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EVANGELISM DESIGN

A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK



Evangelism Design: A Comprehensive Framework for Missional Leaders By Keith Davy

There is a heartbeat to evangelism. You hear it as you draw near to God. The veins of gospel outreach pulsate with the love of God. Love compelled the Father to send his beloved Son into this broken world to rescue fallen humanity (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9). In love's greatest display, Jesus laid down his life, dying upon a cross for the sins of the world (John 15:13; 1 John 3:16). Love issued the command that sent the disciples into the world as gospel-bearers and ambassadors of the King. True evangelism flows from the love of God.

But if there is a heartbeat to evangelism, there is also a design. The all-knowing, all-wise Creator God didn't leave this glorious enterprise for feeble men to figure out. Like a master designer, he provided the framework for his church throughout the ages and the nations to build upon—doctrines to instruct, commands to obey, principles to guide and examples to follow.

When one recognizes God as the ultimate source, it becomes clear that a discussion of evangelism isn't a mere discourse on ministry philosophy or effective

methodology. Rather it is engaging in a matter of supreme importance to God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. In like manner, it should be of highest priority to ministry leaders and laborers in the 21st century.

THE EVANGELISM MODEL

Too often what is written, taught or discussed about evangelism misses the mark. It isn't that what is said is wrong; rather it is narrow. Biblical bases can be shallow, proof-texting one's position and practices. Unhelpful dichotomies are employed to make a case for one's own preference and style over another. Narrow aspects of the mission are over-emphasized leaving other important elements neglected. The fruitfulness of our efforts suffer as a result.

To address these issues, the U.S. Campus Ministry of Campus Crusade for Christ has developed and employed the Evangelism Model. This model is deeply rooted in biblical studies on evangelism, yet has also been shaped by the realities of actual evangelistic ministry. It provides a framework that enables leaders to think well about evangelism—to understand its foundations and dynamics, to plan strategically, to evaluate effectiveness, to troubleshoot issues, and to innovate new solutions.

To think well about evangelism, we must begin by thinking **biblically**. Ministry philosophy moves from the biblical to the practical, from what is true to what works, and not in reverse. Theology and biblical principles provide the foundation upon which a sound ministry philosophy must be built. (See *The Evangelism Model: The Biblical Framework* below. For an inductive study utilizing the Evangelism Model's framework, see *Getting Biblical About Evangelism*, CruPress, 2004.)



If we think biblically, we will also think **comprehensively**. “All” and “every” are common in the language of the Bible, quantifying the evangelistic mission. This comprehensive scope provides an essential context, protecting us from a narrowness that limits our strategy and hampers our effectiveness. To reach a campus, community or country with the gospel requires comprehensive thinking and multi-faceted engagement.

But our thinking must also be **principle-based**. It has been said, “Methods are many, principles are few. Methods always change, principles never do.” Specific methods and approaches are limited in application, but biblical principles are applicable anytime and anywhere. The principles remain constant, but the application is contextualized, adapting to the setting or need. This has made the Evangelism Model useful in diverse settings, culturally and globally.

Finally, leaders must think **practically**. We must translate our thinking into effective outreach ministry and missional activity. The wisdom of leadership is to discern the best means to the best ends. Ultimately, only God knows both. But to the degree to which the Evangelism Model helps us think biblically, it aligns our ministries and efforts with the very work that God is already doing in the world around us.

THE CHANGING FACE OF EVANGELISM

Evangelism is always changing, yet always remains the same. That may sound like a paradox, but it isn't. In fact, it is a key in understanding and leading evangelism—any time and any place, in any culture and with any generation. To unleash the power of the gospel with relevance, we must differentiate between what never changes and what is always changing.

Consider the divine drama of salvation. Evangelism always involves the interaction of three principal actors:

- **God—the Master**

Evangelism always begins with God. It is ultimately the work of God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- **The Audience—the Masses**

God is at all times and in all places seeking the lost—the people of this world, alienated from his life and suffering the consequences of their sin. They are the context that shapes the form of evangelism.

- **Believers—the Messengers**

God chooses to send believers as his messengers to the world—ambassadors authorized by his command, empowered by his Spirit and constrained by his love. They are the primary initiators in evangelism.

There are two additional elements always involved:

- **The Gospel—the Message**

God has entrusted the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ—to his messengers to deliver to the intended audience. It is the power of God for salvation of everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

- **The Communication—the Methods**

There is always an approach employed to communicate the gospel. The methods are contextualized, varying according to audience and the situation.

These five elements provide the framework of the **Evangelism Model**.

Now consider what never changes among these five. Certainly God doesn't change, nor does the gospel. Neither does the fundamental need of the masses for salvation, nor the calling and mission of the messengers.

But what does change? The masses change, at least in respect to their culture and felt-needs. Therefore, the messengers must also change, adapting to the culture and differences in setting, lest they become irrelevant and ineffective. The methods must also change according to the context or they will fail to communicate effectively.

Leading evangelism effectively involves understanding these five elements and the biblical principles that undergird their interaction. Effective leaders align to the unchanging elements and adapt the rest as needed.

THE MASTER

Evangelism is, first and foremost, a work of God. He is the Master of evangelism, the Lord of the Harvest (Matthew 9:37-38). Evangelism begins and ends with him. Our English word *master* has two meanings. It can speak of one who has authority over another or it can identify an artist of consummate skill. Both definitions apply to God with regard to evangelism.



As Lord of the Harvest, God sends workers into his harvest field. They engage in their Master's work under his authority and according to his command. But God is also a Master artist who, with consummate skill, orchestrates each evangelistic encounter according to his plan and purposes. The unique testimonies of believers illustrate how brilliantly God's Spirit weaves together the circumstances and relational connections in life, along with the power of the gospel, to bring individuals to faith in Christ. First and foremost, from beginning to end, evangelism is a work of God.

But what happens when we lose our God-centeredness in evangelism? What symptoms appear when we shift our focus from the Master and his work? The list is long. We begin to feel pressure to witness. Legalism sets in—evangelism becomes a thing that we have to do to. It can become stressful. We often lose our desire to witness. People can become projects, objects that we are doing something to rather than people that we love. We may manipulate to get results. We feel like a failure when we don't see results and proud when we do. We judge others who are not involved in witness. We grow frustrated with ourselves or with others. We lose effectiveness and spiritual power. Competition, comparison, and performance set it. And the list goes on.

But if these are symptoms of a lack of God-centeredness in evangelism, then the cure follows. Re-center on God! If the root of the problem is a loss of focus on God, then the solution has to begin with re-focusing on his role. Like the hub of a wheel, all evangelism should revolve around God and draw its power from him. It is the task of the leader to ensure that it does. But how?

There are four biblical truths that Jesus modeled and taught that connect our efforts to his work. They can be summarized as:

- Christ's Purpose: The Glory of God
- Christ's Passion: His Love for the Lost
- Christ's Plan: The Great Commission
- Christ's Power: The Holy Spirit

To ensure that our witness is truly Christ-centered, we must weave these truths into the fabric of our lives and those that we lead.

