

Fulfilling the Great Commission

**An Introduction to
Evangelism and Discipleship**

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Course Introduction

The church does not exist for itself. It exists in the midst of a lost world, not to condemn those in such a state but to shine like stars, to give out to each generation the Word of life (Phil 2:15-16), and to declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His wonderful light (1 Pet 2:9). To whom are we to declare His praises? To our families. To our brothers and sisters in Christ. To the non-Christian world around us.

The world is in such a need of a Savior and of the knowledge of God that Jesus commanded before He left, “Preach the gospel to all creation.” “Make disciples of all the nations.” Every member of the church has the great privilege of sharing the gospel with others, of leading them by God’s grace to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus, and of helping them grow in their walk with the Lord.

This course is vital because the gospel must be preached in every village and home of your nation. Those responding must be established in the faith so they can “shine as lights” and reach out with the Word of truth.

In order to be effective in the task, you must grow in compassion and love for the lost. You must become more skilled in declaring the message of truth. It is necessary to learn to build bridges of love and acceptance into non-Christian homes and lives. Whom are you counting on to reach your people and your nation with the gospel? Whom can God send? Who will go for Him?

Missionaries from other lands cannot be counted on to do the job. They cannot minister in your land as effectively as you can. They do not understand your culture well. You do. They do not perceive so deeply why people think and act as they do in your land. You do. They speak your language with an accent, if they speak it at all. You speak it fluently. They are foreigners. You are at home. They must leave at some point, the task unfinished. You can stay to complete the task.

You are a person who can influence others effectively toward Jesus Christ. Therefore, you must be equipped to penetrate your society with the gospel, not only to win others to the Savior but also to build them up in the faith and see these converts become strong disciples who can continue winning and building others. In this way the kingdom of God will grow!

During Christ's three years of ministry He went everywhere preaching—evangelizing the lost. At the same time He also had a teaching ministry through which He could establish His disciples in the faith and preserve them for the kingdom of God.

Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness (Mt 9:35).

In His final days on earth, after the resurrection, Jesus met with His disciples and gave them what we call “The Great Commission” (Mt 28:18-20). It outlines His vision for His disciples then and now. It can be carried out by someone who has felt called to a full-time Christian ministry or a lay person who wants to spread the good news of the gospel and the Christian life.

A common complaint is that we expend a great deal of effort to evangelize the world, but then we leave the new believer to grow alone without help. Too often no follow-up in discipleship is provided. This course is intended to supply necessary instruction and motivation for fulfilling the Great Commission.

Description of Course Content

This course is divided into two units: “Until the Whole World Knows” and “Follow Me.” The first deals with the basic issues of evangelism, while the second develops the idea of discipleship.

Course Outline

Course Introduction

Unit 1 Until the Whole World Knows

Lesson 1 Tell Me Why I Should Evangelize

Lesson 2 Tell Them about God

Lesson 3 Tell Them about Sin

Lesson 4 Tell Them about Christ

Lesson 5 Tell Them about Repentance and Faith

Lesson 6 Tell Me How to Evangelize Effectively

Unit 2 Follow Me

Lesson 7 The Great Commission

Lesson 8 Being a Disciple

Lesson 9 Becoming a Disciple

Lesson 10 Disciple Making in the Past

Lesson 11 The Discipleship Relationship and Process

Lesson 12 The Disciple Maker

Course Conclusion

Course Objectives

When you have completed this course you will be able to:

1. Provide a biblical motivation for evangelizing.
2. Explain the central truths of the gospel about God, sin, and Christ.
3. Outline the key personal responses in both repentance and faith.
4. Train someone to share the gospel.
5. Present the meaning and application of the Great Commission.
6. Explain what it means to be and become a disciple.
7. Describe some biblical models of being a disciple and making disciples.
8. Show the importance of discipleship relationships in making disciples.

Contributions to Developing Character

The overriding priority in one's Christian life is godly character. Everything we do and study must be infused with character. Personal character is the basis for effective ministry. The Great Commission is ultimately about Christian character because disciples are to do all things that Jesus commands you. As you interact with the principles of the Great Commission, your attention will be drawn to the need for consistent godly character.

