

Evangelism

Main point of this entire series holds true: the theology you hold determines the ministry you choose to engage in.

1. If you don't believe God's Word is inerrant, infallible, and sufficient, you may not feel any need at all to evangelize.
2. If you believe the gospel is reduced entirely to feeding the poor and clothing the needy, then you will limit your actions to those, and you will relegate an awful lot of people to hell better fed and clothed in this life than they would have been otherwise.
3. If you believe the Word is inerrant and infallible, but not sufficient, you may find yourself succumbing to whatever methods are currently most pragmatic or yield the most results from a numerical perspective in the present culture.
 - a. Trendy music, light shows, etc.
 - b. Gimmicks
4. If you have an Arminian perspective, you put more responsibility on both the person proclaiming the gospel and the person hearing the gospel. Some of the temptations may be:
 - a. to do anything possible to get them to "make a decision for Christ."
 - b. To base the success of your ministry on numbers of people who have made such decisions.
 - c. To guilt-trip professing Christians into evangelistic events "because of all the people who will go to hell because you didn't evangelize."
5. If you have a Calvinist perspective, you understand that no one is capable of converting themselves or anyone else, that only God can regenerate someone. This eliminates the guilt-trip temptation. The accompany temptation, however, becomes to lose the urgency for evangelism.
6. If you have a true hyper-Calvinist perspective, you get back to feeling no need to evangelize, because, under that belief, God will save everyone of His own accord, without your help.

Some thoughts that help us Calvinists battle the temptation to lose the urgency for evangelism:

- God uses means to achieve His ends
 - o God has commanded us to evangelize (Matt 28:18-20; 1 Pet 3:15-16; 2 Cor 10:5)
 - o Only Christians received this command; i.e., have the role/responsibility to evangelize.
 - Acts 10 – God went to exceptional lengths to send an angelic vision to Cornelius.
 - Why didn't God just have the angel give Cornelius the gospel? (G. Gilbert)
 - This highlights our responsibility: no one else besides Christians is given the task of evangelizing

World Missions

Many of the points above are transferable into our concept of world missions.

Depending on your theological view:

- You may not feel any need at all for world missions, whether b/c you don't believe the Bible is God's Word, or b/c you are a hyper-Calvinist
 - o John Rylands Sr. to William Carey: "When God pleases to convert the heathen world, He will do it without your help or mine."
- You may feel the need to guilt-trip people in churches into becoming missionaries "because of all the heathen that will go to hell because you didn't become a missionary."
- Your view of world missions may be so dominated by the material world (providing food/clothing/humanitarian relief, building homes, schools, hospitals, church buildings, etc.), that you neglect to include the actual gospel message in your activities.
 - o *When Helping Hurts / Poverty, Inc.*
 - Examples
 - o Short-term missions – what truly is the goal of your short-term mission?
 - Is it for the people going to feel better about themselves?
 - Does it provide aid without providing the gospel?
- Jesuit missionary pattern in the New World
 - o Very similar to the monastic ideal – withdrawal from the native culture – create a self-contained enclave within which people will get converted and live out the Christian walk
 - o Is it not a more biblical approach to be faithful Christians acting within the culture to affect the culture, proclaim the gospel message, and provide humanitarian aid?
 - Medical missions, ESL, etc.

Length of service:

- Not all missionaries need to spend the rest of their lives overseas (Sills, *The Missionary Call*; both biblical and practical; outstanding discussion of knowing God / knowing God's will / obeying God's will)

Piper – the goal of the church is not missions, but worship. Missions exists because worship doesn't.

Bible Translation for World Missions

- “all nations” in the great commission has the sense of ethno-linguistic groups, not socio-political boundaries
 - So world missions in some sense must have Bible translation alongside
- Using language skills for the glory of God
- Translating the Scriptures, whenever possible, from Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek, into target language, though sometimes it’s necessary to go through another more established, more widely known language (like English)
- One current controversy:
 - Using “Allah” for “Yahweh” in the predominantly Muslim, Arabic-speaking world.
 - Example Exodus 34:6
 - Wycliffe Bible Translators appears to support this sort of confusion between the language of the Bible and the language of the Qur’an.

Suggested Reading:

J.I. Packer. *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*

Ryan Denton. *Even If None: Reclaiming Biblical Evangelism*

Timothy Beougher. *Overcoming Walls to Witnessing*

M. David Sills. *The Missionary Call*

John Piper. *Let the Nations Be Glad!*

Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert. *When Helping Hurts* (specifically about helping the poor, but definitely applies to our concept of missions)