

The Evangelist's Roles In 21st Century Church

The purpose of this position paper is not to paint a full picture of each ministry gift in Ephesians 4:11 but to portray the life and ministry of first-century evangelists in such a way that twenty-first century evangelists can build their roles and goals on biblical principles of evangelism. Therefore, the “apostle,” “prophet,” “pastor,” and “teacher” will be highlighted only in conjunction with the ministry of the evangelist.

The fivefold ministry gifts not only are representative of distinct people and ministerial offices in the church, but they also reveal five principles for effective ministry today. The apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher represent the principles of governing, guiding, gathering, guarding, and garnering, respectively. All of these principles are needed for equipping Christians for effective evangelism. An *evangelist* (*eúaggelistes*) is a person with a divine gift and sacred calling from Christ to proclaim or announce the good news of Christ. The person who serves as an evangelist is a “gospeler.” The evangelist’s calling originally denoted both a function and an office. There was not much difference between an apostle and an evangelist since all apostles were evangelists. However, not all evangelists were apostles since a direct call by the Lord was necessary. In a real sense, the apostles did not know when to stop being evangelists. In all three New Testament passages (Acts 21:8; Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:5), the evangelist was subordinate to the apostles.

The Principles Of The Evangelist

“Evangelist” in Ephesians 4:11 seems to denote an order of workers midway between apostles and prophets on the one hand and pastors and teachers on the other. There has been much scholarly debate as to whether the ministry gifts consist of four or five separate entities. This debate is the result of the definite article being present before all the various leadership gifts except “teachers” (*toùs dè poiménas kai didaskálous*). The one definite article for both “pastors” and “teachers” indicates the close association of functions between two types of ministers who operate within the local congregation. Even though there is an obvious association between “pastor” and “teacher,” there are also distinctive in ministry (Acts 13:1; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:28). This interpretation is paralleled in contemporary ministry.

As indicated above, sometime these ministerial gifts (Ephesians 4:11) did overlap. For example, Paul functioned not only as an apostle but also as a prophet, evangelist, pastor, and teacher. Christ used Paul in a fivefold gifting of itinerant evangelistic ministry. For this apostle, the work of the ministry is of much greater importance than any hierarchy of officials.

Even though the term *eúaggelistēs* appears only three times, the evangelist had an effective and extensive ministry in the New Testament church. This is indicted by the usage of the verb *eúaggelizō* (“to proclaim the good news”) 54 times and the noun *eúaggélion* (“good news” or “gospel”) 76 times. In Luke 20:1 and Acts 8:4, Jesus and the apostles were evangelists in preaching the gospel.

Since the centrality of evangelism is derived biblically, theologically, practically, and logically from throughout the New Testament, it can further be deduced that the term *evangelist* is located in the center of the five gifts in Ephesians 4:11 because evangelism is naturally the central thrust of the Church. Regardless of the minister's work in the church, evangelism is to be the main function. Evangelism is the heart of the church. It seems reasonable to conclude that all of the fivefold ministry gifts focus on evangelism. As stated earlier, all apostles were evangelists, but not all evangelists were apostles. Moreover, all prophets were evangelists, but not all evangelists were prophets. All pastors were to do the "work of the evangelist" (2 Timothy 4:5), but not all evangelists were pastors. All teachers were to evangelize, but not all evangelists were full-time teachers. Just as the evangelist is the central gift of the fivefold ministry, evangelism is to be the central focus of the church. When evangelists are multigifted (apostle, prophet, pastor, teacher), there is greater diversity in evangelism. These leadership gifts are given by Christ to equip the church for ministry.

The twenty-first-century evangelist should have an evangelistic ministry as well as an equipping ministry. The evangelist must be able to appeal to the sinner regarding repentance and to the saint regarding revival. The position of the evangelist is critical to building a bridge between prophetic and pastoral ministries in the church. The evangelist is a necessary link between repentance and revival.

The church today struggles to understand the biblical role of the evangelist in its ranks. Even New Testament commentators have difficulty in defining the purpose of the evangelist in the New Testament era. There is much written about the respective ministries of the apostles, prophets, pastors, and teachers but not much in-depth research regarding evangelists. For example, some scholars suggest that evangelists are the equivalent of "traveling missionaries" or called only to spread the gospel in new places. Philip, the evangelist, is usually cited to substantiate this claim. However, even though Philip did travel to new areas to spread the gospel, Ephesians 4:11 focuses on the evangelist's equipping the whole church for evangelism. If evangelists are to be modern-day missionaries, then many denominations would have to reevaluate their entire missions programs.

The evangelist's purpose is clearly defined in the Ephesian letter. The aim of all ministry gifts in Ephesians 4:11 is for the equipping of God's people for the "work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Ephesians 4:12). The Greek term for "equipping" (*katartismōn*) means "to put right" or "to put in order." In surgery it is applied to the setting of the broken bone. "Equipping" denotes "the bringing of the saints to a condition of fitness for the discharge of their functions in the Body, without implying restoration from a disordered state. The evangelist, along with the other four ministry gifts, is to set the local church in order, making each member fit for the work of ministry. In the case of the evangelist, this "work of service" or "ministry" is "equipping for evangelism."

