

Changing Our Approach to Evangelism

Changing Our Lightbulb

Have we lost our light?

How do we get our light back?

- Alvin Reid gives “two indispensable ingredients ... for any stagnant church to begin growing: [first] you must *want* to grow (most say they do) [I would add that our church does], and [second] you must be willing *to pay the price to grow* ([to which he adds] sadly, many do not). (Reid, *Evangelism Handbook*, 298)
- The vast majority of what we should be doing as a church should be centered around equipping, encouraging, and practicing evangelism.
- To be a growing, healthy church we must be willing not only to say we want change, but also willing to pay the price of that change, especially when it comes to the mission of our church. An Evangelistic church is one that is willing to pay the price, willing to experience the pain that it takes to reach people.

Diagnosing Your Evangelistic Condition

The following section is borrowed from Mack Stiles in his Book Speaking of Jesus.

Put either a plus (strength) or minus (weakness) in each of the following boxes.

1. Motivated (I genuinely want to share Jesus Christ with the people that are lost in sin around me).
2. Available (I have significant interaction with unsaved people)
3. Equipped (I can effectively communicate the gospel)

I Am _____ in my evangelism.

<p>Diagnosis: <i>Sequestered</i> View of Evangelism: Not interested Symptoms: Faith is adopted rather than personal Type: Cultural Christian—completely isolated from the secular world Prognosis: Marginalized Christian life Treatment: Make a commitment of faith apart from the Christian subculture</p>	<p>Diagnosis: <i>Apathetic</i> View of Evangelism: “My religion is a personal thing.” Symptoms: Sleeping giant of the church world; no functional difference from non-Christian in the workaday world Type: Churchgoer who does not see evangelism as important Prognosis: Assimilation by the secular world Treatment: Embrace your faith and come to know Christ’s love for others; look at what the Bible says about sharing with others.</p>
<p>Diagnosis: <i>Frustrated</i> View of Evangelism: Confused by what to say and who to say it to Symptoms: Has a heart to share Christ Type: Many church members Prognosis: Debilitating guilt Treatment: Look for a mature Christian role model, learn a biblical approach to evangelism and build bridges to the secular world.</p>	<p>Diagnosis: <i>Academic</i> View of Evangelism: Sees evangelism as an intellectual exercise Symptoms: Knows the gospel and sociological trends; doesn’t know a non-Christian Type: Cloistered Christians Prognosis: Treating non-Christians as a problem or project Treatment: Pray for love; take concrete actions to build bridges to the secular world.</p>
<p>Diagnosis: <i>Daunted</i> View of Evangelism: Frightening or tiresome Symptoms: In a strong position: knows the secular world and basics of the Gospel; lack of motivation hinders efforts Type: The fearful or burned out; many fulltime Christian workers Prognosis: May share out of guilt or obligation Treatment: Dare to share.</p>	<p>Diagnosis: <i>Reckless</i> View of Evangelism: Exciting job to be done Symptoms: Motivation and contact with the secular world give real potential; may support manipulative evangelistic schemes Type: Excited new Christians Prognosis: Sharing false things about the Christian life Treatment: Become equipped by developing a biblical approach to the secular world. Know the job description presented in Our Role in Evangelism (Pastor Baun’s lesson)</p>
<p>Diagnosis: <i>Isolated</i> View of Evangelism: Wants to share, but has five church potlucks this week Symptoms: Could engage the world, but doesn’t know non-Christians on a social basis Type: Busy church workers Prognosis: Missing the action Treatment: Gain an audience; become available. Take steps to make friends with a non-Christian.</p>	<p>Diagnosis: <i>Engaged</i> View of Evangelism: Giving away the faith Symptoms: Shares the gospel effectively, using a biblical approach; available to people who do not know Christ; motivated by love Type: All types Prognosis: Good (but watch out for pride) Treatment: Keep following Christ.</p>

Our goal is to change the *culture* not the *programs* of Bethany Bible Church.

Studies say it takes an average of 2 years from when people come in contact with a Christian who shares the Gospel with them for that person to put their faith in Christ. Other statistics have been gathered that on average it takes 7.6 times for people to hear the gospel before they commit their lives to Christ.

“Witnessing is a long-term commitment to invest in a relationship, to pray tirelessly, and to speak the gospel over and over again, patiently and persistently. It is a journey of gospel conversations.” (Rico Tice, *Honest Evangelism*, 88)

Conversational Evangelism

➤ **Conversational Evangelism is about making connections not projects.**

- We must learn to see individuals as people. Friends, sinners, neighbors that Christ died for. As potential brothers and sisters in Christ not as projects.
- Conversational Evangelism allows you to talk to others about Christ out of your own strengths.

- Conversational Evangelism is caring about 2 things:
 - Caring about the unsaved individual
 - Caring about the Gospel

➤ **Evangelism is caught not taught.**

“The Lord wants us to be faithful—in our own way, in our own world.” (Stiles, 34)

➤ **Learn to ask good questions**

– Mr. Nick Mauer

Foundational Interaction: Interrogative Evangelism

Our topic today is “Interrogative evangelism in a pluralistic world.” Now, a few **definitions** are in order:

- **Interrogative:** This just means it is carried out with questions.

