

SESSION ONE

EVANGELISM

BONUS CONTENT

NOTES

Evangelism is about relationship. Sharing your life, truly loving your friends and family.

Looking for the fingerprints of God at work.

Asking for opportunities to pray as they arise.

There is a merge between evangelism and discipleship. It is not one then the other.

Evangelism is a gift, but we are all called to do it. We all need to pray for people and opportunities. We all need to be courageous enough to have that intentional conversation.

There is no greater joy in seeing someone come to faith in Jesus Christ.

QUESTIONS FROM VIEWERS

So Chloe - is it a cultural thing? Developing a culture of natural faith sharing? Takes away the weird and raises the expectation?

Absolutely it is a cultural thing! I think it is incredibly important for any pastor or church to ask themselves what structures, cultures etc. they are putting in place to create an environment that encourages and fosters evangelism. Is your church a place people want to bring others? Do you have a culture that encourages people to talk to new people and welcome them in? Do you preach sermons that will be engaging, welcoming and compelling to a non-believer? Do you have programs that specifically create a space for new people? For example, we do young adult dinners after a night service on a Sunday- not only does it create a community for our young adults but is such an easy invite to someone who's never been to church. Sometimes people will just invite a friend to the dinner to meet people and get closer to a church community- this begins to journey of asking questions, coming along and finding Jesus.

Some people will feel a natural passion and confidence for sharing their faith, but we should be making it as simple and easy as possible for anyone to do this as well.

Other than yourselves, how do you identify evangelists and encourage them, so they can encourage all of us...?

I don't identify Evangelist, I just encourage everyone to give it a go, those who seem to regularly bring people to Jesus I celebrate but wouldn't give them the title. Maybe I should. I think that those who have the gift, have the passion and sometimes it is those people who struggle to teach others because it come so naturally. They just sit at a bus stop and start having a conversation and next they are leading them to Jesus. The best thing I can do for those who are gifted in evangelism is to not clutter them with other church roles, to acknowledge what they do as a ministry and release them into it. One of the dangers of over emphasizing the role and gift in someone's life is that others think that they don't need to do it, if they have a friend they want to see connect with Jesus they invite the evangelist along to have a chat. I am not sure that is God's intent for the gift.

Wondering if the panellist can also reflect on the difference between every Christian sharing faith and people who might have a gift of evangelism? Do we still think evangelists should be acknowledged? How do we support or release them? What role should they play in our churches?

It is just like any other ministry in church- we are all called to worship God, but some people are particularly gifted and passionate about worship and serve there. We are all called to love others and welcome others, but some are more gifted and passionate and serve on the welcome team. So, we are all called to share our faith, but some people are naturally passionate and gifted in this area, and therefore will invest in this ministry. So just like we would identify a good singer and point them towards the worship team or identify someone who is great with kids for the kids team- we can identify qualities in people and encourage them to pursue their gifting in evangelism. This could look like someone who is always bringing someone new to church, someone who is confident in deep conversations around faith, someone who is inclusive and great with people, someone who empathises deeply with others and understands God heart for the lost. (This is not always the loud extravert by the way). From there encourage them and keep them accountable, ask questions like who the 3 people are you are currently speaking into and praying for, how are you positioning yourself to evangelise in your everyday life?

Also get them in on teams and meetings creating programs for pre or post church hangs, running events, talking about sermon topics etc. If you want to be a church that fosters evangelism, and has a culture of invitation you want people in these discussions who are thinking from the perspective of a new person, who's specifically gifted and passionate about people meeting God for the first time etc.

How would you rate the preparation/training/teaching that is given at church level and a theological training level for evangelism?

This would be different in every training organisation but generally not great. Our formation processes are designed to form pastors, shepherds and teachers and struggle to form apostles, evangelists and prophets. The reality is that while a theological college can help to teach and give theological understanding developing your gift (any gift) is done through relationships, opportunities and reflection. This is just as true for evangelism. Giving it a go and chatting it through will always teach you more than a college can.

Some research suggests there are 7 or so significant moments/conversations that lead to someone coming to church and/or becoming a believer. Could you comment on that?

The research points to an interesting truth. When we think about evangelism with think of the moment of sharing your faith or truth about Jesus, someone being convicted by the Holy Spirit and giving their lives to Christ. What this research reminds us is that more often than not it takes time, multiple conversations and ongoing relationship as our panellist explained. Whether it is 7 or 27 whether it happens in a day or over 50 years we need to look for those moments where God is stirring, where He is at work and have hearts ready to share.

Panel. What are your thoughts on using programs to help your people/ peers to share faith?

If we want to encourage everyday people we need to give them a frame work in which they can do it. There are a lot out there, but you need to find what works for your demographic. If you are doing evangelism in a Uni it could look different to a shopping centre. Find what works, don't stop mashing together different strategies until you find what works for you and your church. Once you have a framework you need to train others in it. I started with my staff and with my elders, I challenged them and myself to do it, then as every new ministry or ministry review happens I train those people in how to do it. I have included the framework that what works for PGUC.

How do we do cross-cultural evangelism well?

Barry- We have found our framework transcends culture as long as the language barrier is eliminated.

Barry mentioned 10 people came to faith through the playgroup. Could he tease that out a bit? What did that look like in practice - what supports were offered - what were the dynamics of that movement?

