

**Xenos Christian Fellowship
Christian Ministry 3
Missions and Evangelism
Week 3 – Evangelism, Part 1**

Overview

Evangelism and missions: central to the purpose of the church

(Matt. 28:18-20) “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’”

This command, which Jesus gave to his disciples after his resurrection, is known as the GREAT COMMISSION. It involves both outreach and discipleship. Outreach is getting more people into his kingdom. Discipleship is getting more kingdom into his people.

(Acts 1:8) “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

(2 Cor. 5:18-20) “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

It's God's desire that all people come to know him:

(1 Tim. 2:3) “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

(2 Pet. 3:9) “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.”

The purpose of the church is not to perpetuate itself. The church is commissioned as God's instrument to reach lost people. It is lost people and not found people, that are the central focus of God's concern (Mark 2:17; Luke 15). Of course, God

has great concern for all Christians, but his concern extends to people all across the world who live without him. When a church adopts a mission that excludes evangelism as its central purpose, the clock is ticking toward the breakdown and destruction of that church.

Other things that commonly usurp an outreach focus: good fellowship (sweet, but what happens to our fellowship if don't have outreach?), deep knowledge, political agenda, family protection, corporate worship, etc. THINGS THAT ARE NOT WRONG, BUT ARE INADEQUATE AS A FOCUS. Therefore, the church must not make these its primary focus (THE GOOD IS OFTEN THE ENEMY OF THE BEST)

What happens if the church loses an evangelism focus? The symptoms below will not necessarily all appear at once when a church loses its focus on evangelism, but many will.

1. *Vitality and excitement wane* because new converts are the lifeblood of the church. They "validate" the gospel and increase our own confidence in it and God's power.
2. *No new people means no home group plants* which means no new leaders and workers needed which means less motivation for learning and sanctification among members. People need to step into new roles in order to grow. Planting a group causes everyone to consider what they can do to help the new group succeed.
3. *We get more self-focused* because there are no new converts to care for.
4. *Relational conflict increases* because instead of banding together to help witness and care for the new converts, we start looking at how others aren't meeting our needs. If you've ever seen *Remember the Titans* (a movie about black and white football players in a Virginia high school who were forced to integrate), you understand the unifying power of a common goal. In their drive to win a state championship, most of the team was able to look past racial differences.
5. *The church gets involved in "brass-polishing" or "gingerbread"*—doing less important things that further detract from our real mission.
6. *An "ivory tower" Bible-club mentality* develops and people debate nonessential issues and can't relate to non-Christians.
7. *A "ghetto" mentality develops* that justifies lack of contact with non-Christians—which will lead to increased vulnerability to tribalism, materialism, and hidden sin. History has repeatedly shown the tendency of vital evangelistic movements to go inward. This can easily happen at the

group level – especially in adult groups where day-to-day life and loss of idealism can quickly sap evangelistic fervor. You must fight against this.

8. *The church becomes calloused to the plight of the lost (apathy).* Not just that they are going to hell in the next life, but that they are miserable in this life.

(Matt. 9:36) “And seeing the multitudes, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and downcast like sheep without a shepherd.”

(Eph. 2:12) “Remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.”

Three participants in evangelism

When we are sharing our faith, we tend to focus on our role: what should I say, am I making sense, can I be persuasive enough, etc. Our actions and words are just a part of what goes on in the process of sharing our faith. Being aware of God’s role, the role of the hearer, and our own role will give us a well-rounded picture of what evangelism involves.

God's role

- *The Holy Spirit convicts*

(John 16:8-10) And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; (9) concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; (10) and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged.”

(John 12:32) “And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

- *God creates opportunities*

(Col. 4:2,3-6) “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; 3 praying at the same time for us as well, that God may open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; 4 in order that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom**

toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. 6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you may know how you should respond to each person.”

In the same way, God will at times arrange "divine appointments" for lost people with Christians who are willing to discuss their relationship with Him. But this doesn't mean that the process of leading them to Christ will be rapid or easy.

- **God empowers those who share their faith.**

(Eph. 6:19) “And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.”

(1 Cor. 2:2-4) “For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. 4 And my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”

Stephen in Acts 6; Acts 4:13 “untrained men”; Acts 4:31-33.

A practical way to rely on God’s role:

Pray each day for a “divine appointment.” The book of Acts how the Holy Spirit connected evangelists with receptive individuals (e.g. Phillip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Peter and Cornelius, etc). Paul appeals to the Colossians to pray that God would give him similar opportunities (Col. 4:2-4).

What happens if we lose sight of God’s role?

