



September is  
**EVANGELISM EMPHASIS MONTH**

Our great commitment to the Great Commission.

**September 22**  
**Dr. Michael Milton**  
**D.J. Kennedy Institute**  
**Acts 8:1-8**

*And there arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. Devout men buried Stephen and made great lamentation over him. But Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison.*

*Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ. And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip when they heard him and saw the signs that he did. For unclean spirits, crying out with a loud voice came out of many who had them, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. So there was much joy in that city.*

**JOY AND EVANGELISM: Part 1**

Years ago, I was transformed by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of Dr. D. James Kennedy. When I learned that “by grace are ye saved through faith,” I immediately began to happily share the glory of the grace of Jesus Christ with others. *Joy and evangelism* were forever wedded in my soul. *Joy and evangelism* is also what happened when a crisis erupted in Jerusalem after our Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. Read Acts 8:1-8 and note how it begins with terror and ends with joy.

Today there is still a clear and present danger for millions of Christians around the world because of their faith in Christ. Though threatened, the Church of Jesus Christ is triumphantly advancing, right on schedule, through the Cross of Jesus Christ and His paradoxical, glorious, upside-down way of making all things—even a heinous Roman cross and unprecedented persecution—work together for good. (Rom. 8:28)

The terror in Acts 8 caused what we see so often today in nations under persecution—diaspora. In that diaspora, something happened—*evangelism*. Acts 8:4 says, “Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word.” The diaspora was not in vain. In fact, the terror actually drove the disciples of Christ out from home to the far reaches of the Roman realm. The traumatic events of Jerusalem, rather than driving people to despair, drove them to share the Gospel with the world. Verse 8 takes us to the city of Samaria, and it says, “So there was much joy in that city.” Tragedy led to dispersion that led to the evangelizing of the common people and souls were saved, lives were transformed, people were healed, and the faith of the resurrected Jesus went forward through generations.

**September 23**  
**Dr. Michael Milton**  
**D.J. Kennedy Institute**  
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JOY AND EVANGELISM: Part 2

In my years as a minister, I have often witnessed the transformative power of Jesus the Lord. Pastors in India, whose families were attacked because of Christ, shared with me that their villages were experiencing persecution and joy. “We are seeing more people come to Christ with these trials. Joy has come upon our city.” I stopped and prayed, “O God, grant me such joy!” I was also present in Albania when the “Wall” fell. A minister there, who had received daily beatings for refusing to curse Christ, showed me the knotted scar tissue all over his back as he smiled a toothless smile of inexpressible joy.

“All for Jesus!” he said. He guided me to the crumbled statue of a dictator who had attempted to completely remove Christianity from the nation. The priest wept tears of joy as a Presbyterian minister stood on the head of the dictator, the finest pulpit I have ever had, and proclaimed the Gospel of God to former captives of communism.

What I remember from my own conversion, and the witness to persecution in other parts of the world is this: God is building His Church and calling me to be a part of it. I learned this, also, from my Anglican friend from the Sudan. Pastor “K” told me of his experiences of suffering and how Christ used his beatings at the hand of radical Islamic terrorists to build up Christ’s Church. He told of how he was able to share the Gospel only because of the trauma that human beings experienced. The Church is ignited, as it were, through attack upon it.

Thus, I should look at tragedy and remember God’s involvement in humanity. He is not absent. He is there. This causes me to recognize that the Gospel of Jesus may be preached in the midst of tragedy and indeed *the trajectory towards joy* involves a necessary first step of speaking Christ into the midst of the trauma. Oh that I may have the passion for evangelism in the midst of trials that my Sudanese friend has. Oh that the passionate prayer of David Brainerd might become the commitment of my life as a minister of Christ:

*“I care not where I go, or how I live, or what I endure so that I may save souls. When I sleep I dream of them; when I awake they are first in my thoughts...no amount of scholastic attainment, of able and profound exposition of brilliant and stirring eloquence can atone for the absence of a deep impassioned sympathetic love for human souls.”*

Then there will be joy in my heart and “joy in the city.”

