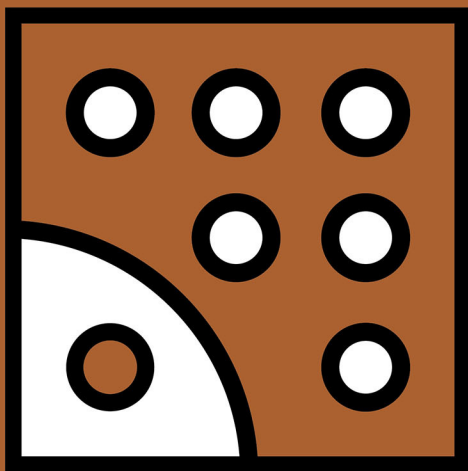


IX 9Marks

How Do I Get Started in Evangelism?



**J. Mack
Stiles**

Church Questions

Endorsements for the Church Questions Series

“Christians are pressed by very real questions. How does Scripture structure a church, order worship, organize ministry, and define biblical leadership? Those are just examples of the questions that are answered clearly, carefully, and winsomely in this new series from 9Marks. I am so thankful for this ministry and for its incredibly healthy and hopeful influence in so many faithful churches. I eagerly commend this series.”

R. Albert Mohler Jr., President, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

“Sincere questions deserve thoughtful answers. If you’re not sure where to start in answering these questions, let this series serve as a diving board into the pool. These minibooks are winsomely to-the-point and great to read together with one friend or one hundred friends.”

Gloria Furman, author, *Missional Motherhood* and *The Pastor’s Wife*

“As a pastor, I get asked lots of questions. I’m approached by unbelievers seeking to understand the gospel, new believers unsure about next steps, and maturing believers wanting help answering questions from their Christian family, friends, neighbors, or coworkers. It’s in these moments that I wish I had a book to give them that was brief, answered their questions, and pointed them in the right direction for further study. Church Questions is a series that provides just that. Each booklet tackles one question in a biblical, brief, and practical manner. The series may be called Church Questions, but it could be called ‘Church Answers.’ I intend to pick these up by the dozens and give them away regularly. You should too.”

Juan R. Sanchez, Senior Pastor, High Pointe Baptist Church, Austin, Texas

“Where can we Christians find reliable answers to our common questions about life together at church—without having to plow through long, expensive books? The Church Questions booklets meet our need with answers that are biblical, thoughtful, and practical. For pastors, this series will prove a trustworthy resource for guiding church members toward deeper wisdom and stronger unity.”

Ray Ortlund, President, Renewal Ministries

How Do I Get
Started in
Evangelism?

Church Questions

- Can Women Be Pastors?*, Greg Gilbert
- Does It Matter What I Believe?*, Samuel James
- Does the Gospel Promise Health and Prosperity?*, Sean DeMars
- Does the Old Testament Really Point to Jesus?*, David M. King
- How Can I Be Sure I'm Saved?*, Jeremy Pierre
- How Can I Get More Out of My Bible Reading?*, Jeremy Kimble
- How Can I Grow in Hospitality?*, Keri Folmar
- How Can I Love Church Members with Different Politics?*, Jonathan Leeman and Andy Naselli
- How Can I Serve My Church?*, Matthew Emadi
- How Can Women Thrive in the Local Church?*, Keri Folmar
- How Do I Fight Sin and Temptation?*, J. Garret Kell
- How Do I Get Started in Evangelism?*, J. Mack Stiles
- Is God Really Sovereign?*, Conrad Mbewe
- Is Hell Real?*, Dane Ortlund
- What Do Deacons Do?*, Juan Sanchez
- What If I'm Discouraged in My Evangelism?*, Isaac Adams
- What If I've been Hurt by My Church?*, Daniel P. Miller
- What Is a Church?*, Matthew Emadi
- What Is the Church's Mission?*, Jonathan Leeman
- What Should I Do Now That I'm a Christian?*, Sam Emadi
- What Should I Look for in a Church?*, Alex Duke
- Who's in Charge of the Church?*, Sam Emadi
- Why Should I Be Baptized?*, Bobby Jamieson
- Why Should I Give to My Church?*, Jamie Dunlop
- Why Should I Join a Church?*, Mark Dever

How Do I Get Started in Evangelism?

J. Mack Stiles

 **CROSSWAY**[®]
WHEATON, ILLINOIS

How Do I Get Started in Evangelism?

