

## *Five-Fold Ministry Gifts*

### *Part 4: Evangelist*

#### **Introduction**

The Evangelist is third in the list of the five-fold ministry offices but has always been first when it comes to who is at the forefront of kingdom ministry. The first role that Jesus took upon himself as an adult in public life was that of evangelist. His inaugural message was, “*The kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel*” (Mark 1:14 NASB). The first calling of the disciples was to be evangelists, for Jesus said to them, “*Come follow me...and I will make you fishers of men*” (Mark 1:17). The first calling of every apostle is to be an evangelist for the very first thing that Paul did after receiving his apostolic call in Damascus was to begin proclaiming that Jesus was the Son of God (see Acts 9:20). And, the first calling of every Christian is that of an evangelist. The work of evangelism and the work of the evangelist is always the first order of business in the life of the believer and the life of the church.

#### **The Good News**

The New Testament Greek word for gospel is “euaggelion,” which simply means, “good news.” An evangelist (Greek: “euaggelistou”) is one who brings or proclaims good news. *How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!"* (Isaiah 52:7).

My wife and I have been privileged on two separate occasions to have Bob Brassett, an evangelist from Victoria, B.C., in our home. As Canadians, our custom is to take off our shoes at the door as we enter our homes. When Bob came the first time, our cat did something that she had never done before with anyone’s shoes. She went over to Bob’s and laid on them. I remarked about her unusual behaviour, half-jokingly commenting that, after all, they were the shoes of an evangelist. We laughed about it together but then Bob proceeded to inform us that every time he leaves on an evangelistic trip, his wife prays over his shoes, claiming Isaiah 52:7. Our cat never laid on anyone’s shoes again—that is, until Bob came back a year later.

*How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.* In ancient times, messengers would be sent from the scene of a battle to run with news concerning the conflict to those who were anxious to hear—especially those in authority. Sometimes the news would be good and sometimes it would be bad. But for those who were to come running proclaiming the good news of the salvation of God’s sovereign deliverance for the Jews in captivity, how beautiful would those feet be? This is the context for Isaiah’s commentary on those who traverse the mountains with the good news that the God of Zion reigns. But because we know that we have the gospel, what Isaiah has to say has crisp meaning for us today. On the night Jesus was born the angel of the Lord said to the shepherds in a nearby field: “*I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people*” (Luke 2:10). Oh those beautiful angels. But where the angels have “wings,” we have feet. Feet that are to be *shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace* (Ephesians 6:15 KJV). Feet that run with the news of salvation. Feet that carry the good tidings of the triumphant reign of our God. Beautiful feet.

Most people don’t have beautiful feet. The messengers who ran through mountainous terrain to bring good news may have arrived with their feet scuffed and bleeding and filthy for the very fact that they were so anxious to bring the news to those who needed to hear it. But don’t you see? That would have made those feet all the more beautiful.

So, we all have the privilege and the calling to run with the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Yet some have a calling, an anointing and a maturity to receive a special designation as an evangelist.

## **Philip the Evangelist**

As we look at the Evangelist we see some things that mark him or her as having a special ability when it comes to bringing the good news of salvation in Jesus Christ. Perhaps the best scriptural example is that of Philip the Evangelist. Two stories regarding his evangelistic ministry are found in Acts, chapter 8:

*AC 8:4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. <sup>5</sup> Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed the Christ there. <sup>6</sup> When the crowds heard Philip and saw the miraculous signs he did, they all paid close attention to what he said. <sup>7</sup> With shrieks, evil spirits came out of many, and many paralytics and cripples were healed. <sup>8</sup> So there was great joy in that city. <sup>9</sup> Now for some time a man named Simon had practiced sorcery in the city and amazed all the people of Samaria. He boasted that he was someone great, <sup>10</sup> and all the people, both high and low, gave him their attention and exclaimed, "This man is the divine power known as the Great Power." <sup>11</sup> They followed him because he had amazed them for a long time with his magic. <sup>12</sup> But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. <sup>13</sup> Simon himself believed and was baptized. And he followed Philip everywhere, astonished by the great signs and miracles he saw....*

*AC 8:26 Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." <sup>27</sup> So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, <sup>28</sup> and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. <sup>29</sup> The Spirit told Philip, "Go to that chariot and stay near it." <sup>30</sup> Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked. <sup>31</sup> "How can I," he said, "unless someone explains it to me?" So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. <sup>32</sup> The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. <sup>33</sup> In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." <sup>34</sup> The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" <sup>35</sup> Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. <sup>36</sup> As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" <sup>38</sup> And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. <sup>39</sup> When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. <sup>40</sup> Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.*

The following are some things that we learn from these two scriptural examples about what it means to be an evangelist:

1. Evangelists go to places that need the gospel (v5). Philip was part of the diaspora of the Jerusalem church as they were scattered from their homes during a season of intense persecution. Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went and Philip went down to Samaria—to a city which had not yet received the gospel.
2. Evangelists proclaim Christ (vs 5, 35). The central message of the evangelist is Jesus Christ. Paul said to the Corinthians, "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). When you hear great evangelists like Billy Graham preach, you always hear the pure and simple message of Christ.

