

Evangelists:

They do far more than evangelizing!

*They plant churches,
Mature them and
Train their leaders!*

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8 PROOFS that Evangelists are Church Planters who Mature their Churches

When examining descriptions and expectations commonly given today for evangelists, one finds they typically focus primarily on sharing the Gospel with unbelievers. For instance, Hirsh defines evangelists as *“infectious communicators of the gospel message who recruit others to the cause. They call for a personal response to God's redemption in Christ, and also draw believers to engage the wider mission, growing the church”*¹. However, my issue with this definition is that it is only partially accurate.

According to the New Testament, evangelists are not merely expected to preach the Gospel. They are also required to train and appoint local leadership within the churches they establish, implying a significant pastoral and leadership component within their ministry. This job description might surprise you, as we rarely encounter evangelists fulfilling such a role today.

Consider the book *The Calling of An Evangelist*², one of the most comprehensive descriptions of an evangelist's role (888 pages!). Surprisingly, you will not find even a single page dedicated to training local leaders or addressing pastoral challenges! Figures like Billy Graham or Reinhard Bonke exemplify our common perception of evangelists today. They are known for converting masses worldwide, yet we seldom see them actively involved in networks of churches, training their leaders, or following up pastorally.

I believe this limited role results from a religious system disconnected from the New Testament model. Below are eight reasons demonstrating that evangelists were meant to do far more than simply preaching and converting:

1. Timothy and Titus Prove Evangelists are meant to Lead and Shepherd Churches

► Evangelists aren't just messengers — they were entrusted with pastoral authority and leadership training.

Paul explicitly instructed Timothy to *“do the work of an evangelist”*³. Timothy was neither called a prophet, pastor, teacher, nor apostle⁴, nor was he observed fulfilling those roles throughout Acts.

It is therefore reasonable to view him as Paul designated him: an evangelist.

¹ Alan Hirsh, *The Forgotten Ways*, Baker Publishing Group, Grand Rapids, MI, 2006

² *The Calling of An Evangelist*, Worldwide Publication, Minneapolis, MN, 1984

³ 2 Tim.4:5

⁴ See the explanation that Grudem gives in his systematic theology why Timothy was not an apostle (under b. who were apostles, p. 910)

This single argument has immense implications for defining an evangelist because Timothy received two letters containing detailed instructions about an evangelist's responsibilities. Without these letters, our expectations of evangelists today would be incomplete and likely distorted.

If Timothy was an evangelist, then the letters addressed to him and to Titus give us a clear and extensive description of this function

Moreover, the similarities between Timothy's letters and the instructions given to Titus strongly suggest that Titus was also an evangelist. Consequently, we have three letters clearly defining evangelists' roles and authority. Timothy and Titus were engaged in pastoral duties, teaching and counseling various groups—including young men, the wealthy, the poor, servants, and widows. They were responsible for teaching sound doctrine and firmly opposing false teaching. Importantly, they selected and appointed elders in every city.

These three letters are powerful and explicit evidence that evangelists held significant authority to influence churches and develop their leadership—a role similar to apostles. This brings us to our second argument.

2. Evangelists Were Apostolic Successors

► Evangelists were trained by apostles and carried pastoral authority.

In the early Church, as Eusebius wrote, "the evangelists were regarded as the successors of the apostles."⁵ As Kittel affirms, "*there can have been little difference between an apostle and evangelist, all the apostles being evangelists.*"⁶

It is interesting in this regard that Grudem writes: "*Timothy and Titus, together with some of Paul's other co-workers, are not apostles, but neither are they elders nor deacons. They seem to fall in the unusual category that we might call 'apostolic assistants,' for they had some delegated authority from the apostles to supervise early churches while they were being established.*"⁷

Like many others today, Grudem does not know what to do with this unusual category of apostolic assistants, which the New Testament called evangelists.

The fact that evangelists were trained by apostles—as we see Paul doing with Timothy, or Peter and John with Philip⁸—to the point of being closely identified with them, gives us a good idea how much authority and pastoral involvement they must have had themselves.