The Greek term for "building up" (*oikodomēn*) refers "to the act of building...to build on something, to build further" (Michel, 5:119-59). There is a fourfold equipping or maturing

function for the evangelist in the church. Even though not specially stated, these functions are easily applied to the pastor's leadership roles in the local church. For evangelists to function biblically, their message, motives, methods, and ministry must align with the Christ-given purposes outlined in Ephesians 4:13-16.

First, the evangelist is to help the church become mature in *stature*. The evangelist's ministry is to be active "until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). This verse paints a picture of the church maturing "into a perfect, full-grown man" (*eis ándra téleion*). "This perfection or completeness is proportionate to the fullness of Christ himself." The whole body of Christ is viewed as one new man with one faith in the Son of God. "The faith" is the full message of the gospel. "The measure of the stature" (*métron hēlikías*) indicates a level of spiritual perfection found in the fullness of Christ. The body of Christ is seen as progressing toward its goal of perfection in the fullness of Christ.

How can evangelists help the local church mature in spiritual stature? Evangelists should equip the body of Christ for its efforts at evangelism. A mature local church is an evangelistic church. When under the ministry of evangelists, each local church should be built up in the fullness of Christ to evangelize the lost in its community. When evangelists strive to equip the church, they should build up rather than tear down the local congregation. Is it possible that the evangelism efforts of the contemporary church have declined in direct proportion to the decline of the credibility of evangelists serving the body of Christ today? Is it also possible that to recapture the spirit of evangelism for the twenty-first-century church, it will have to utilize the gift of the evangelist correctly and evangelists will have to develop innovative, creative techniques for equipping the church for evangelism? The answers are obvious. Ephesians 4:13 indicates that the evangelist gift is required if saints are to reach full maturity in Christ.

Second, the evangelist can help the local church mature in *stability*. The Apostle Paul writes, "We are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming" (Ephesians 4:14). In verses 13 and 14 there is a purposeful contrast made between "a perfect full grown man" and "children." Instead of spiritual maturity, the picture is of "spiritual infantilism." Instability is one definite sign of immaturity. The Apostle Paul knew a lot about being tossed back and forth on the sea, yet it is far worse for Christians to be whirled around by every gust of doctrine. The concept that Paul teaches is not "physical infants in a boat who are helpless to manage it in waves and wind; but of physical men, who know nothing about managing boats, who are infants amid wind and waves.

Evangelists must take full responsibility for their message, methods, and motives in ministry. The itinerant minister must not participate in "scheming" (*methodeían*) to gain financially in the church. Throughout their tenure on the evangelistic field, evangelists must make sure their evangelistic efforts write a biblically-sound, ethically-oriented "press release" for the church and the general public to read. Once the evangelist leaves the

local church, the pastor should be left with a more mature church than when the evangelist first came to minister.

Third, the evangelist can help the local church mature in *speech*. The Apostle Paul continues, “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ” (Ephesians 4:15). “Speaking the truth” (*alētheúontes*) means “truthing” or doing the truth. Mature Christians recognize religious tricksters by comparing them to the truth. They correct the error of these religious charlatans by speaking the truth in love. “Truthing in love” keeps “every joint” (v. 16) limber and flexible in the midst of a changing culture. When the heart of the body of Christ is filled with truth and love, Christians will lovingly speak out against all error in their society.

Since New Testament evangelists often travel from church to church, they have the Christ-given opportunity to build up the whole church in the truth. The evangelist can also teach each local church how to distinguish truth from error and charlatans from evangelists. Moreover, evangelists should strive to equip local believers to share the gospel with love in their respective communities. Just as the pastor becomes the voice of truth in the local church, the itinerant evangelist becomes the voice of truth to the church at large. It has well been said that truth without love is brutality, but love without truth is hypocrisy. The pastor should hold the evangelist accountable to the Word of God.

Fourth, the evangelist can help the local church mature in *service*. Paul writes in Ephesians 4:6, “From whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.” The ultimate goal of an active, fivefold ministry is a coordinated body with each member fulfilling his function. This maturing process depends on the truth that the various ministries in Ephesians 4:11 are interrelated. The whole body of Christ is being “fitted together” and “held together” by each separate “joint.” The Greek term for “supplies” (*épichorēgías*) is derived from *choregos*. He was the man who met the cost of staging a Greek play with its chorus. It is only when every aspect of the fivefold ministries is working together that the body of Christ receives the full support it needs to do the “work of service.” The lifeblood of the body of Christ is love. Each member is to have a loving heart toward the other members of the body of Christ.

The fivefold ministries of the church are to function like an ensemble singing its various parts. They should produce a harmonic sound throughout the church. Moreover, each ministry joint should be limber, not stiff or limited by spiritual arthritis. When the gift of the evangelist is functioning properly in the church, the church will not be stiff toward the lost but limber and able to reach out to the unsaved. In the particular case of evangelists, they should fit together with the other ministry gifts. Each ministry gift should embrace the other for the dual purpose of equipping the church and evangelizing the lost. When the evangelist is biblically, spiritually, and creatively functioning in the contemporary church, the whole body of Christ is more mature in stature, stability, speech, and service.

