

What Is Your Role In Evangelism?

By Victor Beshir

You love evangelism and you love to put a lot of effort in evangelism, or you would even like to make evangelism your primary service, which is great. Nevertheless, you may have already asked yourself, as I did:

What should I do in evangelism?

What is my role in evangelism?

And even more importantly,

What is God's plan for my life?

What does He need me to do in evangelism?

Generally speaking, many Copts think of evangelism as preaching to others or talking to others about Christianity or Orthodoxy or our Coptic Church. Yet:

Is preaching the only method to evangelize?

Of course, one of our duties as Christians is to proclaim the Lord's death and His resurrection to other individuals. But, **do you think we are all called to be preachers?**

Let me start by referring to a business seminar that I attended in 2007, in Tampa, Florida. In the seminar, Derrick Brooks of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers talked about how his team won the Super Bowl that year. Thousands of people attending the seminar greeted him with a lot of cheers and applause. In his speech, he mentioned how believing in the Lord Jesus Christ changed his life and influenced his work in the team. People listened attentively and some were touched by this hero. Derrick Brooks is not a preacher nor is he an evangelist, but he is what I love to call a **'Steward of Evangelism (Servant of Evangelism).'**

He followed what he does best in his life, professional football player, mixed it with Christ, and then used his career to witness to Christ. I call this mix **the golden rule for evangelism.**

In the same meeting, a well-known international businessperson concluded the business seminar by saying all that you heard are tools but lacks the power to do. Then, he talked about the power as the power you will acquire when you believe in God and accept Jesus Christ as your own savior. Tens of thousands were listening to him. To my amazement, he concluded the meeting with a prayer that the Lord accept us and let us enjoy the power of His salvation. Although we, as Orthodox, are in disagreement with his theology, however, I admired the way his courage and his witnessing to Christ in a secular meeting. **He does the best thing he likes in his life, mixes it with Christ, and then uses it in evangelism. He is a businessperson, but surely, he is a servant of evangelism.**

Let us think for a minute about a great figure of the Bible, David. Everyone knows David the king, the military general, the prophet, and all other titles he had. For me, the most important achievement of his life is his poems, his psalms. Until today, we use them in individual prayers and in the church. They move our hearts to God. They pull us to repentance, and lead us into spirituality. His psalms are a great message of evangelism. So, **David used the best thing he liked in his life, writing poems, mixed them with God, and let God inspire him, and lead his hands to write treasures. He was not a full time evangelist, yet his poems were like a great net that have evangelized millions of people!**

A few years ago, I was visiting Denver, Colorado, where there were about 160 artifacts pieces from Rome on display. I visited the museum and liked all that was there, but what I will never forget is my visit to the Pieta. I entered a small room, where I found about fifty people standing in awe and amazement. I looked, and there was the statue of Virgin Mary holding the Lord before burial. I was overwhelmed by the scene, as if I was standing there twenty centuries ago. I looked around me, and I saw everyone was overwhelmed. Some were in tears and others were touched by the scene. People stayed for about half an hour staring at the Pieta. This statue was made by Michelangelo. Here **his art works as a powerful evangelistic tool.** Art is a great area that can be used as an evangelistic tool. The crucifixion picture, for example, attracted many people to God.

George Fredrick Handel, a musician, wrote his famous symphony ‘The Messiah.’ **This symphony has evangelized to many people.** They said it was the most powerful spiritual music ever written. **Again, Handel used what he liked the most, music, mixed it with God, and used it as a tool in evangelism.**

The impact of writers in evangelism is well recognized. A small brochure could attract so many souls to God. A spiritual book written by a clever writer who allows God to work in his writing could have influence people for centuries. Think of a book like ‘The Confessions’ written by St. Augustine. How many people were moved to repentance when they read the book? Writing does not mean writing big books, but could mean writing a small booklet or small articles in a local community paper or even posting a few lines on Facebook.

