

Creating a Culture of Evangelism

“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone...”
(Colossians 1:28)

I. Modes of Evangelism

A. Initiative Evangelism

Unbelievers are exposed to the gospel, often outside of their natural relationships, through the strategic initiative of Christians.

Biblical Examples

- ✓ Jesus’ teaching ministry primarily centered around initiative evangelism – He continually went to new towns preaching publicly (Mark 1:38-39).
- ✓ Jesus trained and deployed his disciples (12 and 72) through initiative evangelism (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-17).
- ✓ The normal Christians (not the apostles), from the scattered church in Jerusalem, went about preaching the gospel in this mode (Acts 8:1-4).
- ✓ Most of the evangelism recorded in Acts was done in this mode: Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8), Peter and Cornelius (Acts 10), Paul and Barnabas (Acts 13 and beyond).

Modern Methods

- ✓ Taking the initiative to share the gospel with people you’ve just met (on airplanes, with waiters, etc.), Gospel Outreaches (GO’s), evangelism at Second Saturdays, open-air preaching, etc.

Challenges

- ✓ This can initially be the most uncomfortable of the three modes.
- ✓ This mode doesn’t allow for an easy follow-up or integration of new believers.

Benefits

- ✓ Many unbelievers have no friends willing to share the gospel with them. And certain groups would be biased against attending a “Christian” event (for example homosexuals, Goths, people of other religions, etc).
- ✓ This mode provides a real-life context for modeling, training and discipleship in evangelism

B. Lifestyle Evangelism

Unbelievers are exposed to the gospel through the everyday relationships and interactions they have with Christians.

Biblical Examples

- ✓ With the first disciples, Andrew brought his brother Peter to Jesus, and Philip brought his friend Nathanael (John 1:40-51).
- ✓ The Samaritan woman told her whole town about her encounter with Jesus (John 4:28-42).
- ✓ The exorcised man from the Gerasenes went home and told his friends how much Jesus had done for him (Mark 5:19-20).
- ✓ We are instructed to make the best use of our time around unbelievers, acting wisely, speaking graciously, and giving informed answers about the gospel (Colossians 4:5-6, see also 1 Peter 3:15-16).

Modern Methods ¹

- ✓ “Pursue & Proclaim,” sharing gospel with friends, family, coworkers, classmates, roommates, etc.

Challenges

- ✓ Many Christians hesitate to share the gospel with people close to them because they fear damaging the relationship.
- ✓ It is difficult to effectively equip the church in the practical “how-to’s” of evangelism in this mode, because it’s normally unpredictable, process-oriented, and drawn out (takes time).

Benefits

- ✓ Christians are usually less fearful of sharing the gospel with people they know, than with people they don’t.
- ✓ Historically the gospel has often spread along relational lines. While the gospel may initially penetrate a group through initiative evangelism, it permeates the group through relationships.

II. The “Body” Witness ²

Unbelievers are exposed to the gospel and its effects through contact with a body of believers.

¹ It’s important to insist that this mode still requires consistent effort on the part of the believer both to plan time together with unbelievers and then to actually proclaim the gospel (e.g. “What’s Your Plan”), or else this mode will degenerate into good intentions with evangelism never actually occurring.

² This mode is not technically “evangelism,” unless the gospel message is proclaimed. Even so, there remains a strong and compelling witness as the corporate body lives out their faith together in love and holiness.

Biblical Examples

- ✓ Jesus prayed for our unity, so that unbelievers would know that he was sent from God (John 17:22-23).
- ✓ Unbelievers will know we are Christ's disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35).
- ✓ In the early church, the body of Christ was a publicly favorable group that unbelievers were being saved into daily (Acts 2:42-47).
- ✓ Worship (esp. prophecy) and Communion ("you proclaim the Lord's death") both serve as corporate witnesses (1 Corinthians 11:26, 14:25).

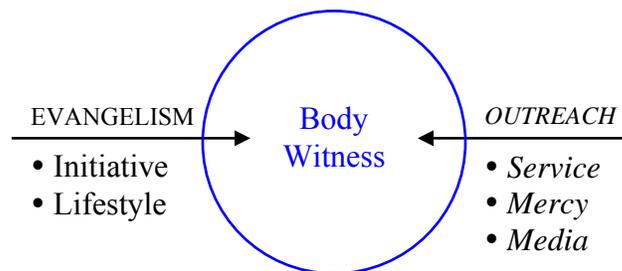
Modern Methods

- ✓ Church services, "Matthew" parties, Community Groups, Connecting Events, Guest Sundays, socials, etc.

