

Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Leadership 1
Ecclesiology 1
Week 4 – Biblical Principles of Evangelism

Introduction

Review the central mission of the church: evangelism and discipleship in the context of Christian community.

Tonight and next week we will focus on effectiveness in reaching people for Christ and following up new Christians. Use this material for your own ministry, and teach it in cell group.

Doing this both equips and motivates people to evangelize.

Focus more on the positive benefits of evangelism (seeing God open doors and empower you to witness; seeing people respond; having new people come into your home group, etc.), and less on the moral obligation, the agonies of hell, etc.

The 5 components of every communication event: Evangelism is a form of communication.

- **MESSAGE:** the content to be communicated
- **MEDIUM:** the context in which it is communicated
- **SENDER:** the one initiating the communication
- **RECEIVER:** the one receiving the communication
- **NOISE:** anything that impedes communication

We will use this model as a framework for talking about biblical principles of evangelism and their practical application. (“Noise” will not be covered as a separate category, but as antitheses to many evangelistic principles. See if you can pick out the “noise!”)

Message: the content to be communicated

What is the “gospel?” “Evangelize” (*euaggelion; euaggelizo yoo ang ghel ee on*) means “gospelize” which means “bringer of good news”.

To evangelize (“gospelize”) is to “verbally share the good news of God’s reconciliation through Jesus Christ, and to invite people to receive this gift.” (John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

2 Corinthians 5:18-21 expresses this emphasis that God has already done everything to be reconciled to us – the question is whether we want to be. John 3:16 has this tone and emphasis as well.

God has done everything needed for him to accept us--the only thing needed is for us to choose to be reconciled to him. This is super important, so important that it is the “marker” of the end of the age (read Matthew 24:14). Consider these practical implications:

- ***Emphasize God’s grace more than human sin and God’s judgment (John 16:8).*** We shouldn’t be afraid to mention these things, but we want them to be the backdrop for the good news--not the focal point. God promises that the Holy Spirit will convict the hearer of sin and judgment. (John 16:8) "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment." Our job is to emphasize the solution. This is what attracts people to Christ.

- **Realize that you have not “evangelized” until you have verbally shared this message.** Showing Christian love, talking about your relationship with Christ and how he has changed your life, sharing the evidence for Christianity, etc. are good. They may even be necessary as “pre-evangelism” - but they are not “evangelism” in the proper sense of the word. Do you have a way of presenting the gospel?
- **Assume misconceptions concerning the gospel, identify them, and replace them with the complementary truth.** Instead, assume they have serious misconceptions about the message (“NOISE”) until they show you otherwise. Like all antitheses, these misconceptions provide the opportunity to better explain the message and emphasize the significance of God’s grace. To defend or advocate Christianity without correcting these misconceptions is to advocate something you don’t believe! Also, don’t assume you understand their misconceptions. You need to listen. Here are common misconceptions. The first three are “central” to the gospel message:
 1. **“We must earn God’s acceptance by good works”** vs. we receive God’s acceptance as a free gift by faith in Christ (Galatians 2:16; Philippians 3:9; Eph. 2:8,9; Titus 3:5).
 2. **“God wants us to relate to him impersonally through ritual observance and with fear-threat-guilt”** vs. God wants us to relate to him in a personal love-trust relationship (Revelation 3:20; John 1:12).
 3. **“We must change ourselves morally before we can come to God”** vs. we can come to God the way we are by receiving Christ and then God begins to change us (Luke 23:43; John 4:10; John 7:37,39).

Other Pre-Evangelistic Misconceptions Include:

4. **“Becoming a Christian requires blind faith”** versus faith based on evidence.
5. **“Once you are a Christian, you have to stop having fun and be weird”** versus being normal and fun-loving.

Look for ways to disassociate your self from these misconceptions and share the complementary truth. Consider the following examples:

You can also ask the other person what he thinks Christianity is, and then respond to the misconceptions he brings up.

When the fact that you are a Christian comes up, say, "Let me explain what I mean when I say I am a Christian. . ."

You can share what you thought Christianity was and what you discovered it actually was.

Trust God to work through this message to arrest people’s attention, and to convict them of its truthfulness and of their need to believe it (John 16:8; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:4; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Colossians 1:5,6).

Your role is not to “do it all” – it is a supernatural event, His part.

And we trust his role regarding of their initial response.

Therefore, consider the following implications:

- **Communicate the gospel as soon as possible and come back to it as much as possible (1 Corinthians 2:1-2).** And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. {2} For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

- ***Clarify the gospel's meaning in various ways (passages, illustrations, personal testimony)***

by contrasting it to common misconceptions (see above),

by showing passages (see above),

by providing illustrations that explain different aspects of the gospel (I.R.S. DEBT; NIAGARA TIGHTROPE; JUDGE & SON; PHARISEE & PUBLICAN),

and by sharing your own testimony.