Depending on your temperament, you will tend to push people to make a decision more than you should OR withdraw because you’re overwhelmed by the task. People who fail to reflect on God’s role are less likely to PRAY about their evangelism efforts. They also often fail to notice what God doing in the life of people they are trying to reach.

The role of the hearer: *The hearer must choose whether or not to believe.*

When we share our faith and someone chooses not to believe, some of us tend to blame ourselves. We take ownership for the person's choice. This is especially tempting when the person we're witnessing to is a very close friend or family member.

God gives people the option to choose him or reject him. The Bible affirms that the hearer has a very important role to play.

(Mt. 23:37) "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling." He wept (see Luke 19:41) and was broken hearted about their response, but did not take ownership of their choice.

Emergency room doctors lose people all the time. What would happen if they take responsibility for every one who died?

Luke 8:5-15, (The Parable of the Soils)

(John 7:17) "If any man is willing to do His will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."

God provides answers to the honest investigator. If willingness to respond is present, God will provide sufficient evidence.

What happens if we lose sight of the hearers role?

We will tend to take on more responsibility than we should. Symptoms of this problem would include (1) tying up all your time with a few reluctant people or (2) resorting to manipulation. See 2 Cor. 4:2-4.

Our role: *To present the message of salvation in a way that the hearer can understand.*

Our part matters! To evangelize means to "verbally share the good news of God's reconciliation through Jesus Christ, and to invite people to receive this gift."

People are not likely to place their faith in Jesus Christ if they aren't aware of what he has done on their behalf. Therefore must we share the message of Christ with others.

(Rom. 10:14) “How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”

(2 Cor. 5: 18-20*) “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, 19 namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. 20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

Here are **five practical ways to enhance our role in evangelism:**

- *Write a short testimony:* Summarize how you came to have a relationship with Christ in 3 minutes or less. Describe what you were like prior to becoming a Christian, what led you to place your faith in Christ, and what your life is like now.
- *Personally invest in the people around you.* Take an interest in your neighbors, classmates and work associates. Draw them out. Learn what is going on in their lives. Truly loving others and showing genuine interest in them will yield opportunities to share your faith.
- *Start spiritual conversations.* See the handout we’ve provided on how to start spiritual conversations.
- *Adorn the gospel.* We can live in a way that makes the gospel attractive or unattractive to others. Ethical conduct and serving individuals in the community enhances our credibility with people we are trying to reach. For more on this, see Gary DeLashmutt’s plenary session, *Adorning the Gospel*, in our 2008 Xenos Summer Institute audio archive on our website.

(Titus 2:9,10) “Urge bondslaves to be subject to their own masters in everything, to be well-pleasing, not argumentative, 10 not pilfering, but showing all good faith that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect.”

- *Don’t forget to challenge people to make a decision.* Can we say we’ve fully given the Gospel if we haven’t extended an invitation to receive Christ? People need to know how God wants them to respond to what he has done on the cross.

Harvest vs. Search Theology

Harvest and Search Theology are two different perspectives on our responsibility in evangelism. Search theologians focus on man's responsibility to proclaim the Gospel and leave the results entirely to God. Harvest theologians agree that the church is called to proclaim the message. They also agree that God provides the harvest. But they measure the outcome of their efforts and see long term lack of results as a cause for concern. This often leads them to modify their approach to evangelism in an attempt to be more effective.

If a harvest and a search theologian were chopping wood together, the search theologian might say, "all that matters is swinging the ax." This might provoke a harvest theologian to reply, "yes, but is the woodpile getting bigger? If not, we ought to look at how we are swinging, how sharp the blade is, and what kind of wood we are chopping."

Christians often disagree on the degree to which individuals should account for results of the church's evangelistic efforts. Some consider this to be vital to a faithful evangelistic witness and would consider their church as failing if there were prolonged periods of time without evangelistic fruit. Others consider a focus on counting attendance, conversions, church growth, etc. to be ungodly. We introduce these terms to initiate you into this debate.

Search Theology

Definition: Searches for people through the faithful proclamation of the Gospel, leaving results between God and the hearer. OK, BUT DOES THAT GO FAR ENOUGH?

Examples: Go door to door or hand out tracks (OR ANY OTHER METHOD). If it doesn't yield, you don't question it because results are up to God.

Search theology is flawed because:

- It does not go far enough. It neglects analysis of results.
- The Great Commission provides a command which includes results.(MAKE DISCIPLES; ALL ETHNOI; THINGS WE CAN TRACK)
- The example in Acts: Luke includes numbers in his report of the early church. (2:41; 6:7, 9:31; 12:24; 16:5; 19:10,20)
- It can lack a dynamic approach (rather than wooden or mechanistic) to evangelism and therefore its adherents do not persuade (Acts 17:2-4; 18:4; 2 Cor. 5:11, 20), persist (Acts 17:17), or adjust (1 Cor. 9:19-23-CULTURAL FACTORS).

