

“The Who, Where, and Why of Evangelism”

Matthew 28

The first time I shared the gospel:

- *I was so **young in the faith**, I did not **know any better**.*
- *I had **very little information**, but I did have a **burden for lost people**.*

A lot of that had to do with what God had done for me personally.

“To whom **much is forgiven**, that **one loves the more**” (see Luke 7:47 NLT).

*I was as **lost as a person could be**, but **God graciously called and forgave me** and so I wanted to reach other **people like myself** with this same message.*

Ah, the Excitement of Youth.

This is probably why **kids can fix our computers** and are so “**tech savvy**”

Adults are afraid to try, but kids will just “**jump in**” and start pushing buttons.

I am not suggesting that we not prepare ourselves to share the gospel.

- *But I am suggesting we **way overcomplicate this thing we call Evangelism**.*
- *It is my firm belief that **GOD CAN USE YOU to bring others into His Kingdom**.*
- ***WHY** would God tell us to engage in this thing we **call Evangelism if it were not so?***
The Calling of God is the Enabling of God.

I believe that God wants to use ALL of us to BRING PEOPLE to Himself.

Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV): “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who **WINS SOULS is wise.**”

Daniel 12:3 (NLT): “Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and **those who turn many to righteousness will shine like stars forever.**”

In this new series, Making God Known, I want to talk about The Who, Where, Why, What, When, and How of Evangelism.

Let’s start with the WHO.

WHO is called to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel?”

Answer: WE ARE.

Matthew 28:19-20 (NKJV): “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**”

In the original language, these words are addressed to EVERYONE.

- *Not just Pastors, Evangelists, and Missionaries, but EVERYONE.*
- *Businessmen, Housewives, Students . . . Everyone.*

No one is exempted.

Also, in the original language, they are a COMMAND.

Jesus is not saying, *“If you can find time in your busy schedule, as a personal favor.”*

No, as our Savior, Lord, and Commander in Chief, He says, “GO!”

Scripture tells us we have been redeemed by Christ.

- *That is a word that means to “buy out of a slave market”*
So, after He has Redeemed us, what does He do?
He frees us!

This should only cause us to say, like Paul, “Lord, what do you want me to do?”

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NLT): *“You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”*

I have the privilege of being on the board of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Assn.

I remember the first time BILLY GRAHAM asked me to do something (“I need a hat”).

Billy gave me a job, *“Greg, I want YOU to do this!”*

Jesus chose me and you, before we were even born, to glorify Him and bear fruit.

John 15:16 (NLT): *“You didn’t choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce FRUIT THAT WILL LAST.”*

Everything else is secondary.

John 15:8 (NKJV): *“By this My Father is Glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.”*

So what is this FRUIT Jesus has called me to bring forth?

A. Living a godly and holy life is bearing fruit.

Romans 6:21-22 (NLT): *“Now you are ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God” . . . “You have your FRUIT TO HOLINESS, and the end, everlasting life” (NKJV).*

B. Winning others to Jesus Christ and helping them to grow spiritually is fruit.

Paul wrote to his friends in Rome

Romans 1:13, 15 (NASB): “Often I have planned to come to you . . . so that I might obtain **SOME FRUIT** among you also, even as among the rest of the Gentiles. . . . **I am eager to preach the gospel to you** also who are in Rome.”

Proverbs 11:30 (NKJV): “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that wins souls is wise.”

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus is saying, “As my redeemed servants, I **COMMAND you to preach the gospel!”**

These verses are often referred to as **The Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion.**

It was never a **suggestion of Jesus** that we, His followers, **carry the gospel** unto “all nations.” **It was, and IS, a command!**

Again, these words are for EVERY FOLLOWER and disciple of Jesus Christ.

- If I am **His disciple**, I am **commanded** to go and **make disciples of others**.
- If I am not **making disciples of others**, I’m not really being the **disciple He wants me to be!**
- Instead of being the **Great Commission**, for many of us it’s **the Great OMISSION**.

We are simply NOT doing it.

And to NOT do what God has called us to do is a SIN.

James 4:17 (AMPLIFIED): “So any person who knows what is right to do but does not do it, to him it is sin.”

