

In a recent book called “The Millennials,” author Thom Rainer reports that “96% of millennials believe they will someday **accomplish something great**” with their lives. That might not seem all that surprising. After all, regardless of the generation, not too many kids dream of growing up to be total slackers, right?

But what is interesting is how that 96% of millennials define what it means to “accomplish something great.” To Millennials, “accomplishing something great” means doing “something for the greater good of humanity.” Millennials want to do something that will leave a lasting impact on others, and make a difference in the world. Not personally beneficial accomplishments like making lots of money or owning a nice house.

For some Millennials, that might mean a career in politics, or a life of activism; running a non-profit, philanthropic giving, or protecting the environment; parenting or teaching, in order to positively influence the next generation.

While those are all good, impactful things, I think there’s one action that stands alone as the most impactful thing we can do for the greater good of humanity. That is, evangelism: Sharing the good news that Jesus is the Savior of the world.

But here’s the tricky part. 96% of Millennials believe they will “accomplish something great” with their lives. But another recent Barna Group report stated that nearly half of Christian Millennials believe it’s wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith, in hopes that they will one day share the same faith. That means, if I’m going to claim that Evangelism is the most impactful “something great” we can accomplish, I’ve got some convincing to do.

Now, maybe you’re thinking, “Of course the Evangelism pastor will tell us Evangelism is most impactful!” But, that’s not just my opinion. In Paul’s letter to the Romans, we’ll see that God agrees, that Evangelism is the most impactful thing we can do in this world. Paul uses rhetorical questions as a “cause and effect” progression to highlight the necessity of Evangelism.

First, Paul quotes the prophet Joel, **“For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”** This is the basic truth at the end of Paul’s logical chain. Calling on the name of the Lord, in prayer or worship, means having faith in Jesus as the Savior. So, everyone—regardless of race, gender, age, or social standing-- who has faith in Jesus as Savior, receives the gift of salvation.

Paul then backtracks through the progression. **“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”**

Calling on the name of the Lord in faith leads to salvation. But in order to have faith, you have to believe in Jesus. In order to believe in Jesus, you have to have heard about Jesus. In order to have heard about Jesus, someone has to have...told you about Jesus.

That’s why Evangelism is the most impactful thing we can do! In order for someone to have saving faith, someone needs to tell them about Jesus. Evangelism affects people’s eternity! Politics, activism, philanthropy, and humanitarian efforts can all effect change...but ultimately, only temporary changes. That’s not saying those aren’t good accomplishments! But we’re comparing the impact of temporary good with eternal good! Can anything else we do make a bigger difference for a person than sharing the message of the Savior who freed them from an eternity of suffering in hell, to give them an eternity of perfection in Heaven?

And the gospel doesn't just impact people's eternity. It impacts the greater good for the present too! If we're concerned about the sanctity of life, we can only change people's hearts by pointing them to Jesus, who gives value to every life, from womb to nursing home. If we're disturbed by the political divide in our country, we can only change hearts by pointing to Jesus, who loved his enemies enough to suffer hell for them. If we want to positively impact the next generation, we need to teach them about their Savior!

But what about those who say it's wrong, or pushy, or unloving to share your faith with others, claiming to have the truth? Is it loving to tackle a person who's unsuspectingly about to get hit by a truck? Or would that be unloving, because who am I to claim to know that the truck was actually going to smash them?

That opinion is also voiced by Penn Jillette. You probably know him as the big guy who talks from Penn and Teller. Oh, and it's important to know, Penn is an extremely vocal atheist. But he says, ***"I don't respect people who don't proselytize. If you believe there is a heaven and hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward? How much do you have to hate someone to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?"*** To view Evangelism as unloving or unnecessary ignores that God says the gospel impacts peoples' eternity!

The other reason to share the gospel is the last phrase Paul uses in his progression; the beginning of the chain. ***"And how can they preach unless they are sent?"*** In order for someone to tell about Jesus, someone has to send them.

I think that's why Paul goes backwards, instead of starting at the beginning. This way, Paul ends emphasizing who's most important—the one who sends the messengers. That's Jesus!