It should be apparent that there is a dual role for the evangelist in the church. In the years ahead, the ecclesiastical discussions should not center on categorizing a person as an evangelist or a revivalist. Those with itinerant ministries should be encouraged to fulfill their New Testament position and purpose as evangelists. The evangelist should be involved in both a soul-winning and a strengthening ministry. The target of the message determines the teaching of the messenger. In the final analysis, however, the church in general and the local pastor in particular determines the kind of ministry the evangelist will have within the body of Christ. Evangelists can have a soul-winning ministry only when they are preaching in a soul-winning church or are given the opportunity to proclaim the gospel to unchurched people.

The Pictures of the Evangelist

The New Testament contains numerous itinerant preachers. John the Baptist, Jesus Christ, the apostles, the Seventy, Philip, Paul, and others traveled proclaiming the gospel. Even though there are numerous examples of itinerant preachers in the New Testament, there are three distinct pictures that clarify what an evangelist is to do in the church. In the following pericopes, only the key words and phrases which further clarify the ministry of the evangelist will be highlighted.

The Preacher-Evangelist (Luke 10:1-19)

Contemporary New Testament scholars acknowledge that Luke portrayed his theology through his history. Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that as the author of Luke-Acts, he is giving the itinerant minister a theology of evangelism in Luke 10:1-19 and Acts 8.

The term *preacher-evangelist* or *proclaimer* denotes a person who is full-time in evangelism. In Luke 10:1-19, Jesus sent out the Seventy on a *dignified mission* (v. 1). The commissioning of the Seventy parallels the commissioning of the Twelve (Luke 9:1-6). The Seventy were “sent ones” or “appointed ones” to work in the harvest field. They were sent in groups of two for accountability, protection, and fellowship. In New Testament times, ambassadors were sent to foreign lands to proclaim the message of their king. Today, the evangelist is to preach and live in such a way as to reflect ambassadorship for Christ. The itinerant preacher is to be the bearer of good news from the King of all kings to this world. When the evangelist loses credibility as an ambassador, then an authoritative ministry of evangelism in the kingdom of God is forfeited.

The evangelist is not only on a dignified mission but also on a *difficult mission* (Luke 10:2-3). Harvesting is hard work. There is much work to be done and not enough laborers to get it done. Jesus already knew this. He did not tell them to pray for an easier job but for more laborers. “Pray” is the most important word in verses 2 and 3. Evangelists need to pray to the Lord of the harvest for more evangelists to be called into the harvest field.

Furthermore, Luke describes itinerant ministers as being on a *disciplined mission* (Luke 10:4-8, 10-16, 20). There are at least two major areas of discipline for itinerants based upon the commissioning of the Seventy. First, they were to maintain the perspective of

future judgment. There was to be an urgency about the work. The context of the commissioning of the Seventy is one of judgment to come. They were working in light of “that day” of dreadful judgment (v. 12; cf. 21:34; Matthew 7:22; 2 Thessalonians 1:10; 2 Timothy 1:12,18; 4:8). Evangelists were to understand the serious consequences for people who rejected the gospel or refused to listen to them. If the people did not accept them or their message, they were bringing down judgment upon themselves. If a community or household did not receive the message of the evangelists, they were to shake the dust off their feet as they left town. This was a testimony of coming future judgment.

The itinerant preacher is not to be despised by the churched or the unchurched. Evangelists are ambassadors for Christ. Those who reject evangelists reject Christ. So long as evangelists are faithful to their calling, they are worthy of ministerial respect, financial support, and open doors of evangelism. It is a great sin for the saved or the unsaved to reject or neglect the “gospeler” of Christ.

In relation to the disciplined life, second, evangelists are to be balanced in their priorities pertaining to ministry. They are to be balanced in their physical priorities. They were to travel as swiftly as possible, preaching the gospel. They were to trust the Lord of the harvest for lodging, food, and remuneration.

It is the evangelist’s responsibility to behave and minister as an ambassador for the King. It is the responsibility of the local church to provide financial support for this minister’s travels and ministry. Woe to the evangelist who places high financial demands on the local church. Woe to the local church that robs or takes advantage of an ambassador of Christ (Luke 10:16). If local pastors are negligent about utilizing the gift of the evangelist, then their congregations will fail to support evangelistic crusades.

As the Lord Jesus Christ continued His instructions to the Seventy, He told them they were on a *deliverance mission* (Luke 10:9,17-20). They were to heal the sick and announce that the kingdom of God was near to them. Healing and the proclamation of the kingdom are linked together. When the Seventy returned from ministry, they were rejoicing because of their victories over Satan’s kingdom. Jesus had sent them out as lambs, but they came back as lords! Then Jesus explained the ambassador’s “authority” as given by the King.