Sometime ago I heard a story about a Sunday School teacher who asked her children to go from door to door to distribute a crucifixion picture and say ‘Jesus loves you.’ A man was thinking of committing suicide, and then he looked at heaven and said, ‘God if you are there and you would like me to live send me a sign.’ At that moment a girl from that Sunday School class was knocking at the door. When he opened, she told the man, ‘Jesus loves you.’ He looked at her and asked, ‘how do you know little girl?’ She gave him the crucifixion picture, and told him, “If he does not like you, why He died for you Mr.” The life of the man changed and he followed the Lord. **The impact of Sunday School teachers who planting love of evangelism are so significant.**

The contemporary Mother Teresa group of sisters, evangelized through nursing, caring for people who have nobody to care for, and showing the love of Christ by deeds. **This**

example shows us that physicians, nurses, psychologist, counselors, and social workers could have a great impact on people's lives when they mix their sincere services with interest in people with the message of God.

Now, I will talk to you about those **rich women who followed Christ, and served him with their money. Do you consider them as servants of evangelism?** Yes, I do. Their financial support was used in satisfying the needs of evangelism at that time.

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This will lead me to ask the question: **What do you have in your life?**

Skills, money, merciful heart, time. Whatever you have, put in God's hands. Mixing it with elements of evangelism will help you to be a servant of evangelism.

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So far, I have mentioned many ways to be a servant of evangelism. Just keep in mind that you don't have to be Michelangelo to serve God using your art. **Even a small piece of art will influence some people.** You don't have to be in the same level of David to be a servant of evangelism writing poems. Sometimes **one poem could influence many.** Consider the internationally famous Christian song 'As I am I come to Thee,' which was written by Charlotte Elliott who put in it all the emotions a lost person has and mentioned all the words that a person may say to God to express his need to God. Just one song but it remains for three centuries sung by many people and was translated into many languages. So, don't be afraid, but use what you have without belittling the gifts God gave you.

Now, let us have a look inside the work of evangelism. Doing so we find that **there are many kinds of work inside evangelism**, for example:

1. **St. Stephen**, although he evangelized people, we notice that his main strength was in defending the faith (Acts 7). This group of people who serve in defending the faith, we call them '**the Apologists.**' They get into dialogue with others, they are knowledgeable of the faith, and are able to convince others. The history of the church is full of apologists, such as St. Justin the Martyr, and Athenagoras. **You may have this ability of convincing others, either through your writings or individual conversation. If you have it, it may be your call to evangelism.**
2. **St. Paul**, in addition to his preaching, he left us a treasure of writings. **God has used all his knowledge of philosophy, Greek culture, and his skills in writing.** His analytical philosophy is obvious in his writing, which enabled him to be able to convince others. **He put all his knowledge and skills in the hands of God, and considered himself as 'fool for Christ's sake' (1 Cor 4:10). The result was**

- a river of grace floating over this knowledge and skills to give his writings a divine power.** They have become as a musical instrument used by a great artist and the artist is God.
3. Then, there is also a difference between the preacher and the teacher. **God gives some people the ability to attract others to the church,** but their role stop there. When they are in the church, they need a special kind of **teacher who can teach them the faith.** **People who have the gift of teaching, need to know about the background of the people, their culture, in addition of speaking their language. Not everybody is a gifted teacher, nor is everyone is an evangelist.** As the Bible says: ‘The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, **some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,** to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ (Eph 4:11,12).

Evangelism in Western Societies:

In addition to all the kind of evangelistic work, I mentioned above, there are a few additional contemporary works in evangelism that need some people to work on, such as:

