

HOW EVANGELISTS WITH THE GIFT CAN GRIEVE THE HOLY SPIRIT

An evangelist is someone who is gifted by God to spread or proclaim the gospel and teach others to do the same. Paul describes these people as a gift to the Church (Ephesians 4:11-14).

Someone without the gift of evangelism who spreads and proclaims the gospel is an evangeliser, not an evangelist.

There are basically four types of evangelist in the Church.

FOUR TYPES OF EVANGELISTS

(1) **Full blown “equipping” evangelists:** These evangelists are working at the ground level doing the hard yards attempting to motivate and equip *everyone* in the Church, showing them how to spread or proclaim the gospel.

Usually, they work for a pittance, live in shacks, drive old worn out cars, and are generally viewed by the general Church as being of little value.

There are many reasons why this is so, the main one being that they are calling and challenging everyone in the Church to actually do evangelism regularly. Most people in churches don't want to be challenged in this way. In fact, they resent it because in being challenged, they feel like they are being asked to do something

which they perceive as frightening, scary, humiliating and embarrassing. Let's face it, most people in most churches want to be comfortable, relaxed, and at peace. Equipping evangelists call them out of their comfort zone, which is where they don't want to be. No one likes to feel frightened, scared, humiliated, embarrassed, and out of their comfort zone, so the equipping evangelist who is issuing the challenge is most often politely shunned.

(2) **“Limited” equipping evangelists.** These evangelists do exactly what equipping evangelists do, except they don't try and mobilise everyone in the Church, only those show some interest in doing evangelism, which is usually the 2%. That is to say, they have given up on the 98% of the Church who show no interest, often writing off this group as “unsaved” or “backslidden.” They put the 98% in the “too hard” basket, claiming that trying to mobilise them is a complete waste of time, effort, and resources.

(3) **“Stage” evangelists:** Billy Graham and Reinhard Bonnke are examples of this type of evangelist. Stage evangelists fare much better than the “equipping” evangelists and are typically well supported and sought after.

This is mainly because they do the evangelism for the Church, and place no demands on the Church to do the evangelism. Stage evangelists make Christians feel good because people in churches love to see people being saved at big crusades. It's highly encouraging and inspiring and everyone loves to feel encouraged and inspired in this way. So much so that the Church will pay stage evangelists handsomely for their efforts. It is virtually unheard of for a stage evangelist to struggle financially.

(4) **The “do it myself” evangelists:** This fourth type of evangelist are those who just “do” personal evangelism.

Their focus is not on mobilising others or doing stage evangelism. They just faithfully chip away day after day reaching people with the gospel. They go about their work, hardly noticed by anyone in the Church. This type of evangelist has got like this because they have found mobilising the Church to do evangelism so discouraging that they feel there is no other option but to “go it alone”. These evangelists tend to focus also on doing evangelism in after school

clubs, Christians camps, prisons, ships, and other what I call “boutique” evangelism opportunities.

What are we to make of these four types of evangelists?

According to Ephesians 4:11-14, if an evangelist is not attempting to mobilising everyone in the Church to proclaim or spread the gospel, they are not operating in the fullness of their God-given job description. The truth is, they are compromising it. As such, they are grieving the Holy Spirit.

And what are the consequences? There are five.

1. **The Church suffers** because it is missing a vital piece of the jig saw for growing a healthy church. Ephesians 4:11-14 makes it clear that Christians in a local church will never reach maturity without receiving the on-going ministry of an equipping evangelist.
2. **The Glory of God suffers.** There is not greater way to glorify Jesus than to proclaim the gospel in a dark world. Proclaiming the gospel is the most potent way to glorify Jesus.
3. **The evangelist suffers.** The fullness of God’s blessing are reserved for those who are walking in the fullness of His will.
4. **The Christian suffers.** Jesus taught that there is a vital connection between doing’evangelism and finding real life in Christ (e.g. Mark 8:35).
5. **The non-Christians suffer.** The chance of non-Christians hearing the gospel is dramatically reduced when all but the gifted evangelists are doing evangelism. The truth is, when only stage evangelists are left to do the evangelism, the evangelisation of the world becomes an impossible task and a large percentage of the lost in the world will die never having heard the gospel.