⁵ Eus. Hist. Eccl. V, 10,2

⁶ Kittel Theological Dictionary of the New Testament –1978 edition, p.737 on evangelists

⁷ Wayne Grudem Systematic Theology. InterVarsity Press (Great Britain) and Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 2000 (p.918, note on the installation of elders)

⁸ In Acts 8:14 we see the direct connection between them

3. Evangelists Minister to the Church, Not Just to the Lost

► Evangelism includes edifying the church, not just converting outsiders.

The Gospel is not a message restricted only to outsiders. Kittel writes that “the euaggellion (good news) is congregational as well as missionary preaching.”⁹

Euaggelizo (to proclaim the good news) is found 54 times in the New Testament, and euaggellion 76 times. Often, this Greek term is associated with a message addressed both to those outside the faith and to those within the church.

In other words, the role of an evangelist is not limited to reaching unbelievers—it also involves teaching and building up the local congregation.

4. Evangelists Have Ongoing Responsibility Toward the Churches They Start

► Their job does not end with conversions; it includes growth and oversight.

Philip the evangelist had such a massive impact in the entire region of Samaria that “multitudes gave one accord to what he said” and “the entire city rejoiced.”

It is difficult to imagine that, after so many people were converted, Philip simply left the city. Why make spiritual “babies” and leave them to themselves?

Anyone who has planted churches knows that follow-up is essential: teaching, maturing the new believers, and raising local leadership. Without these, the initial work risks being in vain. This foundational principle of church planting makes clear why evangelists must also be equipped as leaders.

It is likely that Philip, like prophets and apostles, traveled regularly to visit the churches he had helped establish. But that does not mean he abandoned them. Paul followed a similar circular ministry, yet he remained in close contact with church leaders through letters and by sending trusted coworkers.

This sense of personal responsibility for the churches must certainly have been shared by evangelists as well.

⁹ Kittel Theological Dictionary of the New Testament –1978 edition, p.737 on evangelists

5. Evangelists Equip Others to Evangelize

► Evangelists train believers for evangelism, not replace them.

Ephesians 4:11–13 shows that evangelists are to equip (literally, to bring in order)¹⁰ the Church so that everyone can do the work of the ministry. All Christians are to evangelize, and therefore, the primary function of the evangelist is to train them to be evangelistic.

This can only happen if evangelists are directly and practically involved in the leadership and life of local churches. If evangelists are separated from them, how will they equip them?

In other words, an evangelist is not supposed to do all the evangelism for others. He is to train people while he evangelizes, so they can learn and do it themselves. As James Davis wrote: “The more we synergize, the more we can evangelize.”¹¹

When this happens, we see multiplication that brings very effective results over the long run—which is one more reason I believe God, in His wisdom, wants evangelists to be involved in local churches.

6. Evangelists Continue Apostolic Work

► They finish what apostles begin—training leaders and ordering churches.

Apostles train evangelists so they can do the same as they do. The latter are to continue what the former have started.

As Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary on Titus 1:5: “This was the business of evangelists (in which office Titus was), to water where the apostles had planted (1 Co. 3:6), furthering and finishing what they had begun.”¹¹

The Greek word *epidiorthoun* means not only “putting in order” but also “import,” “order after another.” Titus was to go on in settling what the apostle himself had not had time for during his short stay there.

If there is such an obvious connection and continuity between evangelists and apostles, we are faced with the following two options.

¹⁰ The Greek word for equipping, “katartismos”, means to “put right”, to “put in order”. The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, 3:349, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1986

¹¹ James Davis, *The Pastor’s Best Friend – The New Testament Evangelist*, Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MI, 1997

The first is that we can call people like Titus or Timothy “assistant-apostles” because they are not really apostles. If this is the case, then everyone who functions almost like an apostle—but is not officially one—falls into this vague category. The problem is that this definition appears nowhere in the Bible, whereas the function is well defined in three letters (1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus). What then are we to make of three letters addressed to “assistant-apostles,” if such a designation does not exist in the New Testament?

