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Foreword

It is the best of times for evangelism in America, and it is the worst of times. It is the best of times because there is a high receptivity to the gospel. According to our research, four out of ten non-Christians in the United States would welcome a conversation about Jesus with a Christian. That means that over 60 million people who are lost and without hope would like to know how to be saved and filled with hope. What a great opportunity! What a mission field!

But it's the worst of times as well. The American church is in serious decline. The passion for evangelism is less evident each year. Many church-going Christians will *never* share with an unbeliever the truth claims of the Savior. Never. Not one time. And many pastors and other church leaders are moving evangelism to the backburner of priorities. In fact, in one study we completed a few years ago, we found that 53 percent of senior pastors had not shared the gospel even one time in the previous six-month period.

It is the best of times, and it is the worst of times. The mission field is filled with opportunities for the message of the gospel to be heard, received, and affirmed. But the American church is largely and sinfully silent.

The publication of *Evangelism Handbook* could not be timelier. The need for every word in this volume could not be greater. And the priority for the message of this book could not be more urgent.

I have known Alvin Reid for years. We have been on the same platform in conferences. Our writings often end up in the hands of the same people. The courses we have taught are similar. And more than any of these, Dr. Reid's passion for the sharing of the gospel is what I admire about him the most. This man is not merely writing a book from the wealth of his intellectual expertise. He is writing a book from the passion of his heart. I love this quote directly from Dr. Reid in the book: "for me evangelism is not a job, it is the passion of my life. And the need of the hour is for the church to become more missional in its focus, a challenge for which I will give the rest of my life."

Don't think for a moment that *Evangelism Handbook* is just filled with passion and void of solid content. To the contrary, this book offers one of the best overviews of the discipline of evangelism that I've ever read. The first part is an incredible overview of evangelism from both a biblical and historical perspective. We are able to see why the message of the gospel is so important and why that message must be theologically and biblically sound. And we are able to walk through the history of the Church, looking at her evangelistic victories and her evangelistic mistakes.

The second part of the book reminds us of the critical need to be spiritually empowered to do evangelism. Dr. Reid powerfully examines how the spiritual disciplines can make

a believer effective in sharing the message. In other words, he reminds us that, while the message is vital, the role of the messenger cannot be overlooked.

From history and theology and spiritual power, the book turns to the practical application of evangelistic approaches. And in the final section, Dr. Reid examines the missional focus of the church, offering incredible insights on how each local church should view its community from the same perspective as a missionary on a foreign field.

So there are many great truths, many great facts in *Evangelism Handbook*. But one thing that stands out in the book is Dr. Reid's passion for evangelism. That heartbeat, that spirit, permeates every part of the book.

The late Dr. Lewis Drummond, my mentor and my evangelism professor, said repeatedly, "Men and women, evangelism can be taught. Its truths are timeless. But more than anything, evangelism must be caught." It is that passion that Alvin Reid brings to this book, a passion that is caught.

I have read this book. I have caught the passion. May many more do likewise.

Thom S. Rainer
President and CEO
LifeWay Christian Resources

Afterword

When Alvin Reid first asked me to do the afterword for this book, he referred to it as his magnum opus. His use of the word magnum was no exaggeration. This is easily the most comprehensive book on the subject of evangelism I have ever read.

Again and again I was impressed with the minute details of virtually every aspect of evangelistic ministry. The reader cannot help but be impressed with the soundness of the biblical and theological aspects of this book. But Alvin has a way of making theology come alive, and one of the strengths of this book is the combination of inspiration and theology. The illustrations employed in the book are to the point and gripping in their interest.

Another significant fact about the book is that to Alvin, evangelism is more than some mechanical operation which is humanly contrived. The Holy Spirit's work and the prayer factor on the part of the church are constant themes on these pages.

It is refreshing to read a book that comes to the rescue of what some regard as obsolete methods in evangelism. The author still strongly believes in assigned visitation as a part of the evangelistic planning of a church. He is unashamed to say that most churches that are strong in evangelism are churches that are unafraid to knock on doors with a view to sharing the message with those within. Chapters on the evangelism of children and young people are especially strong.

There is an unusual fairness in assessment of what is workable in contemporary evangelism and what is not. As far as telling the truth about evangelism today, this book certainly carries with it the ring of the real.

Roy Fish
Distinguished Professor of Evangelism Emeritus
Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary