

FOREWORD BY C. J. MAHANEY

The Gospel
and
Personal Evangelism

Mark Dever.

“Mark Dever persuasively covers in this well-written book the basics of reaching the lost with the gospel. Refreshing in its simplicity and practical application.”

—ROBERT E. COLEMAN, distinguished professor of evangelism and discipleship, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary

“Few men have the heart and scholarship to speak so scripturally to the subject of evangelism as my friend Mark Dever. We will all be better evangelists having read and reflected on the theological truths of this great book.”

—JOHNNY HUNT, pastor, First Baptist Church of Woodstock, Georgia

“The author led me to Christ more than a decade ago. He knows whereof he speaks. He’s the only Christian I know who once led a college “atheists’ group” for evangelistic purposes! This book—filled with practical insights about how to obey the Great Commission—should spur us on, both individually and as churches, to shine like stars in the universe.”

—JOHN FOLMAR, pastor, United Christian Church of Dubai, United Arab Emirates

“Our theological lenses vary, but this we all still see the same: the fulfillment of the Christian life and the vocation of the church is to share in God’s redeeming work in the world. And whatever your tradition, there is something in this book that will help you understand and do that better. In the thirty years I have known Mark Dever, he has always been studying and practicing what he writes about here. Read, grow, and go!”

—DAVID R. THOMAS, senior pastor, Centenary,
A United Methodist Congregation, Lexington, Kentucky

“Mark’s deep felt desire to see people come to Christ combined with a rock steady commitment to Biblical evangelism has birthed an important book for our times; a book that everyone who desires to share their faith—faithfully—should read.”

—J. MACK STILES, general secretary, IFES, Dubai; author,
Speaking of Jesus

**THE GOSPEL &
PERSONAL EVANGELISM**

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Where God's Power Makes a Church Attractive (coauthor)

The Deliberate Church:

Building Your Ministry on the Gospel (coauthor)

Discipling: How to Help Others Follow Jesus

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The Message of the Old Testament: Promises Made

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The Unadjusted Gospel (coauthor)

What Does God Want of Us Anyway?

A Quick Overview of the Whole Bible

What Is a Healthy Church?

The Gospel and Personal Evangelism

Mark Dever

Foreword by C.J. Mahaney

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With thanks to God
for his faithfulness
in fruit given through evangelism,
now precious friends—John, Karan, Ryan—and in
friends who've taught me about evangelism:

JIM PACKER

WILL METZGER

MACK STILES

and

SEBASTIAN TRAEGER

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Foreword

One of the first things I discovered about my very good friend Mark Dever is that he walks as fast as he talks. It was over ten years ago that I drove from my home church in the suburbs of Washington DC to meet Mark at Capitol Hill Baptist Church, where he serves as senior pastor. It was a pleasant day, so Mark suggested we walk the short distance from his church's historic building to a nearby Subway restaurant. Even though I usually walk at a brisk pace myself, I had trouble keeping up with Mark.

Moments before entering the fast-food establishment, Mark explained that he ate there often, not because of the fine cuisine, but for the purpose of sharing the gospel. Inside, he greeted the owners—a Muslim couple from India—by name and engaged them in friendly conversation.

As we sat down, I began to quiz Mark about his heart for unbelievers and his strategy for sharing the gospel. He told me that he intentionally frequents the same restaurants and businesses so he can develop relationships and hopefully create evangelistic opportunities.

Since that day, I've attempted to follow Mark's example and had the joy of sharing the good news with many people I meet along the seemingly uneventful route of daily life.

If you, like me, have walked through entire days uncon-

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cerned and unaware of the lost sinners all around you, or if you desire to share the gospel but are unsure how to build a relationship or start a conversation, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* will encourage and equip you. As you read, you will catch Mark's contagious passion to share the gospel of Jesus Christ and receive practical instruction in personal evangelism.

While this book is for all Christians, it is also a gift to pastors. Cultivating evangelism in the local church is one of a pastor's most important responsibilities and difficult challenges. Perhaps *the* most difficult. However, through the pages of *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, Mark's wisdom, teaching, and experience will support you in this vital work of ministry.

That's why, for many years now, I've been pestering Mark to write this book. It's so that by the grace of God, church members and pastors and you and I will notice those we once ignored. It's so that we will befriend sinners who are without hope and without God. It's so that we will share with them the good news of Jesus Christ's substitutionary sacrifice on the cross. It's so that someday those lost souls might turn from their sins and trust in the Savior's death and resurrection on their behalf. And then, there will be some serious rejoicing—on earth and in heaven (Luke 15:10)!

Mark, thank you for writing *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*. Thank you even more for your compelling example of compassion for the lost and for your faithfulness to proclaim Jesus Christ and him crucified. May there be many gospel conversations and abundant evangelistic fruit as a result of this book.

I'm looking forward to our next lunch together, my friend. Let's walk to Subway.

C.J. Mahaney
Sovereign Grace Ministries

Introduction

An Amazing Story

Let me tell you an amazing story about a person you want to be like. And please hang in there through some of the details. I can't tell stories any other way.

John Harper was born in a Christian home in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1872. When he was about fourteen years old, he became a Christian himself, and from that time on, he began to tell others about Christ. At seventeen years of age, he began to preach, going down the streets of his village and pouring out his soul in passionate pleading for men to be reconciled to God.

After five or six years of toiling on street corners preaching the gospel and working in the mill during the day, Harper was taken in by the Reverend E. A. Carter of Baptist Pioneer Mission in London. This set Harper free to devote his whole time and energy to the work so dear to his heart—evangelism. Soon, in September 1896, Harper started his own church. This church, which he began with just twenty-five members, numbered over five hundred by the time he left thirteen years later. During this time he had been both married and widowed. Before he lost his wife, God blessed Harper with a beautiful little girl named Nana.

Harper's life was an eventful one. He almost drowned several times. When he was two-and-a-half years of age, he

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fell into a well but was resuscitated by his mother. At the age of twenty-six, he was swept out to sea by a reverse current and barely survived. And at thirty-two he faced death on a leaking ship in the Mediterranean. If anything, these brushes with death simply seemed to confirm John Harper in his zeal for evangelism, which marked him out for the rest of the days of his life.

While pastoring his church in London, Harper continued his fervent and faithful evangelism. In fact, he was such a zealous evangelist that the Moody Church in Chicago asked him to come over to America for a series of meetings. He did, and they went well. A few years later, Moody Church asked him if he would come back again. And so it was that Harper boarded a ship one day with a second-class ticket at Southampton, England, for the voyage to America.

Harper's wife had died just a few years before, and he had with him his only child, Nana, age six. What happened after this we know mainly from two sources. One is Nana, who died in 1986 at the age of eighty. She remembered being woken up by her father a few nights into their journey. It was about midnight, and he said that the ship they were on had struck an iceberg. Harper told Nana that another ship was just about there to rescue them, but, as a precaution, he was going to put her in a lifeboat with an older cousin, who had accompanied them. As for Harper, he would wait until the other ship arrived.

The rest of the story is a tragedy well known. Little Nana and her cousin were saved. But the ship they were on was the *Titanic*. The only way we know what happened to John Harper after is because, in a prayer meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, some months later, a young Scotsman stood up in tears and told the extraordinary story of how he was converted. He explained that he had been on the *Titanic* the night

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it struck the iceberg. He had clung to a piece of floating debris in the freezing waters. “Suddenly,” he said, “a wave brought a man near, John Harper. He, too, was holding a piece of wreckage.

“He called out, ‘Man, are you saved?’

“‘No, I am not,’ I replied.

“He shouted back, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.’

“The waves bore [Harper] away, but a little later, he was washed back beside me again. ‘Are you saved now?’ he called out.

“‘No,’ I answered. ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved.’

“Then losing his hold on the wood, [Harper] sank. And there, alone in the night with two miles of water under me, I trusted Christ as my savior. I am John Harper’s last convert.”¹

Now for something completely different—my life story as an evangelist. I am no John Harper. Sometimes I’m a reluctant evangelist. In fact, not only am I sometimes a reluctant evangelist, sometimes I’m no evangelist at all. There have been times of wrestling: “Should I talk to him?” Normally a very forward person, even by American standards, I can get quiet, respectful of the other people’s space. Maybe I’m sitting next to someone on an airplane (in which case I’ve already left that person little space!); maybe it’s someone talking to me about some other matter. It may be a family member I’ve known for years, or a person I’ve never met before; but, whoever it is, the person becomes for me, at that moment, a witness-stopping, excuse-inspiring spiritual challenge.

If there is a time in the future when God reviews all of our missed evangelistic opportunities, I fear that I could cause more than a minor delay in eternity.