E.G. READING THE SITUATION AND ADJUSTING YOUR APPROACH

NOTE THE DIFFERENCE B/W PETER'S APPROACH IN ACTS 2 AND PAUL'S IN ACTS 17

- Search theology has been used to justify failure in evangelism. THERE IS SUCH A THING AS A PROPER DISSATISFACTION

Actual REASONS for failure are often complex and should be explored:

- Sin (including sin of omission such a lack of outreach effort).
- Unresponsive field.
- Wrong or unstrategic methods.

Harvest Theology

Definition: Finding and winning receptive people (harvesting) through faithful proclamation of an understandable Gospel, keeping an eye on results to determine effectiveness and future methods.

Examples: LEARNING ABOUT POSTMODERN THINKING AND ADDRESSING IT CONSCIOUSLY IN TEACHINGS RATHER THAN JUST TALKING TO THE MODERNIST. USING A METHOD THAT WORKED WELL WITH STUDENTS AND KEEPING IT WHEN THEY GET MARRIED AND HAVE KIDS.

Harvest Theology is biblical because:

- It does reflect on results.
- It is dynamic.
- Focuses on the responsive field (like Xenos with students-NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE OUR KIDS)

Dangers in Harvest Theology:

- Results are not always immediate (2 Tim. 4:2 "...in season and out of season.")
- God's part may be minimized.
- Taking your identity from results. However, to have a proper sense of identity does mean escaping the pressure of knowing the lost are not being found.

- Can take your eyes off the task at hand (e.g. fretting over low Home Group attendance vs. loving the people that did show up).
- May cheat to get more numbers (becoming market-driven; quantity over quality)

(1 Cor. 3:5-7) “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one. (6) 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.”

- Mk. 4 (The parable of the soils)

Bill Hybels: Walk Across the Room

Bill Hybels is the founder of Willow Creek Community Church, a large church near Chicago. In this video, recorded at the 2005 Xenos Summer Institute, Bill shares his own experiences sensing and responding to the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Note: You can obtain this video at the Study Center. Ask for Athena # v01514. You can also view it on the Christian Ministry 3 Module 1 Week 3 class DVD – Athena # v01889. The times in **bold** correspond to v01514. Times in parentheses correspond to v01889. This video is not part of Willow Creek’s *Just Walk Across the Room* course (Athena # SET s01468).

Instructors, you may only have time to watch the first 30 minutes in class.

0:00 – 17:16 (1:54:48 – 2:12:05)

- Hello and intro.
- What would someone far from God think or feel at our meeting?
- What is the highest value in personal evangelism? Being sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Car ride to camp.
- Recalling conversion at the camp.
- Conversation on car ride back.
- Summary – being led by Holy Spirit.

STOP & DISCUSS

- How does one get ready to hear the HS?

17:17 – 30:03 (2:12:06 – 2:24:51)

- Conversation at lunch story.
- Walk across the room (circle of convenience, zone of the unknown).

- Churches die because they are committed only to the circle of comfort.
- Philippians 2: Christ leaving comfort circle of the trinity.
- Follow Christ's example! You can do this!

STOP & DISCUSS:

- Circle of comfort, crossing the chasm, the zone of the unknown

30:04 – 43:38 (2:24:52 – 2:38:25)

- Cul de Sac story.
- The buzz of being used by God.

STOP & DISCUSS:

- Receiving God's prompting "mid-turn" – the choice to listen or not.
- You have no idea what it at stake in that moment's choice
- Note that results were not immediate, even with leading of HS. Took years.

Optional: 43:39 – 52:29 (2:38:26 – 2:47:20)

- The urgency – son's friend's funeral story.
- Closing challenge.

Memory Verses

2 Cor. 5:18-20* - We are ambassadors for Christ.

Col. 4:3-6 - Pray for open doors.**

Assignment

Talk to a non-Christian and record their answers to the following questions:

- **Do all religions basically teach the same thing? Why do you think that?**
- **What does it mean to be a tolerant person?**

Write a full paragraph response to each of these common objections to Christianity:

- 1. "Why should I regard the Bible as God's Word? What about all of the other scriptures?"**
- 2. "How can your religion consign people to hell if they have never even heard about Christ?" Hint: There are really two distinct issues in this objection—God's judgment and whether he judges all people who didn't have access to the Bible.**