

# Relationship Evangelism



## **Presenting The Need For Meaningful Relationships And How To Use Them To Share The Gospel**

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**To God Be The Glory!**

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# **Relationship Evangelism**

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# Relationship Evangelism

## Forces That Hinder Our Effectiveness

### INTRODUCTION

1. There is a story of a conversation between Jesus and Gabriel which is purely fictional, but illustrates a good point...

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the angel Gabriel approached Him and said, “Master, you must have suffered terribly for men down there.”

“I did,” He said.

“And,” continued Gabriel, “do they know all about how you loved them and what you did for them?”

“Oh, no,” said Jesus, “not yet. Right now only a handful of people in Palestine know.”

Gabriel was perplexed. “Then what have you done, to let everyone know about your love for them?”

Jesus said, “I’ve asked Peter, James, John, and a few more friends to tell other people about Me. Those who are told will in turn tell still other people about Me, and My story will be spread to the farthest reaches of the globe. Ultimately, all of mankind will have heard about My life and what I have done.”

Gabriel frowned and looked rather skeptical. He knew well what poor stuff men were made of. “But what if Peter and James and John grow weary? What if the people who come after them forget? What if way down in the twentieth century, people just don’t tell others about you? Haven’t you made any other plans?”

And Jesus answered, “I haven’t made any other plans. I’m counting on them.”

-- Lifestyle Evangelism, Joseph Aldrich, p. 15-16

2. Twenty centuries later...Jesus still has no other plan!
  - a. He counted on His early disciples and they delivered
  - b. He’s counting on you and me; have we done as well?
3. Before we succumb to another “guilt trip,” I want to consider some reasons why we may appear “ineffective” when compared to the apostles...
  - a. My purpose is not to excuse ourselves
  - b. But we need to understand some of the forces or influences which have clearly hindered our effectiveness

### I. TOO MANY PEOPLE

#### **A. WE LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE WE COME FACE TO FACE WITH MORE PEOPLE THAN WE CAN EASILY RELATE TO...**

1. A casual stroll down the street or through a store brings us face to face with dozens of people every minute
2. Every day we come in contact with more people than we can possibly relate to in meaningful ways

#### **B. THIS FACT CAN EASILY RESULT IN CRIPPLING OUR ABILITY TO RELATE**

**TO PEOPLE...**

1. Since we cannot possibly recognize or relate to **every** one, we are tempted to relate to **no** one!
2. Before long, we begin to adopt an attitude of “isolation”
3. Eventually, we lose the ability to effectively carry on meaningful relationships

**C. THIS CAN HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON EVANGELISM...**

1. For a meaningful relationship is one of the most successful means of providing an avenue for the gospel (which is the thesis of this study)
2. But many Christians, caught up in the attitude of “isolationism”...
  - a. Often do not have any significant contacts with non-Christians
  - b. Are therefore unable to relate to others in a “redemptive” manner

**II. LIFE IS TOO FAST AND COMPLICATED**

**A. DESPITE INVENTIONS TO SAVE TIME, WE ARE BUSIER THAN EVER...**

1. Jobs change, people move
2. Congestion grows, traffic jams
3. Telephones ring constantly, TV drones on and on
4. We are held captive by schedules and the demands of others
5. We find ourselves unable to slow down our world...

**B. LIVING SUCH HECTIC LIVES...**

1. It is easy for one to feel there is simply no room to add the “enterprise of evangelism”
2. One might feel that to do so may even be “the straw that breaks the camel’s back”
3. So evangelism of any sort is often left out

**III. EXPOSURE TO LIMITED EVANGELISM MODELS**

**A. EVEN WHEN WE WANT TO DO SOMETHING, WE ARE OFTEN GIVEN LIMITED “OPTIONS”...**

1. Such as just inviting people to services
2. Or going around the neighborhood, knocking on the doors of complete strangers
3. Or learning how to teach home Bible studies

**B. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SUCH METHODS HAVE NOT WORKED OR WILL NOT WORK FOR SOME...**

1. These options **do** work for some Christians, but not all are suited for the particular approaches given
2. These options **do** reach some nonbelievers, but many are repelled by them

**C. BUT THERE CAN BE LONG-LASTING EFFECTS WHEN THESE ARE THE ONLY OPTIONS GIVEN...**

1. Those not suited for these approaches can get easily discouraged as they try and find themselves failing to be something they are not
2. E.g., not everyone is designed to be a teacher - cf. **Ro 12:4-8; 1 Co 12:29; Ja 3:1**
3. So unless other options are shown to be available, many quit making **any** evangelistic effort!