1. **Internet Work:**
Nobody can ignore the impact of the Internet today in the whole world. People used to find the answer to their questions in books or by asking others. **Today, people go to the Internet, using search engine and chat rooms to find answers to their questions.** Therefore, **the goal is to have evangelistic web pages, plugs, chat rooms, and Facebook pages to fill people’ spiritual needs. We are in great need of web page designers, editors, maintenance people, and writers.**
2. **E-mails:**
Some people use e-mailing as a good method to express their needs and to discuss the faith. Some servants of the church find themselves answering hundreds of e-mails coming from people from many countries with different spiritual needs. It became a big service in itself. **It needs servants of evangelism whose only service is to answer e-mails, and thru e-mails they can attract many people to Christ and to the church,** even though those people live thousands of miles away from where they live.
3. **Video**
Video is one great tool that we need to put in the service of evangelism. I remembered a Muslim clerk went to my daughter’s class when she was in high school. He could not speak but a few words in English, but he had a great video to show. After seeing the video, one third of the class thought to follow Islam. My daughter told the students what the video did not say about Islam. You can imagine how many efforts, skills, and research was put in producing such an influential video. So far, we have no such evangelistic video in our Coptic Church. **We need people who are good in writing scripts, playing music, and in all the different areas of producing videos. What do you think? Do you**

consider those people who work in producing such videos as servants of evangelism? Sure, they are. They speak to others in artistic contemporary attractive methods that sometimes are more effective than preaching.

4. **Welcome Committee:**

Visitors to our churches need a special care that requires a ‘welcome committee’ that not only welcome people and let them feel at home, but also offer help in follow-up prayers, introduce visitors to the priest & others, and follow-up after the visit with telephone calls and thank you e-mails or cards. Then direct visitors to servants who introduce them to the faith. This needs social people and work well with people. If you’re, then probably this could be your evangelism’ service.

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Now, after you have read about all these fields of evangelism service, what is your role in evangelism? What is the will of God in your life? Which way of service to select?

Before you decide, please remember that God has a plan for your life, and He capitalized on it for all your life. He planted specific skills in you, supported you with particular feelings and ways of thinking. He allowed you to meet certain people and visit or live in certain areas. All that He planted in you was not in vain or without a purpose, because God does everything with high wisdom and great vision.

Let me stop here to give you some examples:

1. **Moses:**

Why did God allow Moses to be brought up as a son of the daughter of the Pharaoh of Egypt (Exodus 2:10) –The most advanced country in the world at that time? The Bible reveals to us one reason when it says, **‘So Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in his words and deeds’** (Acts 7:22). He was not only well educated in all sciences and knowledge of the Egyptians, but also he became so powerful and wise in deeds. In other words, he became a leader. Afterwards, God instructed him spiritually in the wilderness for another forty years. Then He sent Moses to be the leader of the children of Israel.

Therefore, God will use what He allowed you to learn, to experience, and even what He allowed you to suffer from. All what you have passed through in your life are important ingredients in preparing you. He might not use you immediately, as He did with Moses, if He feels that you need more spiritual depth or more experiences, but surely the day will come when He uses all what you have in His service, if you allow Him.

2. **St. John Chrysostom:**

They said about him that **‘He was born a public speaker, and with the grace of God he became an evangelist.’** God allowed him to study philosophy and reach

a high level that except for the fact that he left philosophy to join the church service, he could have been one of the famous philosophers of the world. Then God allowed St. John to study theology and the Holy Bible. They said that he knew the whole Bible by heart. Afterwards, he lived as a hermit in a mountain. All the above was God's preparation for St. John's great service.

3. If you meditate in any Saint's life, you can see clearly how God writes the book of his/her life. Every day God writes a few words, but over the years, the words became pages, then chapters, and then a book that explains how God prepared the person for His service, which is at the same time the way of salvation for that person.

The above examples show you how God plants certain capabilities, feelings, skills, and manners in His servants' lives. Now please ask yourself this question:

What is the thing that you love to do without irritation or getting bored even if you continue to do it continually for days or even weeks?

Some may say drawing or writing or serving others, or searching, or singing, or reading, or talking to others & socializing with them, or teaching certain ages, or visiting the sick or the needy, or visiting prisoners or design web pages or playing football or volleyball or other games or work in a business or study. Whatever you discover in yourself, and then you may think that is far away from God's service, in fact, this is what should be your main service to God, at least for now.

No matter what your answer is, just **take whatever you love and pray for it. Put God in it. Do it for Him, and not for yourself. Then ask Him to use it. Finally, use it in evangelism.** This will determine what kind of evangelism service you will get into. This could lead you to be dedicated evangelist or an apologist or a teacher or a welcome person or a translator or a writer or an artist or a doctor or a businessperson or a worker in other areas where you serve the Lord in evangelism with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength and ability.