Evangelists need to stay accountable to the Lord of the harvest as well as to their fellow laborers in the ministry. They should not isolate themselves from others in the harvest field. Also, evangelists must fight against pride and arrogance. They must remember that the greatest privilege is having their names written in heaven (Luke 10:20). There needs to be a well-balanced, evangelistic ministry in the Spirit-filled church today.

The Pioneer-Evangelist (Acts 8)

The New Testament evangelist also proclaimed the gospel in new areas. The Apostle Paul and his party visited Philip, the evangelist, and his house (Acts 21:8). Philip was

known as a pioneering evangelist. Why did Luke devote most of Acts 8 to Philip the evangelist? He wished to show that God used the gift of the evangelist (along with the apostles) to preach the gospel to unreached people. While the apostles were receiving reports of evangelism in Jerusalem, an evangelist was *leading the way* to reach a new ethnic group “in Samaria” with the gospel. In Acts 8, Philip demonstrates many functions of New Testament evangelistic leadership.

First, there were *supernatural wonders in his labors* (vv. 5b-8). These wonders occurred because of gospel preaching (v. 5b) followed by great power (vv. 6-7). The Samaritans gave heed to the preaching of Christ (v. 6a) and were then healed by the power of God (vv. 6b-7). The power of God conquered diseases and demons. Even though Philip (cf. Stephen in Acts 6:8) was not “officially” an apostle, “signs” (*tâ sēmeia*) or miracles were a part of his ministry (v. 13). The term for “miracles” (*dunámeis*) was also used to describe the mighty works of Jesus (Luke 10:13, 19:37; Acts 2:22). Luke provides a “repeated emphasis in 8:7-8 on the ‘many’ who were healed and the ‘much’ joy that resulted (*polloi...polloi...pollē*). Scriptures does not substantiate the claim that miracles were only attested by the apostles (Stott, 148). Philip’s evangelism produced joy throughout the city of Samaria (v. 8).

The church should use the evangelist for the purpose of starting churches. Just as Philip was willing to go to the city of Samaria, the evangelist must be a willing participant in heralding the gospel anywhere. Evangelists should not only ask the Lord to help them communicate the gospel but also to confirm the gospel by curing the sick, casting out demons, and converting the lost. Just as Philip led the first-century church into “new areas” of evangelism, evangelists need to lead the twenty-first-century church into new, creative areas of soul-winning.

Second, we note Philip’s *scriptural work for the Lord* (vv. 9-13). Simon Magus had been deceiving the Samaritans through sorcery (vv. 9-11); he claimed to be the great power, namely God. Philip combated this deception with the Word of God (v. 12); he did not build his ministry on his personality but on the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The people’s faith did not rest on the miracles but on the message. Philip had a sound theology of evangelism.

Evangelists can be assured that when a true spiritual awakening occurs in a church or city, Satan will try to bring distractions and deception during the crusade. Satan has his counterfeits. Evangelists and pastors must make sure they do not become sidetracked in their ministries but continue to proclaim Christ biblically through the power of the Holy Spirit. Moreover, itinerant preachers always need to remember that true conversion is ultimately a personal matter for the listener of the gospel. For example, even though the basis of Philip’s ministry was not the miracles, the basis of Simon Magus’s belief was (cf. John 2:23-25). He was astonished at Philip’s power. He continued to follow Philip to witness the miracles, yet his heart was not right before God (Acts 8:21-23). Evangelists must constantly pray for keen insight into the lives of their listeners since they do not always have the opportunity to learn an individual’s true character during a crusade.

Third, Philip's evangelistic ministry constituted a *submissive will toward leadership* (vv. 14-24). The reports of the Samaritan revival had spread to Jerusalem. After hearing of this revival, Peter and John were sent to Samaria to see this spiritual awakening firsthand (v. 14). Luke wanted the reader to understand that the apostles supported the evangelism efforts in Samaria and were now coming to confirm and extend Philip's ministry.

Evangelist Philip was a spiritual leader in the Samaritan crusade where the Holy Spirit was outpoured upon new converts. The Scripture states:

When the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent them Peter and John, who came down and prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For He had not yet fallen upon any of them; they had simply been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they began laying their hands on them, and they were receiving the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17).

Why did God delay the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Samaritans until the apostles laid their hands on them? In Acts 2:4 and 10:44, the Holy Spirit was given without the laying on of the apostles' hands. The answer is found in this Samaritan narrative.

When Peter and John arrived, Philip slipped out of the limelight into the background. Immediately, Peter and John prayed that the new converts would be filled with the Spirit (vv. 15-16). Instantly, the Spirit was poured out upon the Samaritan believers (v. 17). The Holy Spirit was given through the "laying on of the apostles' hands" in order to bring complete reconciliation between the Samaritans and the Jews. God was uniting the Samaritan church and the Jewish church in Jerusalem. The evangelistic efforts in Samaria became a cooperative undertaking as Peter, John, and Philip worked together for the cause of Christ. Philip's evangelism efforts did not become an independent work. He initiated the outreach in Samaria, but Peter and John led the people into the Spirit-filled life. It was a team effort in evangelism.