**IV. MISUNDERSTANDING “SEPARATION”**

**A. MANY CHRISTIANS MISUNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLE OF SEPARATION...**

1. We **are** to be “separate” from the world - cf. **2 Co 6:14-18**
2. But this does not mean “isolation” - cf. **1 Co 5:9-13**
3. Yet I fear that many Christians tend to isolate themselves from the world in the name of “separation”
4. There **is** a way to “influence people without losing your influence!”

**B. REMEMBER THE PRINCIPLE OF BEING “THE SALT OF THE EARTH”...**

1. Salt must get out of the container and mix with food to be effective
2. Without engaging in sin, we can still have contact with the sinner...
  - a. As did Jesus - **Mt 9:10-13; 11:19**
  - b. And so did Paul - **1 Co 9:20-23**

**V. THE CREDIBILITY GAP**

**A. IN SOME CASES, THERE IS AN IMBALANCE BETWEEN THE “VERBALIZATION” AND THE “INCARNATION” OF THE GOSPEL...**

1. I.e., the lifestyle of the Christian is inconsistent with the message being presented
2. When this happens, people are likely to think: “What you **are** speaks so loudly, I can’t hear what you are **saying**.”
3. In this way, a “**credibility gap**” is formed

**B. TO OVERCOME THIS “CREDIBILITY GAP”...**

1. Christians must **be** good news before they can **share** the good news
2. We must be sure to live out the gospel in our lives before preaching it to others - cf. **Ezra 7:10; 1 Pe 3:1-2**

**C. TO PUT IT ANOTHER WAY...**

1. When love is seen, the message is heard
2. Conversely, when love is not seen, the message is not taken seriously
3. “The best argument for Christianity is Christians; their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians -- when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecrations, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths.” - **Vanauken**

**CONCLUSION**

1. These are some of the forces which hinder our effectiveness in evangelism today
2. Again, the purpose for considering them is not to excuse ourselves...
  - a. For no matter what the circumstances here on earth, the Lord’s plan for reaching the lost is still the same!
  - b. He still depends upon you and me!
3. But perhaps by recognizing these hindrances, we will be more open to **other** evangelistic options which take these problems into consideration

One such option is known as **Relationship Evangelism** (also known as **Lifestyle Evangelism**), which is what we shall examine more closely in succeeding lessons...

# Relationship Evangelism

## Definition And Value Of Relationship Evangelism

### INTRODUCTION

1. In our initial study, we examined some of the forces which hinder our effectiveness in evangelism...
  - a. Too many people
  - b. Life is too fast and complicated
  - c. Our exposure to limited evangelism models
  - d. Misunderstanding “separation”
  - e. The credibility gap
2. One approach to evangelism which takes these forces into consideration is **Relationship Evangelism** (also known as **Lifestyle Evangelism**)
3. The purpose in this lesson is to **define** what “Relationship Evangelism” is, and then notice its **value** in comparison to other methods of evangelism

### I. THE DEFINITION OF RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM

#### **A. THE CHRISTIAN HAS BEEN PROVIDED WITH TWO PRIMARY MEANS TO WIN THE WORLD TO CHRIST...**

1. First and foremost is the **message** of the gospel of Christ - **Ro 1:16**
2. But there is also the **manifestation** of the gospel in the life of the Christian - cf. **1 Pe 3:1-2**

#### **B. “RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM,” THEN, IS...**

1. Adapting the two means to the best advantage for those we seek to lead to Christ
2. A process of developing meaningful relationships with other people...
  - a. In which we allow the beauty of the gospel to first be demonstrated in our lives
  - b. In which we **build bridges** (develop relationships) with our prospects that allow the **traffic** (i.e., the gospel) to flow freely and naturally
3. That which involves gradually developing relationships with those who are lost...
  - a. By working with an unlimited pool of contacts (family, friends, neighbors, coworkers)
  - b. By normally starting with those closest to us and working outward in “concentric circles of concern”
4. The development of relationships that involve several progressive levels...
  - a) The initial contact
  - b) Becoming better acquainted
  - c) Being a servant
  - d) Being a friend
  - e) Sharing your faith
  - f) Witness of the “Body”
  - g) Exposure to the gospel
  - h) Invitation

-- **These will be covered in more detail in succeeding lessons**

[Therefore, **Relationship Evangelism** is where we have enough love and concern for the lost...