A poll was taken that revealed nearly 9 out of 10 American adults (86%) cannot accurately define the meaning of the **Great Commission.**

- **7 out of 10 adults** have no clue what “**John 3:16**” means.
- Barely **one-third of all adults** (31%) know the meaning of the expression “**the gospel**.”
- **Only 4% of adults** could define the **Great Commission**, quote **John 3:16**, and define “**the gospel**.”

Now, we may say, “They aren’t believers; what do you expect?”

But here is the most alarming stat of all.

95% of Christians have never helped lead another person to Christ.

You might protest, “But I’m not gifted as an evangelist!”

- That may be true, **but EVERY believer is called to evangelize**.
- I know the idea of **evangelism** seems daunting and overwhelming.
- **How can we do it?**

The answer to that question is that same as the answer to “How do you eat an elephant?”

Answer: “One bite at a time.”

How do we fulfill the Great Commission? One bite at a time.

Second, WHERE are we to preach the gospel?

Answer: Everywhere!

In Mark, we have a variation on this Great Commission (Mark 16:15):

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature”
(NKJV).

It was Tip O’Neil who once said, “All politics are local.”

The same could be said for world evangelism.

“Go into all of YOUR WORLD and preach the gospel.”

Into your family, your workplace, your campus, your sphere of influence.

Matthew 28:18 (KJV): “All power is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye THEREFORE and make disciples.”

- *What is the connection?*
- *If the power is in Him, and He is living inside us, then His power and resources are at our disposal to accomplish this task!*

What then does it mean to MAKE DISCIPLES?

Verse 20 defines it as “Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you”
(KJV).

Simply put, it means to teach them to observe what He has commanded.

It is to live our faith in this world, and also to share it with others—to teach it by word and model it by example.

The full concept of “going into all the world and making disciples” is to share our faith, to seek to lead people to Christ, and then help them mature spiritually to the best of our ability.

Colossians 1:28 says, “So everywhere we go, we tell everyone about Christ. We warn them and teach them with all the wisdom God has given us, for we want to present them to God, perfect in their relationship to Christ.”

#3 WHY are we to do this?

- Why doesn't **God just poke His face** out of the heavens and say, "**Believe in ME!**"
- Why does He want to **use flawed people like us?**
- I don't really know the answer to **that, but I do know He does.**
- **The primary way God has chosen to reach people is through people.**

People like you and me.

Romans 10:14-15 (NKJV): "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they **believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?** And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!'"

In Acts 8 is the story of a powerful, wealthy, foreign dignitary searching for God.

He had not **found Him** in the empty rituals of the **dead Judaism of the time.** But he did obtain a scroll containing Isaiah 53: "He was led as a **sheep to the slaughter . . .** "

Philip approached him, saying, "Do you understand what you are reading?"

The Ethiopian basically responded, "How can I, unless someone SHOW ME THE WAY?"

That is what people need, and what many want—someone to show them the way.

Someone **LIKE YOU.**

And the primary way we are to share this message is VERBALLY.

*That is not to say that you should not **live it first, for indeed you should.***

*But the Bible does not advocate what some call "**Lifestyle Evangelism,**" meaning, I will just **live a Christian life and wait for someone to ask me.***

*That is a wonderful **compliment** when that happens, and we should **all live in such a way.***

At the same time, we need to INITIATE and VERBALIZE our faith.

1 Corinthians 1:21 (NKJV): "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the **foolishness of the MESSAGE PREACHED** to save those who believe."

Now you might find this surprising, coming from me, but it's not always easy for me to **SHARE THE GOSPEL.**

When I am **behind a pulpit,** it's not too hard, **but one-on-one, that's a different thing.**

There's one thing that Christians and nonbelievers have in common.

- They're both **uptight about evangelism!**
- **Nonbelievers** are uptight about being **evangelized**
- **And believers** are uptight about **evangelizing**.
- *I used to hide from Christians.*

So many of us give up so easily.

We ask our non-believing friends, "Do you want to come to church or a crusade with me?" "No." "OK, *never mind.*"

Do we REALLY BELIEVE what we claim what we believe?

- *That there really is a **heaven and hell?***
- *That the **wages of sin really are death?***
- *If so, how can we be so **casual about telling others?***

This comes back to the WHY of evangelism.

Why should we **tell others about Jesus?**

As I pointed out, because **the Lord told us to.**

And because verbal **communication is the primary way that is done.**

But there is another reason as well.