**September 24**  
**Rev. Mike Jones**  
**ONA Executive Director**  
**Luke 10:29**

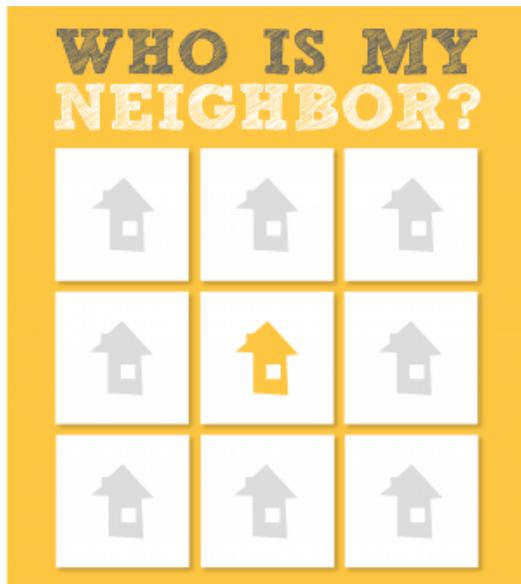
*“Who is my neighbor?”*

A Tic-Tac-Toe Evangelism strategy.

Remember the grid we used to draw for Tic-Tac-Toe before it became an app on our smart phones? Or, if you are truly wired, think of the hashtag symbol: #. That can be a great image for evangelism!

It works like this- using your home or apartment as the middle of the grid- who lives immediately to your left? Your right? Across the street and to the right? Across the

street and left? Directly behind you? There are 8 families or singles that God has placed right around you! As G.K. Chesterton said, “We make our friends; we make our enemies; but God makes our neighbors!”



So, how can this be a strategy for evangelism? Simple- engage those 8 neighbors to intentionally move from a wave to a handshake to an embrace!

A wave is knowing what kind of car they drive and what house or apartment they live in. It's generally being nice and civil- but not much deeper than that.

A handshake is actually going across the street or yard and saying “hello, I’m Mike- I live next door. What’s your name? What’s your story? How long have you lived here? Where are you from? Married? Kids?” As you know their name and their story, your prayers for them become more focused and your heart to reach them with the Gospel becomes more tender.

The next phase is to move from the handshake to the embrace. Go from information about them to understanding their situation and developing a genuine relationship. This isn't easy but it's invaluable! It may take several months or even years of unrequited hospitality- having them over for dinner or game night, sending dinners over to them when crises or needs arise, being there for them without expectation of them being there for you- real life Good Samaritan stuff! (Luke 10:30-37) But press on! *“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”* (Gal. 6:9 NIV)

As you are praying for and serving your neighbors, and as the Lord is moving in their hearts, be looking for those golden opportunities to boldly share the Gospel! (Acts. 4:29 and Col. 4:5) And, when you do, realize that God prepared that opportunity the day He placed them into your Tic-Tac-Toe grid (or hashtag)!

So, again as Chesterton said, “Evangelizing everyone is daunting. Evangelizing someone is exhilarating!” God has given you at least 8 “someones” right outside your door!

(For more on this strategy see *The Art of Neighboring* by Jay Pathak and *The Gospel Comes with a House Key* by Rosario Butterfield.)

**September 25**  
**Rev. Greg Conover**  
**I Corinthians 15:36**

*“You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”*

This is part *one* of *three* devotions on Evangelism. I am not a “natural” evangelist, so I must read, study and watch others to learn not just *how* to evangelize but *why*. If we spend our time on just the *hows*, we may start out trying but when we run out of gas, get discouraged or just forgetful, we will stop as the guilt of not doing runs its course. But if we’re reminded over and over again as to the *whys* we want to evangelize, we will want to do so more and more.

Part One: Die

In this text Paul is talking about the resurrection of Jesus and the dead, but it also applies to our daily lives. If Christ didn’t die, He couldn’t have conquered Satan, sin and death. He died so we could live. The Bible tells us that we’re to *die to self*, that the old man must die and we’re to die to sin etc. This idea of dying so that life can come is in some ways a metaphor to “let go” of old ways— old sins, old habits and letting go of self and putting others first.

