

Courageous Evangelism© by Stephen Misarski

Chapter Two: Why We Do Evangelism

Introduction

I grew up in a classic New England institution: the Congregational Church. One can discover the artifacts of white clapboard church buildings on New England town greens in every village across the land. Labels like “first church” and “unitarian universalist” and “trinitarian” and “evangelical” and “federated” and “United Church of Christ” portray a history and a theology. The message I heard as a child was common among many of them. God is love. Love your neighbor as yourself. Do unto others as you would have them do to you. And an extra-biblical text: “God helps those who help themselves,” ala the Bostonian Ralph Waldo Emerson's essay, *Self Reliance*.

There was no real urgency in the message. Pretty much everyone was going to heaven except maybe really bad people like Hitler. “All roads lead to heaven. No one is really lost. Everyone is basically good. God is everyone’s Father. Jesus is a great moral teacher. And there really is no hell. Hell is merely a ploy to scare bad kids into behaving. Our job is to just be good, moral, loving people. There is no need to push one’s beliefs on others. Live and let live. Mind your own business. God IS love. He would never send anyone to a place like hell, it would be...inhumane.”

After you live in New England for a while, there is a sense that any other belief aside from this would be unreasonable.

But where does that leave us who wrestle with the Great Commission: to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20); to be sent out to fish for people (Mk 1:17), to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mk 16:15); to be Jesus’ witnesses starting in Jerusalem (Lk 24:45-49), Judea and Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts 1:8)?

Granted: Evangelism must be done...by a pastor (II Tim 4:5)... or better yet... an evangelist (Eph 4:11). So why do I have to be involved in evangelism?

You may be with most Christians in thinking evangelism is a scary proposition. You must be convinced that evangelism is necessary. You need to be persuaded that it is your responsibility to be an effective witness for Christ and the Gospel. This is the reason, we must address this issue at the very beginning. Otherwise, all the rest of the training would have no urgency.

1. “Cuz I said so...”

When our children were young, they would ask lots of questions. Every command we gave them would be answered with a “Why?” It made life difficult and tedious when we as parents wanted our children to move quickly. There came a point in the exchange, that as authority figures we resorted to what I called, “the big stick” approach. It was usually stated in the four-word form, “Because I said so!” Everyone wants to raise curious, inquisitive students of the world around them but there comes a limit.

As fully devoted followers of Jesus and ones who confess Jesus as Lord, it is important to understand what he demands or commands of us. We may not fully understand the “Why?” of the command but it is important to come to some clarity as to what the Lord commands. The “Why” can be explored further later.

The last command that Jesus gave to his disciples is recorded in Matthew 28. The resurrected Christ appears to the women who came to anoint the dead body of Jesus. He sends them to tell the disciples to meet him in Galilee on the top of a mountain.

Mountains are climactic moments in Jesus' ministry e.g. Mount of the Beatitudes, Mount of Transfiguration, Hill of the Skull (Golgotha), and Mount of Olives. This “Great Commission” mountain is never identified but tradition suggests that it is Mount Arbel. This mountain overlooks the Sea of Galilee. Although the elevation above sea level is merely 695 feet, the surrounding area is below sea level causing the peak to be effectively 1247 feet above the landscape and waterscape before it. From here, one can easily see Capernaum, the village of Peter and Andrew, the Mount of Beatitudes, and Tabgha, the traditional site of the multiplication of the loaves and fishes to feed the 5000.

This is all to say that the Great Commission does not come out of the blue. The Great Commission in seminal form had been presented in the call of the first disciples.

As the disciples looked down from that high point to the shore of the Sea of Galilee, they may have recalled that Jesus called to two fishermen who were casting a net into the lake.

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” At once they left their nets and followed him. (Mt 4:19-20)

From Mount Arbel, the disciples could also see the raised site where Jesus gave his first major teaching called the Sermon on the Mount. It was there they heard words like:

“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others (Mt 5:14,16)

and “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Mt 5:44)

and also, “Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (Mt 6:33)

The disciples may have also looked from that height upon a site on the lakeshore where they recalled the look of concern on the face of Jesus as he assessed the large crowd around him

as “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Mt 9:36). They may have remarked to each other, “Remember when we tried to get Jesus to send the people into the nearby villages to get food? And then he commanded us to give them something to eat” (Mt 14:16).