*Because **WE CARE.***

- *Let me **ask you this question:** Do you have a **burden, a heart for people who do not know the Lord?** Sometimes we see **them as the ENEMY, instead of people who are trapped by sin.***

But the Bible describes it in a different way.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 (NLT): "The Lord's servants must not quarrel but must be kind to everyone. They must be able to teach effectively and **be patient with difficult people.** They should gently teach those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change those people's hearts, and they will believe the truth. Then they will **come to their senses and escape from the Devil's trap.** For they **have been held captive by him to do whatever he wants.**"

People can tell if you really care or not.

Many years ago in England, a criminal named **Charles Peace was arrested.** He was a **burglar, a forger, and he was guilty of double murder.** He was **condemned to death.**

Legend has it that as he was on his way to the gallows to be executed, the chaplain who walked by his side went mechanically through his often-repeated speech about the power of Jesus Christ to save from sin.

Suddenly, Peace stopped, turned, and looked at the minister and said, "Do you believe that? Do you really believe that? If I believed that, I would willingly crawl across England on broken glass to tell men it was true."

Let's see what Jesus tells us now about the need for evangelism.

Luke 10:1-2
(NKJV)

"After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. Then He said to them, 'The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.'"

This was a crucial time in Jesus' life and ministry. A new phase had begun.

His ministry in Galilee was now over and the long, slow journey to Jerusalem had begun.

Luke 9:51 (NKJV): "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

And now, to prepare the way, He selects 70 new disciples to go before Him into the various areas He Himself would be arriving in.

We can draw direct parallels from this story to our own lives and the times in which we are living.

These are critical, strategic times for the gospel.

- Doors that are opened that **will not necessarily stay that way.**
- There are opportunities that will either **be seized or lost.**
- **We also, like these 70,** are preparing the way for His return.

In John's Gospel, he used a similar expression as found here in Luke.

"I say unto you, **lift up your eyes, and look on the fields;** that they are **white already to harvest**" (John 4:35 KJV).

This is true globally, as well as here in the United States.

- *In these words, we see the real **heart of God** toward this world.*
- *Do you want to know **what God is like**? Just look at Jesus.*
- *Clearly from this passage and others, **Jesus cared deeply about people.***

Matthew's Gospel tells us, "He was moved with compassion for them" (Matthew 9:36 NKJV).

Everywhere **Jesus went**, He was literally **mobbed by people**, pushing and pulling and always **wanting something from Him**.

But Jesus saw their DEEPEST NEED.

- *Where they were **hurting the most**.*
- *Jesus saw **behind the facade**.*
- *Behind the **defense mechanisms**, the **real cry from their heart**.*
- *He saw them as "**sheep without a shepherd**" going astray, and He had **compassion**.*

People put up a front, and pretend to be happy when they are not.

WE used to do the same thing. But, deep down inside, **we are really all the same**, with the same hurts and needs.

Billy Graham was speaking to itinerant evangelists in Amsterdam in 1983.

He told them he had found certain things to be true of **every culture he had been to**.

*"When I go out to proclaim the gospel, whether it's a **street corner in Nairobi** or a meeting in **Seoul, Korea**, I know there are certain things that are **true in the hearts and minds of all people**."*

1. There is an essential EMPTINESS in every life without Christ.

All humanity keeps **crying for something**—they do not **know what it is**.

Pascal had it right when he said, *"There is a **God-shaped vacuum** in every life that only God can fill."*

The Bible teaches *"The creation was made **subject to futility**, not by its own choice, but because of Him who subjected it in hope" (Romans 8:20 NKJV).*

2. We can assume in our hearers there is a LONELINESS.

We can be in a **crowd of people, even at a party**, and suddenly with all the people around you laughing, a **loneliness sweeps over you**. *It's really a **loneliness for God**.*

3. We are speaking to people who have a sense of GUILT.

The head of a mental hospital in London said, “I could release HALF of my patients if I could find a way to rid them of **a sense of guilt.**”

The reason people feel this is because **God has given us a conscience.**

Romans 2:15 (NLT): “They demonstrate that God’s law is written within them, for their own consciences either accuse them or tell them they are doing what is right.”

Deep inside, we feel guilt because, as Scripture says, “all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard” (Romans 3:23).

4. There is a universal FEAR OF DEATH.

Deep down inside, it **frightens us.** The Bible speaks of those who “are being held in slavery by **their fear of death**” (Hebrews 2:15 NIV). It’s the **fear of the unknown.**

It’s been said, “There are two unchangeable things that are true of every person. We all want **to be happy, and we’re all going to die.**”

So we need to look behind the facade, and see that empty, lonely, guilty person.

