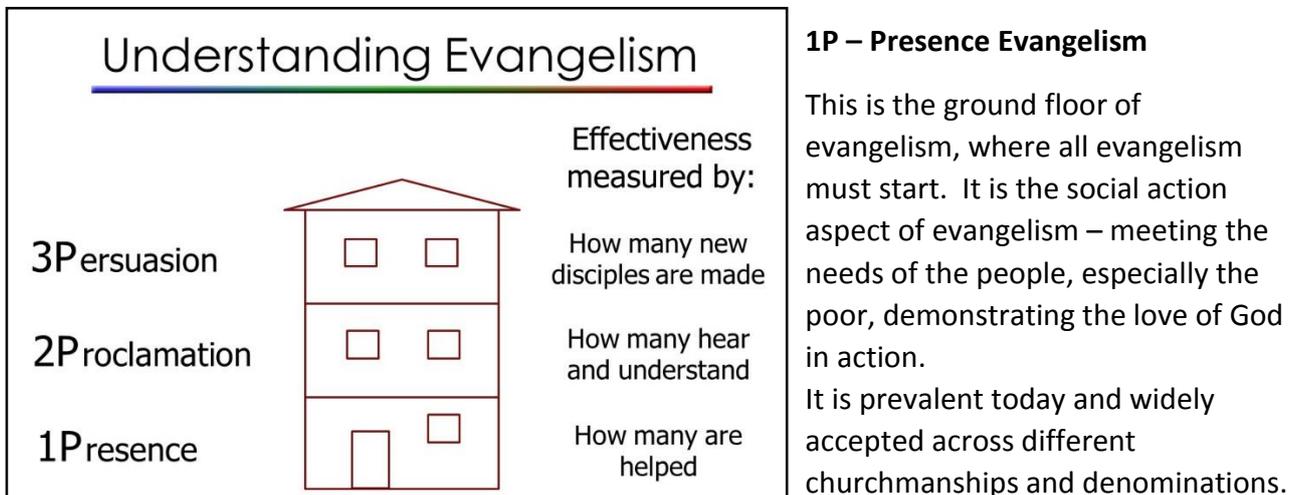


Understanding Evangelism

Evangelism is an oft misunderstood word which has suffered from caricature and polar opposite definitions. A popular concept of evangelism is of a bible-waving evangelist in the mould of Billy Graham or local street preacher. Both have a place in the overall work of evangelism but they are not the sum total.

Over the years the pendulum has swung between what is called the “social gospel” i.e. good works, meeting the needs of others, and “gospel proclamation” i.e. preaching and teaching about Jesus. Again, both have their place within the overall work of evangelism but neither are the sum total.

C. Peter Wagner coined the phrase 3P evangelism which is an holistic understanding of evangelism which embraces the caricatures and the polarities and much more beside. The concept is of a 3 storey house which is incomplete without all three floors and that has to be built up in the correct order from the bottom up.



We see it in Foodbanks; CAP Centres; HOPE2014 and similar campaigns; night shelters; Street Pastors and much more.

2P – Proclamation Evangelism

This is the first floor of evangelism where the gospel is shared in word through a variety of mechanisms. It may be a street preacher, an Alpha, Start or Emmaus course.

It also includes individual Christians talking naturally with non-Christians about their Christian faith – whether with a colleague at work or with a friend over a cup of coffee, or simply being able to respond meaningfully to questions others ask about God or faith.

3P – Persuasion Evangelism

This is the top and essential last floor is persuasion, where a person is helped to come to a personal faith in Christ, to become a new disciple. It might happen at an Alpha awayday, in response to a sermon, during baptism preparation or through a personal conversation with a friend.

Evangelism includes all three of these “P”s and in this order. Anything which claims to be the sum total of evangelism without all three of Presence, Proclamation and Persuasion is deficient. This is equally true when any one is an afterthought.

J John adds two more “P”s – he speaks of prayer as the essential foundation to all evangelism and of the power of the Holy Spirit which empowers, equips and motivates us, without which we are ineffective.

A parish engaged in “Need-oriented Outreach/Evangelism” will be engaged in the messiest parts of their parish, meeting the needs of those hurting the most, the poorest, the isolated, the loveless as an expressing of Christ’s love. Their members will be able to talk meaningfully about their faith, sharing it with others, and people will be brought to faith as new Christians, disciplined and helped in their journey of faith.

“[Growing churches] share the gospel in a way that answers the questions and meets the needs of non-believers”. Christian Schwarz