What I would like to add here is very crucial. You need to lead a spiritual life that allows the ego and pride to disappear and God to dominate your life, so you will be an instrument in the hands of God. Consider all what you have –no matter how great- is nothing without the grace of God. You need to mix what you have with prayers and humility. Keep in mind what St. Paul says, “This *is* a faithful saying and worthy of **all** acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom **I am chief**” (1 Tim 1:15) and that the objective of what we do is to show others ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’ (Eph 3:8)

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Now, I come back to answer the very first question I asked:

What Can I Do In Evangelism?

I think, we can divide the work in evangelism into two major categories- although there are some works that could be allocated to both categories:

First: Work directly in proclaiming the gospel, defending the faith, and/or teaching the new converts, such as:

1- **Evangelist**: As the Nelson's Bible Dictionary defines evangelist saying, 'Evangelist is a person authorized to proclaim the gospel of Christ. In a narrow sense, the word refers to one of the gospel writers. The word means, one who proclaims good tidings' (Eph 4:11, 2 Tim 4:5). Evangelists, therefore, are people who are dedicated to proclaim the gospel.

2. **Apologists**: Those people defending the faith like St. Stephen and St. Justin the Martyr.

3. **Teacher**: Those people who are gifted in teaching the new converts

Second: Servants of Evangelism:

Before talking about the different kinds of services, I would like to make you aware of the depth of the word 'servant' in the Bible:

1- The Lord Himself was called a servant:

Listen to what the Father says about His Son, "Here is my **servant**, whom I have chosen, My beloved, with whom My soul is well pleased. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the Gentiles" (Matt 12:18).

'The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified His **servant** Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release Him" (Acts 3:13).

"When God raised up His **servant**, He sent Him first to you, to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways" (Acts 4:25).

2- Other Apostles called 'Servants':

"Paul, a **servant** of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1).

"Of this gospel I have become a **servant** according to the gift of God's grace that was given me by the working of His power" (Eph 3:7).

"James, a **servant** of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion" (James 1:1).

"Simeon Peter, a **servant** and apostle of Jesus Christ" (2Pet 1:1).

Therefore, it is an honor to be called a servant of God or an Evangelism Servant.

Now let's examine some of the workers in this category:

Please, keep in mind that the following list is not inclusive; you might add to it what you discover in yourself. Regardless of the skills or the gifts evangelism workers could have,

they cannot be instruments of God until they mix their work with God's love and grace. Please think about what each worker in this list could contribute to evangelism.

1. **Musicians**
2. **Doctors, nurses, psychologists, counselors**
3. **Visitors to elderly people**
4. **Sunday school servants**
5. **Teachers & child care workers**
6. **Artists**
7. **Writers:** Poems, articles, brochures, topics, lessons, stories, books & booklets
8. **Greeting committee**
9. **Financial supporters:** With financial support, you could send missionaries, support their mission with gospels, books, help to the poor, build a place for meetings or churches for the new believers. You could also help evangelists to order materials to distribute. In addition, with financial support, some evangelists could work full-time as evangelists, which is urgently needed in the Western countries.
10. **Supporters of others who work in evangelism:** There are always many tasks, small and big, that people who work in evangelism wish they could have someone who could help completing those tasks in order to allow them to catch up with other urgent needs.
11. **Translators:** Translations from Arabic to other languages are needed to help our churches in different countries. In addition, in evangelism we need to translate brochures, Facebook pages, and web pages to other languages to reach out others in their mothers tongues. If you have this gift, please come forward.
12. **Web page related services:** design, maintenance, and editing.
13. **Face Book & Chat room servants:** Chat rooms become like a big net that can attract many people to the faith. We need to prepare servants for the chat rooms to adequately answer questions, know how to read between the lines about the spiritual needs of a person, and how to invite them to Christ first and then to His church. Today we don't have a market place as it used to be in the days of the apostles, but we have chat rooms and face book where we could evangelize.
14. **E-mail servants:** We need to acknowledge the great need to have servants devoted to the E-mail responding, especially in connection with our web pages.
15. **TV, radio, video & movie related services:** such as, anchors, program producers acting, designing, producing, editing, engineering, writing scripts, ... etc.
16. **Admin & organizer:** Those people who are good in organizing a campaign or a meeting or a mission, or an activity like church open house, are very valuable to evangelism. Good organization is one reason behind the success of evangelistic activities; at the same time, its absence is a big reason behind the failure of church activities.

