



How to ...

Make evangelism less scary

I remember several years ago hearing Erwin McManus, leader of Mosaic, a church in Los Angeles, talking about his experiences when he had recently become minister of a Baptist Church.

A couple approached him and said "Since you have become leader this church has become too evangelistic." Erwin asked them if they would repeat that as he wasn't sure he had heard correctly.

Once again the couple said "Since you have become leader this church has become too evangelistic." Erwin said he wanted to get it exactly right because he would be quoting them for many years to come. The point is Evangelism should be part of the church's DNA, and yet for most of us Evangelism is a scary word.

So how can we make Evangelism exciting and not a source of dread?

Why Evangelise?

The first question is: Why should the church be involved in evangelism?

Undoubtedly the most often quoted text to support evangelism is Jesus' Great Commission to those first disciples and by extension to us, Matthew 28:18-20

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. [19] Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

It's always good to know that if we have to do something that the Lord has asked us to do it. We should also note that in the great commission Jesus promises to be with us always and that includes when we seek to evangelise.

What is Evangelism?

You will find several attempts by many faithful committed Christians to define Evangelism. In its simplest form it is telling people the good news of Jesus. Central to it, however it is done, will be that it is about Jesus.

One definition that has always helped me personally, is one I heard used by Michael Green; I am not sure if it's his own or taken from someone else.

"Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread."

Who should evangelise?

Who should be involved in evangelism? Some might correctly ask: "Doesn't the Bible tell us that some are gifted to be evangelists"? Paul writes this in his letter to the Ephesians. So can we not leave it up to them? If we agree that evangelism is sharing good news, then I think it would be fair to say most of us are pretty good and usually very quick to share good news. Think about the birth of a child. Think how quickly football fans can relate a wonder goal. So we know how to do it, we just have to show the same passion and excitement when talking about Jesus.

So how do we make evangelism less scary?

These are some things I have personally found helpful.

A common saying is “practice makes perfect”. So how can we practice Evangelism?

Testimony

I have found the use of testimony in church profoundly useful. Not only can it build up the congregation, it also builds up confidence in the person giving the testimony, that they can share their good news of Jesus in what should be a safe environment. I have seen people do it in church then go on and share their experience in the street. Church should be a safe place to practice.

Some suggest lighting a match, holding it in your hand and sharing your testimony of Jesus before your fingers get burnt!!! A simple way of determining what to say, is how was life before Jesus, how you met him and what has changed since. It is said in these days people’s main question is: does it work? In sharing your story you share what has worked for you.

Prayer

Ask God for opportunities. Ask others to pray when you are going to share.

Resources

Sometimes we may not feel able to do it ourselves but there are some wonderful courses and resources available to which we can invite people.

Alpha

I have seen more people become followers of Jesus through Alpha than anything else in my ministry.

Courses

Courses such as: Calling Out by J.John; The Natural Evangelism Course – also by J.John; Fruitfulness on the Front Line by Mark Greene, can all help with the how to of Evangelism. Some have found the Table Talk game good for opening conversations.

Social Action

For example, litter picking, foodbanks, garden clean-ups etc.... This usually leads to someone asking why you are doing it, opening the door for us rather than trying to open the door itself. Some find this an easier way in.

The ‘how’ of evangelism

But the greatest teacher on Evangelism has to be our Lord Jesus himself.

The vast majority of Jesus’ preaching was the good news of the Kingdom of God.

Jesus’ meeting with the woman at the Well in John 4 is often taken as the blueprint for evangelism. It is a conversation

Intervarsity on Evangelism, suggests 6 steps Jesus takes in revealing himself to the woman at the well, that we can copy.

1. Start Conversations with anyone
2. Adjust Your Life Patterns to Make Conversations Possible
3. Chat about Everyday Life
4. Ask Questions
5. Listen to Questions, Then Answer the Question *Behind* the Questions
6. Share Jesus - *The pinnacle of Jesus’ conversation with the woman comes when he tells her that he is the Messiah. She is so amazed by this that she runs off and brings the whole village to come and meet him for themselves.*

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