Believers should be able to explain the testimony of their own conversion. Many believers find it necessary to write out for themselves a one-page personal testimony with appropriate content, and learn it. The following is a good outline:

a) Your life before you met Christ.

b) How and why you received Christ.

c) The specific changes that have occurred in your life since then. Key words such as purpose, meaning, direction, loneliness, fears, etc., should be considered and remembered.

Note the handout – “Logic of Salvation” to help with this.

- ***Subordinate apologetics to evangelism.***

-WHAT APOLOGETICS CAN/CANNOT DO; Remember the limitation of apologetics.

Apologetics do not convert people. They can be a starting point for discussing spiritual things.

They overturn the misconception that Christianity is irrational (like “FLAT EARTH SOCIETY”) and take away this as a rationalization for not seriously considering God.

They also provide examples of intelligent people who believe, which many people need to see in before they're ready to believe. They can have the effect of opening a closed mind.

-RESPOND TO OBJECTIONS WITH APOLOGETICS; INITIATE THE GOSPEL!

(1 Peter 3:15)--don't initiate apologetics and polemics. If you do this, you may raise concerns they didn't even have. Again make sure we are listening and understand what they are asking.

(1 Pet 3:15) but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

Use different apologetics for different people. Don't just use what was persuasive to you, or what has been helpful for others. Listen carefully to discover the objections and misconceptions and then provide the apologetics that suit them.

-DON'T ACCEPT THE BURDEN TO FULLY PROVE CHRISTIANITY before they should believe. We only need to show that Christianity is *plausible*--that should be sufficient in view of the gracious offer God is making. Keep in mind there is a subjective element. There needs to be a step of faith the person must take.

-TRY TO USE APOLOGETICS THAT INCLUDE THE GOSPEL or are conducive to explaining the gospel (Evangelistic Apologetic Tapes; Fulfilled Messianic Prophecy). Remember, the real power is the love relationship with Jesus Christ and he wants to change my life.

Medium: the context in which the message is heard – 4 Areas

1. YOUR LIFESTYLE - Your lifestyle should complement the message--not replace it!

Words are *essential*. No true evangelism occurs without verbal communication of the gospel (see "Message"). No amount of "witnessing by my lifestyle" will ever substitute for sharing the good news. People can and do come to Christ by hearing the message even if they never see the speaker's life, or even see problems (Philippians 1:14-18). But they don't come to Christ by seeing the Christian's life even if they never hear the message.

How can your lifestyle complement the message?

- ***It can adorn the message (Titus 2:9-14), making it even more attractive and credible (Philippians 2:14-16).*** >> Attitude and behavior at work; friendly helpful neighbor, positive and cooperative vs. negative and belligerent demeanor ("NOISE"). Do we take this seriously enough? Do we presume upon grace and are licentious in these environments? What are you like at work – "hardest worker/ best attitude"?
- ***It can expose by positive contrast the emptiness of the non-Christian lifestyle (Ephesians 5:8-11), and cause thirst for life with God (Matthew 5:13-16).*** >> LOVE RELATIONSHIPS vs. SENSUALITY or NEGATIVE MORALITY/REVERSED ETHICAL PRIORITIES ("NOISE").
- ***It can make slander about us easy to refute (1 Peter 2:12,15; Titus 2:7,8) because what they observe about us is so different.*** We should at least make it more difficult for people to write Christianity off as full of self-righteous hypocrites ("NOISE").

You don't have to be perfect to have a lifestyle that complements your verbal witness, but you do need to be humble enough to admit when you blow it and apologize. This is a witness in itself, and sometimes opens doors.

When people note your lifestyle and compliment you on it, be sure to give the credit to Christ! Otherwise, you are stealing the credit for yourself and communicating that it is possible to change by one's own power.

2. THE SUBJECTIVE WITNESS OF CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

DEFINITION: The loving unity that Christians express to each other is powerful evidence of the truthfulness of Christianity (John 13:34,35; 17:21,23). Since this evidence is more subjective than objective, it must be experienced rather than merely explained. (MUSIC & LYRICS). Satan will go hard after this area because of its potential power.

This seems to be especially crucial for Generation X'ers. They are very relativistic and cynical, but also very hungry for successful relationships

Recommend *Loving God's Way* for building authentic community. *Myth of Romance* – building relationships section

Practical applications:

- ***Whenever possible, invite non-Christians to attend a meeting in which vital Christians predominate (1 Corinthians 14:23-25).*** The atmosphere produced by a

group of Christians who love each other will often do as much to convince the non-Christian to respond to Christ as the teaching he hears. If we have meetings that are spiritually vital and dynamic and sensitive to the non-Christian, we would be foolish to ignore that avenue of evangelism. (See Jn. 1:46 in light of Matt. 18:20 >> 1 Cor. 14:23-25). Consider these additional reasons for inviting non-Christians to a meeting as a *regular* part of your evangelistic approach.