For evangelism to travel from Bible studies, books and devotions (like this one!) we must ask Jesus to go on a hunting trip in our hearts. We must ask Him to kill our hearts of stone and make alive new hearts of love so *what we read and study* becomes *who we are and what we do*. We must come to the end of ourselves so old ways die. We must ask Jesus to expose and kill our uncaring, unloving, unmotivated hearts. So what must die?

- The idea that someone else is to evangelize ‘them,’ especially the pastor.
- The idea that they think like us and they’re bad people if they don’t. (There are *only* bad people – like you and me.)
- The idea that we can’t hang around sinners.
- The idea that once someone comes to Jesus they must adapt to our view of politics, worship styles, dress, music and any other things that are more cultural or not specifically in the Bible.
- The idea that the church is for us. If your church ceased to exist, would your neighborhood care?

- The idea that, while tradition is good, tradition is not to be changed even if the lost are excluded. This doesn't mean tradition is to be ignored, but it does mean we must decide what Scripture says about "being all things to all people..." Jesus left Heaven to become like man. Are we willing to give something for the sake of the lost?
- The idea that we care more about "our thing" than sending and going to do "God's thing."

These are just some things that must die. As we read Scripture, we see a Savior who gave up all His rights to come and die so that we may live. As we go deep into this reality and realize this is His grace to us as sinners, we too will be willing to die to self so others may know Him!

**September 26**  
**Rev. Greg Conover**  
**Luke 15:1-2**

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, "This man receives sinners and eats with them."*

Part Two: Due Diligence

As we daily run to Jesus and go deeper and deeper into His life, death and resurrection for us, we will start to see our neighbors differently. We will see them more than an evangelistic project but as real people made in His image, worthy of dignity and respect. And as such we will want to get to know them. We need to get to know them. Evangelism is a slow process of prayer, words and ministry to those who are lost. The reality is, evangelism is more of a process than an event.

So we must do some *Due Diligence*. What I mean by this is we must spend time with those outside of Christ. If we only have Christian friends, we aren't walking where Jesus walked (Luke 15:1-3). And when we do this *Due Diligence*, it's about finding out about *them*. Meeting them where they are at this point and time. They won't think Biblically, they won't act like a Christian and will probably talk like a sailor. So what? Love them. Find out their stories. Find out what they think, what questions are they asking and why they believe the way they do. Our churches should be filled with the very people who ran to Jesus; the outcast and "sinners" (that is all there are!). This was Paul's story in Acts 17. He did *Due Diligence* before talking to the people of Athens. He affirmed them, loved them and then told them about his amazing Savior who had answers to the questions they were asking.

We are to spend time and hear the questions our neighbors, friends, co-workers, students, and families are asking. Love them as Christ first loved us. Dine with them as

Christ dined with the tax collectors and prostitutes. (To get a “contemporary” view of this, read Rosaria Butterfield’s writing on her conversion and the need for our call to *Due Diligence* – getting to know our neighbors: <https://rosariabutterfield.com/the-gospel-comes-with-a-house-key>).

**September 27**  
**Rev. Greg Conover**  
**Luke 15:1-2**

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**Part Three: Dine**

Part one was to *Die*, remember Christ and His completed work for us. To die to self and rely on Jesus and Him alone. Part two was *Due Diligence*, meaning that we need to really get to know those God put in our lives so we can speak the unchanging truth of Jesus into an ever-changing world. Part Three is *Relationships*. While this may seem like *Due Diligence* it is actually *how* we can do *Due Diligence*.

Do we hang out with the same kind of people Jesus did? Are we called “friends of sinners” and do eat with them? It’s hard to reach the lost if we’re not *with the lost*. In the last several months, I’ve had the opportunity to speak to pastors and leaders of many churches and many have said, “we want to reach our community especially the young; millennials; or any other group.” So I asked the questions: Are you engaging them? Are you inviting them to your homes? Are you willing to “be all things to all to all people?”