The people who came to faith through the playgroup, did so in the framework mentioned. We deliberately set out a pathway for people to follow when they show signs that God is at work. It starts with the offer of prayer, then follow up, offer to read the bible, inviting them to alpha and give their hearts to God then discipling them. We had the blessing of whole family units coming to faith. They came to church when they were ready and felt the presence of God while in worship. Our evangelism tool is to show our faith before we share it, then as we see God at work take them along a pathway. Some take years, some take months and as soon as we identify that God is at work we start praying hard that God will reveal himself to them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR GROUPS

What is your biggest challenge when it comes to sharing your faith with others?

Where can you see the fingerprints of God at work in those around you?

How can you engage more in building relationship with those who don't know Jesus and praying for opportunities share?

What practical steps can you take to develop a culture of sharing your faith and seeing people come Christ in your family, small group, or congregation?

RESOURCES

There are many resources available to help you think through your evangelism. Remember the idea is not that you make it more complicated than it needs to be. Pray for people, love them, share your life with them, let them see your faith as you share your faith, step into the courageous moment to pray for them, invite them to alpha or whatever it may be. Sometimes a simple framework can help.

See attached Kingdom Connection framework from Parafield Gardens UC.

Kingdom Connections

R O A D M A P T O
S H A R I N G Y O U R F A I T H



DISCOVER



PRAYER



FOLLOW UP



READ BIBLE



INVITE



DISCIPLE

Discover

Firstly, evangelism starts with prayer. Ask God to connect you with the right person/people that he has been preparing to interact with you. Praying opens the possibilities and shows the Father your intent to want to reach the lost. Our Job is to discover who God wants us to connect with, who he is already at work in. Ask God to bless the people in your life with a revelation of His presence. Ask God to bless your work, your family and your community. As he reveals the person or people to you then it becomes your job to discover them. Find out who they are, where they grew up, what they enjoy and what is going on in their life. Asking great questions shows your interest in who they are as a person and gives you insight in how you can pray for them

Pray

As you converse with these people look for the issues that emerge and offer to pray for them right there and then. If they accept your offer, pray boldly that God would do something significant in that issue.

Their acceptance is a sign that God could be at work. We are looking for those **Persons of Peace**¹ who God is already at work in and are showing signs of embracing God at work in their lives.

Continue to pray for this person, pray for the that God will give them a fresh revelation of his love and will bless them with knowing that he is for them.

Follow up

If you don't know the person that well, ask for their details so you can follow up in a week or so and see what God has done for them. In following up, if they are seeing God at work in the prayer prayed, then it is an opportunity to go to the next step. This is a challenging step because we can come with uncertainty that God has answered or that they can see that God has answered. Be bold, you already have seen God work in them by letting you pray for them. This is an important step, that can not be missed, because if they acknowledge that God has answered their prayers you have greater confidence that God is drawing them into his kingdom.

Reading the bible together

If you see them receptive to God answering their prayers, then the next step is to invite them to read the bible with you. Simply ask: **"I am looking to read the bible with someone. Is that something you would like to do with me?"** You can also ask if they know anyone else who might be interested. The simple SOAP method is enough, and the Discovery Bible

¹ For more information of Persons of Peace: <https://www.imb.org/topic-term/persons-of-peace/>

method is also good². Start with the stories of Jesus. The key is asking them what stands out and what they think God might be saying to them. There is no pressure for them to give their life to Jesus just explore what that could mean. You don't come as an expert to explain the text, you come as a facilitator to help God reveal what God wants to reveal and help them explore what God wants them to explore. Let the Holy Spirit be their guide.

Meet weekly if possible but at least fortnightly. As well as reading the bible, ask how you can continue to pray for them and involve them in the praying. Don't stop praying for them.

Invite

If you are reading the bible regularly with someone and it seems that God is at work, this is the time to invite them to church or to do the Alpha course. This should be very natural as they explore what faith means. There may be lots of issues with them making it. They may have family issues that stop this, they may have past history they need to get over but when the time is right invite.

The most important invitation is that of inviting them to give their lives to Christ as Lord and Saviour. Be patient, some people take time to get their head around the new paradigm that God is real and wants to be in relationship with them. For some it will be weeks; some it will be months. The key is to be patient and wait. God has it in hand. Don't force what isn't there, don't try and pick the fruit before it is ready.

There is no perfect prayer, but the basis of all prayers is acceptance of what Jesus has done for you, the forgiveness of sin and the surrendering lordship to Him. Some people find this hard, yet it is the most joy filled moment to be a part of. It's important to get them to keep praying to start the connection between them and God. Encouraging them to pray out loud early on is very helpful for the rest of their journey.

Discipleship

The beginning of all discipleship is hearing from God. The parable of the mustard seed is important here. You can receive the word of God, yet it not hit good soil and be wasted. Helping people hear God is the best soil you can give people. It is hard to turn away when you have experienced God's voice. This is more important than information, that will come, but it is the relationship that will keep them connected and hungry to go deeper and learn more. Once they understand hearing God's voice, it is about encouraging obedience to what God is saying. This is the time to get them into a small group, either the group you run or help them find another group if yours doesn't work for them.

² S.O.A.P = Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer. For the Discovery Bible approach, go here: <https://s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/dbsguide/en-US.DBsguide-web.pdf> or <https://www.crossway.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/discovery-bible-method.pdf>