If you are anything like me when it comes to evangelism

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(and many people are), then let me encourage you for picking up this little book at all. It is meant to be an encouragement, a clarification, an instruction, a rebuke, and a challenge all rolled up into several short chapters. My prayer is that because of the time you spend reading this book, more people will hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

Isn't it amazing that we have trouble sharing such wonderful news? Who would mind telling a friend that they held a winning lottery ticket? What doctor wouldn't want to tell their patient that the tests came back negative (which, of course, is a good thing)? Who wouldn't be honored by a phone call from the White House saying that the president wanted to meet with him?

So why is it, when we have the best news in the world, that we are so slow to tell it to others? Sometimes our problem may be any one of a long list of excuses. Perhaps we don't know the gospel well enough—or we don't think we do. Maybe we think it's someone else's job, the work of a minister or a missionary. Maybe we just don't really know how to go about it. Or perhaps we *think* we are evangelizing when we really are not.

Let's say that we are faithful with evangelism, but what do we do if the one we are evangelizing gets upset or even gets mad at us? On the other hand, what do we do if it works, if someone "prays the prayer" with us, or at least says that she wants to be a Christian?

And one more question Christians often ask about evangelism: is it okay if I don't really want to evangelize but simply do it out of guilt? I know it's not best, but is it at least okay? These are some of the questions we want to answer. In addition to those, I want to look at a few other questions about sharing the good news: Why don't we evangelize? What is the gospel? Who should evangelize? How should we evangelize? What *isn't* evangelism? What should we do after we evangelize? Why

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should we evangelize? In sum, we discuss in this book the best news that there has ever been, and how we should share that news.

God has established who and how we should evangelize. God himself is at the heart of the *evangel*—the good news we are spreading. And we should evangelize, ultimately, because of God. All we are doing in this book is connecting some of those dots in our thinking, and, I pray, in our speaking, as well.

Our answers to these questions are not all completely distinct. They weave in and out and one influences the other, but they each provide a separate viewpoint from which to see and understand this great biblical topic of evangelism. To answer these questions, we will look through all the New Testament, from that epicenter of evangelism—the book of Acts—to the Gospels and the letters.

Of course, this little book can't answer all the questions there are about evangelism (because I can't answer all the questions!), but my prayer is that by considering them, you'll find that you can be more understanding and obedient in evangelism. I can't promise you'll become another John Harper (I haven't yet), but we can all become more faithful.

I also pray that as you come to evangelize more, you will help your church to develop a culture of evangelism. What do I mean by a culture of evangelism? I mean an expectation that Christians will share the gospel with others, talk about doing that, pray about it, and regularly plan and work together to help each other evangelize. We want evangelism to be normal—in our own lives and in our churches.

It's to this end I've written this book, and I pray it's to this end you're reading it.

Why *Don't* We Evangelize?

A. T. Robertson was a famous Bible teacher and a beloved seminary lecturer. He was also known as a tough professor. At the time, students would stand in class and recite from memory long passages from their assigned books. Sometimes it went well for students; other times it didn't. Once after a particularly poor performance, Dr. Robertson said to a student, "Well, excuse me, brother, but all I can do for you is pray for you and flunk you."¹

"Flunk" is a word we don't use much anymore. It's a hard, sharp, inflexible kind of word. But it's probably a good word to use to quickly summarize how most of us have done in obeying the call to evangelize. Jesus says to tell all nations the good news, but we haven't. Jesus calls people to be fishers of men, but we prefer to watch. Peter says to always be ready to give a reason for the hope that we have, but we are not. Solomon says he who wins souls is wise, but we flunk.

But if you're anything like me, you're probably not quite so blunt about your failures in evangelism. You've altered your mental records. In fact, even at the time you're not witnessing, you're busy spinning, justifying, rationalizing, and explaining to your conscience why it was really wise and faithful and kind and obedient *not* to share the gospel with a particular person at that time and in that situation.

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Throughout the rest of this chapter, we want to consider some of the most common excuses we use to justify our non-evangelism. Generally, those excuses just come into our minds, save us from having certain conversations, and then quickly pass by. In this chapter, we want to slow down our excuses and keep them quiet for just a moment so that we can talk to each of them. Of course, there are thousands more excuses than those listed here, but these are some particularly popular ones. First we'll consider five especially common ones. Then we'll look at a few excuses that are rooted in unbelievers, those who are refusing the gospel news we try to bring. Finally, we'll consider the excuses that are more about ourselves, and we'll see what we can do about them.

Basic Excuse 1: "I don't know their language."

