

Evangelism

Cultivating A “GO” Posture

Seeking The Father’s Wisdom And Following The Holy Spirit’s Lead

Matthew 14:23, Luke 6:12, 2 Corinthians 5:20, Acts 8:26-40, Acts 16:6-10

This should go without saying, but our first priority in stepping into the evangelism arena is to properly position ourselves in the Trinity as Jesus modeled and the early church leaders also demonstrated.

When we look at the life of Jesus, we see countless examples of Jesus making personal communion with the Father and the Spirit a priority both for himself in ministry and also his followers as an example. In the normal ebb and flow of life and ministry, he would often spend large amounts of time praying to keep himself in step with the Father’s will while operating in the Spirit’s power.

Not only do we see this in the life of Jesus, but the early church leaders also modeled this spiritual lifestyle. They clearly understood and practiced a reliance on God for evangelistic efforts. Paul and Philip are great examples of this spiritual “positioning” and, through both of their lives, we see God work in normal evangelism (relational and slower) and in the abnormal (quick and sovereignly-positioned opportunities).

As we move forward, considering our needed growth in the area of evangelism, let us first purpose to pursue spiritual lives that are deeply and moment-by-moment connected to God. We must pursue the Father for personal/emotional security and a renewed conviction to pursue His will for evangelism in others’ lives. We must also grow deeper in our relationship with the Holy Spirit, trusting Him to provide the power and discernment to proceed in evangelism.

As in all things spiritual, we must never forget that this is accomplished in our own hearts both personally and collectively in community as we grow in becoming an expression of the Body of Christ on mission together.

Leading By Example

The first principle to consider as we face the challenge of cultivating a “GO” posture in our missional communities is the principle of modeling. This is extremely important to understand, not only when we consider the specific issue of evangelism, but also as we seek to form a biblical view of leadership.

As we consider the basic mode of leadership in the New Testament, we see that modeling is the fundamental way that others learn how to live on mission. Consider Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11:1 when he told them, “Be

imitators of me, as I am of Christ.” The idea here is that Paul was actively demonstrating the desired lifestyle in which the Corinthians needed to be living, and he led them into it by example first and instruction second.

What this means for us in establishing a go posture in our MC’s is this: as leaders we must be “Goers” first if we expect our MC to “Go” as well. We cannot view our primary posture as leaders to be one of instructing and commanding, but one of leading in and modeling the going. We must personally deal with the issues of going first, demonstrating, by our own authentic struggles with pursuing lost people, that the mission of God is real and worthy of giving our lives for. This type of real and personal engagement with the mission of God provides us with two very necessary things for leading our MC’s: motivation and experience.

One of our leadership tasks is motivating others into mission. Believe it or not, one of the best ways to motivate others into mission is to be committed to it yourself. Exhorting, praying, and showing excitement are all beneficial to some degree, but being personally invested in the mission is by far the most winsome approach to motivating others.

The other leadership task that we have is equipping others for mission through our own personal experience in it. It is true that biblical principles of mission exist outside of our experience and as leaders we should be increasingly familiar with them. Even though this is true, the practical coaching of individuals on mission is dramatically increased if we ourselves are engaged in it and have growing experiences in it from which to pull. Not only do we help others by having evangelistic strategies, but we can also relate more personally to others as they deal with the emotional and spiritual struggles of reaching others for Christ.

Engaging Stumbling Blocks With The Gospel

Evangelism is challenging to us for many reasons: fear, uncertainty, lack of confidence, and the unpredictable reactions of those we are reaching can cause us to shy away from pressing into deeper conversations about Christ. We can falsely assume that evangelism is always a “one-and-done” encounter, feeling the unnecessary pressure to view every relational encounter as the only opportunity we have in creating a gospel encounter. These pressures are unrealistic and actually unbiblical when we understand the gospel and all that needs to be addressed in a person’s life for them to believe.

It is much healthier, natural, and effective to view gospel conversations as a crock-pot of sorts. When you cook with a crock-pot, you plug it in and begin the process of heating up the pot as you continue adding ingredients. Each step, each ingredient, adds increasing flavor and prepares the food to be cooked and eventually eaten. The way we cook with the crock-pot necessitates a slow and long cooking process for the dish to eventually come out as we desire it to. There is a lot of parallels here with evangelism. In the same fashion, evangelism requires us to “cook slowly” by asking key gospel questions which provide us opportunities to discuss the fundamental issues of the gospel with our friends. The following chart should help in both outlining the main issues of the gospel that every person must be confronted with and identifying gospel questions/conversations that might lead into deeper discussion.