CHRIST'S PURPOSE: THE GLORY OF GOD

What is the ultimate aim of evangelism? It is the same as God's purpose in all of his works. It is his glory. On his last night with his disciples, just hours before his arrest and death on the cross, Jesus prayed. The prayer, recorded for us in John 17, unveils a window into our Lord's soul. In it, he expresses to the Father the desire for what was most important to him—glory. God's glory is laced throughout the prayer (17:1, 4, 5, 10, 22, 24). As he prays about his own life and ministry, as he prays for the disciples and their witness, and as he prays for us who would believe through it, it is all about the glory of God. The ultimate aim of evangelism is the glory of God.

But what is the glory of God? In theological terms, the glory of God is the manifestation of the divine excellencies. Or, in more common terms, it is God in all of his greatness on display. Of course, God is great in all that he is, all that he has, and all that he does. When that is on display, we see the glory of God. So to glorify God is to reveal him or make Him known. That is exactly what true evangelism does. Every time you share the gospel you reveal the glory of God. The gospel reveals his great and excellent attributes—his love, his righteousness, his holiness, his justice, his wrath, his mercy, his grace, his power, his wisdom. The gospel reveals his glorious act of salvation in the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. So every time you share the gospel you glorify God, whether anyone responds or not, because you are revealing the greatness of God through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

But this glorious display extends beyond initial proclamation. The work of salvation in the life of everyone who receives Christ through faith displays God's greatness. All the angels of heaven rejoice each time someone turns back in repentance (Luke 15:7, 10). What is more, the changed life of the new believer reflects the image of God displaying his glory (2 Corinthians 3:18). Those individuals, who worship God now and in eternity, glorify him by declaring his praise (Romans 15:5-12). All this is the fruit of evangelism.

So evangelism glorifies God, displaying his greatness. When you love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength and you want him to be glorified above all else, then evangelism will grip your heart, for it is all about his glory! Leaders of evangelism ministries must inspire a desire among their people for the glory of God.



CHRIST'S PASSION: HIS LOVE FOR THE LOST

Compassion is true love focused on real need. It is always found at the intersection of love and need. Both must be present for compassion to be experienced. People can be exposed to real need, but if they lack love they will not express compassion. On the other hand, one can love, but if there is no evident need then there is no reason for compassion. Compassion is true love's response to genuine need.

When Jesus saw the multitudes, he saw their need—"they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). So he had compassion on them. But compassion is never passive; it is not mere pity. In the gospel records, every time that Jesus had compassion, he moved into action to meet the need. When he saw the blind and had compassion, he restored their sight (Matthew 20:34). When he saw the leper and was filled with compassion, he reached out, touched the man and healed him (Mark 1:41). When he saw a widow whose only son had died, he had compassion on her and raised her son from the dead (Luke 7:13). When he saw the hungry and had compassion, He fed them (Mark 8:1-8). So it is not surprising that when Jesus saw multitudes in their lost condition, that he had compassion upon them and set into action to meet the need. First, he enlisted his disciples to pray fervently for laborers to be sent into the harvest (Matthew 9:37-38) and then he sent them out to be the answer to their prayers (Matthew 10). Compassion spurs action. It did with the Master; it will with his followers.

Thus it is love that compels witness—a love for God and a love for others. Those who love God want to make him known and glorify him. Those who love people want to help them to know God, who meets their greatest need. The greatest thing we can do for another is to help them come to know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is also the most loving thing.

CHRIST'S PLAN: THE GREAT COMMISSION

The Great Commission begins with the words of Jesus, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations..." (Matthew 28:18-19). Understanding "all authority" has a transforming influence on the messengers—it makes the witness unstoppable. It was true for the early believers and it will be true for us, as well.

In the book of Acts, when the authorities in Jerusalem were alarmed by the spread of the gospel, they brought in Peter and John for questioning (Acts 4:7). First, they commanded them to stop speaking and teaching in Jesus' name (4:18). When that failed to deter their witness (4:31), they arrested them (5:18), not once but twice (5:27), and had them beaten (5:40). The effect? The apostles continued to witness day after day. Luke writes, "they never stopped" (5:42). Why? In their own words, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (4:20), and again, "We must obey God rather than men!" (5:29). They understood Christ's authority.

There was one way the authorities could stop their witness. They could kill them, and they did. First it was Stephen (Acts 7:57-60); then it was James (Acts 12:2). They were followed by countless unnamed believers who gave their life in witness to Christ. It became so common for witnesses to lose their life for their faith that over time the Greek word for witness (*martus*) would take on meaning of martyr. That, of course, is how we use the word in English. If we, and those we lead, truly understood and aligned ourselves to the authority and command of our Lord Jesus Christ, we too would become unstoppable in our witness, except by death.

CHRIST'S POWER: THE HOLY SPIRIT

An unstoppable witness requires more than human strength or fortitude to be faithful and effective. Fruitful witness requires power, the inner power of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 4:29, the disciples prayed in the face of persecution for the Lord to "enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness." Their prayer was answered when "they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly" (4:31). It was as Jesus promised, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Like any of us, the Apostle Paul knew what it was like to witness in "weakness and fear, and with much trembling" (1 Corinthians 2:3). But he also knew that it wasn't his words that would make the difference. It was the "demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power" (2:5). God-centered evangelism draws its power from God's Spirit.

So how do you align your heart and the hearts of those you lead with Christ's purpose, passion, plan



and power? The key is through prayer and God's word. Take time to pray through each of these four foundational truths, meditating on key passages and asking God to make them real in your life. Lead your ministry in seasons of prayer focused on evangelism and the lost. Don't assume prayer is happening; it probably isn't (or isn't enough). Word-filled prayer has the power to align our hearts with God's heart and obtain from him the answers that he has promised and delights to give.

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

- What symptoms in your life and witness suggest your evangelism is not fully God-centered? What symptoms are evident in those you lead?
- What has been most helpful for you in keeping God at the center of your evangelism?
- Brainstorm ways to impart these principles in your ministry. Which of these tactics would be most strategic and effective at this time?

THE MASSES

Like Bible study, evangelism is best done in context. As a single verse needs to be understood in the context in which it is written, so an individual is best understood in the context in which he lives. Understanding your audience matters. It makes a difference who they are, what they believe, what they need, and how God has worked in their life. Most important is their awareness of the gospel and their attitude toward it.

Our ability to understand our audience and adapt to it is critical for enabling our communication to be relevant and effective. But it is also a complex challenge. There are layers of various influences, outlooks and experiences that affect receptivity—some are shared with others, some are unique and individual.

The term “masses”, when applied to people, refers to a large group who are somewhat loosely associated. There are, of course, masses of people all around us—on our campuses and in our communities. Most go unnoticed to us, but not to Jesus. When Jesus saw the multitudes, he had compassion on them, for he saw them in their true condition. They were “harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd” (Matthew 9:36). On another occasion, he drew his disciples' attention to the crowds saying, “Open your eyes and

look at the fields! The are ripe for harvest” (John 4:35).