Refer to Schwarz – Passionate Spirituality and Inspiring worship discussion. We also need to come ready and prepared to serve.

It is sometimes better to invite a non-Christian to a meeting even *before* explaining the gospel to him. It is often difficult to get more than 5-10 minutes to discuss spiritual things in informal conversations. In a meeting, the person can hear a full-length, well-reasoned teaching which often includes the gospel (often more pointedly) and provides a basis for a follow-up discussion.

Their stereotypes of "church" will be overturned as they see a group of normal people in a casual setting who are serious about learning the truth and loving each other.

Gifted evangelists and other Christians who are skilled at outreach or have many things in common with the person can help you share the gospel. Consider alerting these people before the meeting so they can help if possible.

Things to remember when inviting a non-Christian to a meeting:

Talk openly and matter-of-factly about the fact that you are part of an interesting Christian group that you would like them to check out some time. If you are an appealing person to them, you may be surprised at how many will respond.

Don't "bait and switch." Be up front about the fact that it is a Christian meeting that will center around Bible study. On the other hand, don't be "churchy" or negative. Remember people's stereotypes of church, and tell them that the meeting is casual, there is no pressure, the people are nice, the teaching is interesting, the socializing afterward is fun, etc.

Know how to explain your church. Descriptions like "focusing on Bible study, personal relationships, and serving others" are accurate and helpful. However, you might need to explain some common misconceptions. With many, it is important to point out that your church is *not* like other churches in key areas (not legalistic, boring, formal dress, hymn singing, ritualistic, etc.). With others, this is unnecessary.

If they express a desire to come, it is best to pick them up if possible. Few people are willing to go to a completely unfamiliar setting by themselves. If this is not possible, draw them a clear map to the location. Also, be sure to be there early to meet them so they don't have to endure any awkwardness.

Choose the best meeting for initial exposure. The more cognitively oriented, and those who are skeptical or cynical about church should usually be invited to a "central teaching" type of meeting because they can preserve their anonymity while they hear the best teaching we have. Those who are more relationally inclined &/or have nothing against Christianity should usually be invited to a "home church" type of meeting because it provides a better glimpse at Christian community. Baptisms are also a great opportunity.

- ***Provide social settings that expose your non-Christian friends to Christian community*** (PARTIES; ATHLETICS; HOSPITALITY; etc.). Jesus set this example by attending non-Christians' parties even though he got judged by the religious people for doing it. Many people become more open to attending a meeting once they have your friends and realize they are normal and fun-loving rather than judgmental, weird and uptight. What does it mean if you've never been told "no"?

If you respond to their social invitations, they will be more likely to respond to your invitations. Do you allocate time for this in your schedule? Are you scheduling "blank spots" in your schedule so that you can fill it with evangelistic opportunities? Are you realistic about what temptations you can handle?

If you invite them to your social event, try to make time for relating rather than exclusively diffuse activity. This gives an opportunity for the witness of the Body of Christ to be expressed, and for the gospel to be discussed if appropriate. "Mom's Play Group," "Conversation & Cuisine" and "Coffee House" are excellent at providing this opportunity.

Don't forget to follow up this exposure with an invitation to a meeting!

- ***NOTE: If the person is open to coming to either a meeting or a social gathering, it is almost always preferable to bring him to a meeting.*** There will be more opportunity for him to be exposed to the gospel and vital Christian community, and it will be easier for him to discuss it if he wants to. Invitations to social gatherings should be for people who evidence an unwillingness to come to a meeting focused on Christian content.

It is easier to invite people to social events, so many Christians "chicken out" here.

Have you ever been turned down on an invitation to a Bible study? If not, maybe you are too soft in this area.

3. YOUR RELATIONSHIPS – "WARM" AND "COLD"

DEFINITION: Evangelism occurs more easily within existing ("warm") relationships, than by talking to ("cold") strangers (see John 1:41-51; Acts 16:30-34; 1 Corinthians 7:14; 2 Timothy 1:5).

Because credibility already exists, you can be more direct in sharing the gospel, and the person is more likely to take the gospel seriously. Because the person already identifies with you, he can more easily envision himself becoming a Christian. Scripture gives many examples of this principle

John 1:41-51 – Andrew gets his brother Peter; Philip who was from Bethsaida the same town as Andrew & Peter; Philip goes and gets Nathanael...

Acts 16:30-34 – Philippian jailer reaches his household

1 Cor. 7:14 – Unbelieving husband, unbelieving wife sanctified through believing wife or husband.

2 Timothy 1:5 – Timothy's spiritual heritage through his mom and grandmother

Consider the following practical implications:

- ***Take advantage of the opportunity God has given you to share the gospel with your "warm" relationships.*** You can be much more assertive with them because you have credibility and identification. Do you do this, or are you needlessly holding back?

