



## Biblical Convictions on Evangelism

“Evangelism” in the church brings up images of everything from the classic *The One Thing You Can’t Do in Heaven* by Mark Cahill to groups completely disregarding the practice. At a summer training program and at Navs campuses all over the country, initiative and relational evangelism are regarded as Biblical commands and therefore practiced regularly. The following defines both relational and initiative evangelism and outlines some of the passages we feel support these actions:

### Relational Evangelism

Relational evangelism may be a believer sharing the gospel with a new friend or group, but it may also be a conversation about the gospel with a long-time friend, family member, or coworker. Often, it is a series of conversations about spiritual issues, discussing the gospel, and following up with someone about any spiritual decisions they make.

#### Scriptural Convictions:

- **Romans 10:14-15, Philemon 1:6** – It is essential for the lost that believers share the gospel and offer them the opportunity to receive the salvation of Jesus Christ and a lifelong relationship with him. Furthermore, according to Paul’s words to Philemon, it is an expectation of all believers that they are “active in sharing their faith.”
- **Colossians 4:2-6, 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12, 1 Peter 3:15-16** – Sharing the gospel with those you know well must be with an attitude of grace and humility

### Initiative Evangelism

Initiative evangelism involves one or a group of believers approaching an individual or group spontaneously and often with little or no previous relationship, with the intention of starting a spiritual conversation. Often, a survey format is used to introduce a conversation. If the individual or group is willing, the students or staff will share with them a short gospel illustration (ex. [The Bridge](#)). The conversation can end at any time that the individual or group chooses or it may extend as long as both parties have time.

#### Scriptural Convictions:

- **John 4:1-42** – It can be argued that Jesus was practicing initiative evangelism with the woman at the well. There is no previous relationship recorded, her name remains unknown from the text, and within a few minutes of their discussion he shares with her the gospel. Furthermore, though the disciples and Jesus stay two days after the encounter, the text says nothing more of Jesus following up with the Samaritans.
- **Acts 8:26-40** – Philip approached the Ethiopian eunuch having had no previous relationship to speak of; he explained the good news of what the eunuch was reading,

invited him into the salvation the Lord was offering him, and then the Lord took Philip away. The Lord also removed Philip after the eunuch's conversion, showing Philip's follow-up was not essential.

- **Acts 17** – Paul approaches the Athenians in their space and speaks to them about issues that are familiar. He uses what is common and familiar to them to introduce the salvation of Jesus Christ.

### **Practical Life Applications**

The ability to approach an individual and start a spontaneous and meaningful discussion takes initiative and practice. The conviction to introduce the gospel into friendships, family relationships, and work relationships takes a similar tact and courage. There are many benefits to sharing the gospel that come with both relational and initiative evangelism:

- It deepens a believer's understanding of the gospel (every good thing we have in Christ).
- It increases compassion for those that don't know Jesus.
- It trains believers to ask good questions, communicate effectively, and develop listening skills in our effort to understand and empathize with others.
- It increases confidence in spiritual dialogue with friends, family and strangers.
- It sharpens the ability to articulate a Biblical worldview when questioned.