For these five reasons, I am, therefore, charging all evangelists to return to their God-given job description. That is to say, to be “full blown equipping evangelists.”

This doesn’t mean that the other types of evangelist will stop doing what they are doing.

It just means that if they are not already motivating and equipping the average layman to proclaim or spread the gospel as a major part of their ministry, they ought to start, and start immediately.

Furthermore, all four types of evangelist ought to be doing evangelism personally otherwise they will have no authority or experience to teach others.

The few “full blown equipping evangelists” who are already walking in their job description must be funded and backed with prayer.

DOING THE MATHS:

Calling evangelists back to their Ephesians job description is crucial if we want to see a resurgence of the Great Commission.

As I have said over and over in this book, we must focus on mobilising the whole Church to evangelise the world. It is the quickest and most efficient way of completing the The Great Commission. It’s God’s “A” plan for getting the job done.

By evangelising the world I mean that every person on the earth gets to hear and understand the gospel message, delivered with love and grace, at least once.

God wants the mission completed. Matthew 24:14 says “*This gospel must first be preached in all the nations, and then the end shall come.*” “The end” is a reference to the Second Coming. Jesus wants to receive His bride (i.e The Church), but He won’t until and unless His world has been evangelised.

How feasible / realistic is it to evangelise the world?

Well, let’s says NZ has a population of 5 million, and 5% are genuine believers i.e. 250,000. If each believer were to share the gospel only once a week, we could evangelise New Zealand in a blistering 20 weeks.¹

¹ What’s the situation today in NZ? Upward of 95% of the people living in NZ today have not heard the gospel. This is because evangelists have not be living in the fullness of their God-given job descriptions.

You might be tempted to say “*What difference to NZ would that make?*” The answer to this question is found in Chapter Eleven.

Jesus’ teaching on the difference it would make if New Zealand (or any other nation) was evangelised is literally stunning.

Today, sadly, if a pastor opened his doors to an evangelist, he could no longer be sure the evangelist would equip his people to spread or proclaim the gospel.

Today’s evangelists are under enormous pressure to compromise their God-given job description and the vast majority have succumbed.

Instead of equipping people how to proclaim or spread the gospel they have instead turned to teaching people how to build friendships with the un-churched, how to be a person of influence, how to give a testimony, how to invite people to church, how to attract people to church, how to have a gentle conversation with the lost etc. The list of the things being taught by evangelists ***other than*** how to proclaim or spread the gospel is now endless!

Not that any of these skills / behaviours in and of themselves is wrong. Clearly they are not. They are all to be encouraged.

So what’s the problem with evangelists deviating from their God given job description in this way?

(1) Biblically, these “other” skills / behaviours were never meant to be the core business of an Ephesians 4:11-14 evangelist. The core business of an evangelist, as I have said, is to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

That is to say, to equip everyone in the Church who doesn’t have the gift of evangelism, showing them how to evangelise i.e how to proclaim or spread the gospel.

(2) Nowhere in the Bible are these “other”skills / behaviours” portrayed as the core business of a Christian, let alone an Ephesians 4:11-14 evangelist.

If and when these “other skills” are mentioned in the bible, they are not the priority.

We evangelists have erred greatly when these behaviours take the place of equipping people to do evangelism.

When we do this, we are guilty of majoring on the minors.

What is *the* major for all believers?

As we discovered in Chapter Five the major for all believers is the evangelisation of the world.

To evangelise the world is to complete the Great Commission.

The Great Commission has five parts: go, proclaim the gospel, baptise those who are saved, disciple those who are baptised.

Of these four parts, proclaiming the gospel is the priority, since the New Testament presents this behaviour as the core activity of a genuine disciple.² When this is not the priority, then ‘going’ ‘baptising’ and ‘discipling’ all break down.

That is to say, if *the* mission (i.e. the main thing) of the Church is to evangelise the world, what, logically, ought to be the priority of every discipleship program? That’s right - teaching disciples how to evangelise. If the mission is ever going to be completed, the disciples need to know, as their first priority, how to complete it and be motivated to complete it. It’s a no brainer. So, where to from here?

WHY CHURCH LEADERS ARE SO IMPORTANT

From the discussion so far, it’s not hard to see that a big part of this vision to call evangelists back to their Biblical job description depends on pastors and leaders at all levels of the Church.

