

199 “And ye shall be my ...” – Ye shall be my what?

Yes, God wants all people to come to repentance. Yes, God is so desperate that everyone should know his love that he will use *anyone* willing to help in achieving that aim. But don't you think we owe it to God to follow what it says in the 'BIBLE', that's Jesus' **Best Instructions Before Leaving Earth**. (Sorry, blame Tony Maidment, Church Army evangelist, for that one.)

So what were Jesus' final instructions before he ascended? “And ye shall be my *evangelists*”? No, and we're not all called to be evangelists. “He called ... **some** to be ... evangelists” – and I've already questioned what an 'evangelist' was in the early church.^[195]

OK, but surely we should all have a lifelong commitment to evangelism? How else are we going to reach the 95%?! Yes, but again what is 'evangelism'? Words are important, but slippery; their meanings change with time. I quoted^[195] the OED definition: *A person who seeks to convert others to the Christian faith, especially by public preaching*. So what about evangelism? OED again: *The spreading of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness*.

If your church is urging a commitment to evangelism then you'll be encouraged to go on an evangelism course. Maybe it's different now, but any course I've ever been on has been:
1) How to get opportunities to 'share the gospel' and 2) how to share the gospel. In other words, personal witness is persuading people to accept Jesus' offer of personal salvation. (And then the church tries to disciple them on 'follow-up' courses, i.e. the decision–discipleship model.^[196])

So is that how eleven disciples became one million followers of “The Way” in just a few decades (AD100) and 44 million by AD500?^[198] Did they do it, as Michael Green claims in “Evangelism then and now”, by trying to “persuade, to warn, to teach, to cajole others into that relationship”?

No! The good news spread because (a) it really is the **best life-changing good news ever**, and (b) they **made disciples**, followers, and they **baptised** them. Like what Jesus told them (us) to do!

So let's get away from what we've always been taught – do evangelism, get converts, then disciple them – and let's look at the biblical pattern:

*But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be My **witnesses** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

(I once read that the word 'witness' is linked to the word 'martyr'!)

*Therefore go and make **disciples** of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you.*

Yes, but what does that mean in practice? Dunno, but here's a thought: can someone follow Jesus (be a disciple) *before* they have 'made a decision'. Can you love someone *before* you say, “I do”?

Discuss.

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