But Jesus didn't just see the multitudes; he saw the individual. He saw the Pharisee, Nicodemus, as a misguided religious leader (John 3:1-21). He saw a young man with great wealth and stature, but impoverished in his spirit (Mark 10:17-31). He saw an immoral woman who thirsted for the satisfaction that only he could give (John 4:1-42). He saw a tax collector as a future apostolic leader (Mark 2:13-22). He saw four fishermen and saw the same. He saw the blind, lame, leprous, sick and infirmed as individuals needing his healing touch. Jesus saw and understood the crowds. But he also saw and understood the individual.

Our ability to see and understand our audience, both the masses and the individuals who compose them, will be critical in shaping relevant communication of the gospel and approaches in evangelism. But where do you start?

First, recognize the complexity of the challenge.

It is easy for us to project on others a shallow, simplistic perception of who they are and what they need. How often have we made assumptions about people based solely on their outward appearance? Those assumptions are rarely accurate, nor helpful. Empathetic engagement, or what has been termed in scholarship as “perspective taking,” enables us to better understand our audience by seeing the world through their eyes. We come to understand them as people, not projects, and their lives as stories—stories worth hearing. Through this deepening understanding, we discover how the gospel speaks to them individually and as a group. (For a practical guide to empathetic listening, see the “Explorer” role in *CoJourners: A Transferable Concept*, CruPress, 2007.)

When you peel back the layers of reality and examine what is beneath each, they yield insights that will make a significant difference in evangelism. Those insights include:

- The spiritual realities
- The cultural influences
- The social connections
- The personal pilgrimages

Together these dimensions will influence people's attitude and responsiveness to the gospel.



SPIRITUAL REALITIES

There are spiritual realities that are true of every person apart from Christ. The Bible clearly articulates the human condition—that we are all under sin and unable to save ourselves (Rom 3:9-20). Our sin and the resulting death is the ultimate need that Jesus Christ alone can reverse through his atoning death on the cross (Romans 3:21-26). This salvation, accomplished by the risen and reigning Lord, is the reason evangelism is necessary (Romans 10:9-15).

But there are other realities related to the spiritual context of the masses. First, apart from Christ, they are in **spiritual bondage**:

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. (Ephesians 2:1-3)

Apart from Christ, they are **spiritually blinded**:

The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (2 Corinthians 4:4)

Apart from Christ, they are the objects of a **spiritual battle**, in which the enemy of their souls seeks to keep them in their fallen and broken condition.

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

But there is also a divine side to the spiritual realities. God created humanity in his image, He has worked providentially determining the time and places for all people to live, with the purpose that they would seek him, reach out and perhaps find him (Acts 17:26-27). As the Lord of the Harvest, the Master of Evangelism, he continues to orchestrate the circumstances that set the stage for men and women to seek him. He

has sent his Spirit into the world to convict of sin, righteousness and the coming judgment (John 16:8-9).

Evangelism, then, isn't merely an "intellectual" exercise, trying to convince people to recognize the truth. It is a spiritual power encounter. The gospel is the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16). God's Spirit brings its power against the opposition of the spirit of evil and into the experience of those who hear it (Acts 1:8; 1 Thessalonians 1:5). This is the spiritual context for evangelism. But there is more.

CULTURAL INFLUENCES

While the spiritual realities are true for all, people live within a mosaic of different cultures and cultural influences. There are elements generally shared by large numbers of people (macro-cultures) and other aspects that are more narrowly shared with a few (micro-cultures). We might describe student culture in general (a macro-culture) or the characteristics of a specific fraternity or sorority house (a micro-culture).

These layers of culture will have a significant influence on evangelism. For instance, the culture of the audience will shape the message. Why are there four Gospels in the New Testament? Each conveys the same narrative—the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Yet each does so with its own distinctive elements. Why? Because the Gospels were written to four different audiences, with four different cultural characteristics. Matthew was written to a Jewish audience and so he relied heavily on the Old Testament prophecies to show that Jesus was the Messiah. Mark was written to a Roman (or largely Gentile) audience, so Mark had to explain more fully Jewish customs that Matthew took for granted. He emphasized Messianic action over teaching. Luke and John were to still other audiences. The cultures of each audience shaped the message of each Gospel.

The same principle can be demonstrated by comparing the gospel messages found throughout the book of Acts. Compare, for instance, Peter's message to the Jews (Acts 2:14-21) with his message to the Gentiles (10:34-43). Do the same for Paul's gospel message for Jews and God-fearers in Antioch (13:14-43) and the Greek philosophers in Athens (17:16-34). In each, the essence of the gospel remained constant—who Jesus is, what he has done and why. But in each, the gospel was contextualized according to the culture of the audience.



But Paul goes beyond merely adapting the message. He adapts his own lifestyle and approach according to the audience's culture. He even did so at the expense of his own cultural heritage and preferences:

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. (1 Corinthians 9:19-22)

For those who are insiders within culture, little adaptation is necessary. But for those who are cultural outsiders, effective evangelism requires more. The cultural distance can make it challenging to establish a positive environment of communication or relationships of trust. If there is “emotional baggage” from past negative experiences or cultural stereotypes, contextualization requires even greater sensitivity and adaptation. Leaders and laborers in evangelism must grow in understanding the audiences they seek to reach. The context of the audience will shape their message and methods.

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

While culture in general is important, relationships are even more crucial. People are relational beings and exist within a web of relational networks. These networks can be channels for the rapid spread of the gospel. They can also be barriers that impede it.

Relational networks create social boundaries making certain people insiders and leaving the rest as outsiders. When Paul entered a city on his missionary journeys, he would go first to the synagogues (for example, Acts 17:2-4). Among the Jews, Paul was an insider. He shared much of their culture and related as one of them. When the Jews resisted his message, Paul turned to the Gentiles. In the marketplace among the rest of the community, Paul was an outsider (Acts 18:5-8). Leading effective evangelism requires sensitivity to this insider-outsider dynamic.

But a social network not only affects the relational connection between the messenger and audience, it

also can be a critical factor in the spread of the gospel to others beyond that audience. Jesus' first disciples were all associates. Andrew and Peter were brothers, as were James and John. Philip and Nathaniel were friends from the same hometown. All or most of these six were disciples of John the Baptist (John 1:35-51). The good news was spreading within a social network.

When the Philippian jailer believed, so did his whole family (Acts 16:34). When the Samaritan woman believed, so did many from her village (John 4:39). Effective evangelism not only recognizes the importance of the relational connection between the messenger and the audience, it also considers the importance of the listeners' relational network to others. The gospel can, and often does, spread through these relational connections. Effective leaders in evangelism learn to maximize these relationships.

PERSONAL PILGRIMAGES

As you continue to peel back the layers—the spiritual realities, cultural influences and social involvements—evangelism must still adapt to the individual. This involves both their worldview and spiritual journey.