The fact is, evangelists can’t mobilise whole churches for evangelism unless pastors open their doors.

Herein lies one of the major challenges facing the modern Church.

Most church leaders have zero desire to invite an evangelist into their church whose desire it is to equip all their people, including the church leader, for evangelism. It’s not even on their radar.

This is because most pastors and leaders today do not have it in their heart to engage in personal evangelism themselves.

Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year,

² Some would argue that “discipleship” is the priority. I would agree but only if the discipleship program makes a priority of teaching disciples how to evangelise. As it stands, I can’t find a discipleship program with this feature anywhere. There is no point in defending “discipleship” as the main feature of the Great Commission if the kind of disciples we are producing are not participating in the Great Commission. When this happens, “discipleship” becomes a nonsense.

the passionate desire to leave their office and go into the world and proclaim the gospel to a stranger *is just not in their heart*.

In fact, many leaders have so succumbed to making these “other skills and behaviours” the priority, that the thought of inviting an evangelist in to mobilise all their people for evangelism makes them feel nauseous.

Some, believe it or not, as I mentioned in chapter 10, even openly argue *against* teaching their people how to evangelise.

These are not the only challenges evangelists now face. For example, of the few pastors who do want to teach all the people in their churches how to evangelise, most will only want their people to communicate a sugar coated, watered down, “God is Love” “soft” gospel message - a message with all the hard sayings of Jesus stripped out (e.g hell, judgement, punishment, justice etc). In other words, a gospel message which is really not *the* gospel at all. For Paul the Apostle, this is a tragedy beyond words (Galatians 1:6-9 “*Woe to you if you preach another gospel*”)

How have evangelists reacted to these various challenges?

Most have buckled under pressure and done what pastors have wanted them to do i.e. to teach everything except how to proclaim or spread the gospel. That is to say, evangelists have within them a God-given desire to get in to churches, but pastors will either not let them in, or they will let them only on the condition they do something *other* than equip their people how to evangelise!

As such, many pastors and leaders are unwittingly working against evangelists who want to be true to their Biblical job description.

That is to say, they are unwittingly working against the completion of the Great Commission.

Tragically, we have become, to quote Jesus, a house divided against itself (Matthew 12:25) i.e. Jesus wants one thing, and most pastors want another.

How have so many of today’s pastors and leaders become like this? The answer? They are the fruit of many of today’s seminaries and Bible Colleges.

What I am about to say is not a criticism of seminaries and bible colleges. They are what they are. The situation I am about to

describe is what it is. Nothing more, nothing less.

Let me explain.

Reliable research shows that only 10% of seminaries around the world now have a course on evangelism.

And of the 10% that do, it is likely that the course will be run by a liberal theologian who doesn't actually do evangelism.

As well, it is likely that "the gospel" being promoted in such courses will be an insipid, limp, watered down, liberal, powerless gospel.

Often the course content will focus on little more than the history of evangelism - a history lesson. This is hardly the fuel needed for completing the Great Commission and changing the world.

In all my years as a researcher / writer, I have not been able to identify one seminary or bible college in the world which:

- has a compulsory, major course for all its students on evangelism.
- equips it's students to actually do evangelism
- requires its lecturers to be active in evangelism
- has any form of accountability for it students and staff in evangelism
- honours and lifts up evangelism in the general life of the institution.

These are the kinds of features of a seminary evangelism curriculum which are needed if we are going to restore the Great Commission to it's rightful place as top priority in the life of the Church.

Because this curriculum is missing from most of today's Bible Colleges and seminaries, they are producing graduates who possess no powerful all consuming vision to evangelise the world i.e. to complete the Great Commission.

Thus, a domino effect kicks in.

That is to say, this "non desire/vision/passion" for evangelism which graduates of bible colleges and seminaries carry with them when they graduate is passed onto everyone in the churches they lead, including any budding evangelists sitting in their congregation.

Evangelists sitting under such pastors often become so discouraged that they toss in their God-given calling, and move into real estate sales, insurance, or some other endeavour; or they compromise their

calling in the way I have described.

And so the downward spiral of forces working against the completion of the Great Commission gain momentum.

Yes, the majority of today's crop of pastors and leaders are unwittingly putting out the fire of the evangelists in their midst by demanding that they only teach the people in their churches these "other skills and behaviours" or a compromised gospel message. Worst of all, they just ignore full blown equipping evangelists.