3. Evangelists draw a crowd (v6). Philip had the ability to draw a crowd. People are drawn to hear the message of the evangelist—sometimes in vast numbers.
4. Evangelists have the ability to keep the attention of their listeners (v6). The people of Samaria paid very close attention to what Philip was saying. Even if people do not like or agree with what the evangelist is saying—they still pay attention to what is said. Evangelists do not elicit a lukewarm response from their hearers.
5. The preaching of the Evangelist is often accompanied with miraculous signs (v6). The last verse of the gospel of Mark says, *And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following* (Mark 16:20 KJV). In the book of Acts, every time you see a miracle it is in connection of the gospel being preached.
6. The preaching of the Evangelist brings conviction (v6). Implied in verse six and beyond is the convicting power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Peter preached on the day of Pentecost the people who heard him were *cut to the heart* (Acts 2:37). Paul said that when the gospel came to Thessalonica, it came with *power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction* (1 Thessalonians 1:5). When I was attending seminary, it was amazing to me how, as I walked the campus with a friend of mine who was an evangelist, people would come under conviction when he would simply ask, “How ya doin?” This kind of thing happened in the ministry of Charles Finney, as well.
7. The preaching of the Evangelist brings freedom and great joy (vs 7-8). As Philip preached, evil spirits came out of people with shrieks and many people were healed resulting in great joy in Samaria. I will never forget the exact same thing happening at an outdoor evangelistic meeting I attended in LaPlata, Argentina as Carlos Annacondia preached the simple gospel with great power and authority.
8. The preaching of the Evangelist brings faith (v12). The evangelist has a special ability to bring in the harvest. A traveling evangelist friend of mine who we had in our church for twelve consecutive years humbly shared with me that he has never given an altar call in an evangelistic service that did not result in someone responding to the call for salvation. I experienced this same anointing as I preached in an outdoor meeting in Lima, Peru. The mantle of the evangelist came on me and brought overwhelming confidence that many would respond to the gospel message that night.
9. Evangelists preach a kingdom message (v12). Evangelists are very aware of the present reality of the kingdom of God. They preach the *gospel of the kingdom* (Matthew 24:14). When they lead people into a born-again experience they lead people into a revelation of the kingdom of God (see John 3:3).
10. Evangelists lead people into water baptism (vs12-13, 38). In the book of Acts, people were baptised as soon as they believed (see also Acts 2:41, 9:18, 10:47, 16:15, 16:33, 18:8). Immediate water baptism marks and solidifies the faith decision. The closer baptism is to that faith decision, the more meaningful it will likely be. Some see water baptism as a pastoral issue but a proper understanding of the meaning of baptism places it more in the ministry of the evangelist than the ministry of the pastor.
11. Evangelists get their direction from God (vs 26, 29). Philip was led by the Lord, through an angel, to go to the Gaza desert. Paul was led by the Lord, through a vision, to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9-10). The Lord sends the evangelist to strategic places at certain times as he wills.
12. Evangelists obey and go (v.27). Philip did not have much time to mull over the Lord’s direction. As soon as he heard from the Lord he started out. Evangelists are ready, willing and able to go on short notice. If an evangelist puts down roots, it is only to have a base from which to travel. It is the nature of the call of the evangelist to “go,” whether near or far, to preach the gospel.
13. Evangelists look for and get divine appointments (v27). Divine appointments are the most exciting and fruitful way to do personal evangelism. Philip had a divine appointment with the Ethiopian eunuch. The evangelist is well aware that the fields are *white already for harvest* (John 4:35 KJV) and have their eyes open looking for every opportunity to share the gospel.
14. Evangelists are sent to those who are “ripe for the harvest” (vs 27-28). The Lord knew the hunger in the heart of the Ethiopian—a genuine seeker of God. It was important to the Lord that this man meet someone who would faithfully give him the great news of salvation in Jesus. James Jacob was a man

from India who was so intent on finding the true and the living God that he decided to kill himself by jumping out of a tree so that perhaps he could become reincarnated as an eagle and fly to the Himalayas to hear from the holy gurus. Just as he was about to jump, the Lord sent a Christian missionary to call him down and tell him the good news about Jesus.<sup>1</sup>

15. Evangelists are eager to bring the good news (v30). When the Spirit of God told Philip, “*Go to that chariot and stay near it,*” he ran up to the chariot. Now, it was probable that Philip had to run to physically catch up to the chariot as it was moving along, but this is a wonderful picture of the evangelist who is eager to “catch up” to those to whom they are sent.
16. Evangelists know how to naturally enter a spiritual conversation (v30). The Lord had led Philip to the Ethiopian but once he arrived he knew how to engage the eunuch in a conversation that would naturally move into the sharing of the gospel.
17. Evangelists are welcomed and received by those hungry for the gospel (v31). The Ethiopian invited Philip to join him in his chariot as he travelled along. Jesus’ disciples received instructions to stay in the homes of people who would receive them and their message. The hearts of people are revealed by not only how they receive the gospel message but even how they receive the messenger.
18. Evangelists use the Scriptures to tell the good news of Jesus Christ (v35). The Scriptures have intrinsic power to testify to the truth. There is authority in the word of God. All of Scripture testifies about Jesus Christ. Philip began with the words from the prophet Isaiah that the eunuch was reading to tell him the good news of Jesus.
19. Evangelists do not stay in one place for very long but move on to other places where the gospel is needed (v39-40). As soon as Philip’s evangelistic mission was complete, he was whisked away in the Spirit to other preaching assignments.
20. People go on their way rejoicing because of the work of the evangelist (v39). The gospel really is good news. Those who receive it can’t help but rejoice at what they have heard and received.