Now, a language barrier is an impressive excuse. And it's got to be about the best one in this chapter. If you're sitting next to people who only speak Chinese or French, you don't have much of an opportunity to share any news with them, let alone news about Christ and their own soul. Of course, you can work to learn another language and so be able to share with many other people. You can keep around Bibles or evangelistic literature in other languages to give away as you have opportunity. But ever since the Tower of Babel, "I don't know" has been one of the most legitimate excuses we could imagine. Paul warns the Corinthians of the uselessness of speaking words that are unintelligible to someone (1 Cor. 14:10–11, 16, 23). After all, the whole point of our using words is to be understood!

Basic Excuse 2: "Evangelism is illegal."

In some places, evangelism *is* illegal. There are countries around the world in which tyrannies of darkness reign. They

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might be atheistic or Muslim, secular or even “Christian” (in name). But in many countries, sharing the evangelical gospel is forbidden. And it certainly is not to be believed by people who are not already confessing Christians! In such countries, you can usually go out and evangelize—once. It’s the second or third time that might be prevented by social pressure, or laws, or jails, or guns. Not many of us reading this book are probably in that position, though.

Basic Excuse 3: “Evangelism could cause problems at work.”

Even in countries where evangelism is legally allowed, many of us have jobs for which employers are paying us to get a certain amount of work done, and they have a legitimate expectation. During those work hours, it may be that our evangelism distracts people, or reduces our productivity, or does other things that can cause our employers valid concern. We certainly don’t want the sharing of the gospel to bring us or the gospel into disrepute for any reason other than a disagreement with the message itself. We understand that everyone is, by nature, at enmity with God; but we simply don’t want to give people other reasons to oppose our evangel. We don’t want our evangelism to stand in the way of the *evangel*—the good news.

Basic Excuse 4: “Other things seem more urgent.”

There is so much else to do in any given day. We’ve got to care for our families and plan for our weekend. The job has to be done, and the bills have to be paid. Studies, cooking, cleaning, shopping, returning calls, writing e-mails, reading, praying—I could go on and on about all the good things we need to do. And many of these things are time-sensitive. If I have a misunderstanding with my wife, I need to take care of that immediately. If the baby is crying, I need to get her home

now. If the paper is due tomorrow, I've got to get the writing done right away. If we've got no food for tonight, I've got to do some shopping and cooking now. It is legitimate for me to make and fulfill many commitments in life other than evangelism. But do our other commitments sometimes become so numerous—or do we interpret them so—as to leave no time for evangelism? If we are too busy for that, what things are we managing to make time for?

Basic Excuse 5: "I don't know non-Christians."

Isolation from unbelievers may be the most common excuse for a lack of evangelism. This is the excuse of choice for mature Christians. When I'm honestly reflecting on my own life, I see that I have fairly few significant relationships with non-Christians. I'm a pastor. I'm not around non-Christians much as part of my job. I am busy writing sermons, counseling, planning, training other Christians, returning phone calls—even writing a book on evangelism! I'm generally unavailable to people except for my church members during the day or my family in the evening. I'm really absorbed with Christian relationships, and I think that I'm called to be.

But in cases like mine, how does evangelism fit in? If you're a young mother at home with her children, or an older Christian, retired and not easily able to build new relationships, then you, too, know something of this challenge. If you're a new Christian, you've probably been advised (wisely) to build new, significant friendships with Christians. And if you've been a Christian for a while, then you're probably busy with service in the church and spending your time discipling younger Christians. One of the best decisions we can make is to pray and talk with a Christian friend about how we can legitimately fulfill our roles in the church, in our family, and in our job while also getting to know and speak with non-Christians.

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Excuses Concerning Them

Another set of excuses has to do with problems you and I think that others will have with our witnessing to them. How many times have I had these more subtle and advanced excuses assemble in my mind as I'm thinking about sharing the gospel with someone? "People don't want to hear." "They won't be interested." "They probably already know the gospel." "It probably won't work. I doubt they'll believe." I don't think about how powerful the gospel is. I get myself in a wrongly hopeless mindset.

Of course, I should consider how faithless all this is. As Paul said to the Corinthians, "Who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). Why do we think that *we* would respond to the gospel, but someone else wouldn't? Haven't you found that God saves some of the most unlikely converts? If you aren't sure about this, consider some friends you've seen converted. Consider your own conversion. Jonathan Edwards called one account of the Great Awakening *A Narrative of Surprising Conversions*. Of course, in one sense, all conversions are surprising: enemies are loved, the alienated are adopted, those who should be punished inherit eternal life instead. But it is exactly this radical, surprising nature of conversion that should encourage us in our evangelism. God may save anyone. And the more unlikely it appears, the more glory, we might even reason, he gets to himself when it happens!