Contributions to Servant Leadership

The Great Commission is in itself a call to leadership—leading people to Christ and then leading them into an intimate relationship with the Lord. Everything in this course will contribute to your growth as a servant leader.

Contributions to Acquiring Ministry Skills

This curriculum seeks to guide students into excellence in the ministry skills of administering, discipling, evangelizing, lay counseling, leading, pastoring, preaching, and teaching. This course will contribute specifically to developing the ministry skills evangelizing, discipling, lay counseling, pastoring, and teaching. Each of the two parts of the course will develop further the ministry skills that are most naturally related to their topics.

Contributions to Developing Relationships

Evangelism and discipleship depend on personal relationships. Relationships are established with non-Christians to lay the foundation for presenting the gospel. Relationships are the necessary aspect of discipleship. Therefore, as you learn about

both of these aspects of the Christian life, you will be guided into developing relationships with others.

Contributions to the Total Curriculum

Evangelism and discipleship are tied intimately to everything we do in Christian life and ministry because they are so strongly tied to relationships. As you develop your ministry in this course, you are necessarily contributing to ministry skill in all other areas of ministry represented in the courses in this curriculum.

Student Instructions

In order to benefit most from your study of this material, you should plan to work through the lessons in the order they are presented. In other words, you are encouraged to work through the course systematically from the beginning.

Before you begin Lesson 1, we suggest you acquire a notebook. This will become your *Life and Ministry Notebook* (LMN) for recording a variety of insights for your own life and for ministering to others. You will use this notebook to write your responses to Assignments and other questions in the lessons. It is also a place where you can record your thoughts from the Personal Reflections, as well as any questions or problems you encounter in the course.

You should allow yourself a minimum of two to three hours of study time to complete each lesson. This will include doing the required reading and completing the Assignments and Personal Reflections.

Course Design

The course objectives listed above summarize the most important things you will learn as you do the lessons. Study these objectives carefully and refer to them periodically as you work your way through the course.

Since most individuals taking this course are extremely busy people, we have designed each lesson with clearly defined steps for easy reference. Also, if you study the Course Objectives and Lesson Objectives, you will know from the start on which topics to spend the most time.

Lesson Design

Several standard components are built into each lesson to facilitate your study and develop your skills and character. They are explained below so that you may recognize and use them to full advantage:

1. **Lesson Objectives** are provided to help you identify the most crucial parts of each lesson. They guide you in the effective use of your study time and will be used by your group leader for class discussion.

2. **Lesson Outlines** provide an overview of the sections of each lesson. In this way you can anticipate the flow and sequence of the various topics to be covered before you begin your study.
3. **Repetition and review** are woven into the course to help you learn new concepts.



4. **Assignments** offer you the opportunity to interact with the material being covered. Whenever you see this icon, stop and record what is required in your LMN. Assignments will sometimes contain instructions to meet with one person or more for discussion. Sometimes the Assignment will designate with whom to meet. Where no designation is stated, that person (or people) can come from within your family, your study group, your seminar, or outside your normal circle of friends.



5. **Personal Reflections** stimulate you to think more deeply about material covered and about life and ministry. These are an important part of your growth. The Apostle Paul says we are “transformed by the renewing of our mind” (Rom 12:2). Whenever you see this icon, please respond to the Personal Reflections. Recording your thoughts in a notebook can be a valuable way of seeing how God is at work in changing the way you think.



6. **Adorations** arise from the lesson content related to the Person and work of God. They encourage you to respond to what God is saying to you as you study, to thank Him and to praise Him. Whenever you see this icon, pause from your study to respond to God.

7. **Appendices** offer resources and useful reference materials that may be of benefit in the course and in your life. These are placed at the end of the workbook.

Materials Needed

To work through this course, you will need a **Bible**, a copy of this **workbook**, and your **LMN** for all written work. Unless otherwise noted, all the Scripture references and Scripture quotations in this workbook are from the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

Unit Introduction

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 3:16 is one of the first verses that many Christians memorize. Eventually, it may roll off a believer's tongue so quickly that little regard is given to its meaning or significance. For a moment, though, we will use this familiar verse as a starting point to talk about one of the most important mandates given to the church—evangelism. This unit, “Until the Whole World Knows,” has three primary concerns: (1) the **motivation** for evangelism, (2) the **message** in evangelism, and (3) the **ministry** of evangelism. John 3:16 speaks to all three of these concerns and serves well as an outline for the content of this unit.