When Jesus met the woman at the well,

- He could have **lectured her on the evils of immorality.** But He saw **behind the sin to what drove her—an emptiness for God that He appealed to.**

When He saw Zaccheus, He could have rebuked him for his greed and theft.

But Jesus said He had come “to seek and **save that which was lost**” (Luke 19:9 NKJV).

- The word “**lost**” speaks of **something that has value, but is simply broken.**
- Again, many of us have a hard time **separating THE SIN from the sinner.**
- Forgetting that we are to “**love the sinner**” and “**hate the sin.**”

I say all that to say this:

- If we are going to reflect the **heart of God,** we have to **care about people.** And specifically, **unsaved people.** They are **not the enemy.**

They are “sheep without a shepherd.”

And lest you forget, it wasn’t all that long ago that **YOU WERE ONE OF THEM!** Without **God,** and headed for a certain destruction.

But the Lord reached out and touched you and brought you to your senses.

- And without knowing **your personal story,** I bet He did that through **human instruments!**

- *It was most likely many people who “sowed seeds” in your life through the years.*

But it probably was a single person who articulated the gospel to you and the lights just went on! *Thank God for **that person**.*

Now here is the question: Are you going to be a person like that for SOMEONE ELSE?

Jesus uses the analogy of farming and planting and reaping in Luke 10:2.

Notice that Jesus says, *“The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few”* (NKJV).

1. Souls are of the greatest value to God (and they should be for us)

He set forth an idea here that the **people we are reaching out to** have **GREAT VALUE** in the sight of God. Jesus did not compare them to **blades of grass**, or **sands of the sea**, or **dust in the wind** (“All we are is dust in the wind”), but rather **ears of corn**.

For those who depended on the crop for their sustenance and welfare, every stalk of corn was valuable. NOT ONE was to be wasted.

Jesus **looks at humanity**, at **each individual**, as something of **great value**.

Of all of God’s creation, mankind is the most precious to Him.

- *He cares nothing for **gems, diamonds, or pearls**. He cares about **PEOPLE**.*
- *He values us so much He sent **His very Son** to **spill His blood** for us.*

The souls of the multitude are valuable to God just as the corn is to the farmer.

Ezekiel 18:4 (NIV): *“For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.”*

My wife and I were in a restaurant once, and our server was named Anna.

We chatted for a bit, had a few laughs, and then, after about 10 minutes, she told me **I had dedicated her as a young girl**. She had been watching me to see what I was like. **I asked her how she was doing spiritually since then and she said well.**

She came back about five minutes later and told me she heard me preaching when she **was pregnant** and had an appointment to **get an abortion, but changed her mind.**

Her daughter is now six years old!

That is why I preach the gospel and teach the Bible.

THAT is why I do what I do and why you must do what you can do. For girls like this.

*That little six-year-old **girl, named Avalon**, will one day grow up, marry, and have children.*

*And her **children will have children**, each a **precious soul to God!***

Souls are valuable to God.

God's heart yearns for souls to come to Him. From Genesis to Revelation, God is **calling humanity to Himself**.

2. God is looking for laborers to harvest the crop.

Luke 10:2 (NKJV): "Then He said to them, "The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few; therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to **send out laborers into His harvest**."

Not observers or spectators or critics, but workers!

- I am amazed at **how critical** some people can be about **crusade evangelism**. They'll say, "I believe in **one-on-one evangelism, not mass evangelism**."
- Our crusades **are all about both**. One proceeds from the other.

And more importantly, BOTH are found in Scripture.

What happened with Philip and the Ethiopian was **personal evangelism**.

What happened on the day of Pentecost was **mass evangelism**

"But you don't believe ALL those people are coming to the Lord, do you?"

Of course not, but THOUSANDS DO.

*I can't tell you how many are in **ministry today as pastors and missionaries**.*

My "job" is to proclaim the gospel in a biblical, compassionate, and clear way.

God's "job" is to convert people.

- I want to use **every means at our disposal to do this**.
- Story of the woman **critical of D.L. Moody** ("I don't like the way you do evangelism!")

I came to faith at an open meeting. No one personally invited me or shared the gospel.