The second option is to call such “assistant-apostles” by the biblical term evangelists, since this corresponds exactly to their role. Evangelists assist apostles, and because of this, they fulfill many of the same functions.

7. Evangelists Have Teaching and Discipling Responsibility

► They don't abandon new believers but nurture them until leadership is in place.

The most compelling argument, in my view, is that we cannot make spiritual children and leave them to themselves. The idea—wrongly taken from Philip's example in Acts—that someone converts people and then immediately leaves those “babies” to themselves by going away, not only contradicts any sense of personal responsibility (what parent would do this?), but also cries out against the very principle of Matthew 28:19–20.

We are called to make disciples not only by baptizing them (conversion), but by teaching them to *obey*—something that implies far more than just passing on information. Jesus called us to make sure that the very people we have baptized will obey, which means guiding them through a process of time and maturity.

In other words, an evangelist has a teaching and pastoral responsibility in the early stages of a church, until he leaves behind trained elders who can continue what he started. Evangelists in Africa or Asia, for instance, who convert people, do exactly this: they return in rotating cycles to the churches they've planted, imitating the very example of the early Church.

In places like North America, evangelists and pastors tend to have sharply divided roles—the latter only pastors, while the former only evangelize. This is usually the pattern in older denominations. But in churches that fall outside this paradigm, whenever you observe growing and dynamic communities, you will often notice that the leader who helped the church grow numerically also plays a strong role in leadership and teaching.

Take, for instance, Rick Warren. He might be called a pastor, but according to the New Testament, he is an evangelist. He started a church and gradually trained his leaders while simultaneously pastoring. It is clear that Rick's strongest gift is not pastoring—although he has a strong pastoral sensitivity—but leadership that trains pastors, which is exactly what I advocate about evangelists.

8. Evangelists Must Combine Power and Leadership

► They are both bold preachers AND wise, pastoral leaders.

Those seven arguments lead us to the following observation: we would likely agree that any evangelist who starts a church must carry “apostolic” responsibilities that go beyond simply preaching the Gospel to outsiders. This was clearly the pattern in the New Testament, which is why their function is so closely associated with that of the apostles.

This may be the reason many people define church planters as “apostles,” when in fact they are simply evangelists.

Obviously, it goes without saying that an evangelist must have the passion and develop the ability to persuade unbelievers. He must therefore possess a good knowledge of the Scriptures and an insightful understanding of people and their culture in order to argue persuasively.

In addition, he must have the gifts of faith, healing, and miracles. Philip was able to have such an outstanding impact in his evangelism because he moved with great supernatural power.¹² Even his daughters had supernatural gifts, since they were able to prophesy.¹³

Anyone who truly desires to increase their evangelistic effectiveness will eventually seek these gifts in greater measure, because they make a crucial difference when reaching unbelievers. This is especially true in contexts where access to unbelievers is difficult. One need only read the book of Acts to see how such gifts opened doors for the Gospel.

If evangelists have this foundation, they must then build on it by developing leadership skills. This need arises as their work expands. The more an evangelist plants churches, the more he will need to identify and train potential leaders, eventually appointing them over the congregations he has started.

At the beginning, he might not know how to do this well. But as he establishes more and more churches, his leadership will play a key role in their long-term growth.

Paul told Timothy that the things he had heard from him in the presence of many witnesses, he was to entrust to reliable men who would also be qualified to teach others.¹⁴ In other words, the multiplication of leaders was a pattern that effective evangelists were expected to develop.

¹² Acts 8:13

¹³ Acts 21:9

¹⁴ 2 Tim.2:2

This leads us to affirm that evangelists must also possess strong pastoral sensitivity. They will never be as pastoral as full-time pastors, of course. But since they are called to identify and raise the future leaders of the churches they plant, they must be able to train them in how to perform their pastoral responsibilities.