Gospel Principles	Gospel Principles Explained	Gospel Principles Engaged
<p>God Exists Genesis 1:1-31 John 1:1-18 Romans 1:16-20</p> <p>Pillars Authority Opposition Faith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is pre-existent • God is all-knowing • God has authority 	<p>DISCUSSION TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creation/creator/DNA/other views • Human tragedy, its causes/answers <p>QUESTIONS AIMING TOWARD TOPICS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about your upbringing. (general and religious) • You ever wonder why people are so obsessed with the paranormal? • Why do you think so many people want to talk about God as they are dying? • What do you think about the tsunami in Indonesia? <p>TESTIMONY: share your personal experiences of God’s presence in your life.</p> <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show love/friendship/community • Running/Walking/Hiking • Picnic/Barbecue • Go out to eat somewhere farther away (use the long drive) • When appropriate, always show where the Bible presents the truths you are sharing.
<p>God Speaks Genesis 1:1-31 John 1:1-18 Romans 1:16-20</p> <p>Pillars Authority Righteousness Faith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God is relational • God communicates with humanity • God desires for mankind to know Him • God is merciful • God is just 	<p>DISCUSSION TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biblical accuracy over time 2. Textual criticism 3. Internal consistency of the Bible when interpreted faithfully 4. The bible is God revealing himself to us. 5. He shows us who he is and what he is like (perfect/right). 6. He shows us all this through the person and life of Jesus. <p>QUESTIONS AIMING TOWARD TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What do you think about various religions? Are they equal? 2. What is your view of Jesus? 3. Why do you think there are many views on God? 4. Did you grow up going to church/reading the Bible? 5. What do you think about the Koran/Book of Mormon/etc? 6. Have you ever looked at some of the Bible’s prophecies? <p>TESTIMONY: share your personal experiences of God’s Word impacting your life/answering your deepest questions, etc.</p> <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show love/friendship/community • When appropriate, always show where the Bible presents the truths you are sharing.

Gospel Principles	Gospel Principles Explained	Gospel Principles Engaged
<p>God's View Of Humanity Romans 1:18-3:20</p> <p>Pillars Authority Righteousness Faith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God holds everyone to the standard of Jesus • Mankind has rejected the revelation of God • Mankind falls short of the standard of Jesus • Mankind is unable to fix the problem 	<p>DISCUSSION TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Moral relativism 2. International affairs (peace in the middle east, etc.) 3. Moral decay in America with no standard of what is right <p>QUESTIONS AIMING TOWARD TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Isn't it crazy how people say that every person's truth is OK for them, but they never consider what that means for others? 2. There are so many opinions out there right now (#MeToo, etc.), but could you imagine if we all just fell under one righteous standard? 3. Ever wonder why you can just count on it that kids are going to do bad things? 4. When comparing yourself to Jesus, what are the similarities and differences that you notice? <p>TESTIMONY: Share how God's view of you has ultimately set you free because it answered the question of why you do what you do and the answer of how to address it.</p> <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show love/friendship/community • When appropriate, always show where the Bible presents the truths you are sharing.
<p>God's Gift To Humanity Romans 3:21-26</p> <p>Pillars Authority Righteousness Faith</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • God offers Jesus as a sacrificial substitute for our sin/death • By believing this free gift for us, we receive the right standing of Jesus because he received our sin punishment. 	<p>DISCUSSION TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Postmodernism's inability to fix society's big problems 2. Eternal uncertainty in facing death 3. Justification - what it means to be declared right by God because of Jesus' rightness <p>QUESTIONS AIMING TOWARD TOPICS</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Do you ever consider your life and the negative things you do to yourself/others and just want to change? 2. How often from childhood until now, have you tried to fix yourself/circumstances in your own power? 3. Do you have any stumbling blocks that would prevent you from believing in Jesus today? <p>TESTIMONY: Share how God's salvation brought peace into your life as you realized that your efforts would never amount to real salvation and real change.</p> <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show love/friendship/community • Give meaningful and appropriate gifts of time/things that meet your friend's needs • When appropriate, always show where the Bible presents the truths you are sharing.

Leveraging “Me” And “We”

John 13, 17

One last topic to consider in creating a “GO” culture in your missional community is the idea of how to best leverage personal (me) and group (we) environments in reaching your friends. From the words of Jesus himself,

we know that our most powerful apologetic in reaching the lost is our love for one another, as the Body of Christ, demonstrated before them. This would mean that ultimately we do want our unbelieving friends to come into contact with our MC friends in consistent and meaningful ways. This is indeed the goal that we must aim for, but we do need wisdom in how we pursue this together.