- ◆ That we are willing to make the effort to develop relationships with them
- ◆ So that we can by both “word” and “example” share the gospel of Christ with them

What value does this approach have over others?]

## **II. THE VALUE OF RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM**

### **A. ITS EFFECT ON OUR OWN LIVES...**

1. **Relationship Evangelism** requires that our spiritual growth and development be what it should be!
  - a. Other forms of evangelism (e.g., preaching, door-knocking, correspondence courses, etc.) can be utilized by hypocrites or those less than truly dedicated Christians
  - b. But to be effective in **Relationship Evangelism** our lives must be:
    - 1) “An open book”
    - 2) “Rated G”
    - 3) “...an epistle of Christ, known and read by all men.” - cf. **2 Co 3:2-3**
2. So by adopting this approach to evangelism, it will:
  - a. Motivate us to draw closer to God
  - b. Make us better Christians

### **B. ITS EFFECT ON THE LIVES OF NON-CHRISTIANS...**

1. **Relationship Evangelism** gets us out of the church building, into the lives of those who are lost
  - a. Where we can be “salt” and “light”
  - b. Where we can humbly demonstrate a better way of life
2. Adopting this approach to evangelism can:
  - a. Make our neighborhoods a better place in which to live
  - b. Improve the moral environment in our places of employment

### **C. ITS SUCCESS...**

1. What may have worked well in times past may not today because of changing conditions
  - a. It used to be that the majority of Americans were of a “Christian” background
    - 1) Though non-Christians, they held to basic Christian morals and beliefs (God, the Bible, the Judgment, etc.)
    - 2) In such cases, a simple presentation of the gospel was often all that was needed
    - 3) But today, the majority is now what can be called “secular, or other religion” background
      - a) I.e., worldly-minded, or holding to non-Christian religions, they do not hold to basic Christian morals and beliefs
      - b) In such cases, a lot of preparation of the “soil” must sometimes be made prior to the planting of the “seed”
  - b. It used to be that most Christians knew how to easily develop new relationships with other people
    - 1) Many Christians had close friends, associates, who though of a “Christian” background were like Apollos - cf. **Ac 18:24-26**
    - 2) In such relationships, it was easy to discuss religious differences over a period of time without breaking off all contact after a few disagreements

- 3) But due to the **hindrances** mentioned in our first lesson, many Christians today don't have such relationships, and don't know how to be close friends with those of different faiths
- c. Again, **Relationship Evangelism** takes these changing conditions into consideration
2. In his book, "**Why Churches Grow,**" **Flavil Yeakley** made the following observations based upon his study of growing and dying churches:
  - a. "The data presented in these tables strongly support the idea that establishment of a pattern of friendship is an important part of the conversion process." (p. 64)
  - b. "Thus the Christ who lives in the heart of the individual members of that congregation is formed in the heart of the new convert. A personal relationship is essential in the process." (p. 53)
  - c. "These data suggest that when subjects formed personal relationships with members of the congregation, they were likely to remain faithful. When they did not form such personal relationships, they were likely to drop out of the church." (p.54)
  - d. I.e., where a personal relationship was used as a vehicle to present the gospel...
    - 1) A person is more likely to convert to Christ
    - 2) A person is more likely to remain converted to Christ
3. Finally, consider the results of a survey by **The Institute For American Church Growth**, who asked over 10,000 people this question: "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and this church?" - Their replies:
  - a. I had a special need - 2%
  - b. I just walked in - 3%
  - c. I like the minister - 6%
  - d. I visited there - 1%
  - e. I like the Bible classes - 5%
  - f. I attended a gospel meeting - 0.5%
  - g. I liked the programs - 3%
  - h. **A friend or relative invited me - 79%**

## CONCLUSION

1. I am not suggesting that **Relationship Evangelism** is the **only** way to do personal work
  - a. Many souls have been brought to Christ through other means
  - b. It may be that you are more suited to use other methods
2. But **Relationship Evangelism** is a viable option which...
  - a. Takes into consideration some of the forces which hinder our effectiveness in evangelism
  - b. Makes us better Christians in the process of trying to influence the lost
  - c. Is an easy, natural, less confrontational way to share the gospel with others
  - d. Is more likely to be successful in leading souls to Christ and keeping them faithful to the Lord!

In the next lesson, we will discuss **The Evangelism Prospect List**, a helpful tool in developing relationships with non-Christians...