Challenges

- ✓ A body witness can only impact those who are close enough to see and experience it firsthand, which typically means those who are already seeking in some way.
- ✓ Usually people come into contact with the church through the two modes of evangelism (see Figure 1), so evangelism must precede for the body witness to have its effect.

Figure 1: The Sequential Priority of Initiative and Lifestyle Evangelism³

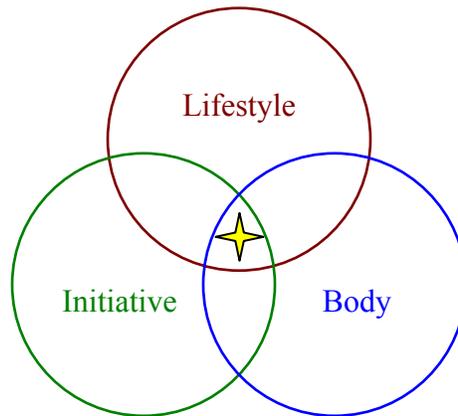


Benefits

- ✓ It's not as hard to share the gospel with someone who is already interested enough to come to a Christian activity.
- ✓ There's a higher rate of integration into the church – if they are already connecting to the church body, they won't face as many the obstacles to becoming a member after conversion.

³ Historically we have primarily utilized forms of non-evangelistic outreaches (the right arrow) to bring unbelievers into the body witness of the congregation. While these are excellent supplements, we must be careful never to abandon personal evangelism (the left arrow). Otherwise our gospel proclamation essentially gets quarantined within the church building. This then places the burden upon the unregenerate to *come* to us for the gospel message, rather than causing us to *go* to them with the gospel message.

Figure 2: Bringing it Together



It's important to not see these modes as in competition, but rather complimenting and reinforcing one another. The ideal "sweet spot" would be to have all three strategies operational in the life of an unbeliever.⁴ Most Christians would acknowledge that they were exposed to the gospel through numerous of modes and methods prior to their conversion.

III. Methodology & Mobilization

"Brethren, do something; do something, do something! While committees waste their time over resolutions, do something While Societies and Unions are making constitutions, let us win souls. Too often we discuss, and discuss, and discuss and Satan laughs in his sleeve. It is time we had done planning and sought something to plan. I pray you, be men of action all of you. Get to work and quit yourselves like men. Old Suwarrow's idea of war is mine: 'Forward and strike! No theory! Attack! Form column! Charge bayonets! Plunge into the center of the enemy! Our one aim is to save sinners, and this we are not to talk about, but to do in the power of God!'" – C. H. Spurgeon⁵

A. Why Methodology is Crucial to Mobilization

Methodology, build upon a sound theology and a biblical philosophy, will translate discussion and theory into practice and action:

Theology → Philosophy → Methodology = **ACTION!**

⁴ Some comments of the Alpha Course. Alpha is a wonderfully potent course, in that it actually combines all three modes of evangelism in one method: initiative (e.g. preaching, group discussions), lifestyle (e.g. natural relationships forming, bringing your friends), and body witness (e.g. church, small groups).

⁵ Quoted from Lectures to my Student, Lecture II, Forward!, pp. 36-37.

Example 1: Servant Outreach (SO)

- Theology: God’s love and grace are free and undeserved.
- Philosophy: Bless and serve people for free to demonstrate God’s love and grace.
 - ✓ NOTE: If we stop here, and tell the church to simply do random acts of kindness, not much, if any, activity will happen. But add a method to execute your ministry philosophy and what happens?
- Methodology: Hand out a gift bag to your co-worker, or...
 - ✓ Pray for your waiter or waitress
 - ✓ Do a free carwash
 - ✓ What happens? Execution and action!

Example 2: Gospel Outreach (GO)

- Theology: God saves people through the power of His gospel.
- Philosophy: We should personally and regularly articulate the message of the gospel with unbelievers, calling them to respond with repentance and faith.
 - ✓ So much of our teaching on evangelism stops here resulting in little to no action
 - ✓ The bold and articulate may figure out how to do it
 - ✓ But the majority of Christians feel inadequate, immobilized and side-lined
- Methodology: Read through this booklet, using it to explain the gospel, or...
 - ✓ Use this Spiritual Questionnaire and then transition to the “How Good Are You?” booklet.
 - ✓ Now what happens...