The Heart of the Matter: Plan to Stop Not Evangelizing

Here we are getting down closer to the heart of most of our non-evangelism. What's going on with us when we don't evangelize? Let's think about twelve steps we can take: pray, plan, accept, understand, be faithful, risk, prepare, look, love, fear, stop, and consider.

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1) **Pray.** I think many times we don't evangelize because we undertake everything in our own power. We attempt to leave God out of it. We forget that it is his will and pleasure for his gospel to be known. He wants sinners saved. Simply put, we don't pray for opportunities to share the gospel, so how surprised should we be when they don't come? If you're not evangelizing because you think you lack opportunities, pray and be amazed as God answers your prayers.

2) **Plan.** As we've already considered, sometimes we don't evangelize because we think, "I'm busy with other good things. Those other things are legitimate ways for me to spend my time. So I just don't have time for evangelism right now. When my health improves . . . after my paper is due . . . when my son is in school . . . when my husband retires . . . when I get that promotion . . . when she's in a better mood, then," we say, "I'll share the gospel with her." To fight such excuse making, we can plan to make time to build relationships or to put ourselves in positions where we know we'll be able to talk with non-Christians. We plan for so many less important things; why not plan for our evangelism?

3) **Accept.** We have to accept that this is our job. We'll consider this more in chapter 3, but for now, let's just acknowledge that sometimes we don't evangelize because we think it's not our job. It's the job of preachers, we think, or someone else who is trained and paid for it. But if we are going to evangelize, we have to realize and admit how we've been dodging our duty and adjust ourselves to accept responsibility for evangelism. We might be the closest Christians to a particular unbeliever. Maybe he has a Christian uncle or aunt, friend, or employee who has been praying for him. Maybe we are the answer to those prayers. We must accept, we may accept, we get to accept the wonderful role that God has for us as evangelists in others' lives!

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4) **Understand.** Part of our failure to evangelize comes from a lack of understanding. God uses not so much gifts for evangelism (though there is a biblical gift of evangelism) but the faithfulness of thousands and millions of Christians who would never say evangelism is their gift. Your conclusion that you are not gifted for a particular task does not absolve you of responsibility to obey. You may conclude that evangelism is not your gift, but it is still your duty. Not having the gift of mercy in no way excuses us from being merciful. All Christians are to exercise mercy; some will be particularly gifted to do this in special ways at certain times, but all are to be merciful. So with evangelism. God may unusually bless and own a Peter and a Philip, a Whitefield and a Spurgeon, a Hudson Taylor and an Adoniram Judson, but he calls all of us to share the good news.

5) **Be Faithful.** Perhaps we need to rebalance our allegiances. Maybe we are too polite to be faithful to God in this area. Maybe we are more concerned about people's response than God's glory. Maybe we are more concerned about their feelings than God's. God does not like having his truth suppressed, and that's what the non-Christian is doing (Rom. 1:18). Good manners are no excuse for unfaithfulness to God, but we have, too often, used them so.

6) **Risk.** Related to being faithful is being willing to risk. Let's obey, even when we are not exactly sure of the response. Maybe you don't evangelize sometimes because you're shy. You don't really enjoy talking to others that much, especially about things that may upset them. It seems tiring and dangerous. Maybe you would rather let someone else, someone who seems more comfortable, do the evangelizing. But could you invite unbelievers to a meeting where they will hear the gospel? Can you share with them a useful book or a story from your own life? Can you befriend them so that you may be able more

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naturally in the future to share the gospel with them? We must be willing to risk in order to evangelize.

7) **Prepare.** Sometimes we don't evangelize because we think we are unprepared or ill-equipped. Maybe we don't know how to transition the conversation. Or perhaps we think that in our ignorance we'll fail at this and actually do spiritual harm to the person by discrediting the gospel in their eyes. We fear our ignorance. We think that it's up to us to make the gospel seem sensible to them or to answer all their questions. And, so, having inflated these expectations, we decide we can't meet them and so neglect evangelism. Instead, we could prepare ourselves by knowing the gospel, working on our own humility, and studying more. Just as we might plan to have time, so we might prepare to be able to use the opportunity well when it comes.

8) **Look.** Have you ever prayed for something and then been surprised when it comes? I know I have. And I guess that means I really must not have been expecting God to answer that prayer request. It may be the same with my evangelism. Maybe I've prayed for opportunities but then not really looked for them. Perhaps I've been careless when they've come.