When Simon Magus offered to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit (v. 18) so he could dispense it to others (v. 19), Philip allowed Peter to consult Simon (vv. 20-23). There is no indication that Philip was resentful toward the apostles or that there was even a "partisan spirit in the early church" (Phillips, 1:154). The attitude and actions of Simon became a serious matter in this Samaritan crusade. Peter discerned the root of Simon's problem and urged him to repent before God.

In Acts 8:25, it is unclear whether Philip returned to Jerusalem with Peter and John; however, Peter and John evangelized other Samaritan villages as they returned to Jerusalem. The evangelism efforts begun by Philip in Samaria were carried on by the apostles. There is no doubt John had been radically changed since his first visit with Jesus to Samaria. The first time he desired fire to come down from heaven and consume the Samaritans (Luke 9:53-54). God used an evangelist to set the stage to change an apostle's heart and for the building of a bridge between the Jews and the Samaritans!

Moreover, the contemporary evangelist must be willing to move the church forward in evangelism. Just as Philip went where no one else was willing to go, evangelists need to set an aggressive pace for evangelism and show the patterns for effectiveness.

Evangelists must become “owners” of their “gift” before the church will embrace it. The twenty-first-century evangelist would be biblically and spiritually wise to strive to include all the elements of Philip’s Samaritan crusade.

Fourth, Philip had a *Spirit-led witness to the lost* (vv. 26-40). This pericope is extremely important in evangelism. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch marks the fulfillment of “You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria had already been evangelized. “The remotest part of the earth” was fulfilled under Philip’s evangelistic leadership. The sequence of Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth is geographical and implies the religious groups of the Jews, the Samaritans, and the Gentiles. It is extensively documented in ancient literature that the Ethiopians lived on the edge of the then-known world. Luke probably means for the reader to conclude that the eunuch was a “God-fearing Gentile.” Philip furthered the gospel to the Gentiles.

In this scene Philip is richly endowed with the characteristics of prophet and preacher of the word previously attributed to the apostles. He receives instructions from an angel and the Spirit (8:26,29), and when his task is complete, he is snatched away by the Spirit like the prophets Elijah and Ezekiel (cf. 1 Kings 18:12; 2 Kings 2:16; Ezek. 11:24). Philip can disclose the hidden references to Jesus the Messiah in Scripture (8:32-35), just as Peter does in his preaching after his mind was opened by the risen Lord (Luke 24:45) . . . He is the initiator of the mission not only in Samaria but to the end of the earth.

After the Samaritan crusade, the Lord directed Philip to go to Gaza (v. 26). Philip needed his *traveling* to be led by the Spirit in order for the Ethiopian eunuch (v. 27) to be evangelized. This man was reading from Isaiah (v. 28) when the Spirit spoke to Philip saying, “Go up and join this chariot” (v. 29). When Philip heard the eunuch reading the Scripture, he asked if he understood what he was reading (v. 30). Philip was then invited to ride in the chariot (v. 31) and to interpret the Scriptures (vv. 31-34).

After Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch in water, he was snatched away by the “Spirit of the Lord” to Azotus (cc. 39-40a). He continued “preaching the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea” (v. 40b). The Holy Spirit directed the evangelistic ministry of Philip. Twenty years later, the Apostle Paul found Philip in Caesarea. He was a family man with four daughters who were prophetesses. His family was serving Christ.

The point is that Philip was in the right place at the right time. God was able to use him both in public crusades and in personal encounters. Modern evangelists should desire to be led by the Spirit in their scheduling. Twenty-first-century evangelists must be willing to leave the large crowds in order to win one lost soul. More souls will be saved if evangelists are where God wants them to be. Often, the difference between a successful crusade and an unsuccessful crusade is the scheduling. Just as God put the evangelist and the eunuch together in a desert, God can place the evangelist in the right church at the right time for an effective crusade. Also, the Bible validates that Philip was Spirit-led in his

teachings because he gave spiritual insight which resulted in the eunuch's conversion. Just as Philip had proclaimed Jesus Christ in Samaria, he "preached Jesus to the eunuch" (v. 35). Philip's exposition of Isaiah 53 found lodging in the eunuch's heart. Philip combined the Word with witnessing in order to reach the first Gentile for Christ.

In summary, Philip initiated the Samaritan outreach, and the apostles confirmed the validity of his evangelism efforts. Philip began the Gentile mission. Later, Peter and the Jerusalem church accepted the Gentiles after the conversion of Cornelius. There was much joy in the city of Samaria as well as with the eunuch who "went on his way rejoicing" (v. 39). It should be apparent that the New Testament evangelist was not seen in a negative light or as a liability to the ongoing work of evangelism. The evangelist was respected by the church leaders. The evangelist was seen as being on the cutting edge of personal soul-winning, church pioneering, and crusade evangelism. Indeed, the evangelist sets the standard in ethics, excellence, and effectiveness in evangelism.