In general, the best approach is to openly share what you have discovered and invite them to a meeting to check it out.

- ***Help new Christians reach their warm relationships.*** New Christians usually have the greatest opportunity to engage in “warm” evangelism. They usually have many warm relationships, but they are often unaware of the opportunity that they have to win their friends and family members to Christ. Introverts probably need more coaching here. When this is the case, older Christians can often help them in many of the following ways.

Ask them about their friends, what they think about their involvement with Christ.

This question often enables the new Christian to share any problems they may have in evangelism.

Without neglecting their own spiritual needs, try to foster a vision in them for seeing their friends come to Christ and grow spiritually.

Give them practical help on how to witness. Identify and correct common errors in witnessing (like those discussed in this packet).

Help them decide which initial exposure to Christian community would be best.

If it is appropriate, go with them socially to meet their friends and help them witness.

Teach them how to respond properly and patiently to those who are not initially responsive.

- ***"Warm up" existing "cold" relationships.*** Many older Christians no longer have "warm" relationships with non-Christians. It is common for this to happen as they lead their open friends to Christ, and become more involved in Christian community. But if we are creative and willing to take initiative, God will provide us with many evangelistic opportunities.

In general, look to the people you are *already* in regular contact with (school, work, neighborhood).

Three points:

1. God will provide the opportunities, if we ask
2. Does require greater boldness
3. Requires persistence

It would be a mistake to think that God will honor a passive attitude in this area or that he will bring about evangelism apart from human agency. Some theologians believe that it is not up to us to worry about evangelism and that evangelism will naturally occur if we just focus on growing with God. This perspective, which has been called “search theology” is not found in scripture, and has been discredited over and over again in churches that have lost their ability to reach the lost. Instead, we believe that the church should engage in intentional efforts to win lost people and constantly study ways to become more effective in those efforts.

NOTE: Some Christians commit to spending regular time with non-Christians in the expectation that they will be responsive to the gospel. If this doesn't happen, they regret their time commitment and withdraw--leaving the non-Christian hurt, angry, feeling like a project, etc. If we make a commitment to spend regular time with a non-Christian, it should be something we are willing to do even if they are unresponsive. If we are unwilling to make this commitment to an unresponsive person, we should not get into this situation to begin with.

- ***Prayerfully look for opportunities to share Christ with strangers.*** God knows who is open to him, and he often orchestrates contact between them and Christians (see Acts 8:26-39; Philippians 1:12-14). Divine appointment.

4. CULTURAL IDENTIFICATION/CONTEXTUALIZATION

DEFINITION: We should identify as much as possible with the culture of the people we are seeking to reach without compromising biblical doctrine or ethics (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; John 17:15-18; Acts 15:19-29).

Paul cites this as a key evangelistic principle in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. We should be distinct in ideology and ethics, but we should practice identification in cultural matters. More people will be saved if we observe this principle (“ . . . that I might win . . . ”). See also Jn. 17:15-18 (“in the world but not of it”). See also Acts 15:19 (“ . . . we should not trouble the Gentiles who are turning to God . . . ”) We should make the sacrifice for their sake! (Cultural barriers are “NOISE.”)

GHETTO vs. MARKETPLACE: Ultimately, we must decide **which is more important--to make it as difficult as possible for us to sin, or to make it as easy as possible for people to come to Christ?**

GHETTO Christianity prioritizes the former, with disastrous results:

Kids are nerds, many times when they do finally come in contact with the world, they completely go over, no resistance, no ability to critique or wrestle through issues.

Protection ultimately fails. Analogy - teach your kid to swim rather than stay away from the water

Ineffective evangelism. Lose your love for non-believers, judgmental, etc.

MARKETPLACE CHRISTIANITY emphasizes the latter. It is willing to wrestle through difficult issues and incur the wrath of the church in order to be faithful to our calling.

EXAMPLES FROM CHURCH HISTORY:

Missions: JOHN WESLEY (preaching outside church buildings); HUDSON TAYLOR (Chinese dress); CALVARY CHAPEL (hair; dress; barefoot; music).

APPLICATION AREAS:

The church is often different where it should be the same (cultural matters) and the same where it should be different (ideology & ethics >> materialism; narcissism; etc.)!!

- ***Appropriate dress and atmosphere at meetings***

- ***Modern Bible translations***

- ***Culturally relevant music & entertainment***

Individual: Stay in touch musically/cinema; learn their vocabulary; entertainment (BARS; etc.)

- ***“Christianese” vs. relevant terminology & illustrations***

WARNING: Never compromise ethical or doctrinal issues; do not let the culture define people’s needs.

- ***Be a student of your culture!***

Sender: the one initiating the communication

There are **five lies we often buy into** and these should be considered “**noise**”. If we do not reject them and hold them up to God’s truth, the gospel will be hindered.