All of these sights and the recollection of those experiences built a case for what Jesus was about to ask of them. He was about to give them a command.

Yes, some of them were still reeling from the fact that Jesus had just overcome death by crucifixion. But Matthew says they worshiped him. They were beginning to grasp that he was “my Lord and my God” (Jn 20:28) in the flesh.

His next statement puts weight on his command: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” This is the biggest “Cuz, I said so” there ever was! The sovereign rule of the entire universe has been turned over to Jesus. Jesus is large and in charge!

Now, we are ready for the command. It contains four verbs and is followed by a promised assurance: Go...make...baptize...teach. This may seem like Jesus is giving us four commands rather than one major command. The form of the verbs tells a different story. The imperative verb is to “make disciples.” The other three verbs appear in the participial form, meaning they are done as a part of the imperative verb. The first participial “go” is also a different form than “baptize” and “teach.” This first verb is then joined with the imperative as it is in several other examples in the Gospel of Matthew.

The grammar of the verbs tells us that the main command is to “make disciples” or literally “disciple.” Going is an important part of discipling “all nations.” The discipling of all nations includes at least an initial response to the Gospel described as baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. It also involves extensive instruction of these new disciples: teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you (including obeying the Great Commission!)

Jerry Trousdale in *Miraculous Movements* stresses that disciple-making is obedience-based vs knowledge-based.. “A disciple is taught to obey what Jesus commanded” (p.100) and not just know what Jesus commanded.

This command to go and make disciples in every nation around the world comes with the promise that Christ’s presence will abide with his obedient disciples. The promise also has no time limit.

Although the Great Commission is most definitively and explicitly expressed here in Matthew, it occurs in other forms in the other three Gospels.

Mark commands, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” (Mk 16:15)

Luke impels: “Repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things” (Lk 24:47-48).

John implies: “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you” (Jn 20:21).

The Lord Jesus commands all of his disciples to go and bring the Gospel to the people of every nation so that they can become disciples of this Jesus. We are to go “cuz he said so.”

Once we have that straight, let’s look at why he might command us with such force of authority.

2. Follow the Leader: Jesus!

One of the worst examples in parenting is summed up in the statement, “Don’t do as I do, but do what I say.” This is not the kind of leadership Jesus demonstrated for his disciples. What example did Jesus leave for us? We have heard his words clearly spoken at the end of each of the Gospels. But did Jesus do what he commanded us to do?

From the 1990’s, many may recall the acronym WWJD. But very few are familiar with the spiritual novel written in 1896 by Charles Sheldon titled, “In His Steps.” Through this fictional story, this Congregational pastor challenged his flock to ask this simple question, “What would Jesus do?” The book was wildly popular resulting in a great force for good by moral and religious people. Unfortunately, its lack of biblical grounding caused it to fall short of inspiring a true Gospel movement.

Jesus not only commanded his disciples to go into the world. He himself demonstrated that throughout his life. Following his baptism and the descent of the Holy Spirit, he was sent by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by Satan. (Mark 1:13) After Jesus emerges triumphant from his trials, Luke adds “Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit” (Luke 4:14).

Luke places Jesus' mission in the context of Isaiah 61: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor (Lk 4:18). Mark puts it simply: “Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mk 1:14-15).

Jesus proceeded to go about his mission. He “immediately” (Mk 1:18,20) calls disciples like Simon and Andrew, James and John. Jesus cared for the whole person and so the preaching of the Gospel was accompanied by praying for the sick and driving out demons from the oppressed. After the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law, people came in droves to the village of Capernaum for healing and deliverance. The next morning, Jesus is nowhere to be found. Simon implies that more people were already gathering to be healed by Jesus. But Jesus insists, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” (Mark 1:38).

Jesus called people to himself with the simple words, “Follow me!” Unfortunately, some to whom Jesus gave this command, chose not to obey, like the rich young ruler (Mt 19:21//Mk10:21) and the man who excused himself because he had to wait for the not-so-imminent death of his parents (Mt 8:22/Lk 9:59). Jesus called people to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow him (Mt 16:24/Mk 8:34).