Story of guy seeing all the **lights in stadium (going to rob liquor store)**

Again, Jesus said, "the laborers are FEW."

- **A laborer** is someone who gets out in the fields and **goes to work**.
- Yes, **evangelism is work!**
- *Without God, man cannot. Without man, God will not.*

And it can be very difficult at times.

There can be times when it doesn't **seem to be WORTH THE EFFORT**.

The farmer could feel the same way when a **crop doesn't take**.

So could a fisherman if he doesn't get a single bite.

But when your table is **filled with food**, or you pull in that **record-setting fish**, all is **suddenly worthwhile**.

When you see that person you've been praying for come to Christ, it's all worth it.

There is **joy in heaven** (and on earth too) **over ONE sinner who comes to repentance.**

Psalm 126:5-6 (NIV): *"Those who **sow in tears** will reap with **songs of joy**. He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, **carrying sheaves with him.**"*

So the people are many, their needs are great, and God wants laborers.

We are ALL called to do this. ANYTHING ELSE?

Luke 10:2 (NKJV): *"Therefore **PRAY** the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."*

Note that it says "HIS Harvest" not "Ours"

Conversion is the work of God and God alone.

Yes, He uses us, but we must be **completely dependent** on Him for the results.

Many of our attempts at sharing the gospel fail because we do so in our own strength.

We are like the **disciples** who went *"**fishing all night and caught nothing . . .**"* Everything changed when **Jesus came on board** and He told them "to launch out into the deep."

It actually is a great relief for me to know that my responsibility is to lovingly, accurately and understandably proclaim the gospel.

The actual work of conversion is God's part.

John 6:65 (NIV): *"No one can come to me unless the **Father has enabled him.**"*

This phrase "send out" in Luke 10:2 is interesting. The Greek is much more forceful.

It means *"to **push them forward and thrust them out.**"*

"PRAY that the Lord of the Harvest would "thrust out" laborers into His Harvest."

Verse 2: "Pray"

You might be praying, *"Yes, Lord, raise up **more people to go and do this!**"*

And you will find God saying to you, *"**YOU go into all the world and preach the gospel.**"*

*"**Me?** You've got to be kidding!"*

No one can honestly pray that this work be done who is not willing to help do it.

- *We all have a **part to play**. Granted, not all of us are **necessarily preachers, per se**. But we are called to **"sow seeds."***

When we hold our crusades, literally hundreds of people help us to do the job.

From **ushering to counseling**, to **praying**, to **bringing**, etc.

Are you **laboring in the harvest**? Is God *"**thrusting you out**"* among family and friends?

Are you a **"worker in the field"** or just sitting in the **shade, drinking lemonade?**

Yes, the “harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.”

The observers are many. The critics are many. But the laborers ARE FEW.

Yes, God is looking for workers today.

Ezekiel 22:30 (NIV): “I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before **me in the gap** on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none.”

2 Chronicles 16:9 (NKJV): “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of **those whose heart is loyal to Him.**”

Will you PRAY that the Lord will send laborers into the harvest? And will you become a laborer?

- Will you ask the **Holy Spirit to stir your heart** to answer the **desire and wish of Jesus?**
- Will you allow God’s Spirit to stir you deeply with a **burden for those** who are like “**sheep without a shepherd.**”

He may call you to CROSS THE SEA as a missionary (or perhaps cross the street).

But He wants you to be a **laborer in the harvest.**

*Will you not only pray that God will raise **up other laborers**, but also **RAISE YOU UP?***

We need to infiltrate and influence our culture. To “go into all of our world and preach the gospel!”

- **WHAT EXACTLY IS THE GOSPEL?** Could you **define it right now?** It is a **VERY important issue** and we will **look at that next time.**

Let’s recap what we have seen together.

The Who, Where, Why, What, When, and How of Evangelism.

1. WHO is called to “go into all the world”?

We are. You are.

- We have been **redeemed by Jesus and belong to Him.** As our **Commander in Chief,** He calls us to do this.

2. WHERE are we to go?

Everywhere. Into our neighborhoods, schools, beaches, and malls. We are to “**go into all of OUR World and preach . . .**”

3. WHY are we do to this?

- *Because God has primarily **chosen to reach people through people**. And because we need to **genuinely CARE for lost people**. People who are like “**sheep without a shepherd**.” People who are “**taken captive by Satan**.”*

People just like WE used to be.