© 2024 by 9Marks

Published by Crossway

1300 Crescent Street
Wheaton, Illinois 60187

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopy, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publisher, except as provided for by USA copyright law. Crossway® is a registered trademark in the United States of America.

Series design: Jordan Singer

First printing 2024

Printed in the United States of America

Scripture quotations are from the ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The ESV text may not be quoted in any publication made available to the public by a Creative Commons license. The ESV may not be translated into any other language.

All emphases in Scripture quotations have been added by the author.

Trade paperback ISBN: 978-1-4335-9172-3

ePub ISBN: 978-1-4335-9174-7

PDF ISBN: 978-1-4335-9173-0

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Stiles, J. Mack, 1956- author.

Title: How do I get started in Evangelism? / Mack Stiles.

Description: Wheaton, Illinois : Crossway, 2024. | Series: Church questions | Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023043487 (print) | LCCN 2023043488 (ebook) | ISBN 9781433591723 (trade paperback) | ISBN 97814335917247 (epub) | ISBN 9781433591730 (pdf)

Subjects: LCSH: Evangelistic work.

Classification: LCC BV3770 .S68 2024 (print) | LCC BV3770 (ebook) | DDC 269/.2—dc23/eng/20231228

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023043487>

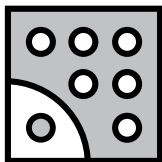
LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023043488>

Crossway is a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers.

BP 33 32 31 30 29 28 27 26 25 24
15 14 13 12 11 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.

1 Peter 3:14–15



Are you ready?

Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you . . . (1 Pet. 3:15)

As my wife, Leeann, and I traveled to Boseman, Montana, we stopped at the Denver airport for a layover.¹ We ducked into the newly opened Smashburger for lunch. While waiting for our meal, I glanced two tables down and spied Lance Armstrong, the disgraced racing cyclist who was stripped of his Tour-de-France titles for using performance-enhancing drugs.

He was eating alone.

“I think that’s Lance Armstrong,” I said.

Leeann raised an eyebrow, “Honey, could we just eat our lunch?”

“No, no, I want to meet him; I’ll be right back.”

I walked up to his table and asked, “Are you Lance Armstrong?”

He was mid-bite but nodded and said, “I am.” The “I am” came with a question mark—like an implied “don’t hurt me.”

“Oh, well, Lance,” I said, feeling awkward, “I wanted to tell you that I was at the finish line in Paris at the Tour de France in 2004 with my boys, and we saw you cross the finish line in your yellow jersey. We couldn’t believe they shut down the Champs-Élysées for the celebration. It was amazing.”

Lance looked awkward now too. “I guess your boys are older now,” he said.

“Uh, yeah, they’re grown men.”

“Are they okay?” he asked.

Suddenly, in a flash, I realized how he saw me. He saw me as a fan. I mean, who else would go

to Paris to see the Tour de France with his children? I didn't know how to explain that we were in France during the race by accident. We had been traveling back to the United States from our home in Dubai, and we had some cheapo redeye tickets that required a fifteen-hour layover in Paris. Rather than waste time in the Charles de Gaulle airport, Leeann and I dragged the kids to the Louvre, bleary and sleepy. Then we exited the Louvre, lo and behold, onto the Tour de France finish line. People cheered wildly. I didn't even know the race was happening. I whipped out my camera and got a shot of Lance spinning by.

"Oh, the kids are fine, Lance, they're fine," I said.

He seemed relieved and sad. Suddenly he put his head down and said, "Oh, I messed up. I messed up so bad."

His heartfelt humility touched me deeply. I felt sad that the poor guy couldn't eat a burger without having his past dredged up by some seeming ex-fanboy.

Caught off guard, I didn't know what to say; I didn't have a plan. I mumbled something about

being a missionary in Iraq, how I followed Jesus, and how Jesus loved giving second chances to people who've messed up.

And then we talked about Iraq a bit, and I said I hoped he enjoyed his burger, and I went and finished mine.

As we took our seats on the plane, I realized that Lance wasn't the only one who messed up. I had messed up. I kicked myself for missing an opportunity to tell a hurting, humble guy, weighted with guilt, the good news of Jesus. Through simple, genuine faith in our resurrected Lord, Lance could be wholly forgiven, restored, and accepted by the maker of the universe.