Jesus did not set people free from slavery. Jesus did not overthrow the oppression of the Romans. Jesus did not protest or march against or boycott injustices. As important as these may be for people, Jesus instead, loved people, healed people, delivered people, fed people, and forgave

people. These were all expressions of the Kingdom of God that he proclaimed with his mouth. He proclaimed good news and called people to respond to himself. For John that response is expressed as “whoever believes in the Son has eternal life” (Jn 3:36) In the Synoptic Gospels, discipleship manifests as “Follow Me.”

3. Father wants a BIG family

In the 1970's, there was a movement to prevent overpopulation. The experts were predicting the exhaustion of natural resources and the starvation of the masses. Interestingly, abortion on demand became legal in those days and so it became safe and easy to terminate a pregnancy and control the number of children one raised. Fifty years later, those nations who continued this practice have decreased their population until they are not even able to replace their present population.

From the beginning, the biblical narrative reveals the heart of God for a BIG family. The first command that God gave human beings, created in his image, was NOT “don't eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil” (Gen 3:17) The first command was the positive command to “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth” (Gen 1:28). It comes after he states that humans were created in his image. Human fruitfulness reflects the desire of God to have an earth full of human children, created in his image.

After the Fall, the LORD calls a man from which he would create a redeemed nation (Gen 12:1). Abram continues to believe this promise until he is old and still childless (Gen 15:2-3). At this point, Abram begins to doubt the Sovereign LORD's plan. In my imagination, I picture the LORD taking Abram by the scruff of the neck and dragging him out of his tent. He then shows him the stars in the dark desert sky.

Having slept in the Sinai desert, I can tell you, there is nothing so magnificent and beautiful as the myriad upon myriad of stars in such a sky!

The LORD commands Abram to start counting the stars but soon interrupts him to make the point, “So shall your offspring be” (Gen 15:5). Abram becomes the first and progenitor of a race of people who believe God and are declared righteous. Paul closes the loop on the story by saying “Understand, then, that those who have faith (in Christ Jesus) are children of Abraham (Gal 3:7).

If we were to be literal, scientists would tell you that a person looking at the night sky can only count 4500 stars. To Abraham (Gen 22:17) and his grandson Jacob (Gen 32:12), the LORD used another image to illustrate his promise. God said that he would give offspring as numerous as the grains of sand on the seashore. There are 7.5×10 to the 18th power (quadrillion) grains of sand in the world. But then again, astronomers would tell you that the Hubble telescope reveals that for every grain of sand there are multiple stars.

Take your pick! Either way, God wants a BIG family!

In his peek into heaven, John the Revelator sees the fulfillment of the promise to the Patriarchs, “After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from

every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9).

God doesn't even ask John to count them. This is God's heart...a BIG family!

4. Lost and Found

My favorite parable of Jesus is the story of the Prodigal Son. Technically, that parable is the last part of a three-part parable. The whole parable located in Luke 15, could be called the Lost Parable. Jesus tells this parable to a mixed audience that represents humanity.

There were the tax collectors and sinners on one side of the room and on the other side, the Pharisees and teachers of the Law: the irreligious and the religious; the outsiders and the insiders (Lk 15:1-2) That covers everyone in the world. There are those who know they are wicked, unrighteous, unworthy, reprobate, dirty rotten scoundrels, technically called “sinners.” Then there are those who consider themselves upstanding, law-abiding, religious, devoted, faithful, all-around nice people. The former tend to see a need to repent and the latter do not see a need to repent.

Jesus speaks to an audience represented by both camps to tell them that they are all valuable in the sight of God and that they are **all** in need of repentance. The angels and other citizens of heaven rejoice and celebrate over those who see the need of repentance and do it (15:7,10).

No one celebrates over the 99 sheep or the 9 coins. There is no fattened-calf celebration for the older brother who never leaves the premises. His response to the Father's pleading to join the house party reveals how lost he really is. It reveals that he worked more as a slave than a son (Lk 15:29). It is interesting to note that the older son never calls his male parent, “Father.” Skillfully, Jesus ends the parable with a cliffhanger. Will the older son repent and enter the home brimming with music and dancing (Lk 15:25) or will he continue to seethe with anger, resentment and self-righteousness?

