



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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What Does the Bible Say About Evangelism?

When you are looking at the basic doctrines of the Christian Faith, sooner or later you also have to look at what your Faith requires you to do in your life. In general terms, the Christian Faith requires us to accept Jesus Christ as the Son of God and to be obedient to the commands of Scripture. The problem that occurs is when we read the Scriptures and then **we decide** what is a command from those Scriptures and what is not. Now you know why there are over 22,000 Christian denominations in North America today. The bottom line is that folks just cannot seem to agree over what the commands of Scripture are and how we are to follow them today.

In the area of evangelism, the commands of scripture are quite plain. Jesus, before He ascended up into heaven, told His disciples:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18b-20.

Jesus' command was very simple. He told us He had the authority to issue the command and then commanded those who would be His disciples to teach other people about becoming disciples, baptize them and then continue teaching them everything else that Jesus had already taught.

So what is the issue with this command? Some people say that this command was only for the eleven. If that is so, then why are they not still here doing that job? The answer is because part of that “everything I have commanded you” includes the passing on of the job of teaching, baptizing and teaching some more to the new disciples that come into the Church. It may have indeed started with the eleven, but a week later on the day of Pentecost that command was shared with 3,000 new converts. They in turn followed this command and passed this responsibility on to the next converts who did the same. Generation after generation of the Church has received and passed on this teaching until it comes to us today. Now, we are responsible for carrying out Christ's command to teach, baptize and teach some more.

The biggest problem with commands such as this one is that it does not allow for exceptions. In the pages of the Scriptures, we do not see any “loopholes” that give us a way out of personally following the command to teach, baptize and teach some more. When it comes to this topic there are no age limits, there is no “free pass” because of a lack of ability or any other excuse we might come up with. Every disciple is called to share in the teaching of our Faith to the very best of our ability. We call this process evangelism and every Christian is expected (and commanded) to carry out this tasking as a part of our obedience to Christ.

The truth is, every disciple carries out the command to evangelize whether we realize it or not. By our words, but more importantly by our actions, we proclaim who and what we believe Jesus Christ is to the rest of the world. As His disciples we are the ones who are called to live like He lived, act like He acted, serve like He served, love like He loved. That is the difference between being a follower of Christ and being a disciple of Christ. Anyone can be a follower and stay on the outer edge of the Church never making a full commitment, but to be a Christian, we must become a disciple and make that commitment to follow, obey and be a living example of Jesus.

The bottom line is this: if we have committed ourselves to Jesus and accepted Him as our Lord and our Saviour, if we have been baptized into Him, then we must continue to study and learn so that we can teach the others who follow in our footsteps just as we follow in His footsteps. We need to accept the fact that all Christians are called to be evangelists in one way or another. It is also important for us to realize that not all teaching takes place in a classroom environment. Most of takes place in the view of the public as we live for Christ and let His light shine out through our words and our actions. The world is watching and judging us.

A part of how we evangelize is carried out by what we proclaim, but the rest is communicated by how we live our lives. It is by the way we live what we teach that we make real converts. The real question is what are we actually teaching and what kind of converts are we making? Jesus once had to warn the Pharisees that they were being blind guides in their evangelism and making of Jewish converts as they taught and lived contrary to the God’s commands. We must be careful not to make the same mistake.

To be a disciple and bring others to a point in their lives where they want to follow Christ and become a disciple, we have to live and act like Christians even in the middle of a non-Christian world. That also means that we share our faith with others and tell them why we live and act the way we do in our lives. This is the primary mission of the Church. The questions we need to answer now are threefold. Are you doing your part? Are you being the example for others that you need to be? Are you telling others about Jesus? When you can answer yes to these questions, then you are following His command. Being sound in your doctrine is not always easy, but it is necessary. The commands are clear. Are you ready to follow them?

Under His commands,

James