Today’s world doesn’t think like the world of 40 years ago. We live in the world of the “nones” where folks not only *don’t go to church*, they don’t really have any beliefs. They check the “none” box when asked about religious affiliations.

This means that they don’t think like us. Our starting points are not even close. We’re to start with dialogue, dining and relationships. This is what might be called “pre-evangelism.” Yes, we’re to bring them to an understanding of the work and person of Jesus, but this takes time. It takes building relationships in our homes, over meals, over coffee and more. Jesus did so much ministry over meals and one day we will have an amazing banquet together as we eat at His return. Meals move men. Dinner opens dialogue. Supper soothes souls. Eat together! Watch this video which describes the impact of eating together: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vDuA9OPyp6I>

My three posts on Evangelism are not new. When we think of the summation of the Ten Commandments, “Love God – Love Neighbor” these posts are built with this in mind. We rightfully can love God when we remember what He did for us, which daily changes

us into His image. And since we're so dearly loved, we in-turn have the power to love our neighbors... sinners like us.

**September 28**  
**Steve Nichols**  
**ARP Foundation**  
**Matthew 1:23 & Isaiah 7:14**

*Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name **Immanuel** (which means, **God with us**)*

Immanuel Strategies

How do you communicate the Gospel to a person who doesn't openly oppose Christ, who thinks they are a Christian, or is disillusioned by their religious experience? Or more subtly, to someone who is quietly indifferent to Christianity – just running their life the way they want?

To really get personal, what would I do to reach a guy like me with the Gospel? That's a tough question to answer for a person who had a good home life with parents who wanted to provide a good Christian upbringing. I regularly attended Sunday school in a caring, Bible teaching church, sang in the choir, and was involved enough to lead the youth group. I even recall telling my grandmother when I was about eight years old that I wanted to be a missionary (probably to Africa). Even as I transitioned into college and graduate school, I never hesitated to identify myself as a Christian, but at a practical level, I had gradually concluded that Christianity was not relevant – at least for me – in relationships, career choices, or whatever I judged was of real importance.

I thought I was a Christian (not a Buddhist or Jewish), but could not answer with certainty when challenged with the question "Are you sure if you died tonight, you'd spend eternity with Christ?" The context that even made asking me that question possible was my relationships the leaders of a Christian organization on my campus who worked intentionally on ways to connect with me – on my terms. They all belonged to local churches, but knew me well enough to know I wasn't interested in being involved in church at that point in my life, particularly if it was going to conflict with my lifestyle.

I gave them every reason to write me off as a lost cause – I had an endless list of challenges to what they believed coupled with my lifestyle in obvious contrast to their own. For months they engaged me; over coffee breaks to patiently hash-through my menu of apologetic questions; to go rock climbing with the guys, but always mixing-in talk about spiritual issues; or join their snow skiing parties with evening Bible studies; football games; camping and trout fishing with a few of the guys who loved it as much as I. Over time, I became more and more convinced being a Christian was indeed relevant because I could see these people not only claimed to be Christians, but were

actually living out their faith in their relationships— love in action! In my heart I felt compelled to ask Christ to become Lord of my life and to give me the power I saw at work in them to seek me out.

Forty-six years later, I find my strategy and opportunity to share the Gospel similar to my campus experience. Those young Christian leaders met me where I was; the strategy God used to relate to us by becoming a man; living with and meeting us where we are, authentically living-out what He taught, and challenging us to connect personally with the Word.

Being proactive to engage people around me through ordinary activities is easy to do – grabbing a cup of coffee, entertain them in our home, buy tickets to sports and theatre outings... simple things I can intentionally do to build the relational context to share the Gospel in the practical ways the Gospel became authentic to a me through other people.

**September 29**  
**Dr. Alan Avera**  
**Christianity Explored**  
**2 Corinthians 4:1-7**

*<sup>1</sup> Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart.<sup>2</sup> But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. <sup>3</sup> And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup> In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

This is one of the most important passages on evangelism in the New Testament. Here we discover the chief problem faced in evangelism – *the god of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers, keeping them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God* (verse 4). Satan allows unbelievers to see many things, even many true things. What he will **not** allow them to see is the light of the gospel of God's glory in Jesus Christ.