The Motivation for Evangelism

John 3:16 is part of a narrative that describes one of Jesus' evangelistic encounters. Jesus placed great priority on evangelism. As we follow in His footsteps, we should also note why Christ evangelized. His evangelism brought glory to God. It was an expression of His love for God and His neighbor. It displayed His commitment to obey His Father's every command and His compassionate concern for the lost who faced eternal damnation apart from faith in Him.

The Message in Evangelism

John 3:16 tells us about God. It assumes the existence of God, as do all of the Scriptures. Evangelism is a declaration about the God of the Bible. God loves the world He made. His love for mankind reaches its highest expression in the sacrifice of His Son.

John 3:16 reveals to us who and what human beings are. Evangelism is a declaration that human beings are sinful, separated from God, and in need of a Savior. They are in danger because their hearts, at the very core, are corrupt and in rebellion against God: “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it” (Jer 17:9 KJV). The record of every person's thoughts and actions shows that we have fallen far short of God's holy standards, “for all have sinned and

fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23). Paul summarizes the consequences of sin in this way: “the wages of sin is death” (Rom 6:23).

When we consider the status of the heart, record, and life of mankind, we begin to understand the significance of Jesus’ declaration, “For God so loved the world.”¹ This statement is striking because, “The point . . . is not that the world is so big that it takes a great deal of love to embrace it but that the world is so bad that it takes an exceedingly great kind of love to love it at all.”² Mankind is in peril, but there is also great hope in the gospel message.

John 3:16 focuses on the person of Christ. Evangelism is a declaration about Jesus Christ and the redemption He accomplished on the cross. God the Father gave His only begotten Son, and Christ willingly came to earth so that no one would perish. In John 10 we read the words of Jesus, “I lay down My life for the sheep” (Jn 10:15). Christ gave Himself to the agony of death on a cross (Acts 2:23-24) so that we would have eternal life through faith in Him.

John 3:16 also directs us to the importance of faith. The object of our faith is Jesus Christ. All of God’s Word points to the fact that Christ’s death on the cross is the only means of atonement for sin (Isa 53:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Tim 2:5). Saving faith applies Christ’s redemptive act to the life of the sinner. To place our faith in Christ is much more than intellectual agreement with the gospel; it is to totally trust Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins and for eternal life.

Where there is true, saving faith, there will also be sincere repentance of sin. Jesus states in the gospel of Mark, “the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mk 1:15). Paul taught Jews and Gentiles repentance toward God and faith in Christ (Acts 20:21). Since there is a close relationship between repentance and faith, in evangelism we call people both to repent and believe.³

The Ministry of Evangelism

John 3:16 also directs us to one of the best examples of how to evangelize effectively. Jesus was speaking to a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish Sanhedrin, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the people. Nicodemus had ecclesiastical power and extensive theological knowledge. He had already made his mark in the world and achieved a certain amount of renown. He is presented in the narrative account as a representative of all the best that mankind could offer. Jesus, however, was not impressed with Nicodemus’s list of credentials. He knew what was in the heart of everyone. In essence, Jesus said to him, “Nicodemus, I know who and what you are. You are sinful and separated from God. You are in spiritual danger. You need to be born again. You need God to give you a new heart, a new record, and a new life. You need to believe in Me.”

Jesus engaged Nicodemus with the core issues. As believers follow Christ's example, they will do the same. "Until the Whole World Knows" is designed to equip students to obey the Savior's last command before departing this world, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation" (Mk 16:16).⁴

The results in evangelism must be left in God's hands. God is sovereign—even in evangelism. Our responsibility is, however, to take the initiative and present the gospel of Jesus Christ often and well to the people God brings into our lives.

May this unit help you to evangelize with proper biblical motivation, to present accurately the gospel message, and to carry out confidently the ministry of evangelism, remembering the promise of Christ: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20).

Unit Description

The six lessons of this unit are designed to encourage you in the fulfillment of your responsibility to evangelize effectively those around you. Lesson 1 cites five reasons why we all should be involved in the work of evangelism. Lessons 2-5 discuss topics related to a clear understanding of exactly what the gospel message is. These issues include: God, sin, Christ, repentance, and faith. The final lesson focuses on helping you develop some basic skills that are essential in carrying out an effective ministry of evangelism.