**NOTE:** At this point the material in this series might best be used by Christians in a weekly class in which they meet to:

- ◆ Study and discuss the remaining material

- ◆ Encourage one another to set weekly goals for implementing the suggestions that will be made in later lessons
- ◆ Evaluate the success or failure to meet such goals and make whatever alterations may be deemed suitable in setting new goals

# Relationship Evangelism

## The Evangelism Prospect List

### INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point, we have been dealing with the preliminaries of **Relationship Evangelism**
2. With this lesson we start getting into practical applications
3. One of the first steps to successful evangelism using any method is to have an **Evangelism Prospect List**

[This is especially true in **Relationship Evangelism...**]

### I. WHAT IS AN EVANGELISM PROSPECT LIST?

#### **A. SIMPLY STATED, IT IS A LIST OF NAMES...**

1. Of individuals that we would like to see saved
2. Which we keep in some prominent place where we see it every day

#### **B. IN THE CASE OF RELATIONSHIP EVANGELISM...**

1. The prospect list is a part of the **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart** (see sample)
2. The “Flow Chart” will be explained in more detail in succeeding lessons, but you will notice that it provides space for the names of those who would be on your list

### II. WHY HAVE AN EVANGELISM PROSPECT LIST?

#### **A. AN IMPORTANT KEY TO LEADING PEOPLE TO CHRIST IS CONSTANTLY KEEPING THEM ON YOUR MIND AND IN YOUR PRAYERS - cf. Ro 10:1**

1. Consistent success in any venture depends upon...
  - a. Setting goals (which gives **direction** to your life)
  - b. Keeping those goals constantly before you (which provides **motivation** to your actions)
2. To be successful in evangelism...
  - a. We need goals to give us a direction
  - b. We need to be constantly reminded of those goals to stay motivated

#### **B. THE EVANGELISM PROSPECT LIST IS A HELPFUL TOOL TO ACCOMPLISH THIS END...**

1. By having a specific list of names we are able to concentrate our attention and our prayers
2. By having that list in some prominent place, we are constantly reminded of our goal to reach them for Christ
3. It is like having a picture on the refrigerator to motivate us not to overeat

### III. SUGGESTIONS FOR SETTING UP YOUR EVANGELISM PROSPECT LIST

#### **A. PRAY FOR WISDOM - cf. Ja 1:5**

1. Once we start listing prospects, it will be evident that to work effectively the list needs to be

narrowed down

2. So wisdom (which can be sought through prayer) will be helpful to determine the best prospects

## **B. LIST THE NAMES OF YOUR NON-CHRISTIAN CONTACTS...**

1. Here are some good sources for prospects:
  - a. Visitors at services
  - b. Spouses of members
  - c. New residents in the neighborhood
  - d. Relatives of members
  - e. Unfaithful members
  - f. Friends of members
  - g. Your own neighbors, friends
  - h. Coworkers
  - i. Children of members
  - j. Prospects furnished by recent converts
  - k. Classmates at school
2. Initially, concentrate on just developing the list
  - a. Add names to the list over a period of time as other prospects come to mind
  - b. If you have trouble coming up with any names...
    - 1) Don't get discouraged, it has become very easy for each of us to become isolated in our own little world
    - 2) The next lesson will suggest ways to make initial contacts so you will begin to have prospects

## **C. SIFT THROUGH YOUR LIST TO DETERMINE WHICH TO GIVE PRIORITY...**

### **Some guidelines for determining priority:**

1. Those you believe are closest to obeying the gospel
2. Those with whom you have open communication
3. Those who have shown spiritual interest (but are "unchurched")
4. Those whose respect and friendship you have gained
5. Those for whom you have been praying regularly
6. Those you may have a limited time to reach...
  - a. Who might be moving from your area
  - b. Or who might not have long to live
7. Those who have a Christian spouse
8. Those in whom others have already invested some "sowing" and "watering"
9. Those who seem to repeatedly come across your path (is it coincidence, or providence?)
10. Those for whom you have the greatest concern

## **D. NARROW YOUR LIST DOWN TO NO MORE THAN TEN PEOPLE...**

1. These will be the people you feel are your best prospects
2. Put their names on a list (such as the **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart**)
3. Keep this list in some prominent place where you will see it daily

## **E. BEGIN PRAYING FOR THESE PEOPLE DAILY...**

1. Asking God for **opportunity** to be of service to these people - cf. **1 Co 3:5-7; Co 4:3**
2. Asking God for **wisdom** to make the most of the opportunities you have - cf. **Co 4:4-6**
3. Asking God for boldness to share the gospel when the right opportunity avails itself - cf. **Ep**

**6:18-20**

**CONCLUSION**

1. Developing such a list can be a major step to being successful in reaching others to Christ
2. As with so many areas of life, the reason many individuals fail to achieve their goals in life is because  
**they never really set them in the first place!**
3. But if our goal in life is to save others, an **Evangelism Prospect List** (as incorporated in the **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart**) can help to define our goals and keep them ever before us
4. In the next lesson we will explain further the **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart** and offer suggestions on how to develop meaningful relationships with those outside of Christ

But if you have time between now and the next lesson...