I trust God's sovereignty. I know the Lord is the one who brings about conversion; it's not my job to save someone. But in that moment, I wasn't ready to do my part of telling others the good news.

I've come to see that most of my evangelistic efforts are failures, like my time with Lance. But the silver lining is that after I blow it, I ponder what to do the next time I have an evangelistic

opportunity. Precisely because Jesus loves giving second chances, to me as well as Lance, there's good reason to think there will be a next time.

So let's get ready for evangelism. After all, it's a job for all of us, whether we have recently come to faith or whether we've walked with Jesus for fifty years. In this booklet, I want to give you ten pieces of counsel for how you can get started in evangelism.

1. Start with a Right Understanding of Evangelism

I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Acts 20:20–21)

What comes to mind when you hear the word *evangelist*? What about *evangelism*? Before I became a Christian, those words sounded creepy and pushy to me. “Evangelistic zeal” seemed a standard applied to anybody who believed

something too much—a wild-eyed and preachy fanatic.

After becoming a believer, not only did Christ become real to me, the spiritual world did too. It dawned on me that much was at stake for a person's soul. So I scrapped negative thoughts of evangelism—but regrettably, I replaced them with an equal amount of religious error.

For instance, I thought evangelistic success meant a person got converted. But that's not true. Faithful evangelism can occur even if nobody positively responds to the gospel. And besides, it's also a discouraging definition since most evangelistic appeals aren't met with positive responses.

Later on, I saw evangelism as an attempt to win arguments for God. But after winning some of these battles, I recognized I was losing the war. Besides offending people with my smug attitude, my apologetic arguments only seemed to move people away from Jesus not toward him.

Next, I attempted evangelism by telling stories about my personal encounter with Jesus—I had a dramatic and scintillating testimony.

Still, people seemed more entertained than convicted of sin.

So after a time—okay, so, after a few years—I looked more carefully at the Bible.² Here's a definition I gleaned that has served me for years: *evangelism is teaching the gospel with the aim to persuade.*

I'm sorry it's so simple; I wish it sounded complex and sophisticated for credibility's sake, but that's it—four essential words: teach, gospel, aim, persuade.

Let's look at these four words.

Teach

There are many ways to teach the gospel. It can be taught in a one-on-one Bible study over coffee or a full-fledged sermon on Sunday morning.

There are many things to teach about the gospel. We teach to sweep away obstacles, answer questions, or correct misconceptions. But most of all, we teach to help people see the gospel's truth as the core message of the Christian faith.

Aim

We don't just teach for teaching's sake; we teach with an aim—we desire for something to happen. An aim guards us against seeing evangelism as mere information transfer, a kind of gospel data dump on somebody.

Aim steers us toward the bigger picture. Since much is at stake, we put aside our egos and any hint of dismissiveness—those things that will drive people away—and focus our evangelism on critical components for salvation rather than spinning through needless rabbit trails of theological trivia.

After all, we have the hope that someone might move from darkness to light. So we put ourselves aside for our aim, which is to persuade.

Persuade

The word *persuade* comes from Paul's statement about evangelism in 2 Corinthians 5:11: "Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we *persuade* others."

First, let me state what persuasion is not. It is not manipulation or coercion as some think.

The apostle Paul says, “We have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways” (2 Cor. 4:2). In the same passage where Paul renounces disgraceful evangelism, he says he refuses to practice cunning or tamper with God’s word. In fact, Paul says when we give an open statement of the truth, our words commend us to God and people.

Persuasion helps us see that how we speak is almost as important as what we say. After all, a heated argument rarely persuades anyone. Persuasion means speaking graciously. As Paul says, “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:5–6).

Gospel

The final word in my definition is gospel—the very thing we teach and aim to persuade others about. Understanding the gospel requires a bit more thought, so it’ll be the focus of our next section.

2. Understand the Gospel Message

But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

Now that we've got a working definition of evangelism, we need a working definition of the gospel. Here it is: *the gospel is the message of what God achieved in Christ that leads us to salvation.*

When the Bible uses the word *gospel* in the New Testament, it refers to a message about Christ the King who saves his people from their sins. So if we want to get started in evangelism, we need to start with a clear understanding of the gospel.

What Are the Essential Parts of the Gospel Message?

I find it helpful to think of the gospel as a message that answers four questions: (1) Who is God? (2) Who are we before God? (3) Who is