Jenny Russo’s Story

Before the church began teaching practical ways to engage people with the gospel, I hated doing [evangelism]... I would always leave a conversation feeling like I had failed because the person didn't respond in repentance – if I even got to the point of sharing the gospel at all. Not only did people not repent, but I was left feeling like they just got further removed because of my awkwardness and lack of knowledge to defend my faith.

Fast forward to the present. When I found out my Small Group was going out one evening and sharing the gospel, I cringed. Then I felt guilty that I didn't want to go out even after all the experience I had had in sharing my faith over the years... When the (time) to go out came up, God gave me grace. I was praying for God to give me strength and a love for the lost that I could lay down my desires and serve those that need to hear the gospel. By God's grace, I was totally at peace and relaxed... That night I used the Spiritual Questionnaire... (and) like we had been trained, I walked up to someone that night and told them that we were "out talking with people about God, did they have a few minutes to chat...I know it's kinda weird, I just have some questions to help me get to know you better..." We were able to get through the entire questionnaire, the "How Good Are You?" tract, and even discuss things further! God was reminding me the whole time of how it was only my job to share to the best of my ability and that it was His job to convict and save. I kept remembering that these people knew truth in their hearts, and I was able to give it over to God and let Him change their hearts and work out their questions. One of the girls asked to keep a tract and I encouraged them to attend Alpha.

I left that evening feeling so good that I am now able to engage people in the gospel. I shared the gospel later after that, using the same method and got into another great conversation and gave out another tract. Thank you for teaching a simple approach that takes the awkwardness out of it for me. I love it. I'm finding myself looking forward to evangelism. I enjoy meeting new people and I'm excited to be able to get into these great spiritual conversations with them with honesty, using structured questions that lead right into a clear gospel tract. I can't thank you guys enough for being so faithful to lead reluctant people like me in this way!

- ✓ Training in methodology, if done rightly, will not undermine your theology, but actually reinforce it and put it into practice!

B. Why Prioritize Initiative Evangelism (e.g. GO)?

"I firmly believe that witnessing is a learned talent. God burdens our hearts to reach the lost, but we must get out there and start practicing those conversations. The funny thing is, though, the more you practice, the easier it becomes." – Mark Cahill

1. It's message-centered
 - To evangelize (euaggelizomai) is to proclaim the gospel message (euaggelion) with an aim to persuade.

- Phrases like, “preach the gospel at all times, if necessary use words” are unhelpful and can undermine biblical evangelism.
- We don’t want to lower the bar of what we’re actually called to do in evangelism (i.e. “evangelize”).

2. It’s incarnational

- Many factors contribute to incarnating the message: our common humanity (the image of God), language, culture, backgrounds, experiences, relationships, etc.
- While friendships are ideal, it’s not accurate to say that these relationships are the only way to effectively incarnate the message.

3. It’s equipping

- “Evangelism is easier caught than taught.”
- In evangelism, we more easily act our way into thinking differently than think our way into acting differently.
- Experience, both good and bad, play a powerful role in whether we will remain actively involved in evangelism.
- Initiative evangelism reinforces the reality that evangelism is something we can learn and grow in (a spiritual discipline). It’s not something you do or don’t have (a spiritual gift).

4. It’s catalytic

- Initiative and lifestyle evangelism are mutually reinforcing.
- Initiative evangelism is an ideal training mode, lifestyle an ideal “way-of-life” mode (see Figure 3).
- Those who are involved in initiative evangelism (i.e. GO) are often more likely to share the gospel in the context of their everyday relationships than those who are only willing to share the gospel through relationships alone.

C. GO: Implementing Structures of “Reality-Exposure”⁶

“For most of us, evangelism is not a comfortable activity. Here we often face the ‘chicken and the egg’ dilemma. We reason, ‘I don’t want to do evangelism unless it feels natural.’ This feeling is quite understandable. But what we really are saying is, ‘I’ll do it when it’s in my comfort zone.’ And how does any activity get to the point where it ‘feels natural?’ You guessed it, by doing it. Only personal experience broadens the boundaries of our comfort zone.”