- ◆ Come up with as many as ten names of people you would like to see saved
- ◆ List them on the “Flow Chart”
- ◆ Begin praying for them daily
- ◆ Be prepared to share with others the names you have on your prospect list

Even if you do nothing more than develop such a list and begin praying for the souls on this list, perhaps you can give a copy of it to some teacher or preacher who can follow up on it!

# Relationship Evangelism

## Building Bridges (Developing Relationships)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Before beginning this lesson...
  - a. Spend a few moments sharing with one another your lists of prospects for which you have been praying
  - b. As a group, take the time to pray in behalf of these souls...
    - 1) Asking God to be with them
    - 2) Asking God to bless your efforts to set before them the proper example, and to one day reach them with the gospel of Christ
2. As stressed thus far in this study, the key to **Relationship Evangelism** is developing meaningful relationship in which we can increase opportunities to share the gospel
3. But as pointed out in the first lesson, there are factors which hinder our effectiveness:
  - a. **Too many people** - tempting us to relate to no one since we can't possibly relate to everyone
  - b. **Misunderstanding separation** - causing us to become isolated from many in the world
4. The end result of such factors is that many Christians no longer know how to develop meaningful relationships with new people!
  - a. We have forgotten how to "make friends"
  - b. Like someone who has been married so long that when widowed they have forgotten how to "go on a date"
5. The **Evangelism Prospect Flow Chart** is a tool for developing meaningful relationships...
  - a. To those we hope to reach with the gospel, it can help us to "**Build Bridges**" (develop relationships)
  - b. Later, we shall see how it can help us to "**Let The Traffic Flow**" (use the relationship to share the gospel)
6. Before we examine the four stages of "**Building Bridges**," consider the following explanation of the **Flow Chart**...
  - a. The Flow Chart is a tool to aid one in developing relationships with others which we hope will result in their obeying the gospel of Christ
  - b. As you gradually progress through the eight stages of developing a relationship, mark the appropriate box, indicating that the particular level of the relationship has been attained
  - c. In some cases, more time will be spent at one stage more than another
  - d. Also, in some cases the stages might be attained in an order slightly different than shown on the chart
  - e. The important point is that this chart should enable us to see where we are in our relationships with our prospects, and help us know what would normally be the next stage

[Now we are ready to consider the first four stages in **Relationship Evangelism**. The first stage pertains to how we can meet people, which is very helpful if we do not currently know anyone to put down on our **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart**...]

## **I. INITIAL CONTACT**

### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. Choose to be where people are
2. Be friendly and willing to talk - **Pro 18:24**
3. Take the initiative to meet people and make friends
4. Try to leave the person with a favorable impression

### **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Around the **neighborhood**.
  - a. Be outside when your neighbors are; e.g., doing yard work
  - b. Have an open house
  - c. Neighborhood cookouts, block parties
  - d. School and children's activities: PTA, Little League, etc.
  - e. Homeowners associations
  - f. Canvassing work for health organizations
  - g. Welcome new neighbors
  - h. Join a club
2. At **work**
  - a. Coffee and lunch breaks
  - b. Work projects together
  - c. Business trips
  - d. Office parties
  - e. Meetings, seminars

[As one follows suggestions like these, it should give you plenty of opportunities to start developing meaningful relationships. The next step is for those people with whom we are past the "just met" stage...]