Contributions to Developing Character

The content of this unit provides you with opportunities to grow in the understanding of who God is and who humans are. This will encourage you to trust God more and turn away from sin. Taking time to share the gospel with your non-Christian friends demonstrates an active love toward God and one's neighbor. It can also cause your faith to grow because you are forced to trust God in new situations.

Contributions to Developing Relationships

Effective communication of the gospel best occurs in the context of relationship. As you grow in your ability to share the message of salvation with others, you will also experience progress in your interpersonal skills. Evangelism is all about sharing personal experiences—your personal experience with God and Jesus Christ, His Son.

Contributions to Acquiring Ministry Skills

The primary ministry skill in this unit is evangelizing. The essence of this ministry skill is the ability to present the gospel in a way that people come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. One who is competent in evangelizing shares the gospel

clearly and succinctly, keeping the focus on the person and work of Christ and the need to believe in Him for salvation.

This person is also able to explain truths and answer common questions about the gospel. He or she can handle typical objections (e.g., what about those who have never heard the gospel?) correctly but concisely and tactfully, without being diverted from the gospel presentation. One who is competent in evangelizing shares a personal testimony in word and also lives it out.

The working definition of “evangelizing” for the purposes of this unit is the following: **The declaration to mankind of the gospel, the good news of Christ’s substitutionary death on the cross and of His resurrection from the dead to the end that people might believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved and receive eternal life.**

This unit examines biblical motivation for evangelism, primarily by looking at the example of Jesus and the Apostle Paul. Faithful application of the biblical principles presented in the unit will lead to greater concern for the lost and to boldness in evangelism.

The unit also presents a thorough explanation of the gospel with emphasis on the dangers of a weak or ineffective evangelistic message. After preparing a gospel presentation, you will be observed and evaluated by a qualified trainer as you clearly, accurately, and completely communicate the gospel and a personal testimony to an unbelieving listener. The listener who understands the content and implications of the gospel will have an opportunity to put his or her trust in Christ as Savior.

Contributions to Servant Leadership

Jesus came not to be served but to serve; He came to seek and to save the lost. As He served the world by coming to earth to die for our sins, the one who evangelizes serves by spreading the message of that sacrificial act of eternal redemption. As your desire to share the gospel grows, you will find yourself in leadership situations. If you take advantage of these opportunities, you will see yourself grow as a servant-leader.

Unit Task

You are encouraged to accomplish the Unit Task after completion of this unit both to test and demonstrate that you have grasped the main objectives of the unit.

Communicate the essential elements of the gospel effectively to a non-Christian on two separate occasions, in the presence of an evaluator.

Unit Objectives

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:

1. Articulate the main motivations for evangelizing.

2. Describe the biblical God, while also dealing with false notions about God.
3. Explain the consequences of sin and a life rebellious before a holy God.
4. Present the uniqueness of Christ in salvation.
5. Outline the same elements in both repentance and faith.
6. Describe the relationship between repentance and faith.
7. Present the gospel effectively to another person.

Unit Outline

Lesson 1 Tell Me Why I Should Evangelize

Lesson 2 Tell Them about God

Lesson 3 Tell Them about Sin

Lesson 4 Tell Them about Christ

Lesson 5 Tell Them about Repentance and Faith

Lesson 6 Tell Me How to Evangelize Effectively

Contributions to the Total Curriculum

Evangelism deals with the spreading of the gospel. The gospel is the foundation of everything in kingdom work, as expressed in the Great Commission. People have to come to faith in Christ before they can grow in Him. The spreading of the gospel is the means by which people become believers. The rest of the curriculum relates to helping believers grow in their Christian lives and in their relationships with other people.

Unit Design

The unit objectives listed above summarize the most important things you will learn as you do the lessons. Study these objectives carefully and refer to them periodically as you work your way through the unit.

Since most individuals taking this unit are very busy people, we have designed each lesson with clearly defined steps for easy reference. Also, if you study the Unit Objectives and Lesson Objectives, you will know from the start the topics on which to spend the most time.