- **Pluralistic:** Our world is full of contrasting and incompatible viewpoints. Each person has “his own truth” and people are more and more comfortable today with everyone believing what they want to believe with no regard for objective, fixed truth. This is what we mean by saying we live in a “pluralistic world.”

So what we're here to talk about today is, Sharing the truth about Jesus compellingly with people, using questions because of the pluralistic, relativistic context in which we live. And my primary proposition today is the main title: Questions Build Knowledge.

You can share the truth of the gospel with people using nothing but statements. You can do that and it is legitimate. But you actually put yourself in a position to minister to a person more effectively if you incorporate questions into your presentation of the gospel. There is more knowledge—more understanding. As I hope we will see in this session, the knowledge is not just for you, either...

1. Learning from children.

- One question for all of you: In your life, at what age were you the best at learning?
- I would imagine that most if not all of us would say, in our early childhood. We all have songs we can sing all the words to because we learned them as children. We have vivid childhood memories. We can remember all of our teachers from grade school, but can't recall the names of current coworkers!
- So let me ask you, what makes a child such a good learner? Wouldn't you like to be able to harness that—whatever it is—and be a better listener yourself today? I would suggest two major factors: one of which we can control, the other not.
 - 1) The first is Neuroplasticity.
 - Neuroplasticity refers to the ability of a child's brain to adapt quickly and learn new things. You could think of it as the *flexibility* of young brains.
 - Unfortunately, we all have relatively old, inflexible brains, and there's not a lot we can do about that biological reality.
 - But wait for the second factor:
 - 2) The second is Humility, manifested in constant questions.
 - When kids ask questions, they ask in order to get as ***much*** information as possible!
 - As adults, we try to get as ***little*** info as possible in response to our questions. Just think about your Google searches: what makes them successful? If you're able to word your search in such a way that you only get a direct answer to your question. You don't want 7 million hits; you want one that deals with the specific answer to your specific question.

- Tomorrow, go through your day and see how many times you ask closed-ended questions (yes/no) versus open-ended questions.
 - What do children always ask?
 - Why? Why daddy? Why mommy? Why, why, why?
- We will become better learners if we ask questions. And we ought to intentionally ask open-ended questions.
- We have much to learn from children in this regard!

2. Earning conversational capital

- A conversation is much like a transaction. We give and we take in conversation. The interesting thing is that, actually, we are taking when we *spea*k, and giving when we *listen*.
- We all understand this when we talk to those above us socially.
 - 1) Think of talking to your grandparents.
 - 2) Think of speaking to any number of political or religious leaders of the past.
 - 3) Wouldn't you give to them the honor of listening to them?
- If you talk non-stop in a conversation, you "spend" your capital. So listen!
- People are starving for listening ears!
- If you ask someone 3-5 open-ended questions and listen at a high-level, you give them a LOT. And they are very likely to be willing to listen to you.
- Our third point is that matter of two levels of listening.

3. Two kinds of listening

- Defining: There are two or three levels of listening. We'll just divide into 2 today.
- Level 1: Listening to respond (understand just enough to respond)
- Level 2: Listening to understand (understand fully first, then respond based on understanding)
- Advantages of Level 2 listening:
 - 1) You show you care about them individually.
 - 2) You earn their respect.
 - 3) You actually understand them.
- Our next point involves this matter of understanding.

4. Aiding self-knowledge

- You are not the only one who learns more by asking questions. You can actually help others to honestly assess themselves by asking them probing questions.
- Proverbs says that: "Counsel is in the heart of a man like deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out."
- It has been wisely observed that, "Accusations harden the will; questions prick the conscience."
- Think about NT examples of this:
 - 1) Jesus with the woman at the well

- 2) Jesus with The man born blind
- 3) Philip with the Ethiopian

Sample Questions:

- When you attend church, where do you attend?
- Do you ever think about spiritual things?
- In your opinion, what is a real Christian?
- What do you think of _____? (God, Jesus, The Bible)
- Who do you think Jesus Christ was?
- Have you come to a place in your life that you know for certain that you have eternal life and that you will go to heaven when you die?
- At what point are you in your spiritual journey?
- How do you feel about your standing before God?
- Do you ever wonder about life after death?
- At times like this, what inner resources do you draw on?

Responses to Answers:

- Would you mind explaining that to me?
- Why do you say that?
- What do you mean?

➤ **Become a part of other people's world.**

"Exclusive Christian fellowship isolates us from the very people who desperately need Christ." (Mack Stiles, Speaking of Jesus, 45)

- For some of you the first step in evangelism is to bake some cookies, take them to your neighbors and say, "Hello, we are the _____ family and we have been living here for _____ years and have never really introduced ourselves."

"You cannot win until you begin. So start where you are, disciplined for the glory of God. It is not where you are but where you are headed that matters." (Alvin Reid, Evangelism Handbook, 228)

Conversational Evangelism practiced by the majority of the members of a church results in a church culture of evangelism. Where evangelism is practiced, praised, and prayed for. And where all of this becomes the norm the product is a healthy growing church.