The fact that Timothy had to know the qualifications of an elder was so that he could help others grow into those roles. Moreover, as we see in the two letters addressed to him, Timothy had to deal with all sorts of issues—many of which are exactly what a pastor would be expected to handle. This is why those letters are called “pastoral letters.”

So, evangelists must carry two essential characteristics. First, they must be bold pioneers who preach the Gospel with the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit. Second, they must be wise leaders who can train the leadership of the churches they establish, while also dealing with various pastoral concerns.

Evangelists evangelize with **supernatural power**, and **train the leadership** of their planted churches for pastoral and numerical growth

Their greatest challenge is that they must embody both qualities at the same time. If evangelists focus too much on outreach and neglect their converts and leaders, they risk losing them. If they fail to delegate and empower others soon enough, they may unintentionally hinder the church's growth by holding on to too much control.

This delicate balance is not unique to evangelists—it is perhaps the most difficult challenge faced by any leader. Let me explain more about this aspect, as I believe it is crucial in how we should perceive evangelists.

4 STAGES how Evangelists Start and Mature their Churches

1. Infancy

At the first stage, called “Infancy,” the evangelist has given birth to a baby—his church—which will devour everything he has. The atmosphere in this new spiritual family resembles that of parents with young children: it is messy and unpredictable. Because the founder is fiercely protective, he wants to control everything and everyone. This is perfectly normal. In fact, such control is required. Parents do the same when raising toddlers—they maintain a tight grip and certainly don’t let children do whatever they want.

The desired environment is one of love and learning, but also one of great safety. This is why clear guidelines and simple instructions are perfectly legitimate. This doesn’t mean the evangelist treats his converts like babies; it means that at the very beginning of church life, he creates a safe and protected setting with clear, practical expectations.

He is in charge, knows exactly what he wants, and expects his spiritual children to follow his instructions. We see this dynamic in the first and second letters to Timothy. He must protect his newly planted church from doctrinal influences or false teachers that might divide it. He must quickly

address issues that could lead to disorder, whether it be women or widows who are not behaving appropriately.

At this stage, he must correct and instruct many people simultaneously. Because this season is often disorganized—even chaotic—it is legitimate that he handles many issues personally and acts as the primary decision-maker. The entire direction of the church depends on his leadership, and what he does or neglects to do has a major impact on how quickly the work develops.

2. Childhood

The second stage, “Childhood,” is one of growing success. Leaders are beginning to take greater risks and make sacrifices for the church’s growth. Everything becomes an opportunity and a priority. At this point, the evangelist becomes both the church’s greatest asset and its biggest potential risk.

One of the most difficult challenges during this stage is learning to delegate and truly yield control. The evangelist must take calculated risks in order to build an atmosphere of trust and empowerment. He must select leaders based on their strengths, knowing that while some will excel, others may make costly mistakes.

Therefore, he must entrust increasing responsibilities to others—but in such a way that any failures won’t be damaging to them or to the church. This stage tests his ability to empower without abandoning, to release without withdrawing completely.

3. Adolescence

The third stage, “Adolescence,” is rightly named. The evangelist must go through the painful process of organizing and fully delegating his authority so that new leaders feel true ownership of the church.

This means that evangelists with strong entrepreneurial and controlling personalities must face the hard reality of installing leaders who are not like them. These leaders might be less aggressive, less focused on results, or more administrative—types the evangelist might normally avoid. Some leaders will lean toward pastoral care and prefer stability over change.

In short, the evangelist must install leaders who share parts of his evangelistic DNA but will never be replicas of him. That’s why evangelists often push for new challenges, while pastors aim to protect their flock from fear and instability.

Whether or not the evangelist is willing to fully trust these leaders will determine if the church can reach its next level. He must become like John the Baptist, willing to decrease so that others may increase. Otherwise, he risks stifling the long-term growth of the church by remaining in control.