A Final Word

Many who have not experienced the joy of sharing the message of Jesus Christ in person, face-to-face, may feel a little overwhelmed at this prospect. The idea of trying to introduce the subject and knowing what to say might intimidate you somewhat. The six lessons that follow will prepare you with the knowledge, methods, and practice necessary to develop your message and present it. After completing the

course, you will likely look back and feel confident that you are organized and ready to make new disciples for Jesus.

ENDNOTES

¹ Emphasis added.

² R.B. Kuiper, *God-Centered Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1961), 22-23.

³ See Lesson 5 for a fuller treatment of this issue.

⁴ It is recognized that most scholars believe that the last twelve verses of Mark are not part of the original text of Mark. Yet since it is obviously parallel to Matthew 28:19-20, it is not unlikely that Jesus uttered those words or that they are an accurate representation of what Jesus said.

Tell Me Why I Should Evangelize

Who comes to mind when you think of someone reluctant to do evangelism? Maybe it is the person you look at in the mirror every morning. Are you hesitant to share the gospel with other people? If so, you are not alone. Many “Jonahs” are in the world today.

Remember Jonah’s story? Jonah resisted God’s call to go to the great city of Nineveh and preach a message of repentance to avoid judgment. God told Jonah to go, and he immediately set out on a journey, but in the wrong direction! It took a series of dramatic events to turn the prophet around and get him back on course for Nineveh.



Jonah surely had a number of reasons why he did not want to set foot in Nineveh, but his prayer in Jonah 4:2, after preaching there, reveals one of the main ones: “He prayed to the Lord and said, ‘Please Lord, was not this what I said while I was still in

my own country? Therefore in order to forestall this I fled to Tarshish, for I knew that You are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, and one who relents concerning calamity.’”

Jonah’s national pride and distaste for Israel’s enemies, the Ninevites, coupled with the fact that he strongly suspected that God would direct His mercy to these undeserving people, made going to Nineveh unacceptable to him. Jonah thought, “Me, be a conduit of mercy to our archenemies? No way!” It would be an understatement to say that Jonah struggled with his motivation in fulfilling God’s mandate to preach a message of deliverance from judgment.

The folly of the prophet’s thinking and our own lack of motivation concerning evangelism is captured here beautifully:

And Jonah stalked
to his shaded seat
and waited for God
to come around
to his way of thinking.

And God is still waiting
for a host of Jonahs
in their comfortable houses
to come around
to his way of loving.¹

Lesson 1 of “Until the Whole World Knows” is about your motivation for evangelism. Why should you evangelize? What is the biblical basis for sharing your faith? Are you thinking God’s thoughts in regard to evangelism? If you are not motivated to evangelize or your motivation is faulty, your ability and efficiency to witness for Christ will be affected.

Lesson Outline

Motivations for Evangelism

To Glorify God

To Love God and One’s Neighbor

To Obey Christ’s Command

To Recognize the Reality of God’s Judgment and Wrath

To Follow Christ’s Example of Compassion

Conclusion

Lesson Objective

When you have completed this lesson, you will be able to articulate at least five reasons to evangelize, as illustrated in the life of Christ and the Apostle Paul.

Motivations for Evangelism

There may be as many motivations to evangelize as there are people who feel called to evangelize. A few individuals try to meet a statistical goal of talking to a specific number of people in a week or a month. Some churches or groups may require a certain amount of evangelizing to remain a member in good standing. Others want people to come to Christ to fix their lives. While merit may be found in these motivations, better motivations are the following: to glorify God, to love God and one's neighbor, to obey Christ's command, to recognize the reality of God's judgment and wrath, and to follow Christ's example of compassion.

To Glorify God

On his first missionary journey, what motivated the Apostle Paul to continue his efforts in evangelism after being stoned in Lystra (Acts 14:19)? Paul's Christian friends must have been amazed to see him get up from under a pile of rocks, return to Lystra for the night, and then set out for Derbe the next day. In Acts 14:21-22 we learn that Paul returned to Lystra, after preaching in Derbe, to strengthen the souls [or, hearts] of the disciples and encourage them to continue in the faith. Some of Paul's coworkers who were travelling with him must have told him, "Paul, do not go back there! It is too dangerous! We need to return by an easier way to Antioch." But there was no stopping the Apostle Paul. He was determined to keep preaching the gospel and building up those to whom he had preached.

