

COMMITMENT TO EVANGELISM AND NUMERICAL GROWTH

Follow the call of Jesus

Most of us are familiar with Jesus’ call to join him in his work. He came to seek and to save the lost. He came to call sinners to repentance. He came not to condemn but to save. He came to show us the Father. He came to give abundant life. He came to heal and to forgive. He came to teach the ways of the kingdom. He came to serve and not to be served. All of this guides us in what it means to be and make disciples—to continue inviting and bringing more and more people into this life and journey with us.



According to *Mark 1:15*, Jesus began his public ministry with the words, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news!” Repentance is not just turning from sin but a total conversion of life. The good news is that in the realm of God’s love and grace, known as the kingdom, there is a far better way to live than the world offers—a way that leads to eternal life, a life abundant with grace and mercy, forgiveness and love, wisdom and strength. This is good news, indeed.

Evangelism is joining Jesus in telling people this good news and inviting them into this new way of life, both by what we say and what we do. It’s that simple and that profound.

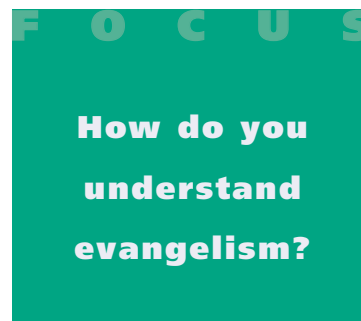
Live a transforming Life

The way we live can be evangelism in action. A transforming life is both a life that is being transformed (for we are not yet complete) and a life that is transforming the world, even in small ways. That kind of life will be noticed by

other people. When we have entered the kingdom and are on the path of this new way of life, we will show compassion and kindness to others. We will help the poor and the sick. We will welcome the outcast and “sinner.” We will love as God loves us, forgive as God forgives us, and be gracious as God is gracious toward us. Will other people notice us? Of course . . . and they will want to know why we live the way we do.

Tell what God has done for you

When we give the reason for the way we live and speak of the ways in which our lives have been changed, that is evangelism in words. “Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you,” Jesus told one man (*Mark 5:19*). That’s evangelism. He didn’t tell him to learn anything, to memorize Scriptures, to follow any scripted plan of salvation. He just said to tell other people—people who know us and can see what has happened—how much God has done for us.



Many people are afraid of the word “evangelism,” or they are threatened or turned off by it because of negative experiences. We need to reclaim the word; it’s a good word. It’s not bad news, but good news. The world is in desperate need to hear from you and from me and from millions of other Christians what God has done in our lives. As they hear it many will listen and believe. They will follow Jesus and enter into this new life with us. That’s evangelism.

Respond to people

Evangelism is about God, but it is also about people. The focus is on the needs of the people who need to hear the gospel. Not just their need to hear, but the specific needs of their lives as well. It’s often been said that it’s hard for someone who is hungry and thirsty to hear the gospel. The gospel calls us to feed the hungry. Let them ask why we feed them and if they don’t ask, let it be. A time will come when they will want to know.

In their classic book, *The Master's Plan for Making Disciples*, Win Arn and Charles Arn present a biblical model of oikos (household) evangelism. We all have a sphere of family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers, some of whom have never heard the good news in a way that makes sense to them to believe it. Our work is to live among them with transforming lives, telling them when there is an opportunity what God has done for us, and inviting them when

F O C U S

Why do most people come to church the first time, and what does that mean for your church?

the time seems right to join us in this new way of life. It takes patience. It takes time and a lot of prayer. It takes courage and faith. Most of all, it takes love.

Many studies in the past thirty years have shown that people come to faith and into the church because someone they know invited them. The percentage is as high as 85-90% in some studies. Many people are actively involved in a church because they were first invited by a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a co-worker. This is how evangelism is done best.