The same Lord who asked Isaiah, ***"Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"***; the same Lord who instructed his first disciples ***"From now on you will catch men."***; the same Lord has called all Christians, including us, to ***"Go and make disciples of all nations."***

If we evangelized our own message, by our own decision, maybe someone could say it's wrong. But the word for "preach" means "herald." A herald is a messenger entrusted to deliver another person's message. We evangelize as heralds, proclaiming the message of Christ, who sent us himself!

As we herald Jesus' message, the Holy Spirit goes to work, creating faith that Jesus is the Savior. As Paul writes, ***"Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word of Christ."***

But if the gospel has such great impact, and Jesus himself sends us to proclaim it, why do we so often find ourselves dodging opportunities to share Jesus, rather than making the most of them? Why do even I, the Evangelism pastor, have to shake my head at the many times that I've kept my mouth shut? Because Satan knows the power of evangelism too.

As Paul says, ***"But not all the Israelites accepted the good news."*** Just like in Paul's day, not everyone believes in the good news of Jesus. That makes sharing Jesus with people intimidating! If all we had to do was talk, and everyone would come to faith, we'd be pumped to do it! But people sometimes reject the gospel, and that can make sharing it disheartening. Maybe you've tried to evangelize friends, family, or coworkers, but they keep shaking you off. Satan jumps in quickly then, saying, "You're no good at this evangelism stuff. Just stop, and let other people do it."

Evangelism can sometimes leave us feeling like the disciples in their fishing boats, lamenting that we've ***"worked hard all night and haven't caught anything."*** But Jesus tells us to keep casting our nets. Do we trust

him? Or do we give up fishing? Satan wants us to silence the message, because he too knows that faith comes from hearing the message!

We have to admit, we often fail to share Jesus with people who need him. We have to acknowledge, we're unworthy messengers with unclean lips like Isaiah. Like Peter, we should drop down in fear before Jesus, pleading, ***"Go away from me Lord; I am a sinful man."***

But that's why we share Jesus. Because he's the God of forgiveness, who through his sacrifice on the altar of the cross has removed our guilt and atoned for our sin! That changes our attitude about evangelism. Just like Isaiah, moved by God's love, we can joyfully answer God's call, ***"Here am I. Send me!"*** and accomplish something great!

Note what God says. ***"How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news."*** Paul's quoting the prophet Isaiah, who spoke of the beautiful feet of the messengers who carried the good news of freedom from slavery and exile to the Israelites. Your feet are beautiful too, as they carry the message of Christ, who set us free from the slavery and exile of sin and hell! It's not about your lips being so eloquent. It's about your feet carrying Christ's beautiful, perfect message of salvation to those who need it.

Nearly 60 years ago, a man named Gleason worked an unspectacular job monitoring dials and gauges in a big room for Consumers Power Company. On nice days, Gleason would walk across the street and eat his lunch in the shade of a big tree. Would you say Gleason was accomplishing something great for the greater good of humanity?

I would. I call him Grandpa Gleason. Not because we were related, but because he hugely impacted my life. The tree he'd eat under was in front of my grandparents' house. My grandparents, who at the time, weren't Christians. Neither was my 4-year old mother. My grandparents became friends with the man who sat under their tree. And he told them about Jesus. They heard it, and by God's grace, they believed it. And so my mom remembers being baptized.

I don't know what would have happened if Gleason hadn't shared his faith with my grandparents. Would my parents have gotten married? If they had, would I have believed in Jesus? Would I be standing in this pulpit today, sharing Jesus with you, if not for Gleason's evangelism? I don't know. But God did. Gleason's in heaven now with my grandma. I look forward to seeing him again someday, and introducing him to my family, and God-willing, to you who I've shepherded.

Today, I want you to think about the person who first shared Jesus with you. Whether it was your parents, your spouse, a friend, a pastor, a teacher, a stranger. God worked through them to accomplish something great-- bringing you to him. Give thanks for those people today. Then, let's go and be Isaiahs, Peters, and Gleasons, trusting that God will use your evangelism to accomplish something great.