So, we have this situation where the vast majority of today's pastors and leaders:

- don't carry a personal, deep, passionate vision for the evangelisation of the world
- don't regularly participate in personal evangelism themselves
- have not led anyone to Christ for a very long time.
- don't want to teach the people in their churches how to evangelise.
- have never themselves established the habit of personally going into the world to share the gospel with strangers.

How tragic is this, given that the evangelisation of the world is the mission of the Church, and the first concern of Jesus. Truly, we are now living in the Dark Age of evangelism. With such a dire situation, what hope is there?

There is one hope - evangelists with the gift who refuse to compromise on their Biblical job description.

Evangelists must find fresh legs to do personal evangelism themselves, and boldly and unashamedly preach and teach everywhere about the utmost priority of completing the Great Commission until the tide turns.

Do we have precedents to encourage us? To illustrate the truths about which I am writing here? Yes, we do! Let me explain. What I am about to say is exciting and will give us great hope.

When Billy Graham was at the height of his usefulness to God, evangelism as a subject soared to a place of prominence in many bible colleges and seminaries. Personal evangelism became "the in thing" in churches. Pastors received a fresh vision for evangelism and the completion of the Great Commission.

Finance for the evangelisation of the world flooded in. Many churches were actually competing to see if they could out give each for the cause of the Great Commission. World wide, evangelism at every level surged. You may ask “*Is Billy Graham the only example?*” No, he is not.

In Acts 2, the Holy Spirit used Peter the Apostle in a dramatic way to put evangelism at the top of the Early Church agenda by preaching an evangelistic sermon where 3000 were saved.

This event, which followed hard on the heels of the resurrection and Pentecost, and the Great Commission announcements of Jesus, kicked off, in a dramatic way, the mission of the Early Church to evangelise the world.

The Apostles (i.e the church leaders) were leading the charge.

Just look at Acts 5:41-42 “*...the Apostles never stopped going door to door, giving the gospel.*”

Friends, if it’s happened before, it can happen again.

God has uniquely gifted evangelists to re-envision the Christian Church at every level to complete the Great Commission i.e. to infuse bible colleges, seminaries, and church leaders with a desire to make the evangelisation of the world their top priority.

But first the vast majority of evangelists must themselves be re-envisioned and re-fired.

Evangelists - because for many of us our fires to mobilise the **whole** Church to evangelise the world have gone out, the fires of the rest of the Church have gone out as well, and these “other skills and behaviours” have, by default, assumed the top spot.

Evangelists, we must find new strength from God, through the Holy Spirit, to overcome the negative attitude to evangelism in the modern Church which has come upon us like a Tsunami from hell.

Truly, this tragic situation is from the devil himself.

Why such strong language?

As long as this situation persists, literally 100’s of millions of souls around the world are being lost without hope, dying and going to hell without ever hearing the Christian gospel once. God’s whole redemptive plan is breaking down.

Not only this, but Christians are missing out on the personal growth

and blessing which comes through participating in evangelism (Mark 8:35 *“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me **and for the gospel** will save it”*).

Where will we find help? - Psalm 121:1-2 says *“I lift up my eyes to the hills— where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.”*

Evangelists out there - we must:

- carry a God given burden to mobilise the whole Church for evangelism, and not settle to work with the one or two people in every church who show some interest. That is to say, we must become **WHOLE OF CHURCH** evangelists.
- be schooled up on the subject of evangelism, so that, among other things, we can rightly define key terms such as ‘evangelism’, ‘the gospel’, and ‘the Great Commission’ and key theologies such as ‘the mission’ and ‘the purpose’ of the Church (2 Timothy 2:15). That is to say, we must become **EDUCATED** evangelists.
- start doing personal evangelism regularly ourselves. It is a strange paradox that the desire to do evangelism comes from doing evangelism. When we “do” personal evangelism, we receive from the Holy Spirit the fire, the power, and the authority to inspire others. We can’t ask others to go where we have not gone first ourselves. Sad to say, many many people who preach and teach about the importance of evangelism don’t actually do evangelism. That is to say, we must become **“LEAD BY EXAMPLE”** evangelists.
- be people of prayer. We won’t turn this tide on the situation I have described in this blog without God’s help. That is to say, we must become **PRAYING** evangelists.
- be people of the Bible. We must study this book, book by book, Old Testament and New, until we get a handle on it in its entirety. Only by doing this will we most clearly see and feel the heart of God to redeem the world. That is to say, we must become **LOVERS OF THE BIBLE** evangelists.
- boldly and unashamedly write about, speak about, blog about, gossip about, preach about the absolute priority of completing

