

2 Necessities for Health in Discipleship AND Evangelism

Which is more important discipleship or evangelism? It's not a trick question, but it is a difficult one in practice. Every church leader has a unique wiring that creates a personal bias toward either discipleship or evangelism. And each church, therefore, quickly reveals an emphasis toward one or the other. This is also true for departments and teams.

Matthew 28:19-20 makes the general mission of the church clear, "make disciples", but that inherently includes evangelism. Without people coming to faith, there is no one to train in their faith. We can quickly argue biblically that this is a *both* and not *either* or issue. Fair enough. But if you want to answer this question honestly, you must consider the patterns, habits and results of the ministry practices in your church. We all need to do this.

Simply ask the question in the context of your church. How many are coming to faith in comparison to how many are being nurtured in their faith? This is the great caution, be careful not to justify discipleship because of the absence of evangelism. Our devotion to spiritual formation is most healthy when it is the response to people finding faith in Jesus.

One thing we have learned for certain is that there is a natural gravitational pull in every church toward discipleship. With minimal intentionality, discipleship (spiritual formation) will occur. Evangelism, however, will not consistently happen without great discipline, effort and intentionality.

So what can we extract from these considerations?

1) It is necessary to make evangelism a priority.

Evangelism needs to be the priority not because it's more important, but because if it isn't it quickly becomes weak and can slide to a nominal position and practice in any church. Evangelism, unlike discipleship is not the natural pattern of the church. It is, however, the cutting edge that helps you take new territory.

Keep it simple. 16 classes in how to share your faith over complicate the matter. Cast vision for your congregation to make friends and invite them to church. That's it. Let it happen in a natural lifestyle way. Of course there is no "wrong" way to approach evangelism, but some are more effective than others within your community and culture. The bottom line is make evangelism a priority, from local compassion to inviting friends, keep it the focus.

2) It is necessary to strive for quality and life change in discipleship.

While we acknowledge that in nearly all churches spiritual formation is happening, it's not true that it's always of high quality and effective.

Here are a few questions to get you started:

- Are your small groups working? Do you have stories of life change?
- How about new Christians? What do you have in place? Are you happy with the process?
- Are baptisms a regular part of your congregational life?
- Is serving (volunteering for ministry) vibrant and widespread?
- Is prayer vital, core and prevalent in your church?
- Is worship robust and alive?
- Are people growing or just repeating the process over and over again?

Discipleship or evangelism is an age-old question. Hopefully you and I can give some fresh new answers.

> [Read more from Dan.](#)
