

Evangelism

Jesus came and gave His life for a sinful world to reach and save the lost.

'For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost' Luke 19:10.

Jesus told many stories about the lost. For example, there is the story of the Lost Coin (Luke 15:8-10), the Lost Sheep (Luke 15:3-7) and The Lost Son (Luke 15:11-32) who returned to his father. People are found however, when they are restored into a meaningful relationship with Christ through repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through the death and resurrection of Christ that this is made possible (Acts 2:38).

From our point of view *evangelism* is simply persuading people to commit their lives to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord. with commitment comes discipleship (Matthew 28:19,20).

Evangelism has often been an emotive topic for discussion among leaders. A few take the attitude that if God wants to save the lost, He can do it without your help or mine. While others look for every possible opportunity to reach out to the unconverted. Leaders with the latter conviction, normally see some or significant church growth. In the book 'The Air We Breathe,' by Glen Acrivener (P231), he mentions 'by 2060, Pew Research predicts that Christianity will remain the largest belief system on earth, having continued to grow as a proportion of the world's population (while atheism, agnosticism and the "nones" will shrink from 16% to 13%).

Four basic assumptions

1. All people *need a Saviour* (Romans 6:23).
2. God's main way of reaching people is *through people* (Matthew 28:19,20).
3. Our *attitude of genuine love and concern* for the lost is a significant motivating factor in evangelism (Matthew 9:36-38).
4. There are always *some people searching for Christ* and they have been made ready by the Holy Spirit and are waiting our arrival. Our church people need to realise this (John 4:35-38).

Too many people have entered the church through the front door as it were only to leave through the back. Jesus was not primarily concerned with securing decisions, but with making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). In our day, church leaders need to move beyond the emphasis on obtaining quick decisions, although there are occasions when a person has clearly been prepared by the Holy Spirit and is ready to respond immediately. We need to explain the gospel message and encourage ongoing commitment to Christ.

It is interesting to note that while John Wesley, who saw thousands come to know the Lord frequently preached in the open air and he did not typically urge people to make an immediate public decision to follow Christ. Instead, he placed great emphasis on small groups made up of people who genuinely wanted to understand what it meant to become followers

of Jesus. Within these groups they were taught, encouraged, and held accountable as they grew in faith and discipleship.

The Secular person

It is important to note that 'secular' does not necessarily mean atheist. A secular person may:

- believe in God but not practise a religion.
- identify as agnostic.
- follow another religion while supporting a separation between religion and public life.
- have no religious beliefs at all.

For these reasons and others, the church must have for our age a relevant message and exhibit authentic Christianity. We must seek to answer the questions secular people are asking. I also like to discern whether people are either walking toward Christ, stationary or walking away from Christ. This helps me understand where people are at.

Ways for reaching pre-Believers

There are many effective ways churches can reach people for Christ. Mass evangelistic meetings (however in the West they are not so effective these days). Here are some methods which have proved most worthwhile.

1. Seeker type services (Not always effective)
2. Videos
3. Friendship evangelism (excellent)
4. Tracts explain the gospel message
5. Groups seeking to understand the Christian message as for example 'Alpha' series.

Engel's chart

Engel's chart is a helpful visual approach in understanding the road people travel as they respond to Christ. We do not want a premature decision, nor do we want an unnecessary delay. Remember, people without Christ are lost.

Modified Engel's Scale

		ETERNITY
		↑↑
	+6	Become 'World Christians'
	+5	Stewardship & Reproduction
	+4	Communion with God
Cultivation	+3	Growth in Grace
	+2	Join the 'Body'
	+1	Post-decision evaluation
Regeneration	+	Repentance & faith in Christ
	-1	Decision to Act
Persuasion	-2	Recognise own needs
	-3	Positive attitude towards Gospel
	-4	Gospel has grasp
Proclamation	-5	Grasp of Gospel
	-6	Aware of Gospel elements
	-7	Aware of Supreme Being
	-8	No awareness of God

Role of the Holy Spirit | Our response | and the Communicator

(Chart used with kind permission of the Christian Leadership Letter)

Follow-up

Develop an effective follow up system where new believers are paired off with other more mature Christians for spiritual growth. Notes on Follow-up are in the following chapter.