

# The Greatest Tragedy in the Church Today

[by Thom Rainer](#)

Evangelism is dying in many churches today.

No, that's not an overstatement. I am not speaking hyperbolically.

Evangelism is dying.

Look at the data. Measure almost any group of churches today versus 30 years ago. You'll likely find only one person is being reached with the Gospel for every 40 to 60 church members. You will find that conversions have declined precipitously. And where you find numerical growth, you are more likely to find the growth is transfer of Christians from one church to another.

That's not evangelism. That's sheep shuffling.

Pastors and other leaders must fall on their faces before God and ask Him to reignite their congregations with an evangelistic passion. When evangelism dies as a priority in the church, the church has already begun to die.

**So why should evangelism be one of the highest priorities in your church?**

Though the reasons are many, allow me to share seven of them.

## **1. Because Christ commanded it.**

We typically refer to the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 as our evangelistic and disciple-making command. But there are many other places in the New Testament where the priority of evangelism is clearly evident. Christ commanded it. We must do it.

## **2. Because Christ is the only way of salvation.**

There is no way around it. Salvation is exclusive. There is only one way. Jesus could not have made it clearer in John 14:6: "Jesus told him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.'" Jesus had an urgent message. He had an exclusive message. We must be conveyors of that narrowly defined hope.

## **3. Because Christ died for the world.**

There is a reason John 3:16 is the most familiar and most quoted verse in the history of humanity. Jesus died for the world. He is the only way, but He has provided a way for everyone. That is a message that is urgent and worth telling. Indeed it's the greatest message ever.

## **4. Because churches that are not intentional about evangelism typically are weak in evangelism.**

Many pastors and church leaders will affirm this article. They will give mental assent to the priority of evangelism. But they do not practice the priority of evangelism in their churches. What are you doing today to make certain evangelism is a priority in your church?

## **5. Because churches tend to obsess inwardly when they fail to move outwardly.**

Where has a lot of your church's energy been expended lately? Rancorous business meetings? Expressions of petty church preferences? Worship wars? Power struggles? Those are inward obsessions. Lead your church to an evangelistic priority and watch the focus shift for the better.

## **6. Because churches become content and complacent with transfer growth.**

Some churches are growing. Others are adding members without significant numerical growth. But many in both categories are growing at the expense of other churches. Some may be reaching unchurched Christians. That's good, but that's not evangelism. We can fool ourselves into thinking we are evangelistic when we are simply recirculating the saints.

## **7. Because evangelistic Christians actually grow stronger as better disciplined Christians.**

Those who are evangelistic are obedient to Christ. Being obedient to Christ means we are following His teachings and becoming a better fruit-bearing disciple.

Most churches are busy with activities, programs and ministries. Few churches are truly sending out their members to evangelize those in their communities. The Great Commission has fast become the Great Omission.

Evangelism is dying.

Churches are dying.

People are going to hell without Christ.

It is perhaps the greatest tragedy today.

*What are you doing to lead your church to become more evangelistic?*