his gospel message to the ends of the earth.

Jesus was the master evangelist. He could minister to people and share the Gospel much more effectively than the ordinary men who followed him around. Shockingly he said in John 14:12 that *"...whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do"*. Jesus' disciples wouldn't be greater in power, but rather in reach. Jesus never traveled more than 200 miles from his home town, but because he inspired, trained, and sent out his disciples to do the works he did, the Gospel has made it across the globe and is being spread faster than ever today. Will you follow Jesus' and the disciples' example and advance the Gospel by multiplication?

#### **THE LESSON:**

After the Gospel letters, the book of Acts continues the story by explaining the beginnings of the Church. The book of Acts is an excellent source of evangelistic wisdom for believers today. It starts with Jesus rephrasing the Great Commission in Acts 1.

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." – Acts 1:6-8*

Because the Jews were under heavy rule from the Romans, the disciples wanted to know if Jesus was going to bring back their nation's political independence (and even dominance). Jesus changed their thinking by commanding them to focus their attention on evangelizing the world. It is also important to note that the promise of the Holy Spirit would be given to them to empower them to witness for Jesus. The primary task of the Holy Spirit is to bring glory to the name of Jesus, and a Christian who is empowered by the Holy Spirit will have the desire to share the message of Jesus.

Then, notice that they are given one clear command to be witnesses for Jesus. Christians in the Church can and should do many different things, but advancing the Gospel is the primary task of their mission. Finally, note that Jesus distinguishes their task of evangelism in ever-expanding locations. We should have a desire and plan to reach the world with the Gospel here, near, and far (Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria, ends of the earth).

After the book of Acts, an extensive collection of letters to churches and people begins. These came from church leaders like Paul, Peter, James, John, and Jude to new groups of believers around the ancient world. These groups of people formed new churches and were the result of the evangelistic work of the early Church. These letters bring understanding into the disciples' evangelistic motivation and into their evangelistic methods.

Paul wrote the Book of Romans to be an evangelism training letter of sorts, by explaining the Gospel he preached. This letter provides a tremendous amount of insight for Christians to use in evangelism. First, Paul clarifies that the most significant dilemma with humanity is sin. Every person that has ever, or will ever exist in the world is a sinner. This means that everyone is or will be condemned before our holy God and in need of redemption (*Romans 1:18-3:20*). Next, he explains how God has made a way to fix this serious problem. Jesus' death on the cross paid the penalty for sin (past, present, and future), and his resurrection proved God accepted that payment, and we have the hope of life eternal (*Romans 3:21-30*).

The rest of the book of Romans makes it clear that we activate Jesus paying for our sins by placing our full faith in what Christ has done alone. Paul finally ends the book of Romans with the truth that people need to hear and respond to the Gospel to be saved. Paul had a passion for getting the Gospel out to the whole world as fast as possible, and we should too.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul explains even more about his evangelistic methods. He was thoroughly committed to the clarity of both his message and his methods. Paul refused to water down the Gospel to make it more tolerable to the pagan

culture he was sharing with. Paul had gospel urgency and knew he must urge and persuade people to put their faith in Jesus. *“Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others...Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God”* (2 Corinthians 5:11, 20). Paul’s evangelistic message was a clear call to rely on Christ alone to be brought back into a right relationship to God.

These NT letters to churches and individuals tell us what was expected from them. The expectation was for them to carry on the work of evangelism in their area. This was standard behavior for New Testament believers. Despite a lack of modern evangelism resources like we have today, they equipped themselves and stayed inspired to share the Gospel wherever they went. These were ordinary believers that gave their lives to Christ and his cause. They shared the Gospel, disciplined people, and started churches, including some of the most active and influential churches in the Bible.

God’s word concludes with the Book of Revelation. It was not given to us to provide fuel for speculation on an exact timeline of the return of Christ and the end of the world. It was given to believers to encourage them with the reality that their present suffering was temporary and that God was going to make all things new.

Even here, the theme of evangelism and the reaching of the nations was clear. We are reminded that the message of the Gospel was good news for the whole world *“...Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation”* (Revelation 5:9).

When all things come to an end, every bit of God’s word will be fulfilled, including the promise that the Gospel would reach the very ends of the earth. At the end of the book of Revelation, as John describes the New Jerusalem, he says we won’t need the sun and moon there because God’s glory will be its light. He then goes on to say, *“By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it”* (Revelation 21:24).

Letter by letter, from start to finish, the Bible is God’s love story for the people of the earth. It is all about the commission he has given his people to bring the good news of the Gospel to them all!

#### **RELEVANCE:**

How does the book of Acts, New Testament letters, and the book of Revelation provide a foundation for us to engage in evangelism today?

#### **DISCUSSION:**

*Instruct students to answer the following questions about evangelism in the New Testament in their teams.*

- What were some of the key elements that helped the gospel spread so quickly in the first few centuries after Jesus ascended into Heaven?
- How does a person activate the Gospel of Jesus according to the New Testament?
- Why was clearly proclaiming the biblical Gospel so crucial to the early followers of Jesus and his followers today? What are a few of the elements of that message that are crucial to explain clearly?

#### **HOMEWORK:**

We see an urgent effort to evangelize and make disciples in every chapter in the book of Acts. For example, in...

Acts 1 - Jesus commissioned His disciples to be *witnesses* to the ends of the earth.

Acts 2 – Peter *preached* on the day of Pentecost, and 3,000 were added to their number that day.

Acts 3 – Peter healed a crippled man and *preached the Gospel* to another crowd.

What are three more examples from 3 other chapters in the book of Acts that describe Jesus’ followers, making an effort to evangelize and make disciples?