1. “People aren’t open to God.”

Our negativity, fear, unbelief – we don’t know a person’s heart. People assume that we know what a friend is thinking about God.

A Christian worker claims: “They’re not open.” After asking the worker *why* they claim the person isn’t open, we often find out they just assumed it.

Don’t make decisions on how to follow-up a person based on your perceptions.

We need to encourage them to actually find out what the other person thinks.

Jesus said the opposite is true – “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few.” God arranges divine appointments: drawing together people who are open to hear with people willing to share (Acts 8 – Phillip & Ethiopian eunuch/ Cornelius Acts 16). Therefore we need to seek to be led by God.

2. “People will initiate with you.”

In the beginning of the relationship, you’ll have to call & initiate getting together. People in general are autonomous, distrustful – slow process. Please recall last week’s practical ideas on how to warm up relationships.

1 John 4:19 – We love because He first loved us.

God initiated with us. He calls us to go into the world...

Initiate getting to know nonbelievers.

Be committed to forming friendships with non-Christians.

Be enthusiastic and warm with people.

Quote from George Barna, “Evangelism that Works” p. 149-150 “For most Christian, developing meaningful, authentic relationships with non-Christians will be an act of intent, not an act of chance. We probably will have to look for or creatively make opportunities to encounter and interact with non-believers. Jesus did not wait for people to come to Him. The biblical model we have is one of believers actively pursuing chances to engage with non-believers.”

INITIATION IS A MINDSET TO DEVELOP!

3. “Evangelism will go smoothly and quickly.”

We get easily discouraged and give up when we don’t get a positive or do get a negative response. The American culture too often demands instant results – have we bought into this in our evangelism? We need perseverance!

The decision-making process can be a long road; two steps forward, one backward.

Remember it is a spiritual battle; a severe war waging for a friend’s soul. God is at work and so is the Evil One.

2 Cor. 4:4 The God of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

Adults have accumulated years of barriers, built up over time that takes some time to knock down. Often they have to hear the truth several times before it clicks.

4. **“Only certain types of Christians can reach people.”**

Do we falsely believe only those gifted in evangelism, only the extroverts, the graduates of all classes, etc. can be used? How does this square with the fact that all are called to evangelize?

Usually the real issue is fear of sharing the gospel. We can feel afraid, but don't be controlled by fear – rather by God and His power.

2 Tim 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.

2 Cor. 3:5 Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God

2 Cor. 12:9 And He has said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.”

Pray for boldness. Trust God to give us all we need as we step out in faith to initiate spiritual conversations and share the gospel. We can be confident that God is going to work. No matter what outward response I receive.

5. **“It's all up to me!” Instead, we need to remember God's role, their role and our role.**

- **Remember scriptures that show that God is at work** drawing people (**John 12:32; John 16:8; Acts 8**), promise a harvest (**Matthew 9:37; Matthew 13:23; John 4:35; Acts harvest**), and empowering us to evangelize (**Acts 1:8**). Remember how God drew you. Collect stories of how God drew others.
- **How will remembering God's part affect your outreach?**
 1. Less fear of rejection.
 2. Less tendency to push.
 3. More likely to use the word.
 4. Will expect to receive power from the Holy Spirit.
- **Remember people have free will.**

Because people have free will, they can and do reject God's offer. Jesus told us to anticipate negative reactions to the gospel (**SOWER & SOILS**), and “out of season” periods (2 Tim. 4:2). Don't take this personally or stop spreading the Word because of it.
- **Our role is to “take the initiative to share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, leaving the results to God... Failure in witnessing is failing to witness.” (Bill Bright, “Witnessing Without Fear”)** God does not hold us accountable for results--only for our willingness to share to the gospel. If we can say that we are sharing Christ as God gives us opportunity (taking risks and doing the best that we know how), and we are learning how to be more effective in this area--we are a success in God's eyes, and we will see people respond over time (Galatians 6:9).

Develop a “Lifestyle” of Evangelism: 3 elements to replace the 5 lies

1. Pray evangelistically! Many are ineffective in evangelism simply because they do not pray, or don't know how to pray in regard to evangelism.

- ***Why prayer is important (1 Corinthians 3:6,7; James 4:2b)***

It focuses us on God's part. The Bible teaches that spiritual ministry can only be accomplished through the power of God.

(1 Cor 3:6-7) I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. {7} So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth.

God's power is released through prayer. (James 4:2b)... You do not have because you do not ask.

It increases our love and burden for the person.

It helps us stay alert spiritually.

- ***What we should pray for***

for open doors (**Colossians 4:3,4**),

for boldness to speak (**Ephesians 6:19,20**),

for wisdom while you are sharing Christ (**Colossians 4:5,6**),

for conviction (**John 16:8**)

and protection (Mark 4:15) of the person with whom you shared.