the Great Commission. For too long, evangelists have, under the guise of not wanting to be viewed as bucking authority, or being divisive, or rocking the boat, kept silent about the issues I have raised in this book. We've been afraid to speak up for fear that pastors will close their doors to us. Yes, we've compromised, and compromise *never* pays a good return. So, we must become BRAVE AND COURAGEOUS, PUBLICISING evangelists.

- absolutely refuse to deviate from our God-given job description. That is to say, we must become UNCOMPROMISING evangelists.
- be morally and ethically pure. That is to say, we must become HOLY evangelists. God works best through clean vessels.
- arrive at churches we are invited to with proven strategies and tools which will help pastors not only mobilise all their people for evangelism, but sustain them in it. That is to say, we must become RESOURCEFUL AND SERVANT HEARTED evangelists who are solution orientated. As such, we'll be able to truly help pastors.

These are the bullet points of our job description from God.

Take any one of these bullet points out, and our usefulness to God as evangelists will be weakened.

Evangelists, hear me in this - because we have compromised on some or all of these bullet points, Church leaders have compromised on their commitment to the absolute priority of the Great Commission, and the Dark Age of evangelism has come upon us.

It will only be when we evangelists return to this job description with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength that our FIRE and PASSION will return, and today's pastors and seminary / bible college leader's will catch the fire.

When this happens, the Great Commission will experience a resurgence and churches will experience GENUINE explosive growth again (not simply transfer growth), just like the Early Church.

Finally, a word about Alpha, seeing so many churches are using this

great initiative.

Programs like Alpha have a vital part to play in the overall mix, and we want to retain them.

However, with Alpha, participants watch Nicky Gumbel do the evangelism, while they look on.

The biblical mandate is to mobilise everyone in a local Church to personally and regularly participate in evangelism, not watch someone else do it.

So, let's retain Alpha, but alongside it keep the priority of motivating and mobilising the Church to start doing personal evangelism.

Summary

- There are 4 types of evangelist: stage evangelists, full blown equipping evangelists, limited equipping evangelists, and “do it yourself” evangelists.
- The Biblical mandate of every evangelist, regardless of what type they are, is to equip everyone in the Church, showing them how to evangelise.
- If we drift from this core mandate, we are erring. We are compromising, and thus grieving the Holy Spirit.
- Evangelists with the gift are the key to causing a resurgence of obedience to the Great Commission.
- But evangelists must first be re-envisioned to adhere to their biblical job description.
- Alpha must be retained, and promoted, but along side it, the emphasis ought to be on motivating and equipping every member of the church to do evangelism personally.
- **ACTION POINT:** Start spreading awareness of the **A**issues raised in this chapter to other Christians, particularly leaders. Email this chapter to everyone on your address book and encourage them to do the same. Send them a PDF file of this Chapter. If you are reading a hard copy of this chapter, you can obtain a PDF copy by sending an email to julian@esisite.com.
- **ACTION POINT:** Go to the leaders of your church. Ask **A**them to make changes to their mission statement so that

evangelism becomes central. Ask them to bring evangelism back to centre stage in the life of your church. Pray for them. Encourage them. Work with them. Dialogue.

In the next Chapter I explore motivations for evangelism. To enlist troops for battle and to keep them there and passionate for the Cause, wise commanders know they must articulate clearly and convincingly why it is worth going to war and staying in the battle.

What ought to be our number one motivation to evangelise the world? Is it obedience to God?

Or is it love for our neighbour? To see people saved and headed for heaven?

Or is the main reason so that we can stop people going to hell?

Or do we go to battle because evangelism gives us a vision and a sense of purpose?

Or is it because we think that in doing evangelism we are storing up riches in heaven for ourselves?

Or is it a mixture of all of the above?

Believe it or not, none of these ought to be our number one motive for doing evangelism. Turn the page and I will show you why.