The Pastor-Evangelist (2 Timothy 4:1-8)

Second Timothy 4:1-5 contains the graphic picture of the faithful pastor-evangelist. Like Bunyan, Paul wrote from a prison. The evangelism of any local church will be greatly affected by the preaching of the minister. To every pastor-evangelist in particular and every pastor-evangelist in particular and every minister in general, 2 Timothy 4: 1-5 reflects what a biblical preacher is to look like in the church.

The Apostle Paul commands Timothy, who is pastoring a metropolitan church in Ephesus, to "do the work of an evangelist" (*érgon poiēson eúaggelistoū*, 2 Timothy 4:5c). It should now be apparent that the work of the evangelist includes both evangelizing the lost and equipping the saints. While Paul instructs us regarding the equipping of the saints, Philip illustrates the evangelization of sinners. It needs to be emphasized that the work of the evangelist needs to be operational inside and outside the local church. Even though every evangelist is not a pastor, every pastor should have an evangelistic ministry. Evangelism must be the main purpose of every local assembly.

In order to clarify the ministry of the pastor-evangelist further, one must study the context where "do the work of an evangelist" is found. Verse 5 is the climax to 2 Timothy 4:1-4 and the introduction to 2 Timothy 4:6-8. In a broader context, the work of the evangelist for Timothy required him to evangelize even though he was not in a new and unreached city. Evangelism was to be a part of Timothy's message, methods, and ministry.

In the Greek text, the definite article does not precede "evangelist." Paul was not giving Timothy another job along with pastoring in Ephesus. He was saying that Timothy's ministry should be evangelistic in nature. The message of the pastor-evangelist is to articulate clearly the sinfulness of humanity and to direct individuals to Jesus Christ for salvation.

The pastor-evangelist is to perform the commands of their commission in light of Christ's return. The first command is to *preach conscientiously* (v. 1). The minister is to preach in

view of God's presence (v. 1a). Paul was calling Timothy to appear in the courtroom of God's justice. The pastor-evangelist preaches God's Word before God himself.

The pastor-evangelist is to preach conscientiously *in view of God's pronouncement* (v. 1b-c). The Apostle Paul dictates to the minister and the congregation the seriousness of the commission because of the One they serve and who will judge them. The Christ who will judge all mankind will evaluate our ministry. (Our word *criteria* comes from the Greek word for "judge.") This judgment will begin at Christ's "appearing." Paul reminds us to always be preparing ourselves for the appearing of Christ.

The second command for the pastor-evangelist is to *preach continuously* (v. 2a-b). The evangelist and the pastor are to preach continuously *fulfilling the task* (v. 2a). The task is to "preach the Word." "Preach" means "to herald or publicly announce a message." The pastor-evangelist is to guard the sacred content of the truth (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 1:14), study the Word (2 Timothy 2:15), and then proclaim it.

Moreover, the pastor-evangelist is to preach continuously *figuring the time* (v. 2b). "Be ready" is a command and military term which means "to remain at one's post whatever the circumstances." "In season and out of season" indicates whether it is convenient or not, the pastor-evangelist is required to proclaim the truth. There is no closed season on evangelistic preaching.

The third command for the pastor-evangelist is to *preach comprehensively* (v. 2c-e). The minister is to preach with the *right tone* (v. 2c-d). Evangelistic preaching has both a negative and a positive side. The negative aspect involves "reproof" and "rebuke." "Reprove" is to prove biblically to someone that a particular act or teaching is sinful. "Rebuke" moves from the content of the teaching to the teacher or from the act of sin to the sinner. It convicts the sinner of sin. The pastor-evangelist discloses the sinfulness of sin and the sinfulness of the sinner. Also, the pastor-evangelist is to preach comprehensively with the *right teaching* (v. 2e). The manner of the minister is "with great patience" and the method of the minister is "instruction."

The fourth command for the pastor-evangelist is to *preach correctly* (vv. 3-4). The itinerant as well as the local pastor is to preach correctly *before people lack the endurance for sound doctrine* (v. 3a). The minister must preach now because a time will come when people will not listen. "Time" means "a season or intervals." There are seasons when people will not want the truth. The faithful pastor-evangelist realizes that people can become unwilling to tolerate good, clean, healthy doctrine.

Furthermore, the pastor-evangelist is to preach correctly *when people lust for entertainment in accordance to their selfish desires* (vv. 3b-4). Paul paints the picture of a time when people will refuse to believe the truth. People have "itching ears." Sensationalism has replaced "sound doctrine." Evangelistic preaching does not tickle the ears but burns them.

The fifth command for the pastor-evangelist is to *preach completely* (v.5). The local pastor is to preach completely through *thoughtful evaluation* (v. 5a). “Be sober” means “self-controlled” and “stable.” The preacher must face the issues with careful deliberation. The pastor-evangelist is to preach through *tremendous endurance* (v. 5b). Evangelistic preaching is not a painless exercise. Diligence and determination are required to faithfully preach in our contemporary culture. The local pastor is also to proclaim the truth through *tireless evangelism* (v. 5c). The work of the evangelist involves the preaching of soul-winning messages and the equipping of the saints for evangelism (Ephesians 4:11). Ministry should have soul winning at its heart. When the heart of evangelism declines or dies in the church, the result will be a bureaucratic denomination rather than a soul-winning movement.