The socio-cultural milieu in which a person lives imprints their lives with a way of thinking. Each individual develops a worldview—an overall perspective about life, the world, and one's place within it. But a worldview isn't merely cognitive beliefs. It is intertwined with deep-seated values that wield powerful influence over thoughts and behavior. Various worldviews can be categorized according to their shared beliefs. But each individual's worldview is unique as it blends a variety of ideas, influences, and values into a perspective about life that is rarely examined or explained, yet subconsciously influences everything. Each worldview has assumptions, but rarely are those assumptions questioned. Thus, most worldviews are inconsistent, embracing contradictory beliefs that can only be maintained by a general reluctance to think deeply. (For a conversational guide to explore a listener's worldview, see *Perspective Cards*, CruPress, 2010.)

But each individual also has a unique spiritual journey. They may be moving toward God or away from God. They may be near or far. They may be pursuing other so-called “gods” that aren't God at all. They may be stuck in a spiritual quagmire and not moving. But everyone is on a spiritual journey. They



can't help it, for they were created as spiritual beings. Their unique spiritual journey will significantly influence the shape that effective evangelism will take. (For help in adapting to the spiritual journeys of others in conversational evangelism, see the suite of *CoJourney* resources, from CruPress.com and at www.crupress.com/green).

For instance, a person's spiritual proximity (that is, where they are in their spiritual journey) can be marked by their openness to the gospel and readiness to respond. But the spiritual process by which one comes to faith in Christ is not linear. The journey to Christ is not the same for each individual. It can be helpful to consider three different dimensions in that journey: growth in understanding, awareness of need, and willingness to change (see diagram 1).

A person may be at a different stage on each of these three dimensions. Some know the truth about Jesus and are aware of their need for a Savior, but are resistant to change because of their entanglement in sin. There are others who know something is wrong with them and want to change but have no knowledge of the gospel. How you deal with the former will be different from how you help the latter. But neither is at the threshold of decision. When one agrees that the gospel is true (understanding), recognizes that he or she can not solve their sin and guilt apart from the Savior (need) and is willing to change (willingness), they are at the threshold of decision, ready to place their trust in Christ as their Savior.

Diagram 1

Growth in Understanding A person may progress across a spectrum from:	Awareness of Need A person may progress down a scale from:	Willingness to change A person may progress through a continuum from:
4. Complete ignorance of the truth regarding God or Christ	4. Complete unawareness of any need or being completely self-satisfied	4. Complete resistance to change
3. A general familiarity with basic truths about God and Jesus	3. A general awareness that there is something wrong	3. An openness to change
2. An understanding of the essential truth of the gospel and its implications	2. A consciousness that the problem is sin and guilt	2. A desire to change
1. An agreement that the gospel is true	1. An awareness that one is unable to solve the problem apart from the Savior.	1. A willingness to change
Threshold of Decision		

It is important to recognize that we cannot make assumptions about a person's spiritual proximity. We must discover this through communication and, ultimately, through their response to the gospel itself. The Pharisees were generally resistant to the gospel and hostile to Christ. But there were exceptions. Nicodemus, a Pharisee, came to Christ seeking understanding (John 3:1-21; 19:39). Likewise, most would have assumed the Samaritan woman at the well to be an unlikely candidate for faith in Jesus Christ (John 4:1-30). But they would be wrong. Spiritual journeys must be explored; we cannot project our assumptions onto others.



Also, people can, and at times do, change rapidly when God is at work. Consider Saul. In Jerusalem, he is breathing threats against the Lord's disciples (Acts 9:1). Three days later, he is sitting blind in Damascus, seeking the Lord and waiting for a man named Ananias to come and complete his conversion (9:10-19). That is rapid change! We cannot assume that those who have been spiritually distant in the past are still the same in the present. They may have been drawn closer by the grace and power of God.

Leading evangelism is complex because people are complex. But that complexity need not create inaction. When believers are guided by God's Spirit and filled with his love, the power of the gospel can break through even in the most challenging contexts. Love compels us to understand our audience. Wisdom causes us to adapt to them. The context of the masses influences our evangelism. Leaders of missional teams and ministries plan and coach accordingly.

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

Identify the different groups of people (sub-cultures, micro-cultures, affinity groups, kinds of people, etc.) within your ministry context.

- Which groups are being effectively reached in your ministry context? Why?
- Which groups are not being effectively reached? Why?
- Which groups would be most strategic to reach at this time?

How would you profile the audience(s) in your evangelism context? What do you know about it spiritually, culturally, socially and personally?

How could the insights contained in your profile influence...

- You as messengers—how you relate to your audience?
- Your message—how you shape and communicate your message?
- Your methods—how you apply and adjust your methodology?

THE MESSENGERS

Evangelism is, first and foremost, a work of God. But it is God's intent to work in and through his people to deliver the gospel message to a lost and dying world. His people are his plan; believers are his messengers. The question each leader must grapple with is, "Who is involved in the mission and in what way?" The task

of the leader is to maximize involvement.

Ask leaders what percentage of believers in their ministry are involved in effective witness and the vast majority will respond with answers closer to ten percent than to ninety. That is true with churches as well as campus ministries. On one hand, we believe that God wants to use all believers as witnesses. But on the other, we resign ourselves to the status quo: that a relatively small percentage of believers will be involved in evangelism and even fewer will be effective.

In the 1950's, Dr. Kenneth Strachan, along with other mission leaders, studied three rapidly growing movements in Latin America: Communism, Jehovah's Witnesses and Pentecostalism. Their findings were intriguing.

*So as we examined groups like these: one anti-Christian, the other pseudo-Christian, and the third Christian but not in the conventional pattern, we wondered just what was the secret of the success of each one. Was it their doctrine? That could not be, because each was preaching a different message. Was it their emphasis? Was it their method? Was it their organization? The answer did not seem to lie with any of these. Finally we came to recognize that in spite of their many differences in doctrine, organization, emphasis and practice, they were alike in only one thing—they had one thing in common and that was the secret of their success. What they had in common was this: their success in mobilizing their total constituency in continuous evangelistic action. (Emphasis added.) And so we came to the conviction that the secret of expansion was to be found in this thesis: that the successful expansion of any movement is in direct proportion to its success in mobilizing and occupying its total membership in constant propagation of its beliefs. (Emphasis added.) (George W. Peters, *Saturation Evangelism*, Zondervan, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1970. pp. 52-53.)*

That is the power of mobilization in any movement. But it is important that the leader in an evangelistic movement ground the effort in sound biblical thinking and true Spirit-empowered action. The mobilization of the whole community of faith in Spirit-empowered witness is a leader's challenge.

Consider the example of the early church:

One of the most striking features in evangelism



in the early days was the people who engaged in it. Communicating the faith was not regarded as the preserve of the very zealous or of the officially designated evangelist. Evangelism was the prerogative and the duty of every Church member. We have seen apostles and wandering prophets, nobles and paupers, intellectuals and fishermen all taking part enthusiastically in this the primary task committed by Christ to his Church. The ordinary people of the Church saw it as their job: Christianity was supremely a lay movement, spread by informal missionaries. (Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI; Eerdmans; Page 274.)