Why was Paul so determined to persevere in his ministry? Clearly, his evangelistic efforts and all other aspects of his Christian life were anchored on a principle Paul states in 1 Corinthians 10:31: "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."

The Westminster Catechism² presents it this way:

Question: What is the chief end of man?

Answer: Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.³



1. Memorize this simple, important question and answer.
2. Answer the following questions:
 - a. What does it mean to "glorify God"?
 - b. What does it mean "to enjoy Him forever"?

If the main aim of life—in all we say and do, our relationships with others, every gift and opportunity God has given us for service—is to glorify God, then **a primary motivation for evangelism also has to be about bringing glory to God.**

To glorify God in evangelism is to tell of His marvelous grace and love displayed in the person of Jesus Christ. This brings honor to God's name. One pastor puts it this way: "God's great goal in all of history is to uphold and display the glory of his name for the enjoyment of his people from all the nations."⁴ The Apostle Paul brought honor to God's name that day in Lystra, even though it was very costly for him.

In the Old Testament the psalmists abound with praise as they tell of God's glory and greatness among the nations: "Let the peoples praise You, O God; let all the peoples praise You. Let the nations be glad and sing for joy" (Ps 67:3-4). "Tell of His glory among the nations, His wonderful deeds among all the peoples" (Ps 96:3). "The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice; let the many islands be glad" (Ps 97:1).

When you evangelize, you point your listeners to this great God. In essence, you tell them, "This is the One you ought to know; this is the One you ought to praise; this is the One who created the heavens and the earth by merely speaking them into existence; this is the One who sent His Son to die on a cross for the sins of all people."

As an evangelist you are one of God's spokespersons to the nations. You must impress upon men and women the glory and perfection of God's gracious provision in the person of Jesus Christ. You must explain that rejecting the gospel is an insult to the supreme revelation of God's glory (see 1 Jn 5:9-12).

In the parable of the wedding banquet in Matthew 22:1-10, the people who had been invited and then said no greatly insulted the king and his glory. So, he sent out his slaves to invite others to come and enjoy the banquet in their place.

In evangelism your responsibility and privilege is something like that of those servants. You are to invite people to know the King through faith in Jesus Christ. If they reject the invitation, they seriously offend God's glory. If they accept that invitation and believe in Christ, they receive pardon for sins and eternal life in heaven. The saints of all ages will enjoy a marriage banquet with King Jesus (see Rev 19:1-10).

God has revealed His glory through His Son. The work has been accomplished. The banquet will someday be ours. If Christ is your Savior, you will want to see many more people there as guests at the feast, which will bring God the glory He deserves.

For evangelism to be successful, the person sharing the gospel should be living a life that glorifies God. Paul was clear in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that we ought to do **everything** to the glory of God, including even drinking and eating.



Think about your life for a moment.

1. Consider (1) your home, (2) where you work or go to school, (3) your community, (4) your place of recreation, (5) where

you go on vacation, (6) your family relationships outside the home, and (7) strangers.

2. For five of these areas, identify at least one thing that you do or should do that would bring glory to God. Do not include religious activities, like sharing the gospel or taking someone to church or ministering in the church. Identify only daily things you say and do in your relationships with others.

To Love God and One's Neighbor

Consider how the two greatest commandments relate to our motivation for evangelism. In Matthew's gospel we read about Jesus' encounter with a lawyer who was testing Him. The lawyer asked, "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" Jesus answered, "'YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND.' This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.' On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets" (Mt 22:36-40).

Jesus responds to the lawyer's question by quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18 to explain that these two commandments summarize the whole law of God.

Love for God and love for one's neighbor are clearly the two main themes found in the Ten Commandments (also known as the Decalogue), given to God's people through Moses. The first four commandments exhort us to love God and explain how this love is to be expressed. When a person breaks any of the first four commandments, he or she fails to love God in a proper manner or to an appropriate degree. The last six commandments concern love for one's neighbor. They explain specifically how we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Breaking any of the last six commandments is a failure to fulfill the second greatest commandment.