If the problem is blindness, then a miracle is needed. The miracle needed is nothing short of healing blind eyes. Only God can perform that miracle. God, who created light in the original creation, opens blind eyes so they can see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (verse 6). So, one parameter for evaluating an evangelism program is its recognition of the sovereign act of God that is needed to

open blind eyes – **God’s Sovereignty**. Recognizing God’s sovereignty leads to an emphasis on prayer and the illumination of the Holy Spirit. It also takes the pressure off of us since we are not responsible for performing this miracle.

But this passage also underscores the importance of human agency in evangelism. In verses 2 and 5, we see the importance of proclaiming a clear message. God calls us to an open statement of the truth, proclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord. That means a second parameter for evaluating an evangelism program is **Gospel Clarity**.

But one more element is needed, which is found in verse 5: *servicing others for Jesus’ sake*. We are to proclaim and to serve. Serving others leads to an attitude of humility as we proclaim the good news. It also leads to creativity, as we seek to serve others through presenting the truth of the gospel in an accessible way to the specific unbelievers we are seeking to reach. So, the third parameter is **Our Humility and Creativity**.

Here, then, are three questions that form a scriptural rubric for evaluating any evangelism program:

1. Does it put proper weight on **God’s Sovereignty**?
2. Does it exhibit **Gospel Clarity**?
3. Does it foster our **Humility and Creativity**?

If you would like to know more about how Christianity Explored can be an effective evangelism tool for your church and family, email me at [alan.avera@christianityexplored.org](mailto:alan.avera@christianityexplored.org)

**September 30**  
**Dr. Alan Avera**  
**Christianity Explored**  
**2 Corinthians 4:7**

*“But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.”*

I suspect many of us have scared ourselves into not making disciples, or we’ve built it up into something that the Lord never intended it to be. Perhaps the best and simplest definition of discipling I’ve heard is this: “helping another person to follow Jesus.” There are a thousand different ways we could do that, of course, and I’ll make some suggestions in a moment. But in the meantime:

### **1. Don’t wait till you have it all together**

One of the biggest obstacles to making disciples is our own nagging feeling that we’d be a hypocrite for even trying it. We’re a mess! How can we – with all our flaws and failings

and sin – presume to disciple someone else? But as I think back to the people who disciplined me best, they were the ones who were most honest about their own struggles. They were humble, recognizing that both of us were equally in need of God’s grace.

## **2. Don’t wait till you have all the answers**

You don’t have to be a brilliant teacher or theologian to be a discipler. Either have a good Bible commentary on hand, or resolve between you to discover the answer before you next meet.

## **3. Don’t wait till you have time**

Most of us are busy. But some of the best opportunities for discipling conversations come when we’re busy doing something else. I learned the value of this from a brother in Washington DC. He’d invite younger men along with him as he ran essential errands – collecting dry cleaning, picking up groceries, getting the car fixed, and so on. As he did that, he was getting to know the person better, and asking questions. It’s a seemingly mundane thing to do, but very often, because the focus is ostensibly on something else, the conversation can really open up. And it doesn’t require you to set aside additional time in your schedule. **Don’t Wait.**

So who could you disciple this week? As you read this, think of one person. Someone, perhaps, who is slightly younger in the faith. It might be a friend, your spouse, a family member, or someone from work or church.

Now, what could you do?

- Slowly read a book of the Bible together, and discuss it week by week, half a chapter at a time. (Use something like [Discipleship Explored](#) if you’d like your Bible study to be a little more “guided”.)
- Read a good Christian book together and discuss each chapter as you go.
- Have someone over for lunch with you and/or your family.
- Invite someone to bring their kids over for a play date.
- Invite someone out for coffee to talk about last Sunday’s sermon.

All that’s needed is genuine care for the person you’re meeting. Don’t wait. Who could you help to follow Jesus this week?