Mobilizing all doesn't mean that everyone is doing the same thing in the same way. Biblically, there is a spectrum of engagement. Failure to recognize this endangers the well-being and effectiveness of the messengers.

THE SPECTRUM OF INVOLVEMENT

What does an effective witness look like? One thing is clear; witnessing is not a one-size-fits-all proposition. Effective witnesses do not all look alike or contribute on the same level. That was as true in the New Testament period as it is today.

Consider three different biblical examples: First, the Samaritan woman who encountered Jesus at the well and returned to witness to her village (John 4:28-30, 39-42). Second, the seventy-two whose mission was to go before Jesus to the towns and villages he was about to visit (Luke 10:1-24). Third, the apostles and their unstoppable witness in Jerusalem (Acts 5:41,42).

Which of the three proved to be effective witnesses? Certainly the Samaritan woman was an effective witness, as her whole village came out to encounter Jesus. John wrote that many "believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39). The seventy-two came back from their mission with great joy and apparent success. Jesus encouraged their celebration as he spoke of seeing Satan falling from heaven like lightning (Luke 10:17,18). The apostles in the book of Acts were seeing great numbers being added daily to the believers through their witness (Acts 2:42; 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7). All three were effective witnesses. God worked through all three. But how different they were.

They were different in maturity. The Samaritan woman had just encountered Jesus moments before; the seventy-two were active followers of Jesus; and

the apostles were, of course, leaders of the church in Jerusalem and beyond.

Their message was also different. The Samaritan woman's testimony was simple – a sentence and a question. "Come see a man who has told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). The seventy-two went proclaiming the message, "The kingdom of God is near" (Luke 10:8). The apostles filled Jerusalem with the name of Jesus and the message that he had risen from the dead and was now reigning as the Lord over all (Acts 5:30-32). Each bore witness to Jesus. But each shared the message differently.

Their motivation was different. The Samaritan woman overflowed in testimony regarding her encounter with Jesus. She was never told to be a witness. She wasn't choosing to witness out of obedience. It was her natural response to having met Jesus. But the seventy-two were different. They went because Jesus had sent them. It was not their idea. Nor was it their initiative. They witnessed because Jesus called them together, prepared them with instructions and sent them out on a specific assignment. The apostles were fully trained leaders, filled with the Spirit and commissioned for a lifetime of service. They were compelled to "obey God" (Acts 5:29) and could "not help speaking about what (they had) seen and heard" (Acts 4:19).

All three were effective witnesses, but different from each other in maturity, message, and motivation. Together they illustrate key points along a spectrum of involvement. A healthy community of believers should see individuals overflow in natural witness to the Lord (like the Samaritan woman). It should also see increasing numbers involved in intentional outreach efforts. A healthy evangelistic movement will also have active leadership who continue to share their faith and lead the way in expansion, despite obstacles or opposition. Recognizing this spectrum of involvement enables the leader to evaluate the missional health of the ministry.

Spectrum of Involvement





Scriptural Prayers for Evangelism

- For the lost to be saved. (Romans 10:1)
- For the witness of the body through unity. (John 17:23)
- For workers for the harvest to be sent. (Matthew 9:37-38)
- For opportunities to witness. (Colossians 4:3)
- For clarity in our presentation. (Colossians 4:4)
- For the words to say. (Ephesians 6:19)
- For the boldness to speak. (Ephesians 6:20)
- For the gospel to spread rapidly. (2 Thessalonians 3:1)

First, consider the level of engagement by the body in prayer for outreach. Jesus and Paul both modeled prayer for evangelism and commanded it in the lives of all believers. Cultivating intentional prayer for evangelism and missions is the first and most basic missional activity of a leader.

Second, evaluate if there is a body-wide culture of outreach. Like the Samaritan woman, some believers naturally overflow about their experience with Jesus. This was true for Saul, as well (Acts 9:20). But not everyone can be expected to witness without encouragement. Most need prompting, like the delivered demoniac of Mark 5:1-20. After encountering Christ and experiencing a life-change of the most dramatic kind, he begged to stay with Jesus. Instead, Jesus sent him back with the instruction, “Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed” (Mark 5:19,20). A healthy community of believers will have both—those who overflow in natural witness and those who need encouragement to do so. A leader must ensure that consistent encouragement and equipping for evangelism is present, spurring all to be engaged.

Third, consider if there are intentional, focused outreach opportunities with growing numbers participating. Jesus expanded the number of laborers when he sent the seventy-two after previously sending the twelve (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-12). Outreach opportunities provide believers a context for fruitful ministry, valuable experience, and application-oriented training. Too often our evangelism training is heavy on teaching and light on experience. Education with little application produces little growth or progress in the mission. The most effective evangelism training will focus on experience, while providing adequate preparation and equipping.

Fourth, are leaders being developed and entrusted with outreach responsibility? The growth potential of

a movement is directly related to the ability to build a growing number of leaders and laborers who are intrinsically motivated and taking responsibility for on-going strategic outreach. Expanding leadership will enable the body to reach more audiences effectively.

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

What was your experience in growing as a witness?

- When did you begin to share your faith? How did you learn?
- Who has been most influential in helping you share your faith? Why?
- What has been most effective for you in helping others learn to share their faith?

What percentage of believers in your ministry are involved in fruitful witness? Why?

Analyze the involvement of believers in your ministry regarding lifestyle witnesses, laborers in the harvest and leaders in evangelism.

- Of the three, which appears to be the strongest? Why?
- Which of the three appears to be the weakest? Why?

What strategic steps can you take to increase the level of involvement of believers in fruitful witness?

THE MESSAGE

There is only one gospel and it is very important to get it right (Galatians 1:6-9.) But what is the gospel? In order to answer that question, it can be helpful to think in terms of the gospel essence and the gospel in its fullness.

On one hand, the gospel can be distilled down to its essence. We may not say it exactly the same every time, but the critical elements would always be there. What is that essence? Compare Jesus’ summary statement in Luke 24:45-49 with Paul’s in 1 Corinthians 15:1-8. There are common elements in both:

- Who is Jesus? The Christ
- What has he done? Died and rose again.
- Why? For the forgiveness of sins
- How do we know? OT Scriptures and resurrection appearances
- How are we to respond? Repentance (in Luke) and faith/belief (in 1 Corinthians)



These same essential elements are found in the Four Gospels. Think of Mark, for example. The first eight chapters move thematically toward the answer of “Who is Jesus?” Peter declares, “You are the Christ” (Mark 8:27-30). From that point on, Mark moves toward the cross and his resurrection. Christ’s death and resurrection are predicted three times in chapters 8-10, followed by the actual events in the remaining chapters. Thus, Mark is a narrative declaring who Jesus is, what he has done, and why – the essence of the gospel. So also, Matthew, Luke and John. Or consider the “gospel messages” recorded in Acts – whether to Jews (say in Acts 2) or Gentiles (like Acts 17:22-32). They declare who Jesus is, what he has done and why. The gospel, at its core, is a message about Jesus. Even Paul’s introductory summary in his letter to the Romans (his exposition of the gospel) centers on these elements (Romans 1:1-4).