Last but not least, the pastor-evangelist is to preach completely through *total effort* (v. 5d). “Fulfill your ministry” includes all the duties named above. The pastor-evangelist proclaims the gospel with patience and careful instruction. They remain clearheaded in every situation, bearing the difficulties the evangelistic ministry brings. Regardless of our ministry gift in the church (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher), the central purpose is evangelism.

The team spirit between the evangelist and the pastor is focused more intently on the salvation of lost people. What would have happened if Philip and Timothy could have ministered together for the cause of Christ? What could happen today if evangelists would strive to be like Philip and pastors would strive to be like Timothy? Would our evangelism efforts be more effective?

The Person of Evangelism

The number one debilitating fear of people is having lived a meaningless life. How can you know if you are making progress unless you have a purpose? The purpose is the compass, and the progress is the coordinates for your life and ministry. In a sense, the evangelist has an “ambidextrous calling.”

There is a proper understanding of an evangelistic calling. There is a bridge between the first-century evangelist and the twenty-first-century evangelist. How can you know that the life and ministry of the evangelist is your “God-given patent” for existence? There are many characteristics of an evangelistic calling.

The Characteristics of an Evangelistic Calling

First, the evangelistic calling is *providential*. It has a sense of divine destiny about it. The call of the Apostle Paul began before the creation of the world (Galatians 1:15). God knew Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb of his mother (Jeremiah 1:5). For evangelists to stay long-term on the field, they must know without doubt that God has called them; otherwise, they will easily become frustrated with the stresses of itinerant ministry.

If evangelists do not know they are divinely called into full-time evangelism, they will eventually settle for “whining in evangelism” rather than “winning in evangelism.” Evangelists cannot live with constant change (weekly travels, new hotels, different churches, etc.) unless there is a changeless core inside them. The key to the ability to change is a changeless sense of who you are, what you are about and what you value. A divine sense of “who you are” will provide direction for “what you are to do” in evangelistic ministry.

Second, an evangelistic calling is *purposeful*. Abraham was called to be the “father of the faithful.” Joseph was called to be a leader in Egypt during a time of famine. Moses was called to lead the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage. Joshua was called to lead his people into Canaan. The Old Testament prophets were called to proclaim the “Word of the Lord.” Jesus was called to die for the sins of the world (John 3:16). Peter was called to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:10). Paul was called to preach the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15; cf. Galatians 3:15-16). When Christ calls individuals to be evangelists, He has a unique purpose for them in the church and in the world.

What are your roles and goals in evangelism? Your roles provide your direction and your goals determine your destiny. For example, you have a role as a Christian, but your goal is heaven. If you are in bible college, then you have the role of a student, no doubt with a goal to graduate. You may have a role as a husband or wife, but your goal is to build a healthy marriage. Your roles and goals will change throughout life.

What is your vision and mission for ministry? Your vision will flow out of your mission. Your mission is born from above while your vision is lived here below. If your vision and mission are fuzzy in your mind, your morale will be low. All great leaders know where they are going and are able to persuade others to follow them.

Third, an evangelistic calling is *personal*. Each of us is as unique in our calling as we are in being made in the image of God. (It would take an infinite number of human beings, St. Thomas Aquinas once wrote, to mirror back the infinite facets of the Godhead. Each person reflects only a small—but beautiful—part of the whole.)

Numerous Old Testament prophets (Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others) and New Testament apostles (Peter and Paul) were personally called to proclaim the Word of God. The evangelistic call is not just a profession but a divine act of God. God has not called you to live someone else’s mission and ministry. Your true identity or self-worth before God is much greater than your present level of ministry. God does not call an evangelist to develop a ministry on the “proven personality” of someone else but on proven eternal principles.

Fourth, an evangelistic call is also *practical*. For a calling to be right, it must fit our abilities. Not everyone is psychologically able to travel for an extended number of years. One must have a changeless core in order to adapt spiritually, physically, and emotionally to a constantly changing environment. One must have a certain level of faith to believe God to provide financially on a weekly basis. It is recommended for someone interested in

pursuing an evangelistic ministry to travel occasionally with a full-time evangelist to observe their lifestyle.

What are your gifts or talents? One of the reasons many of us don't recognize our gifts as gifts is because they seem so natural to us. Why do you suppose God gave those gifts to you? There is a God-given purpose for the unique gifts in your life. It is our responsibility to recognize them, use them, and expect fair wages for the use of them in our service to God (Matthew 20:1-13; 25:29). Your gifts and talents will help you to determine whether you are called to ministry in general and evangelism in particular. Do not mystify God's calling on your life.

Fifth, the evangelistic call is *powerful*. A divine call provides both the passion for the necessary creativity and the power for the passion for the necessary creativity and the power for the renewed energies of the daily preaching grind.