## **II. BECOME BETTER ACQUAINTED**

### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. Your goal is to simply get to know the person better
2. Ask questions about them; e.g., where they are from, where they went to school, interests, family background, etc.
3. Look for common interests
4. Be patient - don't force the relationship
5. Don't hide your Christianity; let your light shine early in the relationship
6. Short, frequent contacts seem to be more effective than a few prolonged periods - **Pro 25:17**
7. Listen for the other person's: desires, fears, aims, goals, burdens, needs, - cf. **Ph 2:3-4**
8. Be complimentary (in all honesty, of course) - cf. **Ac 26:2-3**

### **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Around the **neighborhood**
  - a. Invite the neighbors in for dessert or dinner
  - b. Game nights
  - c. Recreational activities together

- d. Shopping
- e. Watching TV
- f. Picnics or barbecues together
- 2. At **work**
  - a. Eat lunch together
  - b. Recreational activities together: golf, tennis, basketball, walking, etc.
  - c. Continued conversations while working
  - d. Participate in their activities outside of work
  - e. Business trips
  - f. Attend meetings, seminars together
  - g. Car pool
  - h. After work activities
  - i. Bowling leagues, softball teams

[Now that we have become better acquainted, it is important to allow the beauty of the gospel to be seen in our lives. The next two stages in **Relationship Evangelism** makes this possible, the first one being to...]

### **III. SERVE THEM**

#### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. Expect opportunities for service, and be alert for them
2. Your goal is his (or her) success in life
3. Love is shown more by deeds than by words - cf. **1 Jn 3:17-18**
4. Meet genuine, practical needs
5. Let them be of service to you as well, and be appreciative

#### **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Around the **neighborhood**.
  - a. Volunteer to help with kids; e.g., baby-sit, provide transportation
  - b. Take over desserts
  - c. Take meals over during times of crisis (sickness, death)
  - d. Shovel sidewalk, mow lawn
  - e. Help them with their home projects
  - f. Help work on their car (or, in my case, computer)
  - g. Cards, gifts on special occasions
  - h. Be alert for emergencies
  - i. Ask them to help you
  - j. Help them move
2. At **work**
  - a. Volunteer to help them with their work
  - b. Offer to bring them coffee, mail, etc., if you are passing by
  - c. Be alert for opportunities to be a "sounding board"
  - d. Be alert for domestic needs: car, wife, children
  - e. Cards, gifts, cake, on special occasions
  - f. Look for opportunities to praise them and their work
  - g. Ask for help, advice
  - h. Be willing to take on menial tasks
  - i. Let them get the credit, or share the credit, when it is due

[If we are doing these sort of things with regularity, the next stage will likely come naturally. But to make sure that we accomplish the last stage in “**Building Bridges,**” let’s consider the...]

#### **IV. FRIENDSHIP LEVEL**

##### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. Work to develop common interests
2. Deepen the relationship: develop openness, honesty, trust, ease in communication
3. Have good times, memorable times, together
4. Acceptance, not reformation, is the concern at this stage

##### **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Around the **neighborhood**
  - a. Continued conversations over coffee, meals
  - b. Make use of the home - theirs or yours
  - c. Special outings of longer duration
  - d. Consider taking short vacations together
  - e. Extended work projects around the house; e.g., putting up a fence, or painting the house
  - f. Wood gathering trips
  - g. Hobbies
  - h. Recreation, exercise
2. At **work**
  - a. Overnight trips where there may be extended times to not only work together, but to converse
  - b. Seminars, training together
  - c. Volunteer to team together on projects
  - d. Pursue activities outside of work
  - e. Invite over to your home
  - g. Have dinner together with spouses and families

#### **CONCLUSION**

1. To this point, the objective has been solely to “build bridges,” to develop a meaningful relationship
2. You will notice that up to this point no effort has been made to actively discuss religion or try to convert the person
3. But very important steps have been taken:
  - a. You have made a friend
  - b. Your example of service has hopefully introduced them to a lifestyle that is rather unique in our society
  - c. By your friendliness, by your service, the **soil** of their hearts is being prepared for the **seed**
4. Our next lesson will deal with the **planting** of that seed; or to put it another way, how to use the **bridge** we have built to **let the traffic flow**

If you are using this material in a class with others, between now and the next session...