But to speak of the “essence” of the gospel is not to say everything about the gospel. We may also speak of the “fullness” of the gospel. Its truths, themes and implications are so vast that it will take a lifetime to explore and experience. Indeed, we never master the gospel and move on to some other deeper truth. The gospel is not the *initial* message for the follower of Christ; it is the *only* message. We are gospel people. And so, like a vein of gold, we dig deeper and deeper and become richer and richer, always growing in our understanding. So Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are fuller narrative presentations of the same gospel truth as Paul proclaimed. The book of Romans is gospel truth, unpacked in its theological implications, as is Galatians and the other epistles. Jesus enabled the disciples to see that the Law of Moses, the prophets and the Psalms (that is, all the OT Scriptures) spoke of him in Luke 24:44-49. It is all gospel truth!

ONE MESSAGE, VARIETY OF FORMS

Our mastery of the gospel’s essence ensures we communicate the gospel accurately, while our growing understanding of the gospel’s fullness enables us to communicate it relevantly. We get the message right if we understand and communicate clearly the essence. But we can share it effectively in a wide variety of ways because of its fullness. Thus you can tell the story of redemption, emphasizing critical junctures along the biblical storyline. (See *Backstory*, CruPress 2010.) Or you can explain the gospel thematically. Peter explained the gospel utilizing the theme of the promised Holy Spirit in Acts 2. Countless individuals have been led into a relationship with Jesus Christ

through the theme of God’s love and plan as found in *The Four Spiritual Laws*. You may share the gospel in a testimony like the Samaritan woman, whose witness pointed to Jesus as the Christ. Or explain it theologically as Paul does in Romans. Think of how many have come to faith through hearing the truths of Romans—leaders like Augustine, Luther, and Wesley. You may declare the good news of the Kingdom, expressing the essence of who Jesus is and what he does within the context of the coming of God’s glorious reign! You might even tell it in story form, using parables like Jesus did. But it is always the same message in essence. By understanding the audience and their context we are able to determine what form of presentation will be most appropriate and relevant.

Our witness then is always, in essence, who Jesus is, what he has done, and why. This gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16). But we have an unending array of possibilities as to how we communicate and apply this one message. Messengers must master the gospel in order to understand, experience and communicate it with faithfulness and relevance. The leader must help the messengers do so through sound Christ-centered teaching and practical equipping.

Reflection or Discussion Questions:

- Mentally open your toolbox of evangelism resources. What gospel presentations do you have?
- What have been the one or two most effective gospel presentations for you? In what context have these been effective? Why?
- What is missing? If you could have a gospel presentation that communicated effectively with some group within your ministry context, what would it be? Why?

THE METHODS

How do the messengers communicate this life-changing message to the masses? Reading biblical examples reinforces the fact that it is with great variety. It may be an invitation to a family member or friend to come and meet Jesus (John 1:40-51). It could entail pairing up to visit homes on a mission trip (Matthew 10:5-13). It might involve open-air speaking (Acts 2:14-41), house-to-house visitation (Acts 5:42), or even a jail ministry as an insider (Acts 16:25-40). There are conversations on roadways (Acts 8:26-40), at riverside prayer gatherings (Acts



16:13-15), and in the marketplace (Acts 17:17). There may be presentations at a religious gathering (Acts 17:17) or a gospel-bearing message to some group of philosophers (Acts 17:22-31). In the 21st century, it can involve communicating through technology or a creative media. The methods can be as diverse as the settings for gospel encounters. (See for example, *The 250: Evangelism Ideas For Your Campus*, CruPress, 2003.)

But what principles underlie the methodology?

DIFFERENTIATING THE ESSENTIAL FROM THE HELPFUL

Evangelism is by definition the communication of the gospel with a view of calling others to respond in faith. Two elements are essential: proclamation and persuasion. But when it comes to effectiveness, there is more that can be helpful to the process.

To grow a crop, a farmer must plant the seed and harvest its fruit at maturity. Those are the two essentials. But there is a great deal more that can be done to increase the yield. Before planting, the ground is prepared. Hard soil is plowed; weedy soil is cultivated. After the seed is planted, it is watered and fertilized to nourish the growth. The work before and after planting have one end in view—to create the best environment for seed to grow, mature and produce the highest yield.

This agricultural metaphor has an analogy to evangelism. Biblically, sowing is the proclamation of the word (Mark 4:14). Calling for others to believe and follow (that is, persuasion) is often associated with the harvest (John 4:35-38). Any discussion of evangelism methodology must keep the main thing – sowing and reaping, or proclamation and persuasion. But because those are essential and because we seek the greatest yield for our efforts, we must also give attention to the preparation of the audience (or, cultivation in the agricultural analogy) and the nourishment of the gospel seed once it is sown.

As in agriculture, the levels of cultivation are determined by the condition of the soil. A hardened or resistant audience will generally require more relationship, presence, love and care, and pre-gospel dialogue. Yet a softened, prepared heart may respond quickly and immediately to a gospel presentation. While the messengers seek to carefully work with the seed and the soil (1 Corinthians 3:6-8), ultimately

the response is a function of the soil's condition (Mark 4:13-20) and God who causes the growth (1 Corinthians 3:6).

This discussion underscores the dynamic relationship between the life and deeds of the witness and the words of the gospel. There are, of course, many examples where the testimony of the messenger's life and some prior interaction prepares the listener for the hearing of the gospel. Jesus said, "In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16). Many came to listen to Jesus, having learned of his works of compassion and power (Matthew 4:23-25). In a similar manner, the favor the early church experienced with the people of Jerusalem was connected to their responsiveness to the gospel message, as "the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47; 5:13-14). So our lives and deeds can prepare the listener for the gospel message.

But it is important to observe that often, the life of the messenger can also reinforce the message after, not just before, the gospel presentation. Proclaiming the message often precedes the testimony of the life. Paul demonstrated this type post-proclamation involvement throughout his ministry. For example, Paul began his ministry in Thessalonica proclaiming the gospel in the synagogue, but remained engaged with those responded, lovingly caring for them like a father or mother (compare Acts 17:1-9 with 1 Thessalonians 2:8-12).

At times there is no opportunity for the listener to be exposed to the life of the messenger beyond the gospel interaction. So it was with Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). But whatever the situation, the witness of one's life can never replace the words of the gospel. The gospel message must be proclaimed:

How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" (Romans 10:14-15)

THE MODES OF EVANGELISM

But how does a leader determine what methods to employ? How does one develop a comprehensive



strategy, aligned to God but adapting to the context, while mobilizing the whole body? It begins with God, for (as has been emphasized) evangelism is always first and foremost a work of God.

Imagine joining our Lord at the right hand of the throne of God to watch him work through his people as he seeks to save the lost. Suppose you could see his work throughout the centuries and in all different cultures. Are there common methods? Would there be consistent patterns? Are there ways that God always works? The number of distinct methods would be far too numerous to count. Nor would it be that helpful to list, as some worked well at one time and place, but others in a different context. Yet in the midst of them all, there would be a pattern—three consistent relational connections through which God has always worked. These are what we call the relational modes of evangelism.