4. Entering Adulthood

Eventually, at the fourth stage, the evangelist appoints local leaders—elders or shepherds. This formal act signals his willingness to fully transfer responsibility. He may leave the congregation physically or, if he remains, he should focus on planting new churches.

This “separation” is important. If he stays too closely involved, he may be tempted to exercise hidden control, which is harmful both for the church and for the broader kingdom of God. An evangelist is called to start churches, not to keep them. His gift works best in pioneering, pushing the boundaries of God’s reign.

Like parents who must eventually let their children go, evangelists who cling to control become spiritually dysfunctional. They’re like parents who refuse to let their grown children live independently, stunting their growth.

But if an evangelist has done his job well—empowering and equipping leaders—he will have built a relationship of loyalty and trust that endures. This final stage reflects a mature, equal relationship based on mutual respect.

Even if the churches he planted are autonomous, a wise spiritual father will still have a positive influence—not through a hierarchical role (which the New Testament rejects), but through the example he left behind.

We see this in Paul’s visit to the elders of Ephesus, where he gives warnings and instruction, appealing not to his position, but to the sacrificial model he set among them¹⁵. This is why a well-trained evangelist maintains long-lasting leadership, like a father whose grown children still seek his advice. In such a relationship, it’s natural for a church to request the temporary help of its founding evangelist—whether due to internal issues or a need for encouragement

¹⁵ Acts 20:17-38

Table: The Stages in which Evangelists Mature their Churches

Infancy	Childhood	Adolescence	Entering adulthood	Parental Relationship on Equal basis
<u>RESPONSIBILITIES</u> an evangelist has at each stage:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He oversees everything and everyone to grow the church's membership (converting and restructuring it for evangelism). ■ He fiercely guards against external influences and swiftly resolves internal conflicts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He takes all sorts of pioneering initiatives to make the church grow both in numbers and in quality. ■ He chooses key leaders whom he trains and progressively delegates his authority to them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He goes through the painful transition of structuring the entire church and delegating his authority in such a way that the leaders eventually feel they own the church 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He officially appoints elders who will lead the church themselves, and goes on planting other churches 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He offers encouragement, advice, and possible warnings, as expected in an equal relationship.
<u>QUALITIES</u> an evangelist needs at each stage: (They are all needed, but some are more crucial at certain stages)				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He has to clearly and constantly communicate both a challenging and inspiring vision ■ He must be able to convert as many people as possible, and train the church how to do the same 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have the discernment and faith to take new initiatives that will improve the productivity (some activities work great, but some could work even better!) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have the administrative wisdom to put in place people who will help the church to become stable and organized (elders, various deacons, administrators, etc....) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have the faith and humility to completely delegate his authority to all his leaders (and cut off any kind of "bad" dependency he might have created) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have the wisdom and humility, whether he is an internal or external consultant, to treat the leaders of his former churches as adults. (even if he will always have more experience)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must not be afraid to call people to produce results (conversions, radical commitment, etc...) ■ He must have the boldness to oppose those who create divisions and/or bring wrong doctrines into the church ■ He must be totally on top of every priority, but not lost in the details ■ He must be flexible enough to do every kind of possible and even “messy” tasks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must push people to evangelistic results without neglecting their spiritual growth ■ He must have the discernment to choose the best leaders according to their best talents ■ he must take calculated risks to give increasing responsibilities to those leaders (which implies some “testing” in those areas) ■ He must be “pastoral” enough in having the patience and firmness to bring those leaders to a minimal maturity ■ He must create a secure “family atmosphere” where mutual trust and cooperation rule 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have the humility and trust in God to let his leaders have major responsibilities in every area of the church ■ He must have the wisdom to teach the church in such a way that his vision and core values become more important than his own person 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ He must have a vision for his own life to go ahead by planting other churches 	
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Churches should invite Mature Evangelists to Train them

The question is: what do we do with evangelists who are not our spiritual fathers—that is, those who had no influence in the initial development of our church? This question is particularly relevant when a church is not growing in evangelism and badly needs the input of an experienced evangelist.