Other Passages:

(2 Thessalonians 3:1) Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified, just as *it did* also with you;

(Hebrews 13:18) Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a good conscience, desiring to conduct ourselves honorably in all things.

(Colossians 1:9) For this reason also, since the day we heard *of it*, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,

- ***The importance of corporate prayer***

Most of your groups have corporate prayer meetings, some separate from any other meeting, some prior to your home group.

Consistent corporate prayer along the lines above will keep us thinking about God's priorities, stimulates our thinking about further evangelism, and builds our faith as we see God answer prayer. We probably believe this; are we practicing it?

2. Cultivate the habit of talking with people about spiritual things. Very few people (even those who are responsive) will ask you about God because they are aware of their ignorance. We have to give people the opportunity to talk about spiritual things. This is how we discover the open doors we have prayed for. Consider the following guidelines for initiating spiritual conversations.

- ***Assume openness to the gospel until proven otherwise.*** This expectation is rooted in God's activity (see above). It will also affect our willingness to speak up, and the way we discuss Christianity.

- ***“The most interesting person is the most interested person.”*** Cultivate genuine other-centered enjoyment in learning about others’ lives: their upbringing, interests, job, family, etc. Practice having more-than-superficial conversations with people, even if you don’t bring up spiritual things. This will often lead very naturally into questions about beliefs, religious background, etc.--and people will often reciprocate such personal interest, giving you an excellent opportunity to share your faith.

Listening communicates love and genuine interest in a person. Provides an opportunity for you to make sure you understand what it is they are saying. Jot down conversations, use as a point of reference for future discussions. By being good listeners we can start to discern their world view and needs.

Becky Pippert – rowing around an island, trying to determine where to land...

Spend more time drawing out others, then telling about yourself. Questions are important because: People want to draw their own conclusions & reject others imposing their beliefs on them.

- ***Ask questions that can open up spiritual conversation.***

What do you want to find out about them? Question differs depending on how well you know person & where they are at on the decision continuum. Ask leading, open ended, “why” questions.

Career - what do you do & why did you choose it?

What do you want to accomplish in your life?

What makes you happy, excited?

What do you believe about spiritual things?

What do you think about God?

What do you think a Christian is?

What is your spiritual background? What like, dislike?

Who do you think Jesus Christ was?

What do you think happens to us when we die?

Do you believe in heaven? How does someone get there?

After Central Teachings or home group - What do you think about the teachings hearing?

- ***Talk about your involvement with Christ as openly and naturally as you would any other important part of your life.*** If you are genuinely excited about Christ, you can’t relate to someone very long without this coming out. (“Hey, why don’t you come out Tuesday night?” “I’d love to, but I go to a really cool Bible study on Tuesday that I get too much out of to miss.”) This gives people the opportunity to ask more about your faith, and doesn’t shock them when you bring up spiritual issues.

Many Christians struggle with a sense of shame. We might be ashamed to mention we are unable to come out and party on a Monday night because we have a cool Bible study we go to that night. It is a clear antithesis to being motivated to being open.

We need to pray for courage, meditate on thinking *why* we are doing what we are doing, etc.

- ***Share--don't declare.*** In general, it is better to simply share what you have discovered rather than to declare what it true. This is not a cop-out to moral/ideological relativism; it is an understanding of communication dynamics. In a group setting, the speaker can be much more declarative and forceful because the individuals don't feel put on the spot. In personal conversations, declaration tends to close down communication, while asking questions and sharing your discoveries tends to open it up.
- ***Read interest level and respond accordingly.*** Assuming that you are practicing the above two principles, you need to learn how to take the conversation from there. This is a lot like kissing a date for the first time. In general, if you read interest, give more information. If you read disinterest, give less information. Avoid predictability. If you sense that the person is expecting you to press the issue further but that they don't want to pursue it (LOOKING AT WATCH; FLAT AFFECT; "UH-HUH . . ."), change the subject before they do. Often, when people realize you will not pressure them, they feel more free to ask questions about your faith.
- ***Pick your disagreements carefully*** (misconceptions about Christianity; absolute vs. relative truth; etc.). Project genuine personal acceptance. Colossians 4:6 refers to a gracious conversational style that opens further doors. Like Jesus, we need to find ways to show we can distinguish between what people do/believe and who they are. Don't act as the "sin police" ("NOISE")--most non-Christians already expect you to act this way (why they apologize for their cussing, etc.). Don't feel obligated to correct every moral or ideological falsehood they express. While we need to answer honestly if people ask us direct questions (like "Do you believe abortion is wrong?"), we should not feel we are compromising to keep our disagreement to ourselves if it is strategically prudent. When we do take a moral stand, we should also follow it with an explanation of the gospel that corrects related misconceptions.
- ***Respond to questions and objections with non-defensive honesty.*** This provides you with an excellent opportunity to correct misconceptions, provide evidence, etc. Don't fake answers you don't know--get the answers and come back. Don't become argumentative ("NOISE")--your demeanor is just as important as your answer.

