

The Role of the Pastor in Evangelism

Personal and corporate involvement in evangelism.

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The pastor is the catalyst to the overall success of any outreach program. His input, involvement, and example are paramount. Unfortunately, many pastors are expected to either attend or at least verbally support every ministry activity in the church. He becomes the designated "cheerleader" for every ministry. His desire as a pastor is to see every ministry that is Christ honoring and kingdom building succeed. However, there is only so much of him to go around. Unfortunately, many pastors become so spread out and divided among ministry activities that they are rendered ineffective.

Implementing a Plan of Evangelism

As the pastor or church leader, your role in your church's evangelism efforts is crucial. I want to address this responsibility from two perspectives: personal and corporate.

Personal Involvement

1. *Live the gospel every day.* By this I mean that it ought to be your personal goal each week to share the gospel with someone and see that person come to faith in Jesus Christ. Try winning someone to Christ who is outside your comfort zone or circle of influence. Have you ever noticed that every evangelist that comes to your church has a story about witnessing to a complete stranger while traveling on an airplane? I say this not to be flippant but rather to make a point that most of these people practice what they preach. A true evangelist's heart is bent toward lost souls. Because as pastors we are to "do the work of an evangelist," we need to reach out beyond our comfort zones and share the gospel with people we don't know.
2. *Stay close to the action.* As pastor, you need to be the primary leader of your outreach/evangelism program. It is not to say that if you pastor a large (mega) church, you shouldn't have a designated staff person directing the program. What I'm talking about is your personal involvement and visibility in the effort. People need to see their pastor winning others to Jesus Christ. They need to see their pastor making visits to the unchurched, cultivating relationships with the unsaved, and establishing contacts with the lost. You need to be seen on the front lines of evangelism in your church.
3. *Maintain your circle of influence.* Every pastor ought to keep a personal circle of influence. I started doing this a few years ago, and I can honestly say I am never at a loss of having someone with whom to share my faith. God will do the same for you if you will be obedient and faithful to this task.

4. *Pray daily for souls to be saved.* Every pastor ought to be a prayer warrior, especially when it comes to praying for the harvest. Amazingly, when the laity in your church sees your prayerful spirit for the harvest, many of them too will mimic that same passion for souls. As pastors and church leaders, we need to be reminded of men like Martin Luther, John Wesley, David Brainerd, George Fox, Adoniram Judson, and John Hyde. Luther said, "I have so much business I cannot get on without spending three hours in prayer." Wesley declared, "God does nothing but in answer to prayer." Brainerd wrote in his journal, "I love to be alone in my cottage, where I can spend much time in prayer." William Penn said of Fox, "Above all he excelled in prayer. The most awful, living, reverent frame I ever felt or beheld, I must say was his in prayer." Judson withdrew from business and company seven times a day for the purpose of prayer. Hyde was so characterized by prayer that he was nicknamed "Praying Hyde." It is no small wonder that these prayer warriors wielded unusual power and supernatural influence for the kingdom of God.

5. *Respond to cries for help.* As the church grows and its ministry becomes more specialized, the pastor may not be able to be involved in the lives of every single convert. But to fulfill our call to ministry and to be like the Lord who called us, we must personally answer enough of those cries for help that we get our hands dirty and our hearts broken by hurting people. If you have decided to become a church CEO, you may never experience the soul-shaping, spiritual adventure of touching lives for the kingdom. Be sensitive to benevolent needs that come your way. Be on guard the next time you conduct a funeral service and a distant family member of the deceased is in attendance at the funeral, having never heard gospel. Be aware of hospital visits where the opportunity to share with doctors, nurses, and attendants is abundant and often timely.

Corporate Involvement

Second, let's look at the pastor's corporate involvement in evangelism. A church and its leaders have a responsibility to God to involve its great army of laity in witness for Jesus. Four basic keys are necessary for proper implementation of good evangelism program.

1. *Enlighten the church.* Many Christians fail to witness because they are not educated or challenged on the subject. I urge you to preach on the subject of soul winning, challenging your flock about the biblical mandate to share their faith. Witnessing is not an option; it is a mandate for every Christian. Pastors should keep their flock accountable before God concerning the commission every Christian has received from God.
2. *Enlist the church.* We enlist people for practically everything under the sun. Unfortunately, one of the areas we often overlook is the ministry of evangelism. Evangelism must be given priority as a major emphasis of the church. If not, laity will be enlisted in so many committees, social functions, and recreational activities that they will have no time to commit to outreach.



3. *Equip the church.* Most laypeople have a deep desire to win others to Christ; unfortunately, most of them simply do not know how. We need to learn to work with a team of Christians to develop meaningful relationships with lost people through acts of hospitality and grace. The pastor needs to be the primary person who leads in the equipping of the saints. As the pastor makes it a priority not to only share his faith but also to equip his flock, he will reap greater benefits from both his example and training of others.

4. *Engage the church.* Every church has a corporate witness to its local community. Unfortunately, many churches have lost their influence in their community as a result of infighting, lovelessness, or a church split. The church must seek to keep its witness strong and vibrant in the community. Therefore, as pastors, you must engage your flock to go out into the community and share their faith with everyone who is in their personal circle of influence. Just as a general sends his army out to do battle, likewise, our great commander Jesus Christ has commissioned his army to go out and engage the lost. Pastors serve as field generals who lead and engage others. Therefore, lead by example and challenge others to do the same.

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