Luke records another unique story only in his Gospel. A diminutive tax collector, named Zacchaeus, hears that Jesus was passing by and climbs into a tree to catch a glimpse. Jesus sees him and invites himself to dinner. Enthusiastically, the tax collector evidences the fruit of repentance by paying restitution. Jesus makes the point that seeing sinners being rescued from sin and becoming sons of God is his mission. “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10).

Adam and Eve are sent out of the Garden; the Babel dwellers are sent away from the city; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob wander the Negev Desert; Moses and the People of Israel wander the Sinai Peninsula; Israel and Judah live in exile. The message throughout the Bible is that humanity is lost and far away from home. All have sinned and fallen short of God's best. (Rom 3:23). The Gentiles who have exchanged the truth for a lie and worshiped the creature instead of the creator are lost (Rom 1:25). But so are the Jews who have attempted to obey God's Law but have woefully fallen short (Rom 3:20).

The Good News is preceded by the Bad News. Our life is a mess and all of our motives are suspect and we are powerless to help ourselves. Reflecting on his own journey, Paul sums it up : “What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? (Rom 7:24).

We must be absolutely convinced that every human on the planet, no matter how moral or religious they may seem, is lost and in need of salvation through Jesus Christ. If there is any other way, we are going to tend to lean on that idea, and excuse ourselves from this hard reality.

“Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:12)

5. Hell is real!

In America, we do not like to face death. We dress our dead in their best suit and hire a cosmetologist to make them look as alive as possible. As we gaze into their casket, we make comments like, “They look so good.” They are dead! No matter whether we consider them a sinner or saint, we dress them up as if they are going on a journey to a place of bliss.

Jesus did not pull any punches on the reality of what faces humans after death. He tells a story about a wealthy man and the poor man that sat outside his gate panhandling. The rich man’s extravagant attire was contrasted with the sores that covered the beggar's body (Lk 16:19-21). Ironically, Jesus gives the name Lazarus, his good friend's name, but applies no name to the tycoon.

Jesus portrays the next scene following the death of both individuals. Lazarus retires to the “bosom of Abraham” while the former rich man writhes in thirst and torment (Lk16:22-24). Jesus also describes a great chasm that lies between the two men and their ultimate destinations. (Lk 16:26). But wasn’t Jesus just telling a story that didn’t really happen historically?

I saw a bumper sticker that says, “May the Metaphor be with you.” As clever as that message seems, it has a logical flaw. Every metaphor is a description of a real thing. Father is a metaphor that describes God. Jesus told the story of the Rich Man and Lazarus to convey a truth.

There are two destinations for human beings after death. Jesus gave far more descriptions (and metaphors) about hell than about heaven. All of these metaphors are an attempt by Jesus and the writers of the New Testament to describe a place of punishment far away from the presence of God.

Here is a sample of them: a place of eternal torment (Lk 16:23), unquenchable fire (Mk 9:43), where the worm does not die (Mk 9:48), weeping and gnashing of teeth (Mt 13:42), outer darkness (Mt 25:30) and Gehenna (Matt. 10:28/Isa 30:33) which was the name of an actual place outside the walls of Jerusalem where trash burns continuously. That last description must have been “burned” into the memory of the disciples as they recalled the sting of the pungent smoke in their nostrils. Hell was a reality that Jesus wanted his disciples to grasp.

Paul's description of hell is not as graphic as Jesus', but it portrays a Holy God who pours out wrath and anger...trouble and distress on those who are self-focused, reject the truth, and do evil (Rom 2:8-9). He emphasizes punishment and destruction (II Thess 1:9) and never being able to be in the presence of God forever. The author of Hebrews mentions "a raging fire" (Heb 10:27) which is a theme built upon by John who describes a lake of burning sulfur...a lake of fire that is prepared for the devil and his minions but also for those whose names are not written in the book of life (Rev 20:10,14,15)

The reality of hell brings a sense of urgency to the call to evangelism. If lost people are only lost on this side of eternity and end up where "found" people end up, then there is no urgency. If there is no hell, then lost people may live without hope and without God in this world but ultimately get to go to the same blissful eternity.