A mode is by definition a customary or preferred way of doing something (such as an “MO” or “mode of operation” in business). When we speak of the modes of evangelism, we are speaking of the primary relational contexts in which God always works through the body of Christ. Knowing these modes enables us to align ourselves with God’s work in any context. Together they provide the framework for a comprehensive strategy of evangelism that adapts to the audience and mobilizes the whole body.

Each mode is distinctive. Each has its effectiveness and presents unique opportunities. Each is limited by itself. But when working together, the three create a powerful synergy. They create evangelistic momentum. Together they provide the contours of an evangelistic movement.

BODY WITNESS

The body of Christ can have a powerful witness when it is gathered together and functioning in a healthy manner. A healthy community of believers grows in Christ through speaking the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15, 16). This experience of authentic love and truth is what people genuinely desire. As they experience the fellowship of the body, they have opportunity to hear gospel truth explained and applied to life. They also see gospel love lived out in relationship. God often uses this experience of gospel love and truth to draw people to himself. This may happen in formal gatherings; it may also occur in informal settings. But the love and truth of a healthy body of believers will

have a profound witness to those who experience it.

Jesus underscored the importance of the witness of the body. He indicated that our love for one another would be the evidence to all men that we are his disciples (John 13:34-35). He prayed for our unity, knowing that through it the world would recognize that he was sent as the Messiah (John 17:22-23). So when the early church devoted itself to one another in healthy Christian community, it enjoyed “the favor of all the people and there was added to their numbers daily those who were being saved” (Acts 2:42-47).

How does a leader expand the body witness? Two things are necessary. First, one must tend to the quality of fellowship, ensuring that it is a healthy environment for seekers to experience the gospel. This doesn’t mean everything must be oriented around the seeker. But it does mean that there is intentionality in creating an environment full of grace and truth, appropriate for anyone. Second, the leader must increase the opportunity for those who are open and seeking to be exposed to the body. This will normally happen through relationships, as believers invite others into body activities. But it is not limited to personal invitations. A public presence and outward communication strategies have been vehicles God has used to usher many into body experiences.

As the witness of the body expands, many come to faith through it. The community of believers provides an environment for spiritual process and growth to take place. People have time and relational support to process new insights into the gospel and its implications. When they come to Christ, they are already involved and relationally connected. They have already passed through a barrier that those reached outside the body will have to later cross. Belonging before believing is a powerful pathway to the gospel.

But it is limited, as well. Body witness can only impact those who are close enough to see the body in action or brave enough to enter. Thus, body witness normally reaches only those who are spiritually seeking or relationally connected. Generally, that is a small percentage of the people in need. Large, diverse populations (such as a campus or community) cannot be fully reached through body witness alone. The other two modes must also be employed.



NATURAL WITNESS

As believers leave their fellowship to reengage in everyday living, their lives naturally intersect countless people. Some of these intersections involve intimate and long-term relationships, such as family and close friends. But most will be casual and brief. And while the number of intimate relationships may be relatively few, the total web of natural connections can be substantial. We have classmates, coworkers, and neighbors. We briefly relate to store clerks, waitresses, hairdressers and others in the marketplace. We talk with doctors, lawyers, teachers, plumbers, and repairmen. Entertainment, sports and recreational opportunities expose us to more people in casual settings. Even fellow travelers on planes can become temporary conversational partners. This is not to suggest that every time we are near someone, God intends for us to speak of Jesus. But we must recognize that our lives do intersect those of countless others and be ready at all times (2 Timothy 4:2).

Among this group of natural relational connections, God is already at work and may want to use us. If we are available and alert, if we show genuine care and concern, if we ask good questions and listen, we will often discover opportunities for gospel conversations. Paul exhorted us to be ready for such. “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone” (Colossians 4:5,6). The key in natural witness is not the duration of the relationship, depth of its intimacy or the length of the conversation. Rather it is wisdom to make the most of each opportunity.

Witness among natural relationships was common in the New Testament. Among the first disciples, Andrew brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus and Philip brought his friend, Nathaniel (John 1:40-51). Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman was in a brief, but natural (albeit unusual) setting—at the watering hole. The Samaritan woman’s subsequent witness to her village was among those with whom she had natural relationships, though not particularly positive ones (John 4:1-42). The delivered demoniac was a witness to his people back home (Luke 8:38, 39). All of these examples underscore the importance of natural witness. God delights to work through his people within their web of natural relationships.

How does a leader help expand the natural witness

of the believers they lead? It requires casting a compelling vision for the needs of others and the opportunities to be used by God. The leader must raise awareness, helping believers to be alert for divine appointments and opportunities to engage with others. It also requires motivation. Many influences work against believers’ natural witness, and probably none more than fear and busyness. The leader must cultivate the heart desire for God’s glory and the ultimate good of others. (See the Master principles, above.) But there is also the need for believers to be equipped in conversational evangelism, increasing their confidence and competence. Finally, they need practical ways to engage conversationally. It may be as simple as everyday conversation, guided by genuine interest. Or it may involve specialized outreach tools and resources (like *Soularium*, CruPress, 2008, or the *Perspective Cards*, CruPress, 2010). But believers need a plan, steps they can follow and methods they can employ.

MINISTRY WITNESS

There are many people who lack both connections to a healthy community of believers for body witness and personal relationships with individual believers who will engage in natural witness. The only way for these individuals to be reached with the gospel is through intentional outreach ministry—the ministry mode of evangelism.

It is important to recognize that ministry witness is also a relational mode. But it is a different kind of relational connection than natural witness, because it occurs through the intentional ministry activity of the believer. This context has a profound influence on the style of witness, requiring openness and transparency coupled with genuine love and care. But when a ministry witness is empowered by God’s Spirit, it can have a profound impact on the lives of individuals and communities. Event-based and media outreaches can be considered subsets of ministry mode evangelism. Though the relational element is less personal, the communication of the gospel occurs because someone is engaged in intentional ministry outreach.

Jesus is, of course, the model of ministry witness, *par excellence*. Fulfilling his mission involved going “to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come” (Mark 1:38, 39). He sent the twelve and then the 72 on ministry mode assignments, declaring the kingdom of God (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-17). After his ascension, the apostles led the expansion



of the gospel through this type of ministry witness. (See for example, Acts 5:41-42). Philip engaged in a ministry mode of witness in a city in Samaria (Acts 8:5) and on a desert road with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8:26-40). Barnabas did so in Antioch (Acts 11:22-24) and then joined efforts with the Apostle Paul, as they engaged in ministry witness throughout their missionary journeys (Acts 13 and beyond). Ministry witness is the leading edge of gospel expansion. Through it, new audiences are penetrated and new communities of believers are established.