3. Focus on the responsive field (Luke 10:8-11; Acts 13:44-47; 18:4-11).

Sow the Word liberally, but focus your prayer and efforts especially on those who seem to be most responsive. This respects the free will of the unresponsive, and provides the most help to those who want it.

Sometimes we get too comfortable with the person we've been reaching out to for several years without any interest on their part. It feels like less of a risk than developing a new relationship with someone you haven't yet shared the gospel with.

Receiver: the one receiving the communication

DECISION CONTINUUM

DEFINITION: People usually make big decisions by going through a process rather than all at once (e.g., getting married; buying a home; coming to Christ). They need time to assimilate and evaluate the information in order to make a sincere and lasting choice. This process is called the "decision continuum."

QUALIFICATION: I am not saying that event of conversion is a process. Conversion is the crucial point of decision in a process.

See Paul's application of this principle in Acts 17:1-4,11.

Why is this principle important in evangelism?

- By observing this principle, we will be better able to *help the person come to an informed, free-will decision to receive Christ*, and we will see more positive results. If we ignore this principle, we may try to move someone from only dim awareness of Christianity to a decision to receive Christ in one step. Because of this, the person is usually either needlessly scared off, or makes a premature, and therefore insincere decision which will not last. We may also be needlessly discouraged because of the poor response.
- *This principle will help us be more effective.* As our culture becomes more and more ignorant of &/or negative toward Christianity, older evangelistic methods which assumed familiarity with its main concepts or basic agreement with its concepts (CRUSADE PREACHING; TRACT DISTRIBUTION; DOOR-TO-DOOR WITNESSING) become less effective.

In order to effectively apply this principle, we need to be able to do three things:

- 1. discern where the person is in the decision-making process,**
- 2. discern the appropriate next step; and**
- 3. give him what he needs to enable him to make the next step.**

NOTE: THE DECISION CONTINUUM ON THE STUDENT OUTLINE ONLY CONTAINS THE SYMPTOMS, NOT THE GOAL OR ACTION STEPS. STUDENTS RECEIVE THE COMPLETE DECISION CONTINUUM CHART AT THE END OF CLASS.

	SYMPTOMS	GOAL	ACTION
HOSTILITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • verbal or non-verbal dislike 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • disarm and win trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pray • express love; • discover why hostile & respond • your lifestyle can have impact here
DISINTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • doesn't ask questions; • doesn't initiate or join in discussions • changes the subject • ignores invitations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • arouse curiosity and stimulate interest, • find out if they know about the Gospel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pray for them to see their need; • ask about their world-view; • expose to Christian community; • identify & correct misconceptions • be ready with your testimony
CURIOSITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • asks serious questions & is satisfied by good answers; • willing to talk more about Christianity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increase understanding of the gospel & Christian world-view 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pray for conviction; • invite to Bible study or personal Bible study; • repeat gospel; • challenge to investigate further; • answer questions and misconceptions
ACTIVE INTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • freely discusses Christianity; • reads Bible & books alone; • more personal questions about Christianity; • speaks of Christians & Christianity favorably 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuade of necessity of decision, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fervent prayer for protection from distraction & conviction • urge regular involvement in Bible study meeting; • explain how to receive Christ;

EXCITEMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • admits Christianity is true; • identifies self with Christian community; • tells others they need Christ; • admits something holds him back 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • persuade of necessity of decision, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pray for conviction to make a decision. • repeat the necessity of receiving Christ; • correct misconceptions of conversion • Ask “What is preventing you from making this decision?” • Consider offering to pray with them to receive Christ. (qualification: people who have moved very quickly to this point usually should not be pressed, but given time to process what they have discovered so far)
DECISION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • articulates the decision he made; • questions about how to live as a Christian 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide assurance & instruction about spiritual growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pray for protection & growth • point out scriptures for objective assurance; • point out changes for subjective assurance; • explain Means of Growth; • warn of dissonance; • encourage to share faith (including baptism); • strengthen through apologetics <p>all of these steps are best if in the context of a friendship – if not already there, building a friendship with this person is key.</p>

PERCEIVED NEEDS

People come to Christ because of a variety of needs, not just one need. Christians commonly make the mistake of assuming that the person to whom they are witnessing has the same perceived need that they did. (This is a limitation of relying too heavily on your own personal testimony.) Look for the perceived need(s) of the person, and then explain how Jesus Christ meets *that* need.

