



Mark Keown

Laidlaw Colledge

Mark Keown is Professor of New Testament Studies at Laidlaw College in Auckland. He is the author of *What's God Up To On Planet Earth?* (Castle) and *The Missing Imperative* (Paternoster, forthcoming).

Resources:

Books

What's God Up To On Planet Earth?: *A No Strings Attached Explanation of the Christian Message*, Mark Keown, Castle Publishing Ltd, 2010

Finding the Forgotten God: *Credible Faith for a Secular Age*, Ron Hay, DayStar Books LTD, 2014

The Patient Ferment of the Early Church: *The Improbable Rise of Christianity in the Roman Empire*, Alan Kreider, Baker Publishing Group, 2016

Websites

All Together NZ - www.alltogether.co.nz

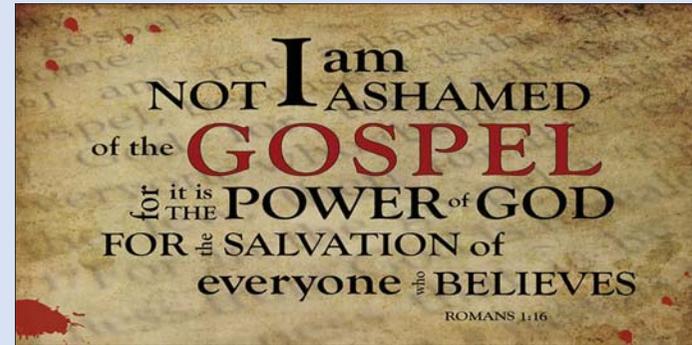
Long Story Short - www.longstoryshort.co

Alpha NZ - www.alpha.org.nz



Evangelism

New Zealand Christian Network - *Ka mahi tahi, ka ora*



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Discipleship & Evangelism+



Evangelism does not seem to be widely practised in the church today. Perhaps this is because it's not well understood. Perhaps poor teaching has left a residue of suspicion or even fear. This NZCN|Note explains what evangelism is, and challenges all of us to be involved.

Evangelism

The Christian gospel is a wonderful thing. Christ has come, sent from God, and shown us who God is with his life of sacrificial service. He died on a cross for our sins. He rose, overcoming death, and is Lord of all. He invites us to be a part of his great mission to renew this world. This good news about Jesus is to be shared by God's people throughout the world. We call this evangelism; sharing the *euangelion*, the good news. All a person has to do in response to hearing this message is to believe that Jesus is saviour and Lord. When they do, they receive salvation as a gift, receive the Spirit, and are welcomed into God's family to experience eternal life.



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However, a person cannot know this extraordinary privilege unless someone tells them the good news so that they can respond. Consequently, one of our central purposes as a Christian is to take up the challenge of sharing the message of Christ to others.

Some Christians with a gift and call to share Christ do this as their vocation – these are the evangelists whose task it is to devote themselves to the ministry of sharing Christ, and to equip others for the task. All other Christians, as they go about their various vocational callings, are also called to take every opportunity to share Christ.



Evangelist Billy Graham - Tallahassee, Florida (1961)

Verbally articulating the gospel is central to evangelism

This can happen in any situation, whether a formal gathering like a church service, or in a conversation at home, at work, or in a social situation. As **we are called to give witness to Christ**, so we must take the responsibility to be equipped – knowing the gospel and understanding how to go about it.

Evangelism cannot be limited to merely verbal communication

Sharing Christ is something we do with our whole lives. We are to embody the virtues of the gospel as we relate to others, whoever they may be; such things as holiness, kindness, goodness, patience, respect, gentleness, humility, and supremely, love. We are called to share Christ by continuing his ministry of compassionate service to others – caring for the poor and marginalized, healing, restoring, and being the friend of sinners.

Evangelism is about hospitality



Christchurch City Mission Christmas Lunch

Essential to evangelism is invitation. Jesus' Great Banquet parable speaks of a God who invites the world to a great feast. A servant is sent out inviting all humanity to the feast. We are called to serve in this way, and invite people to join God in his great restoration project.

Evangelism is a team activity

Certainly, evangelism includes inviting people into a personal relationship with God. However, it is more. **It is inviting people to be a part of a people**, God's family, the church. All humanity is invited – the gospel is a radical vision of people of every race, age, men and women, rich and poor, together as one. We become part of God's vision of a world united in Christ.

Central to evangelism is the art of good conversation

Conversation is about sharing our lives with others not merely to convert them, but to genuinely know them and show them Christ's love. We are to engage with others recognizing that they are made in the image of God and God created them for relationship with him. We are to make the most of every opportunity, and share Christ with wisdom and words that are full of grace and seasoned with salt.



We are assured by Jesus that as we share his gospel with others, he is present empowering the words, seeking to draw people to him. We cannot guarantee another person's response. That is up to them. **Our call is to be faithful to our call to share Jesus.**



Jesus came and told his disciples, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." *Matthew 28:18-20 NLT*

Evangelism then is a central task for all Christians

It is a supreme challenge, especially where Christianity is maligned and resisted. We may be persecuted. We may suffer. Yet, our reward is great. It is also a privilege to be honoured by the God of the universe to be called to be his ambassadors to the world. **May we do it well.**