Evangelism is an expression of love for God and your non-Christian neighbor. If you are striving to love God and your neighbor, it will be demonstrated by your willingness to explain to people the hope of the gospel. "The greatest good that has ever been done to me, or for me, in this world was done by the man who brought me the message of salvation, the message we call the gospel. He loved me; he was concerned for my good in this world and in the world to come. The Christ of this message changed my life, my home, and thank God, my [eternal] destination."⁵

In evangelism you urge your non-Christian friends to turn from the false idols of their own hearts and flee to Jesus for forgiveness and life. Assuming they take that advice and place their faith in Christ, you urge them to live according to the two

greatest commandments. By your words and deeds you also provide them with a living example of what it means to love God and your neighbor.

Another motivation for evangelism is, therefore, love for God and one's neighbor—fulfilling the first and second greatest commandments. Praying for your non-Christian neighbors and sharing the gospel with them **is an act of love, which fulfills the law of God**. Paul writes in Galatians 5:14, “For the whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.’”



Think about what Paul writes in Romans 9:1-3.

1. How does Paul's love for people compare with your love for others?
2. How often have you shown your love for the Lord by sharing the gospel with a nonbeliever?
3. When was the last time?
4. What was the result?

When you begin to ponder what it means to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind, and to love your neighbor as yourself, you can understand why the Apostle Paul writes, “The love of Christ controls us” (2 Cor 5:14). In other words, the love of Christ drove Paul to preach and teach and serve God. He could do no other. The knowledge of Christ's measureless love towards us “ought to *constrain* our affections, that they may go in no other direction than that of loving him in return. . . . [I]t is impossible but that every one that truly considers and ponders that wonderful love . . . becomes, as it were, bound to him, and *constrained* by the closest tie, and devotes himself wholly to his service.”⁶

You should evangelize because you love God and your neighbor.

To Obey Christ's Command

Christ invested a major portion of His time and energy in the lives of the twelve apostles. This small company of men ate, drank, traveled, lived, and ministered together for about three years. Though Jesus did not limit His earthly ministry to their training, He did often pray and put forth significant effort to ensure that the ministry He began with them would be carried to completion. It was sometimes a difficult road with these disciples, yet Jesus chose to use them to evangelize the world. In obedience to Jesus' Great Commission (Mt 28:18-20), they were to make disciples of all the nations and teach them to observe all that Christ had commanded them.

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If you are Jesus' disciple, sincere obedience to scriptural commands should characterize your Christian life as well. The composer of the following nineteenth-century song captures well the essence of the Christian life:

When we walk with the Lord in the light of his Word,
What a glory he sheds on our way!
While we do his good will, he abides with us still,
And with all who will trust and obey.
Trust and obey, for there's no other way
To be happy in Jesus, but to trust and obey.⁷



Evangelism is an expression of trust in and obedience to Christ.

1. Read the following verses:
 - a. Matthew 28:18-20
 - b. John 14:21, 23-24
 - c. John 15:9-11
2. Explain how they relate to each other.
3. Describe their implications for you in light of Christ's parting instructions concerning the lost of this world.



We all recognize certain barriers to sharing the gospel with others. They vary with each individual. Take a few minutes to list the barriers or the obstacles you see or have experienced in your life that prevent you from wholeheartedly embracing Jesus' command to proclaim the gospel. Then ask the Lord God to enable you to overcome those barriers.



Take time now to thank the Lord for the wonderful privilege He gives us to share the good news of eternal life. It may be a responsibility, but more importantly it is an opportunity to lead a person to a personal relationship with Christ.

To Recognize the Reality of God's Judgment and Wrath

The Apostle Paul stated the purpose of Christ's mission in the world in straightforward terms: "It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Tim 1:15). The natural question that arises from this verse is: From what are sinners to be saved? The biblical response to this question is: from God's just, eternal judgment and wrath.

All of mankind stands condemned as sinful before God, falling far short of His righteous standards. All people are spiritually dead and lost. Jesus explains to Nicodemus in clear terms the consequences of not trusting in the Savior: "He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn 3:18). The last verse of the same chapter of the Gospel of John says, "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (Jn 3:36).

The reality of God's judgment should be faced by every human being in this life.⁸ According to God's Word, "it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment" (Heb 9:27).