But God is not a sadist. He does not want anyone to perish eternally but come to repentance. (II Pet 3:9). He wants all to be rescued from the perils of hell (I Tim 2:4). He has more. Jesus promises that "whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life (Jn 5:24).

Fire is hot. The floor is hard. The night is dark. And Hell is real. It is not just a story to keep us from behaving poorly. All of us have experienced a taste of hell. It is not as some describe it: a great big party for sinners. Others say hell is here on earth. The latter is partly true in that we all have experienced moments of pain, loss, loneliness, depression, sadness, and anger that eat us on the inside. These all are tastes of hell. And yet, unless one is a masochist (which is itself another taste of hell!), we have a sense that the world was not supposed to be like that. We all have a longing for a better world free from all that.

With the combination of our internal witness of hell and desire for a better place and Jesus' testimony of hell's reality; of weeping and gnashing of teeth, we should be driven to warn as many as possible of the coming wrath and show them the way of escape which is through Jesus (I Thess 1:10).

6. Love Your Neighbor

As a Sunday school student in a Congregational church, the basic message that was taught to me over and over was "Love your neighbor as yourself." Unfortunately, I do not recall ever being taught *how* to love our neighbor. What is the most loving thing we can do for our neighbor; our friend, family member, coworker, or literal neighbor?

The liberal Church may debate with the conservative Church over the nature of Jesus' person. Was he the Son of God or God the Son? Was he God's best example of humanity or was he God in the flesh? What they both can agree on is that Jesus was the most loving person ever to walk the face of the earth. Jesus loved. Everything that Jesus did was out of love. He taught love and manifested love by healing the sick, setting free the demonically oppressed, feeding the hungry, and raising the dead. But what was the most loving thing that Jesus taught?

Jesus proclaimed the good news of God (Mk 1:14) which was the best news in the whole world! It meant forgiveness from sin, a place in heaven, a purpose on earth, a new identity and so much more. Jesus described this good news of the Kingdom of God as a man finding a treasure in a field. After he finds it, he gathers all the money he can and buys that field (Mt 13:44).

Now imagine that your neighbor has buried treasure in his own backyard. Would it be loving to not tell him about it and for him to struggle for the rest of his life and to die without discovering it? The most loving thing for us to do is to tell him where the treasure is buried!

Conversely, if you were sure that a friend was driving toward a cliff that would result in him losing his life in a fiery crash in the canyon below, what would you do? The previous section on hell is that fiery crash below. The most loving thing you could do is to warn them and point them another way.

Penn Jillette, of the magician act, Penn and Teller, is not a Christian but he says this about Christians who do not evangelize, or as he says, proselytize:

“I've always said that I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect them at all. If you believe that there is a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward...how much do you hate somebody to not proselytize?... I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that.” (p 38, Rico Tice, Honest Evangelism.)

The greatest act of love we can perform for our family members, friends, and neighbors is to tell them the message that speaks about their eternal destiny: heaven or hell. We can feed them, serve them, befriend them and just be super nice to them but unless we have shared the Good News with them, we have fallen short of the call to love them in Jesus' name.

7. Babies (Use your Superpower or Grow Up)

The thing a parent, and especially as a nursing mother, discovers about infants is that they eat very, very often. Every two to four hours, a newborn exercises its lungs to communicate that she is hungry. All they seem to do is eat and sleep and do that thing that happens after eating so often. Now imagine that a full-grown adult does that same thing. One would conclude that this person is developmentally disabled. They have not matured or grown up as God designed them to. Yet there are lots of Christians in the Church who are “developmentally disabled.”

Singer/songwriter Amy Grant wrote a tongue-in-cheek song that has a powerful message. “Fat Baby” describes the fact that some Christians come to church and receive teaching year after year and yet never grow, never serve, and are not productive.