We must first come to terms with the idea that the initial step in getting our friends in and around our MC is to personally commit to the actions required to build a personal friendship with an unbeliever. You must understand that no one else is more responsible for building a deepening relationship of trust with your friend than you. Missional community cannot become our crutch in reaching the lost. Yes, MC integration is the goal for our unbelieving friends, but we are the ones that must take the first steps of building a friendship with them. If we do not do this step faithfully, they will never desire to meet any of our friends. If they are your coworker, your neighbor, your friend, then your initial task is to broaden the familiarity you have with them and demonstrate your desire to become better friends.

What does this look like? You must commit to the essential components of a meaningful friendship built on love which are time and sacrifice. You will get nowhere in the friendship if you never see them nor make sacrifices to relate to them. This means making them a time priority for your schedule. Planning to hangout with them for normal things (sports, hangouts, games, activities, etc.) will be crucial in doing this. You also will need to sacrifice your emotions and energies to learn about them by asking questions, digging deeper, and being interested in their life and interests, even if they don't match yours.

Secondly, as you grow in this relationship with your friend, you must look to incorporate your MC friends in the process. You must do this with patience and discernment if you want to succeed. Always think small in terms of how many MC friends to include and also consider who in your MC might best relate to your friend. Consider your friend's interests, career, and activities as you plan with your MC about who might be best to hang out with your unbelieving friend.

As you bring your unbelieving friend into the sphere of your MC community, be as normal as possible. Don't press too hard for deep conversation that might be uncomfortable for your friend (as he/she relates to your friend) from your MC. Do your best to be patient and to have fun while demonstrating what the Body of Christ looks like.

Lord willing, as your unbelieving friend builds increasingly meaningful friendships with you and your MC friends, your opportunities to demonstrate the gospel and discuss the gospel will increase. As this happens, pray together with your MC about his/her salvation and look for even more opportunities to have him/her get involved with your MC in social ways. There is no perfect science to when an unbelieving friend should come to your MC gatherings, but normally it is best to hold off until you (possibly with a few MC friends) have had the chance to share the gospel clearly and your friend has believed. When this occurs, remember that your new believing friend still might find an MC gathering to be awkward. Don't pressure him/her into coming, but begin to explain your MC's function and purpose and to let them know that they are welcome to come any time. If they are unsure for whatever reason, remember that it is your responsibility (along with the other MC friends who know them) to continue to lead your friend into the truth, ground them in the gospel, and begin to help them learn what it means to walk with Christ.

Consider these suggestions/principles as you look to bring your unbelieving friend into your missional community in a non-threatening way:

- When it comes to reaching your friend for Christ, assume the primary role in reaching them and do not presume on your MC to step in and do your job. If you need help and ideas, reach out to your MC for help, but do not shift the responsibility to them. Ultimately, your friend will likely be reached by you.

- Do not immediately invite your friend to your MC gathering. This could be very uncomfortable, especially if they have not established friendships with others in your MC and if they have not expressed interest in spiritual things yet.
- Do not immediately invite your friend to a large social gathering of those in your MC. If it is a room filled with those they do not know, it will also be an uncomfortable situation for them.
- When considering exposing your friend to those in your MC, plan well and consider how it might be most comfortable for them. Usually a small group, participating in a very normal function, is best (watch a football game, play games, barbecue, going out, etc.).

Note: It might appear that we are over emphasizing the “comfort” of our new friend. This not the case. We simply don’t want the environment to be a turn-off or a distraction. If there is to be discomfort, we want that to come from their encounter with the gospel and doing business with Jesus, not from a lack of consideration on our part that places them into awkward social situations.

Resources

Postmodernism

1. The Universe Next Door, James Sire
2. Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture, Gene Veith
3. The Death of Truth, Dennis McCallum
4. Jesus Among Secular Gods, Ravi Zacharias
5. “The Relevant Podcast”

Skepticism

1. From God To Us, Norman Geisler & William Nix
2. Evidence That Demands a Verdict, Josh McDowell
3. The Reason for God, Tim Keller

Engaging Stumbling Blocks

1. Listening For Heaven’s Sake, Gary Sweeten
2. Discovering God, Dennis McCallum
3. The Case For Christ, Lee Strobel