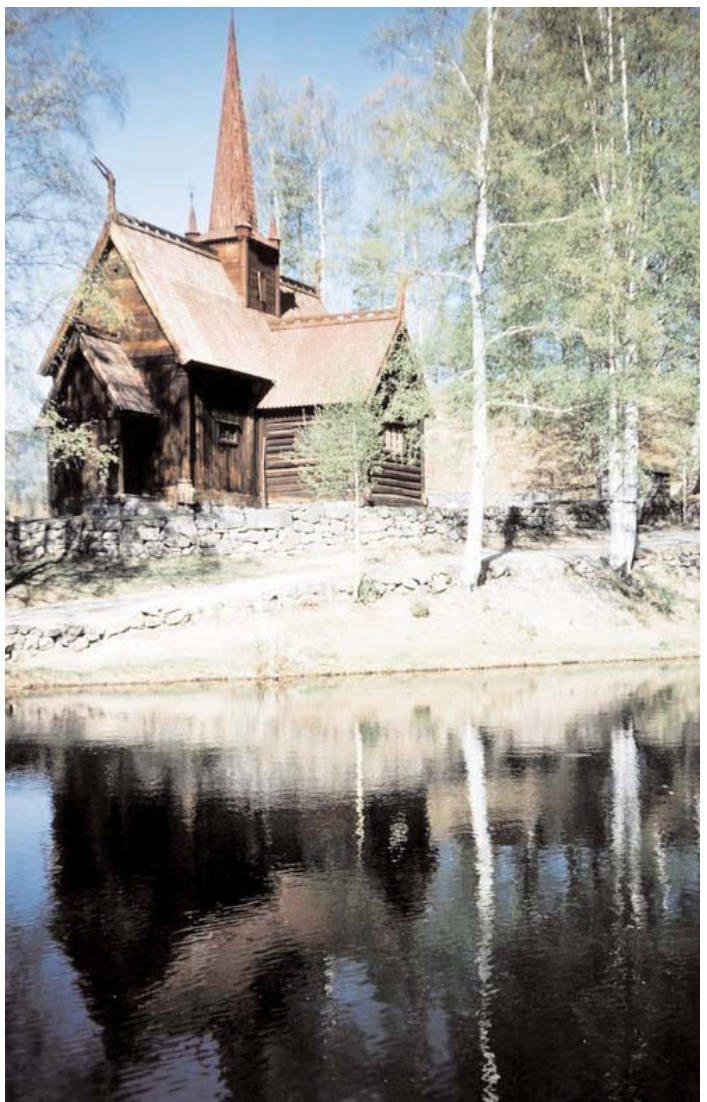
Be who you are

The Reverend Dr. Jeffrey Johnson, Strategist for Evangelism with National Ministries, reminds us that we are all different. Our personalities make us better suited for one style of evangelism than another. We don't have to do it like someone else we know or like the person who led the last workshop we attended. We just need to be who we are. If we live transforming lives and tell our story of what God has done, we will be doing the work of evangelism, but there are other specific ways of doing it as well, each one better-suited to one personality type than another. As you read through these basic descriptions of different styles of evangelism, let your heart tell you which fits who you are:

- Share the gospel verbally with individuals, one on one, perhaps even with strangers.
- Invite co-workers to join you for a workday luncheon.
- Invite someone to a special event at your church.

- Invite people to your home for a dinner or group.
- Do some intentional act of kindness and compassion for someone.
- Do "service outreach" in your community (wash car windows for free, clean public restrooms).
- Lead a discipleship group in your church or your home.

The list could be expanded. Have you seen someone engage in evangelism and thought, "I could do that!?" Then go and do it. Try it out. See if it "fits" who you are.



Focus on quality first

When we engage in evangelism in these ways, the number of disciples will increase. In Acts, we read the story of the early church and find it said many times, "And the church grew in numbers." It grew from 12 to 120 to thousands,

until in a short time, someone said “They have turned the world upside down.” Numerical growth is important. It is an indicator of health. Focus on quality first, and then the growth will come.