I know a man, maybe you know him, too
You never can tell; he might even be you
He knelt at the altar, and that was the end
He's saved, and that's all that matters to him

His spiritual tummy, it can't take too much
One day a week, he gets a spiritual lunch
On Sunday, he puts on his spiritual best
And gives his language a spiritual rest
He's just a faaa...He's just a fat little baby!
Wa, wa, waaaaa...
He wants his bottle, and he don't mean maybe
He sampled solid foods once or twice
But he says doctrine leaves him cold as ice
Ba, ba, ba, ba...ba, ba...ba, ba!
He's been baptized, sanctified, redeemed by the blood
But his daily devotions are stuck in the mud
He knows the books of the Bible and John 3:16
He's got the biggest King James you've ever seen!
I've always wondered if he'll grow up someday
He's momma's boy, and he likes it that way
If you happen to see him, tell him I said,
"He'll never grow, if he never gets fed"
He's just a fat, fat, fat, fat, fat, fa-at, fat...
Fat, Fat, Fat, Fat, Fat, Fa-at, Fat...
Fat, Fat, Fat, Fat, Fat, Fatttt...Baby...

Jesus, sitting in the midst of an olive garden, uses the image of a grapevine to describe the growth process of a believer.

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful” (Jn 15:1-2). He goes on to say: “This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. (Jn 15:8).

The purpose of the branch is to bear fruit...much fruit... fruit that will last. “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last (Jn 15:16).

Of course, there are many different ways to bear fruit; the fruit of the Spirit, love for one another, obedience, and Christian character. But among those is the fruit of bearing witness to the Gospel of Grace.

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world—just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God’s grace. Col 1:6

Evangelism is a natural outgrowth of maturity in Christ. If a believer never engages in evangelism, it is likely that there are other indicators of spiritual immaturity. On the other hand, sharing one’s faith causes a believer to grow in love for their neighbor and in knowledge of

Scripture, and in confidence in the power of the Gospel. Spiritual gifts will also develop that can be used to minister to lost people who cross one's path.

Remember: it is to your Father's glory that you bear fruit!

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don't you have a saying, 'It's still four months until harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest (John 4:34-35).

8. Celebrate

One of the first historical statements that I learned as a young believer is from the Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession: "Man (meaning humankind)'s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him forever." The first chapter of Ephesians is punctuated with the phrase, "to the praise of his glory." We were created in the image of God as human beings in order that we might reflect glory back onto our Creator. That is why Paul says that to sin is to "fall short of the glory of God." Sin does not reflect God's glory.

Lost people, coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ bring great glory to God. One of the themes of the Lost Parables (Lk 15) is celebration. When sinners repent and the lost are found, there is great rejoicing in heaven by the angels (Lk 15:7,10). In the Lost Sons section of the Lost Parable, the final scene is about a great celebration being thrown by the compassionate, forgiving Father. The younger son has returned home and has repented of his rebellion and the Father has killed the fattened calf for a great celebration. The Older Son, however, misses the heart of the Father by refusing to enter into the celebration. He prefers a lesser celebration with friends and a barbecued goat. The Father's glory is displayed in the celebration of all his children in a saving relationship with him.

In Revelation, John describes one of the scenes in heaven as angels and human elders encircling the Lamb who is Jesus and singing: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain, and with your blood, you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev 5:9).

Isaiah also describes what gives God glory:

I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' and to the south, 'Do not hold them back.'
Bring my sons from afar and my daughters from the ends of the earth—
everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."
(Isa 43:6-7)

Divinely-imagined human beings are uniquely created to bring glory to God. Marred by sin, they fall short of bringing maximum glory to him (Rom 3:23). By bringing many sons and daughters to God, Christian witnesses are restoring glory to God.

If you want to find purpose for your life, you must orient yourself around bringing Jesus the maximum amount of glory. Telling unbelievers about the wonderful and matchless grace of Jesus brings glory to Jesus even if they reject him. But when unbelievers turn to Jesus in faith as a result of your witness, there are angels rejoicing in the presence of God. And the voice of one more is added to the choir that will bring glory to the Lamb for eternity. That is glory!

QUESTIONS:

1. After reading the chapter, which reason was the most impactful for you?
2. What is for you, the weakest argument for evangelism?
3. How convinced are you that evangelism is necessary? (1-4)
4. If you are not a 4, what would help you be brought to a 4?
5. What other reasons would you suggest, in convincing another Christian about the necessity of every believer being an effective witness to the Gospel?
6. In your own words, explain to another person why a disciple of Jesus must be able to give a reason for the hope within them.

Further Study: The Great Commission Study

Mt 28:18-20; Mk 1:17; Mk 16:15; Lk 24:45-49; Acts 1:8