I believe the answer depends on two factors. The first is: how much spiritual authority does the evangelist have? Does he carry a supernatural anointing that opens doors? Does he have a strong reputation for integrity, character, and the way he works with people?

The second question is: how much influence is a struggling church willing to accept from an outsider? For an evangelist to have a real impact on a church's evangelism, the leadership must be willing to humbly admit that they need training.

When a church fails to grow through conversions, the issue often lies with its leaders—not leading by example and not knowing how to equip their members or structure the church for numerical growth. In other words, those leaders must invite evangelists into their inner circle and allow themselves to be personally trained.

Struggling churches
need to invite
evangelists who will
intentionally equip the
leadership and motivate
their church for
evangelism

To borrow the humorous illustration that Ichak Adizes¹⁶ gives: organizations don't need consultants who stay at a safe distance and are consulted only when convenient. They need outside consultants who stay inside—so much so that we could call them not “con-sultants,” but “in-sultants”!

If a church keeps an evangelist at a distance—bringing him in only for a revival meeting or a large evangelistic crusade—without being willing to change from the inside, then the impact will be superficial. It will be cosmetic surgery, not heart surgery. If the leaders are unwilling to retrain themselves in a leadership style that must fundamentally change to become evangelistic, then nothing will be resolved in the long run.

In conclusion, I want to make a passionate appeal: evangelists must be restored to the biblical place of leadership and pastoral influence that they held in the early Church.

Churches must make room for these ministers—not only by supporting them financially and emotionally in starting new congregations, but also by opening their doors and welcoming their equipping.

As long as churches resist evangelists—out of insecurity toward their authority—they will never step into the missional destiny that was intended for them.

For those who are called to be evangelists, they must grow in the supernatural anointing that is reserved for their function. They must learn the difficult art of training and empowering local leaders until those leaders can stand on their own. And they must mature pastorally, so they can relate well to, and effectively help, pastors of long-established churches that struggle with evangelism.

Lesson from the Secular World: Evangelists Should Build Homegrown Leadership Within the Churches They Started

In his book *Built to Last – Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*, Jim Collins, together with Jerry Porras, presents a surprising statistic about how successful companies recruit their top leaders. Among the 18 most successful and enduring companies studied from 1806 to 1992, only two hired a chief executive from outside the company. In contrast, the comparison companies—those that did not perform as well in the same industries—hired thirteen outsiders. Put differently, the visionary companies were six times more likely to promote insiders to key positions than the comparison companies.

Another relevant fact, which correlates with this insight, is that nearly all of the key early architects in the visionary companies remained in office for extended periods—an average of 32.4 years. So although few faced succession while still young and small, Collins notes, “many were preparing for succession long before the actual moment of succession. If you are a small-business person, this indicates taking a very long-term view. In other words, the entrepreneurial model of building a company around a great idea, growing quickly, cashing out, and passing the company off to outside professional managers will not produce the next HP, Motorola, or GE” (p. 184).

Now let us consider how most churches develop their leadership. The average tenure of a pastor in a local church in America is just 3.8 years (Rainer’s survey, 2001). Among many other issues, one of the worst outcomes of such brief tenures is the vicious cycle that follows—a pattern remarkably similar to what occurs in the business world.

When church members feel dissatisfied, they look for a new “Messiah” from outside, hoping this person will turn everything around. After a few years, when the new pastor fails to meet all their expectations, he leaves for “greener pastures,” and the church once again falls into the “outside savior syndrome.”

This cycle continues because churches rarely pause to ask: “What do we have in our midst to meet our own leadership needs? Can we hire a coach to train our own team?” Unless a church adopts a long-term mindset and commits to building homegrown leadership, the cycle will repeat endlessly.