- ◆ Mark those stages you feel you have already accomplished with the names of those on your **Flow Chart**
- ◆ Make definite plans to do something (using the suggestions above) with one or more of your prospects during the week...
  - ✓ Either to strengthen the stage of the relationship already attained
  - ✓ Or to move up to the next level of the relationship
- ◆ If you do not have any prospects on your “Flow Chart” yet, make plans to do one or more of the suggested activities found under “Initial Contact”
- ◆ Be prepared to share your successes or failures in fulfilling your plans at the beginning of the next session

# Relationship Evangelism

## Letting The Traffic Flow (Sharing The Gospel)

### INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point in our study of **Relationship Evangelism**, we have...
  - a. Noticed various forces that hinder our effectiveness in evangelism
  - b. Defined “relationship evangelism” and considered its value as a method of sharing the gospel of Christ
  - c. Discussed the value of a “prospect list” and offered suggestions for developing one
  - d. Offered recommendations for developing meaningful relationships
2. It was in the last lesson that we examined the **four stages** of forming substantive relationships, what I call **building bridges**. These stages are:
  - a. Making the initial contact
  - b. Getting better acquainted
  - c. Serving them
  - d. Becoming a friend
3. If this material is being used in a class-like setting, then before proceeding with this lesson...
  - a. Spend a few moments sharing with others in the class:
    - 1) The names of prospects you have on your **Flow Chart**
    - 2) What you did during the past week with any of these individuals to either strengthen the level of relationship you have with them, or to move up to the next level
    - 3) Feel free to relate and discuss any failures or successes you think might prove beneficial to others in the class
  - b. As a group, take time to pray in behalf of the souls with whom you are working:
    - 1) Asking God to be with them
    - 2) Asking God to bless your efforts to forge stronger relationships with them in order to reach them for Christ
4. In this final lesson, we shall offer suggestions on how we might use the **bridges** we have built to **let the traffic flow** (i.e., to use the opportunities provided by our relationships with others to share the gospel of Christ)

[As indicated on the **Evangelistic Prospect Flow Chart** (see sample), there can be four stages in this process as well. The first one being called...]

### I. SHARING YOUR FAITH

#### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. You wish to make a clear identification that you are a Christian in the course of natural conversations
2. Conducting yourself in such a way that people are aware of your faith - cf. **1 Pe 3:15**
3. Don't try to say everything at one time
4. Ask questions - seek to understand first, then to be understood
5. Be sensitive to their reactions; place yourself in their shoes

6. As you share your faith, seek wisdom from God through prayer - cf. **Ja 1:5; Neh 2:4**

**B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. In daily conversation, interject your beliefs that are based upon God’s Word
2. Don’t hesitate to speak of the special benefits and blessings of being a Christian
3. When appropriate, give God the glory as you discuss good things that you experience (but avoid excessive praise, for it can sound artificial and hypocritical)

[Bear in mind that at this point your purpose is not to convert; rather, you are simply communicating what your faith in Christ means to you or has done for you. The next stage will involve introducing your friend(s) to other Christians...]

**II. WITNESS OF THE BODY**

**A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. People may at first discount your **individual** faith and lifestyle, but the **corporate** example can be a powerful witness and influence - **Jn 13:34-35; 17:20-21**
2. At this stage, then, you are wanting to introduce your friend(s) to the love and unity of other Christians

**B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Around the **neighborhood**
  - a. Include Christians in your social, recreational and work activities with your non-Christian friends
  - b. Have your prospects over for dinner, and invite some Christian friends as well
  - c. Invite your prospects to functions of the local church (regular assemblies, gospel meetings, etc.)
  - d. Invite them to pot lucks or other social functions organized by members of the church
  - e. Invite them to home Bible studies with a mixture of Christians and non-Christians
2. At **work**
  - a. Introduce them to other Christian associates
  - b. Invite them to attend weekly Bible studies at places of employment, or with other businessmen outside of work
  - c. Invite them to church functions
  - d. Invite them to lunch or dinner where other Christians will be present

[Again, the purpose at this stage is not to convert, or to “gang up” on the prospect, but to simply let them be around other Christians where they can see the faith of others being demonstrated in their lives. At last, we come to the point where explicit teaching begins...]

**III. EXPOSURE TO THE GOSPEL**

**A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. You want to expose your prospect to a full and clear explanation of the gospel
2. Your goal is not so much to convert, but to create understanding of the gospel and its implications
3. With those who are already firm believers in Jesus, but mistaken in their understanding of the gospel...
  - a. You should not be trying to convert them from “their church” to “your church,” but

- leading them closer to the Christ they love
- b. Like Aquila and Priscilla, you seek only to help them learn the way of God more accurately concerning salvation and the Lord's church - cf. **Ac 18:24-26**
- 4. If you do not feel you are capable of teaching what they need, ask someone else to step in and take over

