

The power of evangelistic prayer

Why prayer is at the heart of evangelism – and three evangelistic prayers anyone can commit to. By Chrissy Remsberg

Charles Spurgeon said prayer was the engine room of the church. It is the vital piece of ministry that engages us with the Holy Spirit. Evangelism is always a spiritual battle and prayer allows us to keep moving forward in that battle.

Within the Firestarters Network we believe the most effective way to fight this spiritual battle is through prayer. We have observed churches that have experienced significant growth through conversions have leaders who are committed to intentional, leader-led prayer and fasting. It is only the power of the Spirit at work that is able to *'make his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ'*. (2 Corinthians 4:6) Our work then is to join the work of the Spirit through prayer.

What motivates a commitment to evangelistic prayer is an understanding of what is happening through evangelism. 2 Corinthians 4:5-6 tells us the same God who said, *"Let light shine out of darkness,"* is also the one who shines his light into the human heart to give us the knowledge we need for salvation. Thus, when we share the gospel, universes are being created in human hearts.

This way of thinking about evangelism can be incredibly liberating because it reminds us we don't convert anyone. Those who become Christians do so only by the power of the Spirit. But at the same time, we can be filled with an incredible confidence that some *WILL* respond to the gospel. Some *WILL* become Christians. We know this because the great power that created universes, the power that healed the sick and raised the dead, is the power at work in people's hearts.

Therefore, as Christians we can engage in evangelism through prayer, preaching and serving

filled with an abundance of hope and freedom knowing that God is powerful and his Word never fails. We need not feel despair or fear because our confidence rests in God and his great power. Our work is simply obedience.

And this we can do!

What if evangelism was simply a faithful act of obedience?

The word 'evangelism' perhaps fills us with dread or fear. We may flinch from it the way we would a door-to-door salesman or telemarketing call. And maybe, for some, there are even feelings of guilt, recognising perhaps this is an aspect of our Christian discipleship that's being neglected.

I think these feelings are all valid and understandable, but I also happen to think they are unnecessary. From Matthew 28:19-20 and Jesus' command to *"go make disciples"* to Paul's encouragement to Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 to *'do the work of an evangelist'*, the Bible leaves

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little doubt that God's plan for bringing the hope of Jesus to the world is the Church. But I don't think this needs to fill us with dread or fear or guilt.

Eugene Peterson said that Christian discipleship is "a long obedience in the same direction". I believe evangelism requires this kind of discipleship, a simple, faithful obedience we are committed to for the long haul.

And I also happen to believe evangelism can be easier than we think or at least, if not exactly easy, certainly more accessible. You needn't be particularly courageous. You don't need a theological degree. An outgoing personality is not required. I don't think it's even necessary to have a particular spiritual gifting, though some will have that. What I believe you need is a commitment to the belief that evangelism is a spiritual act long before it ever becomes a physical one.

It's true the gospel needs to be spoken. Serving others is necessary as part of evangelism.

Paul said as much in 2 Corinthians 4:5, *'For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.'* But our speaking and serving will be infinitely more effective if it is driven by the work of the Spirit through the prayers of his people.

How exactly do you pray evangelistically?

At Firestarters we believe there is great power in evangelistic prayer. But what exactly are we talking about when we say that we should pray evangelistically? We would break this down into three simple prayers that anyone could commit to praying regularly.

Famous Five

Your Famous Five are five non-Christians who you see and interact with regularly, from someone at the school gate to friends and neighbours to co-workers and colleagues to family and loved ones. This is a list of just five non-Christians you have opportunity to interact with and hopefully get to speak to about Jesus.

We suggest you use scriptures to pray for these five, inserting their names into the Scriptures as your prayer that the Holy Spirit would move their hearts toward Jesus.

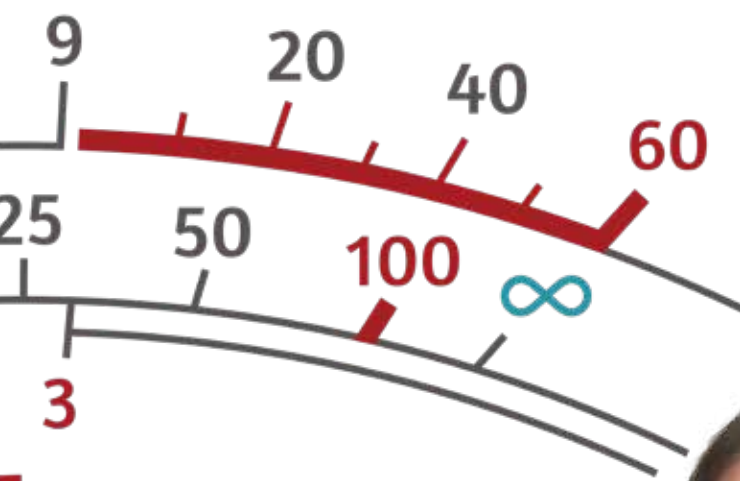
Proclaimers

Your second prayer is for the proclaimers, those people who are regularly proclaiming the gospel. Paul would often ask the church to pray for him with words like, *'And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains.'* (Colossians 4:3)

We can use these same requests from Paul to pray for the proclaimers we know, that God would use their preaching of the gospel effectively in the hearts of people.

Ourselves

Our third prayer should be for ourselves. Scripture is filled with evangelistic prayers we can pray for ourselves with words like, *'...make the most of every opportunity...let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt'* (Colossians 4:5-6)



and '...always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Sometimes, God will give us opportunities to speak the gospel and we must pray for ourselves that we will be prepared to share the good news about Jesus when those moments come. And perhaps, we might also need to pray that we can do what Jesus said in John 4:35 and have eyes that are open to see the fields are indeed ripe for harvest.

Everyone can be an evangelist

Evangelism is not ONLY prayer, but it is rooted in, motivated by, and made more effective through prayer. Evangelism is not only prayer, but perhaps, it cannot happen without it. At Firestarters we believe prayer is at the heart of what it means to be an evangelist. You don't have to be particularly brave, theologically trained, or outgoing to pray. You just have to be faithful and obedient. And that's why we believe that absolutely anyone can be an evangelist!



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The second season of the Firestarters Network Podcast covers evangelistic prayer (episode 4) and many helpful suggestions about Evangelism For People Who Don't Do Evangelism. You can find the podcast on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or anywhere you listen to great podcasts.

You can also find our latest podcast episodes on the website along with upcoming Firestarters Conversations, a free evangelism training workshop available for download, a book filled with the stories of growing Baptist churches and other resources.

Visit firestartersuk.com

God's Comfort Blanket by Claire Nicholls

May the arms of God surround you
With the fibres of his warmth
May his comfort blanket enfold you
As you shelter in his wings.

May the strength of God's embrace protect you
As the fleece and wool surround you
May you feel his love, his peace
As you rest in his arms.

May you gradually unravel
As the threads ravel round you
May you begin to let it go
And feel release in his grace.

May the arms of God surround you,
Protect you and enrobe you
May his comfort blanket soothe you
As you shelter in his wings.

Taken from *Gathering up the Crumbs*