How do leaders expand the mode of ministry witness? First, they must identify the audiences in need of gospel witness. Time and energy must be invested in understanding the audience and their context. This determines the approaches that will be fruitful and effective. They will also need to identify and involve believers and teams who will lead in the outreach efforts. These will, of course, need preparation, training, and resources, as well as a clear plan of action.

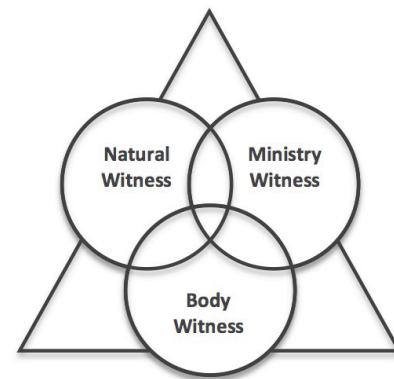
There are challenges to effective ministry witness. Often the ministry mode requires some degree of cross-cultural involvement. Whether the cultural gap is narrow or wide, there is a need to understand and adapt on the part of the witnesses. Since those engaged in ministry witness are often outsiders socially, it is important they connect in a caring and transparent way with the audience. Caution must be exercised to not mislead others, appearing to be interested in friendship while primarily seeking ministry opportunity. Ministry witness requires genuine love, while being appropriate in relationship and honest regarding our purpose and intentions. Also, while body witness and natural witness can involve every believer, ministry witness will normally require a level of maturity and training. But that process is part of the power of ministry witness. For as individuals and teams are equipped and developed, the number of lifetime laborers for the gospel expands. And with it, so does the overall impact for Christ.

CREATING SYNERGY

It is common to see a ministry emphasize one or two modes of witness. In fact, too much discussion has occurred debating which is more biblical or effective. Yet God delights in working through all three. He always has. He always will. The leader's task is not in deciding which is better; it is in expanding the witness of all three.

The most powerful evangelistic movements and

churches are those that experience the synergy of all three modes. The modes don't work independently. Many come to Christ through the influence of multiple modes. And as believers experience fruitfulness in one, they often become involved in outreach through the others.



But the greatest benefit from understanding the three modes is that together they provide the framework for a comprehensive evangelism plan. As leaders and teams build plans based on prayer and aimed at expanding the witness of all three modes, equipping and engaging believers in each, they set direction for a movement of evangelism.

What does a movement of evangelism look like? The two-year old church in Ephesus provides a clear picture (Acts 19:1-20). Paul initiated with ministry witness, as he “entered the synagogue and spoke boldly there for three months, arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God” (Acts 19:8). After a community of disciples was formed (and opposition built), the disciples met together, having “discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus” (19:9). This gathering, no doubt, provided a center of body witness. As the number of disciples grew and as they continued to share Christ in everyday life over a period of two-years (overflowing in their natural witness), “all...who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord” (19:10). Luke summarizes the evangelistic momentum that built with the words, “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (19:20).

The phrase, “spread widely” suggests the expansive nature of gospel communication (working through the **Methods**). “Grew in power” describes the qualitative impact of the gospel as it transforms lives (the **Message**). Together they portray the effect the leader seeks as he aligns with the work of God (the **Master**), adapts to the audience's context (the **Masses**) and mobilizes the believers for involvement (the **Messengers**). This is the design of evangelism.



Reflection or Discussion Questions:

- What are your most effective evangelistic methods or strategies? Why?
- Which of the three relational modes of witness does your ministry emphasize? Which appears to be the most effective? Why?
- How can you more fully expand each relational mode of witness?

EVANGELISM MODEL: THE BIBLICAL FRAMEWORK

The Evangelism Model is built upon a theology of evangelism. The following passages are illustrative of its principles.

God: The Master

- Christ's Purpose: God's Glory (John 17)
- Christ's Passion: Love for the Lost (Matthew 9:35-38)
- Christ's Plan: The Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20)
- Christ's Power: The Holy Spirit (Acts, the whole book, particularly 1:8; 4)
- Our Prayers: Our Dependence (Ephesians 6:19-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:1; Colossians 4:2-4; Matthew 9:37-38)

The World: The Masses

- The Spiritual Context (Ephesians 2:2; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-4)
- The Cultural Context (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Compare the cultural context and messages of Acts 10:34-43 with 17:16-34)
- The Social Context (John 1:40-51; Mark 1:16-20; 2:13-17; John 4:39-42; Acts 10:24)
- The Personal Context
 - » Spiritual Proximity
 - The Pharisees (contrast Mark 12:34 with Matthew 23, particularly 15, 27)
 - The Crowds (compare Acts 2:40-41 with Acts 17:16-34)
 - » Spiritual Process
 - Consider Paul's life-story
 - His upbringing and education (Phil. 3:5)
 - His life as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:6; Acts 9:1,2)
 - His encounter on the road (Acts 9:37)
 - His three days in Damascus (Acts 9:8)
 - His visit by Ananias (Acts 9:10-19)
 - Or consider Timothy's life-story (or others)

Believers: The Messengers

- Compare and contrast each of these witnesses (consider their maturity, impact, motivation, message, relationship to audience, etc.)
 - » Lifestyle Witness: The Samaritan Woman (John 4:28-30)
 - » Laborers: The Twelve & the 72 Disciples (Luke 9:1-6; 10:1-20)
 - » Leaders: The Apostles (Acts 5:41-42)

The Gospel: The Message

- The Essence of the Gospel
 - » Compare 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 with Luke 24:45-48
- The Essence of the Gospel
 - » Matthew, Mark, Luke, John,
 - » Luke 24:44 [Old Testament writings]
 - » Romans [and New Testament Epistles]
- Various Gospel Messages
 - » Theologically framed presentations (Acts 2:14-39; Book of Romans)
 - » Life-story or testimonial presentations (John 4:28-30, 39-42; Acts 26)
 - » Historical narratives (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Acts 7; Acts 13:16-44)
 - » Philosophical arguments (Acts 17:22-31)
 - » Non-historical stories (The Parables; Mark 4:33-34)
 - » Guided conversations (John 3:1-21; John 4:7-26)

Effective Communication: The Methods

- The use of the agricultural cycle as a witnessing analogy: Cultivating – Planting – Watering – Reaping Cultivating
 - » While plowing is not used biblically in witnessing contexts, preparing the land for planting was an assumed agricultural practice (see Luke 9:62)
 - » Planting & watering (1 Corinthians 3:5-9)
 - » Planting & reaping (John 4:35-38)
 - » Reaping (Matthew 9:37, 38)
- The Relational Modes of Witness
 - » The Body Witness (Acts 2:42ff; John 13:34-35; 17:22-23; 1 Corinthians 11:26)
 - » The Natural Witness (John 1:40-51; 4:28-42; Luke 8:38-39; Colossians 4:5,6; 1 Pet. 3:15)
 - » The Ministry Witness (Mark 1:38, 39; Luke 9:1-66; 10:1-17, Acts 5:41-42; 8:5ff, 26ff; 11:19-21; 11:22-24; ch. 13 to the end)
 - » The synergy of all three working together (Acts 19:1-20)