Jesus' example: Notice the different ways that Jesus approached people like Peter (John 1: "I can make you a Rock"), Nicodemus (John 3: "I don't care how good you are"), the Samaritan woman (John 4: "I don't care how bad you've been"), the hungry masses (John 6: "I can satisfy your spiritual hunger"), the woman caught in adultery (John 8: "I can forgive you"), Zaccheus, etc.

Common perceived needs: include boredom with life, lack of meaning in life, guilt, loneliness, and fear of death. Others include grief over the loss of/failure in valued relationships, concern about destructive habits, fear over national crises, etc

NOTE: We cannot always accept people's specific definition of their needs, because God reserves the right to inform us of our actual needs. For example, someone may say their greatest need is to find a romantic partner who will always be there for them. We would realize that their perceived need is not their actual need. Rather, their actual need is a love-trust relationship with God that alone provides the basis for successful human relationships. We need to show people how their perceived need connects to the spiritual need God says they have--as Jesus did in John 6 when he connected the people's request for food with his offer of himself as the bread of life.

Transitional periods in life are also times when people become more aware of their inadequacy to live life. These include adolescence, marriage problems, divorce, job loss, mid-life crises, empty-nest syndrome, widowhood, etc.

"More Needy" tendency

Christians generally reach out to those who have more "basic" psychological needs because they are less likely to meet with opposition and refusal. But we should also be willing and able to reach out to those with "higher" psychological needs even though they can afford to say "No" and "hit back."

Why is it important to do this? Because those with "higher" psychological needs are actually just as lost and needy as those with "lower" needs. Because those with "higher" psychological needs are often more suitable for leadership.

The Moral Issue

The main problem for non-Christians is not intellectual or evidential, but rather moral. When a person decides to humble himself before God, the evidence for God and Christianity is clear and sufficient.

Romans 1:18-23,28,32; John 3:19-21; John 7:17; Matthew 7:6; Mark 11:27-33

This might be the key need to point out to someone who apparently has their life "together". Too often Christians pray for God to bring need into their life, forgetting that this need – separation from God due to true moral guilt is already there!

Romans 1:18-23,28,32 teaches that all people know God exists and that they should bow to him. But as long as we are in a state of rebellion against God, we use our rationality to

formulate excuses not to bow to God, rather than to acknowledge God's claim on our lives and bow to him. In other words, the main problem for humans is not intellectual or evidential, but rather moral. When a person decides to humble himself before God, the evidence for God and Christianity is clear and sufficient.

Jesus teaches this same truth in **John 3:19-21** and **John 7:17**, and he applied it by refusing to give further evidence to those who were hardened (see **Matthew 7:6; Mark 11:27-33**).

Several evangelistic applications flow from this principle.

- **Remember to subordinate apologetics to evangelism (see "Message").** People are often argumentative because they have one of the misconceptions about what Christianity is. It is not possible to discern whether the person is truly in revolt, or only reacting to a misconception until you explain the gospel clearly.
- **Apologetics will only be effective when the person is willing to humble himself.** According to John. 7:17, the order is: be willing to do God's will, and then God will grant you sufficient evidence. We should give honest answers to honest questions, but this will not remove the necessity to humble oneself before God. God has given fully sufficient evidence for His existence and the truthfulness of Christianity, but he has purposefully stopped short of "empirical certainty" because he wants men to humble themselves and trust him.

For this reason, it is often good to ask the persistent objector if he would be willing to bow to God or Jesus *if* he is there. Challenging him to pray expressing this humility along with a request for further evidence (as in John 7:17) is often necessary before further progress can be made.

- **When we invite people to come to Christ, we should emphasize God's grace and love. But we also need to explain that they need to personally humble themselves before God:** to admit their true moral guilt and worthiness of God's judgment, to ask Jesus Christ to forgive them, and to bow to God's right to lead their lives.

Conclusion

It is exciting to share the gospel! Even when people do not respond positively, God still grants us this experience of his empowering, etc.

Do your part to make an evangelistic lifestyle a key of the *ethos* of your church.

Make a big deal of all conversions.

Praise people for all evangelistic attempts.

Make this a priority in corporate prayer.

Ask people for advice about evangelistic situations.

Teach these principles! They will be more equipped and motivated to evangelize.

Memory Verses

None

Assignment

Read Master Plan of Evangelism Chap 4 & 5 (“Impartation” & “Demonstration”) and write a paragraph summary of content and a paragraph of personal application.

Share your testimony with a non-Christian.

Write a one-page summary of someone you are reaching out to, answering the following questions:

Where they are on the decision continuum & why do you think this? What can you do to help them take the next step? What is the most difficult part of evangelism for you and what steps can you take to overcome this difficulty?

Key Points to Know for Exam

1. Know the 5 components of a communication event (Sender, Receiver, Message, Medium and Noise) in relation to evangelism.
2. Know the 5 common misconceptions of Christianity discussed in class.
3. Know the 6 stages of the decision continuum and how to apply the decision continuum.