Philip’s experiences as recorded in Acts 8 are just two examples of the methods and marks of the New Testament evangelist. We see the work of the evangelist all throughout the New Covenant Scriptures. In short, the message of the evangelist is:

- *Repent and believe the good news!* -Mark 1:14. Repentance always precedes salvation.
- *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures...* - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4

In short, the job description of the evangelist is:

- *"Come, follow me...and I will make you fishers of men."* -Matthew 4:19 and Mark 1:17
- *"Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation"* -Mark 16:15
- *'We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.* -1 Thessalonians 2:2
- *"Your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace."* -Ephesians 6:15
- *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power."* -1 Corinthians 2:4-5

## **The Evangelist in Relation to the Other Five-Fold Ministry Gifts**

Five-fold ministers need each other to bring balance and fullness to the ministry of Jesus. Unless someone is a true apostle, they do not have the full compliment of the five-fold ministry operating in their lives. Evangelists don’t often make the best pastors. Evangelists are better equipped to bring babies into the kingdom than to change the dirty diapers. Benny Hinn is known as “Pastor Benny” but, he is not a pastor. This is not taking anything away from his ministry—he is one of the greatest evangelists of our day. For him

to travel and hold two day healing and evangelistic meetings—which is his normal practice now—fits perfectly with his mantle and anointing as an evangelist.

Evangelists who try to teach often miss the mark, as well. Attending the James Robison Bible Conference one year in Ft. Worth, Texas, I was really looking forward to hearing Ray McCauley speak. Ray had started a racially integrated church in apartheid South Africa which had grown, at that time, to 10,000 members. As Ray taught in the afternoon pastors' session, he about put me to sleep. I wondered how in the world he had a church of 10,000 people. It was no different in the evening plenary session. It seemed that none of the thousands gathered in the Ft. Worth arena were at all engaged as we slumped in our chairs waiting for him to finish speaking. About forty-five minutes into his "teaching," Ray paused. Without a word, I saw virtually everyone in the arena simultaneously sit up in their chairs as electricity filled the arena. Ray's next words were, "I am now going to give an altar call." I don't think I have ever witnessed such a moving and loving appeal for the salvation of souls. As Ray moved from the role of teacher to evangelist the love of God filled the arena in a phenomenal way and hundreds came to Christ—in a bible conference, of all places. I later learned that ninety percent of Ray's church in South Africa had come to Christ through his evangelistic ministry. The ministry of the evangelist is truly amazing.

If you look at those who would be considered historical and modern era apostles, you will find that they began as evangelists. I do not know of one exception. People like Patrick of Ireland, John Wesley, Aimee Semple McPherson, John Wimber, Bill Bright and Heidi Baker first had a passion for souls and were faithful evangelists before they moved into the other five-fold giftings. Most of these also had miracles and healings as part of their evangelistic thrust.

### **Other Considerations**

It is important to note that all those who are "promoted" into the five-fold ministry know what it means to be a servant to the Lord and to his church. Philip was a deacon in the church before he was sent out as evangelist. To be a faithful servant is the paramount virtue in the kingdom of God. God can best entrust his anointing and ministry callings to those who humbly serve.

Unfortunately, the term and title, "evangelist" has a largely negative connotation in our western society. Those who are labelled, "televangelists" are seen as unethical and greedy by the world. Billy Graham has done much to temper this negative stereotype but evangelists are still reticent to use the biblical designation.

Many evangelists who sense a call to full-time ministry find that they must become pastors in order to receive the financial support that they need to support themselves and their families. But, *the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel* (1 Corinthians 9:14). Who does this more than the evangelist? If those who preach the gospel should make their living from the gospel, should not the church support the ministry of the evangelist as much as any of the other five-fold ministry offices? As the Lord continues to restore the balance of the five-fold ministry to the church, perhaps this inequity will also be corrected.

### **Conclusion**

Even though, in theological terms, most North American churches accept the ministry of the evangelist as being valid and important, in practical terms the ministry of the evangelist and evangelism is largely neglected. The evangelist is needed, not only to do the work of public evangelism, but also to equip the saints to do the work of personal evangelism. Without the evangelist and evangelism, the church is one

generation away from extinction. The fields are ready for harvest. May the Lord give to the church many more anointed evangelists and may the church receive them and support them as they deserve.

<sup>1</sup> I first heard the testimony of James Jacob as he was being interviewed by Pat Robertson on *The 700 Club* sometime in the early 80's.