

DIFFERENT EXPECTATIONS IN EVANGELISM



A key question to ponder when thinking about evangelism is what expectations does the Bible encourage us to have of people when it comes to sharing the faith? Our hunch is that the answer will vary according to the stage of faith and role within church (see below). We also explore some foundations for thinking about evangelism.

STAGE OF FAITH/ ROLE IN CHURCH	YOUNG CHRISTIAN	MATURING CHRISTIAN	LEADER – GROUP	EVANGELIST	LEADER – OVERALL
BIBLE ENCOURAGEMENT	'I have found...' (John 1:41), 'Come and see...' (John 1:46)	'Make the most of every opportunity...' (Colossians 4:2-6)	'Give a reason for the hope you within you...' (1 Peter 3:15-16)	'... to equip his people for works of service...' (Ephesians 4:12)	'Do the work of an evangelist...' (2 Timothy 4:5)
APPROPRIATE EXPECTATIONS	<p>Pray</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pray for those you know who aren't yet disciples of Jesus. Pray with people in times of need. <p>Serve</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kind words. Offering to help (sacrificially). Sharing what we have. <p>Own up ('I have found...')</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That you go to church. How Christianity helped in your life. How you came to faith. How you handle struggles/doubts. <p>Invite ('Come and see...')</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To a connecting event: coffee, meal, social event with others from church To join us in serving the needs of others: a foodbank, night shelter, lunch club, overseas mission trip. To consider Jesus: invite to read, watch, listen or attend (gospel, blog post, video, film, podcast, Alpha). <p>One book to read Living His Story, Hannah Steele (SPCK)</p>	<p>All of the previous, and...</p> <p>Continue to develop relationships on your frontline</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify your oikos (your relational map); discern who to pray for. Consistently pray for five people who are not yet disciples of Jesus. Pray for yourself, that God would give you opportunities, eyes to see them, courage to take them and wisdom to know what to say. Take every opportunity to bless people through good deeds and gospel words. <p>Learn how to share the good news</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Asking great questions. Engaging with the three stories (theirs, ours, God's). Discerning next steps. <p>One book to read Fruitfulness on the Frontline, Mark Green (IVP)</p>	<p>All of the previous, and...</p> <p>Order the life of the group so it has a mission focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pray for those who are not yet disciples of Jesus. Practise gospel conversations. Promote every opportunity. Prioritise connecting activities. <p>One book to read Everyday Church, Tim Chester and Steve Timmis (IVP)</p>	<p>All of the previous, and...</p> <p>Commit to playing your part in the leadership of the church.</p> <p>Equip others in evangelism:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Model (take people with you). Mentor (better than training courses that only the interested attend). <p>Pioneer new ways.</p> <p>One book to read Evangelism in a Sceptical World, Sam Chan (Zondervan)</p>	<p>All of the previous, and...</p> <p>Order and mobilise the life of the church to keep evangelism on people's frontlines as a focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connecting: with where people/culture are at, with what God is doing, and therefore how we connect the gospel into the cultures around us. Modelling, sharing faith personally: cannot ask others to do what we ourselves aren't doing, therefore personally involved with praying for those who aren't yet Christians, sharing faith, inviting people to things. Ordering: two main ways we do this (a) shaping an evangelistic culture (b) discerning an appropriate strategy. Mobilising: (a) equipping ordinary people to play their part and (b) identifying, resourcing and releasing evangelists and pioneers <p>One book to read The Word's Out, P Weston D Male (BRF)</p>

BASE LINE (FOR EVERYONE)

Love Jesus ● Love People ● Love Serving

Theological Foundations

- We are **created** to be divine image-bearers, to glorify God and do the good works he has prepared in advance for us to do.
- We are **called** to help others discover their identity as divine image bearers.
- We are **collaborators** with what God is doing in people's lives to draw them to himself (God is the evangelist, we have a part to play). We trust the Spirit to be at work, drawing people to the Father through the Son. Only he can convict and convert.
- We are **commissioned** in a particular time and place to do that as a church community (evangelism is a body ministry that focuses on both the gathered and scattered life of a church).

Pastoral Foundations

- Enthusiasm for evangelism doesn't begin with evangelism at all, it begins with an enthusiasm for Jesus.
- Need to believe the gospel really is *the* way to human flourishing, and to experience that truth in our own lives and see its reality in the lives of others around us.
- Compassion, seeing people as Jesus sees them (as lost, blind, hungry, without hope), leads to generous welcome of all on our part (radically loving, outwardly focused, grace giving people).
- Releasing people from inappropriate expectations frees them up to play their part. Such inappropriate expectations include:
 - ⇒ Evangelism is speaking the whole gospel in one go. Most of the time we will share small parts, chatting about aspects of the gospel.
 - ⇒ Evangelism requires me to become someone I'm not. We can be ourselves, with God, for others. God uses all personality types to reach all types of personality.
 - ⇒ Evangelism is the preserve of a few special people in the church. It is a body ministry: everyone has a part to play, everyone needs to play their part.
 - ⇒ Evangelism is only possible if we have got to know people really well. It is less about how well we know people and more about how we treat people.

People Foundations

- People share the same basic needs for love, acceptance, recognition, belonging, security, purpose, and freedom.
- Most people today are extraordinarily ignorant of Christian things; if they know anything about the Christian faith it is likely to be a faint echo of the real thing.
- Most think little about life after death (at least until death becomes a present reality); they are more interested in making the most of life now (a happy mid-narrative).
- People, especially young people, are generally more conscious of shame, doubt and struggle than guilt and sin.
- People are not as irreligious as we might think; they deify many things, many pray, have had a 'spiritual experience'.
- People generally do not see themselves as immoral per se.
- Most people think positively of Christians they know, even if they might think less positively about the Church as a whole.
- Many people are open to talking about spiritual things *if* approached in the right way.