



Reasons to Evangelize

ΝΙΛΩΙΞΙ ΝΤΕ ΤΖΙΦΕΝΝΟΥΦΙ

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There are many reasons why we should reach out and evangelize getting involved in missionary work. For the sake of brevity, let us divide them into the following major reasons:

First: It is the Lord's commandment.

Second: This is the foundation and premise behind the first church's success.

Third: Ethical reasons in the west.

Fourth: Many people abide in emptiness, leading them along the path to condemnation and falling into the devil's trap, and they don't know what to do about it, so they succumb to it.

Fifth: The spread of other religions and philosophical and questionable religious thought in the west, such as *Far East Religions*, cults, Islam, and Atheism.

Sixth: Many churches today have lost their connection to the historical "One Apostolic" church, which has resulted in churches with "spiritual void."

I will elaborate in this article on the first two reasons...

First: It is the Lord's Commandment

1. Often, people are remembered by the last words they utter before they leave the earthly life. As for our Lord Jesus Christ, His last Words on earth, as it is documented in the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew: 28:19-20 were: ***"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age."***

2. There are many other direct verses that urge us to do evangelistic work. I would encourage you to read the reference book *An Introduction to the Theology of Mission*, written by H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos for additional verses as well as study.

3. The spirit and the essence of the New Testament is that ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him may not be perish but may have eternal life"***, (John 3:16). So, God's heart is in the salvation of everyone. He emotionally and physically gave the highest price anyone could pay, His life on the holy Cross, after a horrible and painful death. He is looking for us to spread the Good News of salvation. Notice the words "so everyone who believes". He did not talk about multitudes of people, but His love and desire is in the salvation of everyone.

4. The same intense burning desire of the Lord to save each individual is noted in the Holy Gospel of St. Luke 15, where He speaks about three parables: 'The Lost Sheep,' 'The Lost Coin,' and 'The Lost Son.' In each parable, we can observe where God's heart is. How many of you come in contact each day with those who are lost from God? It is the Lord's desire to find someone like you and me to carry out the Holy Gospel's joyful message, the Word of Life, and the light of salvation to those who may be lost ones.

5. Take a look at this striking verse, ***"There would be more joy in Heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance."*** Think about how much joy you could give to Heaven over the course of your life if you serve God as an evangelizer!

6. Over 25 years ago, an old learned and wise servant, named Ayaad, lectured in the Sunday School servants





“St. Matthew (name means “gift of God”) was a tax collector who renounced his position and became an apostle. He would record the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ and his evangelistic ministry on earth among his writings in the Holy Gospel of St. Matthew.”



meeting that I attended. Ayaad was known as a truly spiritual person. His words always inspired our hearts with the love of our Lord. The servants' tears were great witness to the burning-flames of love for the lost sheep in his heart.

One day Ayaad told us this story: "A Sunday school servant saw a person entering the church one day, whom he had not seen before in the church. He hurried to him and welcomed him warmly. The person looked at the servant in amazement and asked him if he knew him. The servant answered, 'yes, my beloved I have been praying for this moment *for twenty years.*' These were Ayaad's last words before his eyes were full of tears, and he sat down. His words touched our hearts deeply that day because he was speaking from the bottom of his heart.

Dear friend, we need to learn how to be concerned about the salvation of others, as we are concerned regarding our own salvation. Imagine on the Last Day, you find out that your name is not written in the Book of Life? Think about it. Would you like this to happen to you? If not, then we should help others to have their names written in the Book of Life through our evangelism endeavors. We need to have the love of the Lord for the lost sheep in our hearts and work in evangelism as mightily as we can.

Second: This is the foundation and premise behind the first church's success.

1 Historians estimated that the early church was growing at an annual rate of 40 %. This is why Christianity reached most of the civilized or known world at that era in such a short time span.

2. The Holy Spirit was working strongly because people, like you and I, were ready to follow the Lord no matter what the price was, including death.

3. Christians truly believed that their lives were not theirs any more, but rather the life of the Lord Jesus Christ in them. They no longer lived for themselves but for the Lord, who died for them on the holy Cross and was raised from death on the third day. Can you and I compare our faith and our love to theirs?

I would be the first to confess my weak faith. But let us courageously confess these sins, and ask God to help us not to live for ourselves anymore. Let our work in evangelism and our love for our worldly brothers and sisters erase these years of ignorance of the value of the grace of God! God needs people who put Him first in their lives, because He is their life.

Away from God, we have no life, something all of us have experienced repeatedly, but can overcome with faithfulness and His abundant mercy. Isn't it time to surrender our will and our lives to God, and choose life instead of spiritual death?

4. When it comes to evangelism, there is no more joyful news than what you read in H.G. Bishop Antonious Markos's book "Acts of the Apostles", whom I often refer to as "the Father of Evangelism in the Coptic Church in the twentieth century". In His Grace's book, he has devoted an entire chapter to explain this point alone (Chapter IX). I urge you to acquire and read this chapter to comprehend and understand the well-spring and effect of evangelism in the early church, the church of the Apostles.





5. To verify exactly what happened in the first church, I would like to quote just one verse, “And the Lord added to the church daily who were being saved” (Acts 2:47).

6. Now, I would like to ask, “How much joy did they have? Was it an earthly joy that disappears after a while, or a heavenly joy that flourished and grew into inner peace, more boldness, a desire to evangelize, and more exceeding joy? I think the second supposition is the correct one. I would not hesitate to say, ‘the source of our sadness is the lacking of our life commitment to God and also lack of our love to the lost sheep.’ Are you becoming eager to start working in evangelism?”

Although, you may not know that much about evangelization, and granted we are all weak persons in many areas of religious life, His promises always direct us to look not at ourselves but upon Him. God promised that He would be with us unto the end of age. My friend, no matter how old you are, or how much you know, or how strong or weak you are, put your life into God’s Hands, and let His Spirit strengthen you, make you stronger and absolve every weakness you have, and lead you onto the path of evangelism for His Name Sake. Make evangelism a very serious commitment in your life.

Make evangelism a priority in your life, as one of your everyday necessities. Make it a one-time final surrender to God. Decide in your heart that this is the beginning of a service and life that you longed to live, and there is no turning back, by the grace of God, the One Who loves you dearly and needs your salvation first. I urge you to make this decision.

References:

- 1- An Introduction to the Theology of Mission, by H.G. Bishop Antonius Markos
- 2- The United States Southern Diocese Evangelism Web Page: www.suscopts.org/evangelism
- 3- Evangelism Class & Bulletin Board: <http://groups.google.com/group/Coptic-Evangelism-In-North-America>
- 4- Worldwide Coptic Church Directory: <http://st-takla.org/Links/Coptic-links-1.html>