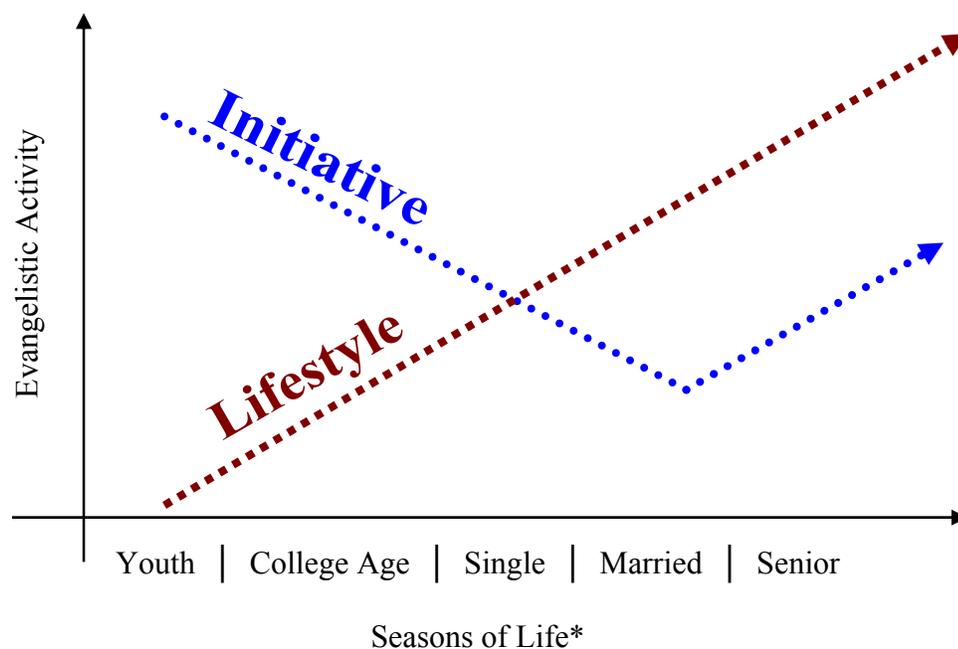
- Mark McCloskey

⁶ See Appendix 2 for some tips on doing a Gospel Outreach.

The intent of these structures is to massage the value of evangelism into the church. To create a culture of evangelism in our churches through real-life experience. We want evangelism to become the normative experience of every believer in our church. Once this corner is turned, as new Christians and converts join the church they'll "catch" evangelism, like they do all our other values (doctrine, gifts, marriage, parenting, etc) through both our teaching *and* our modeling:

1. GO with the Pastors (top-down)
2. GO with the Small Groups (grass-roots/bottom-up)
3. GO with Outreach Days and other Events (voluntary contexts)

Figure 2: A Normal Believer's Life⁷



*Notice that differing seasons of life normally provide differing opportunities for evangelistic obedience in the initiative and lifestyle modes:

- ✓ For example we wouldn't encourage a professing teen to throw themselves into relationships with unbelieving peers.
- ✓ Likewise a mother of 5 children will have much less opportunities to invest herself in an regular form of initiative evangelism.
- ✓ Even so, initiative evangelism (e.g. GO) will always remain a crucial means of establishing and maintaining the culture of lifestyle evangelism (i.e. Pursue & Proclaim).

⁷ This chart assumes that the believer is saved as a youth.

D. Why We Use the “How Good Are You?” Tract?

“Get good striking tracts, or none at all. But a touching gospel tract may be the seed of eternal life. Therefore, do not go out without your tracts.” – C.H. Spurgeon



- Covers the essentials in explaining the gospel:
 1. Our Problem
 - ✓ Includes God as Creator, sin, wrath, hell.
 - ✓ Covers topics that are hard to talk about in an honest, biblical presentation.
 2. God’s Solution
 - ✓ Includes Christ’s love, sinless life, substitutionary death, and resurrection.
 3. Your Response
 - ✓ Switches to 2nd person and emphasizes the need for repentance and faith.
 - ✓ Allows you to call for a response to the message, which is part of evangelism.
- Equips through real-life experience immediately
 - ✓ Unlike many methods, memorization for HGRU comes on the back end (not up-front).
- Illustrates the message and holds attention through high-quality graphics.
- Provides an “outside authority” and Scriptures for the Christian and unbeliever to engage over.
- Over time, God’s Law and the 3-points become four mental “hooks” in which you explain the gospel – with or without the tool (it unites & “catechizes” the church).