## **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. With those who believe they are already saved...
  - a. You might appeal to their interest in learning more about the Bible:
    - 1) Offer to show them Jule Miller's **Visualized Bible Study Series**, or Robert Harkrider's **How To Understand The Bible**, both of which are five lessons on video tape
    - 2) Encourage them to study on their own, with the aid of a Bible correspondence
    - 3) Invite them to study with you one of the gospels, or the book of Acts
  - b. Or you might be more direct with a one-lesson approach, like that found in Field's **Test Your Salvation** booklet
2. With those who are not sure of their salvation, or who know they are not saved, you can use the material above, or more one-lesson approaches, such as:
  - a. Charles Goodall's **In The Same Hour Of The Night**
  - b. Bob Danklefsen's **Are You Ready For Your Journey To Eternity?**
  - c. Bristow's **Something Christ Asked Me To Share With You**

[At this point, our primary responsibility is to teach the gospel and to make sure the person has a proper understanding of what Christ has done for them. The last stage of **letting the traffic flow** involves encouraging the prospect to obey the gospel...]

## **IV. INVITATION**

### **A. PRINCIPLES TO REMEMBER AT THIS STAGE...**

1. Be sure they grasp the personal implications of the gospel
  - a. Trusting faith in Jesus Christ...
    - 1) As the Son of God
    - 2) Who loved them and gave Himself on the cross for their sins
    - 3) As the only way to forgiveness of sins, fellowship with God, and the hope of eternal life
  - b. True repentance...
    - 1) A decision to turn from sin and turn to God
    - 2) A willingness to obey Jesus Christ in everything
  - c. Confession of faith in Jesus Christ...
    - 1) Both now in obeying the gospel
    - 2) And throughout their life as Christians
  - d. Baptism into Christ...
    - 1) To be united with Christ in His death
    - 2) To be "clothed" with Christ
    - 3) For the forgiveness of sins through God's grace and Jesus' blood
    - 4) By faith in the working of God
  - e. Faithfulness as a disciple of Christ...
    - 1) Who observes ALL that Christ commanded
    - 2) Who remains faithful throughout life, even to death

2. You want them to understand:
  - a. The purpose of baptism into Christ
  - b. The importance of being simply Christians, members of the Lord's body
3. It is important to ask them if they wish to obey Christ; some times we never get around to actually asking!
4. While there is a place for persuasion (cf. Ac 2:40), we need to avoid pressuring someone to do something they really don't want to do
5. If feasible, continue the relationship even if they say "no" - some people take longer than others to make the decision to say "yes"

#### **B. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES...**

1. Approach a person privately after a Bible study or presentation of the gospel and ask them if they have considered obeying the gospel
2. The following questions may be helpful after a study:
  - a. **"Does this make sense?"**
  - b. **"Is there anything I (we) have said that you do not understand?"**
  - c. **"Have I (we) been teaching you anything other than what the Bible teaches?"**
  - d. **"Would you like to obey Christ and be baptized for the remission of your sins?"**
3. Give them time to make their decision - some people need to study and pray about it for awhile
4. Let them know you are always available: any time of the day, any day of the week; when they decide to obey Christ, you will be glad to assist them
5. After obedience to the gospel, follow up with a Bible study designed to help them grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ - cf. **2 Pe 3:17-18**

### **CONCLUSION**

1. **Relationship Evangelism** is really quite simple, and can be summed up in this way:

**"Be a friend - share your faith!"**

2. Even for those who feel they are unable to teach, **Relationship Evangelism** can be used to lead others to Christ:
  - a. Be a friend, and let your faith show by example
  - b. When it comes down to the point of explaining the gospel, let another Christian do the actual teaching
  - c. Many Christians (especially those new in the faith) have led their friends to Christ in this manner
3. If other methods of evangelism do not appeal to you, or are beyond your present abilities, why not apply yourself to this approach?
4. I am convinced this can be one of the most effective ways to lead others to Christ, and we might be surprised to see how many people could be saved if more Christians applied themselves to this approach

#### **One Last Point**

For an approach like this to work, it is imperative that Christians constantly encourage one another to carry it out. One way this could be done is for a group of interested Christians to meet weekly for the

purpose of:

- ◆ Encouraging one another to implement suggestions in this material
- ◆ Helping each other make definite goals for things to do each week, that they might...
  - ✓ Make contacts
  - ✓ Proceed along the various stages of the relationships
  - ✓ Make certain the relationships evolve to the point where the gospel is shared and the invitation is given
- ◆ Sharing successes and failures in meeting the weekly goals, in an effort to learn from them
- ◆ Praying together for souls being sought for Christ, and for those involved in the search

***“Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified, just as it is with you.” (2 The 3:1)***



