

Why Do I Need to Evangelize (1)

By Victor Beshir

There are many reasons why we should reach out and evangelize or get involved in some missionary work. Some of these reasons are as follows:

1. Our Lord commands us to evangelize
2. Evangelism is the secret behind the success of the early church
3. It is critical to evangelize in Western societies
4. Evangelism helps people to learn about our Lord's salvation and eternal life. This knowledge may lead them to believe in the Lord, Who through baptism will make them children of God.
5. Other groups have diligently worked on spreading their faith in Western Societies (i.e. Far East Religions, cults, Islam, and Atheism). Therefore, Christians need now more than any time before, to have a complete and thorough understanding of their faith, as St. John warns us saying, *"For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son"* (2 John 1:7-9).
6. Modern Christian churches have lost their connection to the historical church, the church established by Christ and His apostles, which has resulted in churches having a "spiritual void" and consequently spiritual emptiness that has now made their members easy prey for other religions or groups¹.

In this lesson, we will discuss the first and second reasons.

First: It is Our Lord's commandment

1. Our Lord Jesus Christ's last words on Earth were, "*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age*" (Matt: 28:19-20).

2. There are many other direct verses that urge us to perform evangelistic work. A good reference book that lists the verses is written by H.G Bishop Antonius Markos, called "An Introduction to the Theology of Mission."

3. The spirit and the essence of the New Testament are manifested in "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). So, God's heart is in the salvation of everyone. He offered the highest price anyone could pay; Jesus' life on the cross was surrendered after a brutal death. He is looking for us to spread this great news of salvation. Notice the words "that whoever believes." He did not talk only about masses of people, but His love and interest is in the salvation of everyone.

4. The same intense burning desire of the Lord to save each individual is noted in Luke 15, where He gives three parables: 'The Lost Sheep,' 'The Lost Coin,' and 'The Lost Son.' In each parable, we can easily see where God's heart is. Let's stop for a moment to ask about how many of us come in contact with lost ones each day? It is the Lord's desire to find someone like us to carry out the gospel's joyful message, the word of life, and the light of salvation to those lost ones.

5. Take a look at this striking verse, "*There would be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance*" (Luke 15:7). Think about how much joy you may generate in heaven over the course of your life if you work as an evangelist!

6. Over 25 years ago, an old wise church servant, named Ayaad, used to lecture in the Sunday school servants meeting that I attended. Ayaad was a truly spiritual person. His words always inflamed our hearts with the love of

our Lord and His Children. His tears were a great witness to the flames of love burning in his heart for the lost sheep. Ayaad once told us the following story: "One day, a Sunday school servant saw a person entering the church. He ran towards him and welcomed him warmly. That person looked at the servant in amazement and asked if he knew him. The servant answered, 'yes, my beloved, I have been praying for the day I see you in the church for twenty years.' These were Ayaad's last words before he sat down, bursting into tears. His words touched our hearts deeply that day because he was speaking from the bottom of his heart.

Dear friend, we need to learn how to care about the salvation of others, as we care about our own salvation. Imagine how you would feel on the last day, if you found out that your name was not written in the book of life? Think about it. Would you like this to happen to you? If not, then we should help others to have their names written in the book of life through evangelism. Our hearts need to be filled with God's love for the lost sheep, and we need to work in the field of evangelism as hard as we can.

Second: Evangelism is the secret behind the success of the early church in the first century.

1. Historians estimate that the early church was growing on an annual rate of 40 %. This is why Christianity reached most of the civilized world in a very short amount of time.
2. The Holy Spirit was working strongly because people like you and I, were ready to follow the Lord no matter what the cost was, including their life.
3. They truly believed that their lives were not theirs anymore, but rather the life of Christ in them. They no longer lived for themselves but for the Lord, who died for them and was raised from the death, as St. Paul says, "*He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again*" (2 Corinthians 5:15). Can you and I compare our faith and our love to theirs? I would be the first to confess my weak faith. But let us courageously confess these sins, and ask God to help us not to live for ourselves anymore. Let our work in evangelism and our love for our brothers and sisters erase the years of ignorance of the value the grace of God that has bestowed on

us! God wants those people who put Him first in their lives, because they believe that He is their life. To work in evangelism, you need to believe that Christ is your life, and you have no life away from Him, as St. Paul describes it beautifully, *"For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God"* (Colossians 3:3).

4. When it comes to evangelism, there is no more joyful news than what you can read in the book of Acts. I urge you to start reading this book to enjoy learning about the source and influence of evangelism in the early church, the church of the Apostles.

5. To see what happened in the first church, I would like to quote just one verse, *"And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:47).

6. Now, I would like to ask, "How much heavenly joy did they experience? They experienced a lasting joy even in the middle of persecution. Historians noticed that Christian martyrs were joyfully singing while they were led to their death. Joy attracted many pagans to join Christianity in the early centuries of Christianity. When people notice our inner peace and joy, they will ask us about the reason for our joy, and then we can evangelize. To have joy, we need to have Christ as our life and commitment to live a pure Christian life.

7- Evangelism was the work of every believer in the early church, though they were mostly weak, uneducated, poor, and new to the faith! They had a flaming holy fire in their hearts that pushed them to evangelize, to tell the whole world about the Savior Who gave them everlasting life. They were so excited about the fruits of their new life that they desired to pass to everyone. The Good News of the Gospel was manifested in their lives. The power of the Resurrection was working on their daily behaviors.

Unless we experience the power of the Resurrection in our lives, the excitement of the Good News of the Gospel, the joy of being with the Lord, our evangelism will not bear fruit. If you are eager to evangelize, start working hard on your spiritual life.

From the Fathers Writings on Evangelism in the Early Church:

1- "And so after receiving their instructions and being fully assured through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, as well as confirmed in faith by the Word of God, they (the apostles) went forth, equipped with the fullness of the Holy Spirit, to preach the Good News that the Kingdom of God is close at hand" *Saint Cement of Rome*

2- "And while the stones of His tomb were fastened upon the vault and the seals yet upon them, the dead One arose, the crucified, the nail-pierced One, and having filled His eleven disciples with His mighty power, He sent them to men throughout all the world to be the common healers of their kind, to correct their way of living, to spread through every part of the earth the knowledge of their heavenly doctrines, to bring down the tyranny of devils, to teach those great and unspeakable blessings, to bring to us the Good News of the souls' immortality, and the eternal life of the body, and rewards which are beyond conception and shall never have an end."

Saint John Chrysostom

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Questions to answer and send to the instructor:

- 1- Can you think of any other reasons as to why we need to evangelize?
 - 2- Search the Bible for verses that talk about evangelism or missionary work
- (You may use a Bible Concordance, Online Bible search, such as:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/>)

Note:

- 1- To read more on the impact on modern churches on Christianity, please visit the following facebook page, "Looking For a Church As Old As Christianity," then read "NOTES." Here's the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Looking-For-a-Church-As-Old-As-Christianity/164218050278580>