

When Evangelism Isn't Translating into Multiplying Disciples and Growing Churches

By Bob Young

Churches must have a clear vision for evangelism. That vision must permeate every aspect of the life of the local church. Everything the church does should point toward sharing the good news of Jesus with others. Not only must that vision guide local ministry, that vision must be the primary goal in mission work. In Ephesians, Paul makes clear that the saving work of God in Jesus Christ is done through and by the church to fulfill God's eternal purpose. The church exists as the declaration of God's wisdom.

The results of evangelism ultimately depend on God who gives the increase, but churches should pray for and anticipate significant decadal growth (at least 50%), with doubling and tripling easily possible in urban areas. Many times, when churches struggle to reach such goals, the problem is not the front door but the back door! The problem is not that people are not coming, it is that too many people are leaving!

The church has two commissions: saving people, keeping people saved. The church exists to reach out to others with the message of salvation and to be a safe haven where the saved share Christ's presence and protection.

When people are reached for Christ and they only stay in the church a short time and then leave, the church must ask what is happening. I share some possible explanations. Are any of these true in your local church?

- Evangelism is not holistic. Evangelism is focused too exclusively on salvation (baptism) without establishing foundations and connections for holistic Christian living.
- Evangelism is insufficient or incomplete. The message does not include commitment, or it is not connected to discipleship.
- Evangelism is not integrative; the evangelism process does not include assimilation into the local church.
- New Christians are not being mentored through an official, formal, defined, personal, individual process.
- Evangelism does not naturally flow into continuing maturity as a disciple.
- Evangelism does not include clear teaching about what it means to be a member of the church.
- New Christians are not being assimilated into the church through multiplying friendships so that they receive continuing care and mentoring and become aware of the spiritual resources God provides.