



Basic Evangelization Training

Course 1: The Basics

1.3 What is Evangelization?

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For many, the word “evangelization” has negative connotations. It may bring to mind images of people standing on street corners with Bibles and large signs yelling at people walking by about the fire and brimstone of hell. It may bring up stories of Christians cornering people, even complete strangers, with five-minute lectures. It might make you think of talking but not listening; of smug superiority; of constantly giving people answers to questions they haven’t asked.

Fortunately, none of those things are authentic forms of evangelization. To understand authentic evangelization, we should look to God’s word revealed in the bible. The authors of the first four books of the New Testament – Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John – are known as the four “evangelists.” The word “evangelist” comes from a Greek word, the noun euangelion, which means “good news.” “To evangelize”, then, is simply “to tell the good news.”

In the ancient world an evangelist was someone who brought a gospel, who announced good news. It could refer to the good news of the birth of a child, or of a military victory, or it could promulgate a new law. In Jesus’ time, if the Roman Emperor was victorious in battle he would send an “evangelist” with the good news that victory belonged to Rome. Such military victories were presented as events that brought salvation to the Roman people, and the emperor was considered a savior, even a god.

In the Old Testament, bringing good news often had to do with proclaiming the saving works of the true God, for His chosen people Israel. This same meaning is carried over into the New Testament, but also expanded to the gentiles, and fulfilled in Christ: In his death and resurrection, the Messiah has come and the Kingdom of God is near – the Victory of the true God and Savior has been accomplished. Jesus is conqueror over sin, death, and the devil. He is mercy for sinners, and has come to rescue and redeem those trapped in various forms of slavery. Through repentance and faith in Jesus, forgiveness, freedom, and joy is available to everyone, and eternal life after the resurrection of the dead at the end of history.

To bring this good news to everyone so that they may believe it and receive it, Jesus sent out his Apostles and disciples, and that includes us. Jesus made us all “evangelists,” like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. To evangelize is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ’s victory over sin and death, and of His offer of eternal salvation through a new life of faith.