

The Idea of Evangelism Makes Me Uncomfortable

I often meet Christians who are uncomfortable with the idea of evangelism. Whenever I dig down to the root of the discomfort, I encounter issues related to the nature of truth, what it means to follow Jesus, and the role of worship. Here's a fictional example of how this kind of conversation usually goes...

Christian: I know we're supposed to tell people about Jesus, but I don't like the idea of pressing someone to come to my way of thinking. When I talk to people of other faiths, I don't want to come across looking like I think my religion is better than theirs.

Evangelist: But even when you don't try to persuade someone to become a Christian, you still think your religion is better, don't you?

Christian: How is that?

Evangelist: The very fact that you're a Christian means you must think Christianity is superior to other religions. If you don't think Christianity is better than Buddhism in any way, then why are you a Christian? And the reverse is true too. If you're talking to a Buddhist, for example, surely they would think Buddhism to be superior. If you don't think your religion is best, why not convert to whatever religion *is* best? You should always be kind and civil, but make no mistake... Both of you think you're right and both of you think the other is wrong.

Christian: So it's okay to believe Christianity is superior?

Evangelist: There's a difference between believing your religion is superior and having a superior attitude.

Christian: The minute you think your faith is better than someone else's, you start down the path of having a superior attitude.

Evangelist: Sometimes. But what's the alternative?

Christian: What if we said no religion is superior? What if we said all religions are on equal footing?

Evangelist: Believing no religion is better than another is itself a belief. You don't lose the attitude of superiority by saying no religion is superior. You get even *more* reason to feel superior. Now you're standing over against all the religions of the world, saying none is better than another.

Christian: I guess when it comes down to it, there's no way around it. I do think Christianity is better. But evangelism still doesn't sit well with me.

Evangelist: That's because you're thinking of Christianity as if it's a preference. Like having a

favorite color or something. Trying to push your favorite color on someone else would make anyone uncomfortable. But at the end of the day, we don't believe the gospel because it's helpful. Or because it's prettier. Or because it's our upbringing. **We believe the gospel because it's true.** Not just a preference, but true. Truth about the way the world works.

Christian: I still think we look bad when we tell people they should become Christians.

Evangelist: Then what do we do with the Jesus' final instructions? "Go and make disciples of all nations." What do we do with Jesus' prediction that the world would hate those who follow Him? What do we do with Jesus saying His disciples would be fishers of men?

Christian: But it seems so arrogant to proselytize.

Evangelist: We don't proselytize. We evangelize. Proselytism is about getting someone to change from one religion to another. Evangelism is proclaiming the *evangel* – the gospel. It's an announcement about the way the world is. Then we call people to bring their lives in line with that reality.

Christian: But it still seems arrogant.

Evangelist: Frankly, I think it's more arrogant to be against evangelism. Whoever says we should just keep our faith to ourselves and not evangelize – they're really saying we ought to follow *their* instructions and not King Jesus. *That* is the height of arrogance, if you ask me.

Christian: So I guess we ought to just grit our teeth and do evangelism because Jesus said so.

Evangelist: No, not at all. You see, **failure to evangelize is a worship problem.** The New Testament picture of evangelism is not that we share Jesus with gritted teeth. It's a picture of lips and hearts overflowing with worship. Whenever you are completely taken with something or someone, you can't help but talk about it. Love can't stop talking about the beloved. Fix the worship problem, and evangelism starts coming naturally. So remember, we evangelize because the gospel is true and eternity hangs in the balance. But most importantly, we evangelize because we love Jesus and want others to know the joy of loving Jesus too.

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