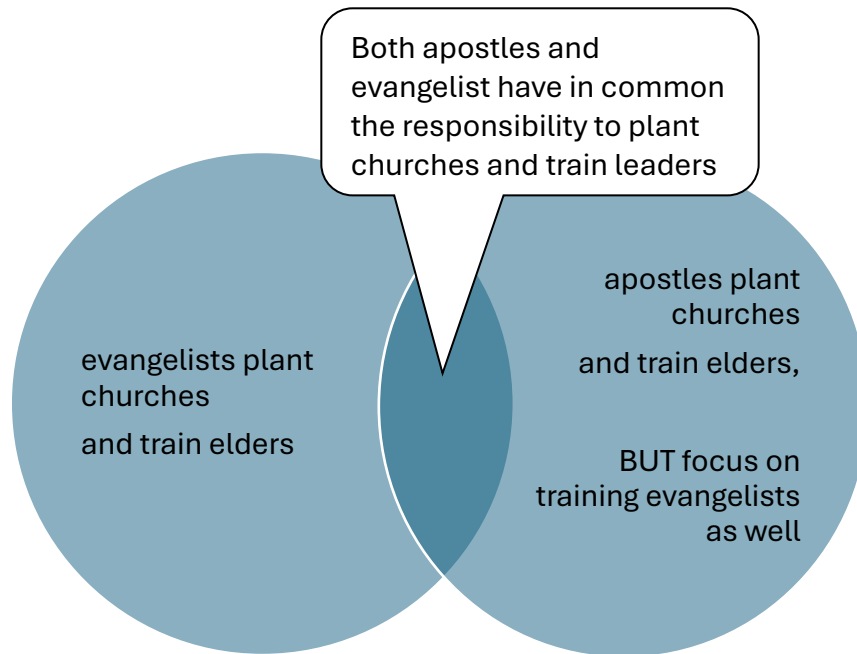
Here is where the founding leader plays a decisive role. If he builds everything around himself—without successors or a long-term, self-reproducing leadership structure—then when he leaves, the church either collapses or limps along until it hires another outside savior. And thus, the same damaging pattern continues.

The key priority for any evangelist, therefore, must be to build strong, local leadership as early as possible. To do this, he must create an environment and structure in which potential leaders can emerge. Eventually, he will have a wide enough pool of candidates to begin choosing the few whom he will personally train and appoint to serve the local church.

This is exactly what Paul had in mind when he wrote to Titus: “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you” (Titus 1:5).

This process may take a few years. But if leadership development is a central priority of the evangelist's ministry, then not only will he leave the church with equipped successors—more importantly, he will create a culture in which future leaders naturally emerge from within, without the need to bring in outsiders.

May evangelists learn from Jack Welch, CEO of General Electric, who, nine years before his planned retirement, wisely stated: "From now on, [choosing my successor] is the most important decision I'll make. It occupies a considerable amount of thought almost every day."



Evangelists: It Is Not How Much Authority They Have, but When and How Long

The big question regarding evangelists is not whether they should have authority in leading their churches, but rather, *"How much authority should they be given, when, and for how long?"*

We cannot deny that evangelists must have some authority in order to initiate change—just as parents need authority over their children. But the real question is: what kind of authority should they exercise, at what stage, and for how long should they retain it?

From what I have observed, when an evangelist starts a church, it is legitimate that he be granted significant authority—within reasonable limits. This is similar to how parents exercise tight control over their very young children. The principle applies to anyone starting an organization. Strong and even dominating evangelists can make a huge difference at this early phase, which is why their authority is rarely questioned at the beginning.

That's because all beginnings are naturally chaotic and face opposition. In such times, a bold and directive leader can make all the difference.

The problem begins when such leaders continue to exercise total control long after the initial phase has passed. They refuse to structure the church in a way that allows them to eventually step back. They simply cannot let go. They fail to trust, to delegate, or to decentralize their influence.

They become like parents who continue controlling their grown-up children—resulting in children who are either dysfunctional or rebellious.

The key lies in progressive delegation until the evangelist is able to step aside—just as illustrated in the graphic below:

