

Combining Evangelism and Discipleship by Paul Miller

This approach combines evangelism and discipleship. For some people, this is a new idea. Here are some reflections on this idea:

Our group included a neighbor who was a graduate student in Catholic theology, a former neighbor who is Catholic and had never studied the Bible before, and also did not seem to know the Lord personally, a neighbor who had never seen a Bible before, a neighbor from a more liberal Presbyterian denomination, and two or three other evangelicals. We all learned, and we all learned together. I have been a Christian for over 30 years, and consider myself to be pretty familiar with the Bible from attending and leading inductive discussion Bible studies, but I learned to see Jesus in a whole new way, noticing details about his loving ways that I had never seen in the Scriptures before.

Ruth Ann Irwin, participant in a Person of Jesus study

When we had our *Person of Jesus* study in New Jersey last year, most of the folks who participated were from our church but we sought both to disciple and to evangelize because not everyone there was a Christian, and even if they were, who doesn't need to be reminded of who Jesus is over and over again. We figured that if the focus was on Christ, then the study would undoubtedly build into the lives of both believer and not-yet believer.

Greg Houck, Pastor, leader of a Person of Jesus study

The "evangelism-discipleship" tension is one of the abiding tensions because of our tendency to bifurcate unities and obsess on one half only. In fact, Jesus invites people, "Come follow me," and Jesus says to those already following, "Keep coming and following me". "Evangelism" and "discipleship" sound far apart to many people; but "Come on over and keep coming on over" aren't that far apart: Colossians 2:6 and Matthew 28:19f are just 2 of countless passages that have such "initial turning" and "keep on turning" implications simultaneously. You will continually be breaking down "hardening of the categories."

David Powlison (PhD), Westminster Theological Seminary

It seems to me that the command in the Great Commission is laden with a command to action, and yet literally says make disciples. In the study we've had here, the Word is doing its work and the folks who are not coming to Christ are definitely disturbed, internally wrestling with what their view is of God. We have just told people we were going to study the Bible in order to learn more of who Jesus is. I guess God has just gone before us. It's a great study.

Melody Burke,

Church staff and co-leader of a Person of Jesus study

The fact that *Love Walked Among Us* and *The Person of Jesus* are useful to both evangelism and discipleship is indicative of the gospel's power to both evangelize non-Christian's and to edify Christians. This is an important truth that is often missing in our current debate over "seeker and non-seeker" services. It is true if you preach/teach in such a way to reach Christians you will lose non-Christians and if you preach/teach in such a way to reach non-Christians you will lose (bore) Christians. I think both approaches are wrong.... if we preach Christ we will reach both Christians and non-Christians for Jesus. Jesus said, "When I am lifted up, I will draw all people to myself." I think we make a BIG mistake when we think Christians need more than Jesus and non-Christians something less!

John Stringer, pastor, leader of Person of Jesus study

People want too sharply to divide the work of evangelism and discipleship. What they should be doing is seeing that everyone needs the gospel no matter where you are. Churches have groups that are segregated (believer groups and unbeliever groups) rather than letting folks care for and struggle with each other all in the same group. If they would have more full spectrum groups, then everyone would see their need and other's needs and use the gospel more effectively. Your material seems to be meeting that need. That's why both believers and unbelievers are drawn to it. The gospel is for everyone and we can grow deeper and investigate the surface all in one study.

Drew Derreth, Pastor

The POJ study is a valuable tool for discipleship and evangelism. Is not that what the gospel is—both? After dinner, I like to have dessert. They each have a different purpose but I crave them both. The POJ is like the total meal.

Scott McBride, Person of Jesus study participant