Some churches discount quantitative growth saying they aren’t concerned about “numbers.” The nature of God’s creation—including the Church—is that healthy, living things are also growing things. Healthy churches are growing churches.

Bring new life into being

There are exceptions to everything, but generally it is true that healthy organisms of any kind bring new life into being in regular cycles. Reproduction and multiplication are woven into the nature of God’s created order; it is the natural way of living beings. When we understand that the Church is a living being, we expect it to follow the same patterns as the rest of creation. Living things are born, grow, reproduce, mature, and die. And so do churches.

Congregations, then, need to be intentional about growing and reproducing as they mature, for they will not live forever. Not one of the early churches to whom the epistles were written are functioning today, yet no one would discount their validity then or now. Part of that growth and reproduction happens as one believer brings another person to faith and into the church. Then two bring two, and

F O C U S
**Is it possible
for your church
to give birth to
new church?**

four bring four, as the church lives and grows and multiplies. Part of that growth and reproduction happens as one congregation gives birth to another congregation in a healthy process of multiplication, just as cells divide and multiply for the growth of the body. New church planting is one more way of doing evangelism at a congregational level.

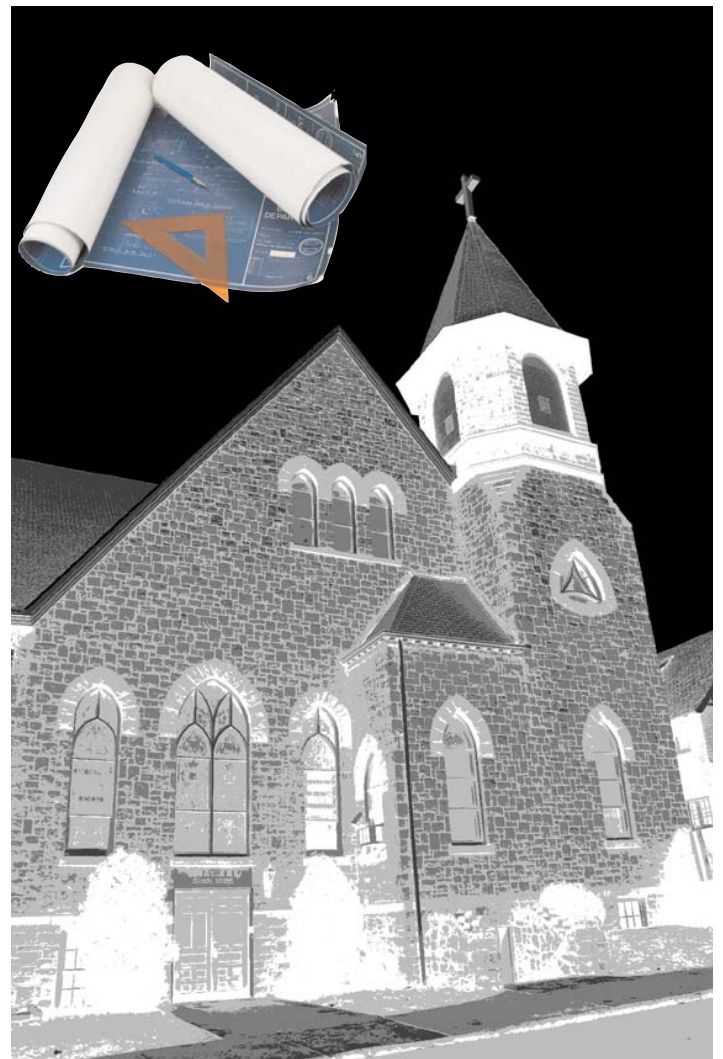
National Ministries advocates for a church multiplication movement. The denomination cannot plant enough churches at a national or even a regional level. There are simply not enough funds or staff available. That kind of

growth is best accomplished when one congregation gives birth to another. Why not join the movement by making plans for your congregation to plant a new church?

