



# EQUIPPER

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Greetings *GC2 equipper* readers:

Beginning this issue, we have shortened the name of this publication to ***Equipper***. Many have been using the shorter name. We like it, and hope you do too.

Last month, we urged churches to embrace a “simple” ***disciplemaking pathway***. As an example, we offered the three-step pathway used by *Journey Church*: ***Belong • Believe • Become***. The first step (*belong*), involves the members of the church in ***evangelism***.



**Journey Church**  
*from union to communion*  
**Belong • Believe • Become**

Evangelism is presenting to non-believers the good news that *they belong!* Because of who Jesus is and what he has done, the Father loves them, forgives them, and through the Spirit has included them in his life in union with Jesus (Eph 1:4-6).

This message is not a *proposition* that people ***can belong*** if they believe or do something. Rather, it is a *declaration* that they ***do belong*** because of who Jesus is and what he has done for them. Through evangelism, believers participate in Jesus’ ongoing ministry to help non-believers understand and embrace the truth of who they are in Christ. Many must *experience* this truth before it can be *believed*. And so we ask, how can churches help unchurched people *experience* that they belong?

When Christianity was a dominant cultural force in North America, churches routinely invited unchurched people to church-based programs. Many came and felt included. Now we are largely *post-Christian*, and churches must venture out from behind church-based programs to share life with unchurched people on their “turf.” This is what Jesus did in the first century. It is what he is still doing. How can we participate?

In *Trinitarian Youth Ministry*, a Grace Communion Seminary class that Greg Williams and I team-teach, we share insights from theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer who helpfully defines disciplemaking (including evangelism) as ***place-sharing with Jesus***. As “the one mediator between God and men” (1Tim 2:5), Jesus is sharing life (place-sharing) with all people. How can churches help their members participate in Jesus’ place-sharing with unchurched people? It need not be complex. It can be as simple as hosting a backyard barbeque where church members are given opportunity to share God’s love and life with unchurched people living nearby the church. Watch *Equipper* for more ideas, and please share yours by emailing them to [Ted.Johnston@gci.org](mailto:Ted.Johnston@gci.org).

On page two of this issue, Jonathan Stepp discusses the theology of evangelism. For ideas related to application, consider hosting MinDev’s *Relational Evangelism Seminar* (see [www.wcg.org/MinDev/services.htm](http://www.wcg.org/MinDev/services.htm)). Also, view a *Speaking of Life* program on evangelism at [www.wcg.org/av/\\_lib/PlayVideoSpOL.asp?program=SpOL183](http://www.wcg.org/av/_lib/PlayVideoSpOL.asp?program=SpOL183).

-Ted Johnston  
CAD communications and resources

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Equipping pastors, ministry leaders and ministry workers for participation in ministry with Jesus.

## Evangelism in light of the Trinity by Jonathan Stepp

The Greek word we translate “evangelism” means, “to announce good news.” Evangelism is not a sales pitch. It is a *declarative statement*—an announcement of fact. As fact, it can be believed or disbelieved, but it remains fact nonetheless. In the New Testament, evangelism is the announcement of the fact of who Jesus Christ is, what he has done (and is doing) on behalf of all humanity, and therefore, who we are in him. This fact is called the “gospel” (“good news”) because it is very good news, indeed.

This becomes clearer as we reflect on evangelism in the light of the Trinity. Every moment of their existence, the three persons of the Trinity share a message of good news with each other. It is the message of how much they love, like, and accept one another. This triune relationship of love is not conditional. The Father does not say to the Son, “If you accept me, then I will love you and you will be my Son.” Rather, the Father says, “You are my Son; I accept you, I love you, and you will always be my beloved Son” (Mark 1:11). In response, the Son says, “I love you, Father, and I accept you and I will always be your Son” (Mark 1:9). The Father and the Son speak this gospel to each other in the power, anointing and fellowship of the Holy Spirit, who joins with the Father and Son in affirming the good news of this love and acceptance (Mark 1:10).



This drawing by Margaret Botha (age ten), reminds us that the angels practiced *evangelism* as they joyfully announced the good news of Jesus' birth (Luke 2:9-14).

Note that the Father does not seek to convince the Son to become the Son. Rather, the Father “evangelizes” the Son because the Son is *already* the beloved Son of the Father! In the same way, the evangelism of the Church is not about *causing* a relationship to come into existence between people and their Heavenly Father. Instead, through evangelism, the Church participates with Jesus in announcing the good news to people of who he is, and therefore, who they already are—*the adopted children of the Father* (2Cor 5:18-19). Evangelism is thus not about helping someone *become* something they are not. Rather, it is to announce who Jesus is, and, because of that, who they are already in Jesus. With this announcement comes the invitation to turn from unbelief (repent) and to believe (have faith), in celebration to this wonderful truth.

Since we know that the Father, in Jesus Christ, has fulfilled his plan to adopt humanity into the Triune Life (Eph 1:5), it should not surprise us to discover that Jesus' evangelism of the human race is the same kind of evangelism that the persons of the Trinity practice towards each other. The Gospels tell us that Jesus came preaching, “The time has come, the Kingdom of God is near” (Mark 1:15). Jesus does not say, “If you will buy the product I am selling then you can create an experience of the Kingdom in the privacy of your own home.” Jesus makes a declarative statement of fact about the reality that the Kingdom of God has come. It is news.

This good news of Jesus is a declaration to humanity of who we really are: citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom of our Father. Just as the Father evangelizes the Son because he already is the Son, so also Jesus evangelizes humanity because we are already children of the Father. Evangelism does not make us into Jesus' brothers and sisters. Jesus' birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and outpouring of the Holy Spirit have made us his brothers and sisters (Heb 2:13). Evangelism is Jesus' work, with and through his Church, to immerse humanity in this reality and baptize us in the good news of who he is, which tells us who we really are.

This article is a brief excerpt from the class 'Practice of Ministry' that GCI Pastor Jonathan Stepp teaches at Grace Communion Seminary. To find out more, go to [www.gcs.ambassador.edu](http://www.gcs.ambassador.edu).