1. Summarize in one or two paragraphs what Christ says about the existence of hell in the following verses:
 - a. Matthew 5:22; 18:9; 23:33
 - b. Luke 12:4-5
2. Find a non-Christian (maybe a friend, a colleague, or even a family member) and tell him or her about this course. Ask for his or her help with this Assignment. Then show the person your summary from #1 above and ask for a response to it.
 - a. Do not try to guide him or her into "right" answers and **do not argue**. You are only getting a response to help you with the Assignment.
 - b. Let the person speak his or her mind and interact by asking questions.
 - c. If your conversation opens the door, present the gospel. If not, you have at least started the person thinking about life after death.
 - d. If it seems appropriate, you could ask to meet with him or her again to talk further.

The Apostle Paul's writings also reflect a sober tone concerning God's judgment and wrath when Christ comes, "dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty

of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power” (2 Thess 1:8-9).

The author of Hebrews warns that “it is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb 10:31). According to 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, the fear of the Lord should be a motivation to urge people to become reconciled to the Lord.

The reality of the coming wrath of God is an important motivation for evangelism, but Jesus’ own ministry among people reveals yet another reason why you should evangelize.

To Follow Christ’s Example of Compassion

In John 10:11-14 Jesus highlights the difference between a good shepherd who protects his sheep and a hired hand who merely cares for sheep to earn his wages. The good shepherd knows his sheep well and shows his concern for them by laying down his life for them. The hired hand deserts the flock in the face of danger and is not concerned about their welfare. Jesus describes Himself as the good shepherd.

The Apostle Matthew describes the Savior’s concern for people in similar terms when he writes, “Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest’” (Mt 9:35-38).

Christ was clearly not a hired man but a shepherd. He cared for the physical and spiritual needs of His people. As you evangelize, will you follow Jesus’ example, or will you follow the example of the hired hand? Evangelism is a ministry of compassion and care. Compassion is a deep feeling of pity and mercy toward others. It sees a need and seeks to do something about it.



1. Read the following passages. They all display Christ’s compassion toward individuals and the multitudes:
 - a. Matthew 15:29-38 (Mk 8:1-9)
 - b. Mark 1:40-42
 - c. Luke 7:11-15
2. List three principles you learned from observing Jesus’ compassion that could apply to your evangelism and Christian life.



Do you regard people as Christ regards them? Do you share His compassion for others? Go to a location where you can observe crowds of people. Spend thirty minutes watching people and note your observations. Do you suspect that people in the twenty-first century are really any different from the people Jesus observed in His day? Ask the heavenly Father to make you one of His compassionate workers in the harvest field.

Conclusion

This lesson has discussed five reasons to evangelize: to glorify God, to love God and your neighbor, to obey Christ's command, to recognize the reality of God's coming judgment and wrath, and to follow the example of Christ's compassion. This is not an exhaustive list of reasons why we should evangelize. Perhaps you can think of some additional reasons that motivate you. If so, write them down and think about them further as you go on to consider the message in evangelism in Lessons 2-5.



Before you go on to the next lesson, relax and spend time with the Lord, thanking Him for the magnificent message of salvation that brings eternal life and the forgiveness of sin. Thank Him that He has led you to confess Him as your Savior. Then thank Him for the privilege of being able to telling everyone about this good news. Just think! You can be the channel God uses to bring salvation to others.

ENDNOTES

¹ Thomas John Carlisle, “Coming Around,” in *You! Jonah!* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 64.

² The Westminster Catechisms (Larger and Shorter, related to the Westminster Confession, 1646) are key media for the instruction of those within the Reformed tradition.

³ *The Confession of Faith of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, Together with the Larger Catechism and the Shorter Catechism* (Richmond, VA: Stated Clerk of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, 1965), 287.

⁴ John Piper, *Let the Nations Be Glad! The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1993), 213.

⁵ Ernest C. Reisinger, *Today’s Evangelism: Its Message and Methods* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Craig, 1982), 3-4.

⁶ John Calvin, trans. John Pringle (2010), *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians*, vol. 2 (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software), 230 (emphasis in the original).

⁷ John H. Sammis, “Trust and Obey,” in *Trinity Hymnal* (Atlanta: Great Commission, 1990), 672.

⁸ See John F. Walvoord, “The Literal View,” in *Four Views on Hell*, ed. William Crockett (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 28.