The way I've been careless can vary. Sometimes I don't see the opportunities because I'm busy. Evangelism can, after all, be time consuming and inconvenient. Or maybe I'm too tired. Perhaps I've used up all my energy on entertaining myself, or working, or on everything other than this non-Christian whom I could talk to. And therefore I don't even notice the opportunity.

Maybe my neglect of opportunities is more habitual. Maybe I'm lazy, caring more that I not be hassled or hurried than that this person hears the gospel. Maybe, when it comes right down to it, I'm simply selfish. I don't see the opportunities because I'm unwilling to be inconvenienced. I guess that

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means that I am, finally, apathetic. My blindness to God's provision is voluntary. I don't consider the reality and finality of death, judgment, and hell. So I don't notice the reality of the person and their plight before me. We must not only close our eyes in prayer for opportunities, but we must then open our eyes to see them.

9) **Love.** We are called to love others. We share the gospel because we love people. And we don't share the gospel because we don't love people. Instead, we wrongly fear them. We don't want to cause awkwardness. We want their respect, and after all, we figure, if we try to share the gospel with them, we'll look foolish! And so we are quiet. We protect our pride at the cost of their souls. In the name of not wanting to look weird, we are content to be complicit in their being lost. As one friend said, "I don't want to be the stereotypical Christian on a plane."

That attitude too often characterizes me. My heart is cold to other people. I have a distorted self-love and a deficient love for others. And just to drive this home, as I've been writing this, a non-Christian friend called and wanted to talk to me. We chatted for about thirty minutes, the whole time during which I was impatient to get back to writing this book on evangelism! Aargh! Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from this body of indifference? If we would evangelize more, we must love people more.

10) **Fear.** We should also fear. But our fear should be directed not to man but to God. When we don't share the gospel, we are essentially refusing to live in the fear of the Lord. We are not regarding him or his will as the final and ultimate rule of our actions. To fear God is to love him. When the One who is our all-powerful creator and judge is also our merciful redeemer and savior, then we have found the perfect object for the entire devotion of our heart. And that devotion will lead

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us to share this good news about him with others. We should pray that God will grow in us a greater love and fear of him.

11) Stop. We should stop blaming God. We should stop excusing ourselves from evangelism on the basis that God is sovereign. We should not conclude from his omnipotence that our obedience is therefore pointless. We should instead read from the Word that God will call a great number to himself from every tribe, tongue, and nation, which will encourage us in evangelism. It encouraged Paul in Corinth when he was discouraged (see Acts 18). Again, if you will realize that conversion always accompanies proclaiming the gospel and the Spirit's work, then you will stop trying to do the Spirit's work, and you will give yourself to proclaiming the gospel. Just because we don't know everything doesn't mean we don't know anything! We can't answer all the questions of how God's sovereignty and human responsibility fit together, but we can certainly believe that they do. It was Paul who wrote one of the clearest biblical passages about God's sovereignty (Romans 9) and then went on to write one of the most pointed biblical passages about man's responsibility in evangelism (Romans 10). He certainly believed both these things to be true. So who are we to blame God for our sinful silence?

12) Consider. The writer of Hebrews said, "Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart" (Heb. 12:3). When we don't sufficiently consider what God has done for us in Christ—the high cost of it, what it means, and what Christ's significance is—we lose the heart to evangelize. Our hearts grow cold, our minds grow smaller (more taken up with passing concerns), and our lips fall silent. Consider that God has loved us as he has. Consider that God is glorified by our telling others of this amazing love of his. And consider that instead of gossiping about God's goodness and the gospel, we engage in a con-

Why *Don't* We Evangelize?

spiracy of silence. We reveal ourselves as being cold to God's glory. If we would be more faithful in evangelism, we should fuel the flame of love toward God within us, and the flame of gratitude and of hope. A fire so enflamed by God will have no trouble igniting our tongue. As Jesus said, "Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matt. 12:34). How much evangelism do we find flowing out of our mouths? What does that suggest about our love for God?

For that matter, why should we so love God? That brings us to consider what exactly this message is that we want to share. What is it that would so fire our hearts? That's what we want to consider in the next chapter.

A PRACTICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE BIBLICAL CALL TO EVANGELISM

“Dever’s personal devotion to Scripture has led him to think deeply, read widely, preach clearly, and write simply to the great blessing of the body of Christ. Evangelism is the church’s mandate, and the one reason the redeemed are still on earth. Doing it effectively requires doing it biblically. Mark teaches us how to mobilize our churches to do just that.”

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EVANGELISM