17. **Public relation** with other churches, communities, organization, and newspapers & magazines:
Those people are needed to contact other churches, schools, colleges, museums, hotels, chambers of commerce, & organizations to ask them to arrange for presentations about our church. We need them badly in establishing relationships with newspaper editors, so we can send them articles to publish. I wish if we have at least one person in each church to help in this area.
18. **Prayer warriors**: Without prayer, all the services are useless. We need servants whose job is to get together and have prayer meetings or get down on their knees to pray fervently for evangelism.
19. **Printing & copying related services**: This extends to include brochures, booklets, videos, cassettes, & CDs. If you consider that one brochure or a CD could, with God's grace, attract a person to God, you would value this service.
20. **Spread of awareness of evangelism servants**: Our congregations need a lot of work to prepare them to accept evangelism as an important role of the church and accept having people who are different in ethnicity, skin color, dress, language, country, or religious background. This service needs servants in every church whose only job is to instill awareness of evangelism and acceptance of others.
21. **Servants with a vision**: To explain what I mean by that, let me mention here a brief story of one of the most notable people in the history of the Russian Orthodox missionary work, **Macarius Gloukharev**. Although he did not baptize many converts as others did, nor did he succeed in accomplishing his goals, but his vision for mission influenced the whole church. His heart was full of love of evangelism, however, he noticed that 'the Russian masses were only superficially Christians, and therefore inadequate for the great apostolic task that God had in store for them. He thought of how to renew the spiritual life of the Russians. He encouraged translating the Bible into the Russian language and helped in doing that himself. He encouraged opening monasteries' doors for all Russians to learn about Christianity. He thought of establishing a mission society, but he could not. However, he became a catalyst for missions by establishing a working theory of missions, which the Russian Orthodox Church at large appreciated only after his death. **Definitely, we need servants with vision who can lead the thoughts and hearts of others towards love of Christ, His church, and evangelism.**
22. **Family evangelism**: The church history is full of exceptionally amazing servants and evangelists. St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine. First she did a great evangelistic work with her husband who was not a Christian and a violent man. Yet she won him to Christ after many long suffering years, applying what St. Peter says, "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear" (1 Peter 3:1,2). Then she evangelized her son Augustine by words and tears in prayers for long twenty years until he repented. St. Monica is an amazing example since all her evangelism was inside her family. In fact, **family should be our first evangelism duty of an evangelist.**

23. **Missionary without leaving country:** Although Thérèse the Little Flower never conducted a mission, she considered the missionary patron in the Catholic Church. She wanted very much to leave her convent in France and be sent on mission, specifically to Vietnam. Her poor health prevented her from making that journey, but not from being a missionary. Determined not only to love God herself, but also to lead others to know and love Him, she offered her prayers for missionaries around the world. **Therefore, you could be a missionary by praying for missionaries.**

Coming to the end of this lesson, you need to pray, humble yourself before God, and ask His guidance on what to do in evangelism. Does any service that I mentioned above attract you? Some of you may be good in many services of what I mentioned. Therefore, if you have many skills or talents or feelings and you don't know which one to pick up, list them in a piece of paper, put it in a small envelope, and place the envelope on the altar. Then wait for God's direction. Just remember that God might want you to work on more than one area. St. Paul, for example, worked as an evangelist, a missionary, a writer, an admin, an apologist, and other roles.

Finally, even after selecting an area for your evangelism, please remember to make sharpening your skills as a continuous work.