Dare to dream

What could happen in our world if every American Baptist church became a disciple-making congregation and committed itself to evangelism and numerical growth, including giving birth to new churches? What if every church worked at increasing the health of the congregation in all nine qualities of a disciple-making congregation? What could happen? What if every church had transforming leaders and experienced the transforming of lives every day? What could happen in our world? Listen to the promise in this benediction and dare to dream:

“Now to [God] who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”
(Ephesians 3:20-21)



COMPROMISO PARA EL EVANGELISMO Y EL CRECIMIENTO NÚMÉRICO

La iglesia discipuladora evangeliza para salvar a otros(as). La iglesia que da mantenimiento evangeliza para su salvación. La iglesia entiende que el evangelismo no trae salud, la salud lleva a evangelizar. Este enfoque en la misión toma muy en serio el desafío de la gran comisión de hacer discípulos y repercute en todos los sistemas de la congregación.

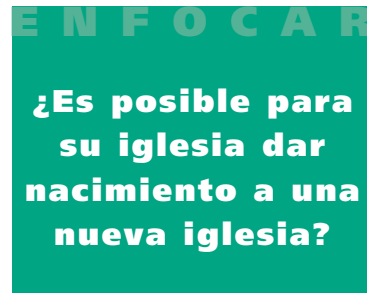


Evangelismo, por definición, es simplemente presentar a Jesús a alguien y ofrecerle una relación personal con Él. Precede al discipulado. La meta es de hacer discípulos(as), no solamente decisiones. El enfoque está en el compromiso de por vida y en el diario caminar con Jesús que ultimadamente resulta en bendiciones y beneficios eternos, que afectan nuestras vidas y a las de los(as) que nos rodean.

La evangelización procede de una elevada cristología de Jesús como Maestro y Modelo en el discipulado. Los(as) líderes modelan la evangelización, al igual que ponen sistemas en marcha que abogan y facilitan la implementación. La congregación separa dinero y personas para este esfuerzo.

Por consiguiente, la evangelización debe de ser un esfuerzo en equipo, una experiencia de cada miembro del cuerpo de Cristo. Unos(as) pocos(as) evangelistas eficientes no pueden llevar a cabo esta responsabilidad. Comunicamos mejor el evangelio en comunidad.

La iglesia discipuladora ayuda a sus miembros a discernir sus dones y personalidades que complementan el trabajo evangelístico. La congregación tiene bien en claro que la personalidad y los dones pueden ayudar a testificar, pero no son un requerimiento para ser un testigo. La iglesia discipuladora provee tanto, información como práctica que complementan y no compiten con la composición de las diferentes personalidades de la congregación.



Los esfuerzos evangelísticos se logran mejor cuando se ven como un método vivo y no mecánico. La evangelización debe ser siempre relacional, no importando los resultados. También debe de ser una combinación balanceada y consistente de lo que decimos (palabras) y de lo que hacemos (hechos).

La congregación deberá tener un equipo que constantemente promueva la evangelización como un privilegio individual y comunitario. Se encargará de la oración, planificación, promoción y procedimientos. El equipo deberá también apoyar nuevas obras, uno de los métodos más efectivos en la evangelización. Los esfuerzos pueden ser lo que la congregación ya hace en una relación de iglesia madre-iglesia hija o a través del apoyo de una nueva obra que no está afiliada pero que se la ve como una ampliación de la iglesia local y una afirmación de la extensión del cuerpo de Cristo.

La evangelización debe poseer dimensiones temporales y eternas. Debe de ser profética, hablando a la condición humana de aquí y ahora, así como su relevancia en el más allá. Habla a pecadores(as) y a los sistemas que éstos(as) originan y facilitan. La evangelización debe de desafiar tanto el alma como el cambio social; literalmente, impacta la comunidad. Habla tanto a individuos como a instituciones. La evangelización es contextualizada a la luz de la comunidad y lo que rodea la iglesia. El crecimiento ocurre cuando alcanzamos a las personas que no son parte de una iglesia y las conservamos.