If someone does not enjoy traveling, that individual is most likely not called to full-time itinerant ministry. If someone does not find renewed energy for the nightly preaching task, that individual needs to reconsider the evangelistic calling. If one does not have deep compassion for the unsaved or unchurched, that individual's evangelistic calling is to be questioned. If a man or woman does not find inner fulfillment or a sense of purpose in their evangelism efforts, then maybe their unique calling is in another area of ministry. If your mission holds no personal passion, it is not your path. Enthusiasm comes from the root words 'en' and 'theos'—which means 'in God.' What are you enthusiastic or 'in God' about? Do people have to prime your emotional pump, or does your passion for your mission get you up when everything else in life is down? Even though purpose is the motivation behind dynamic evangelists, passion drives them to excellence when evangelizing the lost and equipping the saints.

Sixth, an evangelistic calling is *perplexing*. Even though the call of God is personal, sometimes it is hard for some people to discover it. Sometimes, several years of full-time evangelistic ministry are required before individuals know for certain that the evangelistic calling rests upon their lives. There are also those who know that their evangelistic calling is for a lifetime. They have served as the preacher-evangelist, the pioneer-evangelist, and the pastor-evangelist throughout their lives.

Are you seeking success or significance in evangelistic ministry? Success is timely and dies when you die. Significance is timeless and lives on after you die. Soren Kierkegaard said, "The thing is to understand myself, to see what God really wishes me to do...to find the idea for which I can live and die."

The Confirmation of an Evangelistic Calling

An evangelist is not only called by Christ to function in the body but should receive confirmation by the church. The evangelistic calling not only requires inward affirmation but also outward confirmation. In the New Testament era, Philip was well-known and highly respected in his local church in Jerusalem. He was one of the original deacons

chosen to serve the Greek widows (Acts 6). The local congregation also recognized that Philip was “filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). It is important to note that before Philip was a leading evangelist among the Gentiles, he was recognized as a spiritual leader in his local church. The apostles were also supportive of Philip, the evangelist (Acts 8:14). Philip was sent out from the Jerusalem church to become an itinerant evangelist during the New Testament era. Since Christ has given the evangelist to the Church, churches need to realize that this person is needed for the ongoing work of effective evangelism.

How can an evangelist continue to function in the church for years to come? Is there a secret for building a significant evangelistic ministry? What is one of the most important qualities for effective evangelism? In Ephesians 4:7, Paul writes, “To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift.” Christ gives the evangelist “grace” to fulfill “the measure” of ministry. Each ministry gift in Ephesians 4:11 requires a certain level of grace to obtain the full measure of effective ministry. Christ provides not only the gift of the evangelist in the Church but also the grace to accomplish the intended task of evangelism.

Conclusion

We live in a reachable world. If this is true, why has the Church failed to evangelize the world after two thousand years? The lack of world evangelization is not due to the size of the world, a growing population, false religions, political systems, or cultural barriers. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on earth, He did not plan to reach the world with the gospel. The Master’s plan was to equip His disciples for world evangelization. The Church has not accomplished the Great Commission because we have failed to equip both the minister and parishioner for evangelism and discipleship. Equipping is the answer.

For too long, the Church has endeavored to reach the world through addition and division instead of by multiplication. If the Church would learn to equip a disciple, just one person for evangelism in one year and that person and the evangelist each disciple one more person each for evangelism during the next year, there would be four people equipped as evangelists or lay evangelists after two years. If each of these four disciples one new person, there would be eight evangelists or lay evangelists trained for evangelism at the end of three years. At first, this would seem to be a much slower process of world evangelization. However, after 34 years where each one disciplined a new evangelist or lay evangelist each year, the total number of conversions would be more than sixteen billion! We live in a reachable world.

Open-air and citywide crusades are effective tools for winning the lost. Local church campaigns are still vital in the overall life of the church. Biblical revivals turn saints into soul-winners. Spiritual awakenings cause cities and sometimes entire nations to turn to God. In each of these events, evangelists have led the way in cutting-edge evangelism. New Testament evangelists know how to surf the spiritual waves of revival for the purpose of evangelism and discipleship.



Evangelists have been called by Christ to equip the Church in evangelism. Just like the other ministry gifts, evangelists are to multiply themselves in the church for the purpose of world evangelization. Evangelists and evangelism go hand in hand.

If the Great Commission is going to be completed in the future, the Church will have to biblically recognize the leadership gift of the evangelist. It is going require more than a public acknowledgement, but purposeful actions. The Lord of the harvest is still calling evangelists in the 21st century, but the Church will have to embrace them, equip them, entrust them and empower them. The evangelist is to be respected and resourced at the same level as the other four ministry gifts and released in church planting, personal discipleship, local church revivals, open-air crusades, missionary endeavors, bible colleges and so much more. Just as evangelism has decreased as the evangelist has been minimized, evangelism will increase as the evangelist is maximized. Just as the evangelist is the center of the five-fold gifts, evangelism is to be center of the Church.