

REIMAGINING EVANGELISM
INVITING FRIENDS ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY
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CHAPTER ONE: REIMAGINING EVANGELISM – SALESPEOPLE OR TRAVEL GUIDES

1. The term “evangelism” has gotten a bad name in the culture. It is often identified with:
 - Sales
 - Manipulation
 - TV Preachers
 - Pushing people to convert
 - Going door to door
2. The result is that people in the culture are not responding and people in the Church are not excited or engaged in doing it.
3. The culture is shifting from a modern, rationalistic, technique-oriented one to a culture that is more imaginative, experiential, and story oriented. Our new teachers in evangelism are coming from Asia, Africa and Latin America.
4. The paradigm that dominated much of the twentieth-century might be called “Evangelism as Closing the Deal” or a “Sales Call”. This paradigm put undue pressure on Christians making them feel inadequate to do evangelism as they were not extroverted, persuasive, and an expert in both knowing their product and presenting it.
5. The new paradigm for this time is one of a travel guide or spiritual mentor helping others on their journey.

Such guides help people see the clues that God is at work in their experience.

These guides also know that their own stories of failure, struggle, doubt, wrong turns, and missed opportunities are as important and compelling to listeners as their stories of success.

Guides also show people that their individual stories are a part of a bigger and grander story that reveals purpose, meaning and direction.

6. There are new ways to connect and communicate the good news.
 - **Collaboration versus activism:** We collaborate with the Holy Spirit looking for clues about where God is already at work, expecting God to nudge us in His way, and being in an attitude of prayer when we are around unchurched people.
 - **Community versus individualism:** God is far more committed to raising up witnessing communities than to raising up witnessing individuals.
 - **Friendship versus agenda:** We learn the art of spiritual friendship and authentic conversation and then take delight when God intervenes and conversion occurs.
 - **Story versus dogma:** Whenever we have been able to tell a story about God’s reality, then we have had good spiritual conversation and we have evangelized.

- **The outside-the-box Jesus versus the cliché Jesus:** Jesus surprises people not by popping out every moment but by looking very different from what was expected when he does appear.
 - **Journey versus event:** People are either moving toward God or away. Guides help them know which way and encourage movement toward Jesus.
7. The new model of journey does not mean that at some point people are not invited to become a part of God's Kingdom through Jesus Christ, because they are. The process of helping them achieve this discovery is different, but the end is the same.

CHAPTER TWO: REDISCOVERING THE HOLY SPIRIT – COLLABORATION VERSUS ACTIVISM

1. Discovering and collaborating with the Holy Spirit in witness revolutionizes our sense of authority as witnesses.
2. Our first task as witnesses is to learn to listen to God and collaborate with the Holy Spirit.
3. Our model is Jesus who's secret to evangelism was that he was a collaborator, a partner, with what the Father was doing and with the Holy Spirit who empowered him.
4. We are to look for clues as junior partners in the Holy Spirit Detective Agency.
5. When around unbelievers we need to pray that God the Father will give us the nudge to engage those with whom he is already at work. We must ask God key questions:
 - Jesus, where are you already at work? Lead me to those who are receptive.
 - Is there someone you want me to talk to, care for or pray with? Who is hurting?
6. We not only ask God to nudge us but we must then learn to ask good questions of those God leads us to engage in some kind of conversation. The following are some samples:
 - Do you have a religious background and does it mean anything to you today?
 - Have you ever had what you would call a spiritual experience and if so what was it like?
 - Have you ever had an experience of feeling close to God, if so what happened?
 - Do you think there is a God and if so there is what might he be like?
 - What do you think about prayer, does it work and what does it accomplish?
 - When have you experienced turning point crises in your life?
 - What have you done with the spiritual side of life?
 - Where do you seek perspective and help with your inner questions, doubts and struggles?
7. These questions are designed to get people to share with us their stories of their spiritual pilgrimage.
8. We also need to collaborate with God in prayer. That means asking:
 - How do we pray for seeking and skeptical people?
 - How do we pray with seeking and skeptical people?
9. Praying with and for people comes after we have had enough conversation with them to know some of their needs and when the occasion will not draw undue attention to them.

CHAPTER THREE: THE WITNESS OF THE COMMUNITY

1. Most people today will come to faith in the context of community. Belonging comes before believing.
2. A post-Christian culture is when the values and beliefs of the culture are more pagan and require more extended conversations in order to develop the concepts and identity of being a Christian. Such an environment requires the kind of communication that best comes in community.
3. We need to be inviting people to activities and groups designed to be entry points into community e.g. Alpha, seeker small groups, etc.
4. We can also invite people to participate in events that serve the poor and work for justice and reconciliation.
5. The Holy Spirit not only works in community but works through community. This happens as the Spirit works through the gifts he has provided to the Christians who are participating in the community.
6. The key role of leaders is to help the church define, strategize and implement a vision for corporate witness and the community of believers the leader is leading.
7. The work of the Spirit through the gifts:
 - Organization and Leading – How am I helping the whole community do the work of evangelism through the use of these gifts?
 - Evangelism and Equipping – How are we using these gifts to help others get involved in the game?
 - Hospitality and Encouragement – How are we using our gifts to reach out to those outside the body?
 - Pastor and Teachers – How are we using our gifts in the lives of seekers and skeptics?
 - Prayer, Words and Works of the Spirit – How are these gifts being used with seekers and skeptics?
 - Service and Mercy – How are these gifts being used to build trust for the Gospel for those outside the body?
 - Giving – How is my giving helping the whole church reach unbelievers?
8. We must ask the Holy Spirit to fill us to be willing to use our gifts to reach others.

CHAPTER FOUR: SPIRITUAL FRIENDSHIP

1. Many people today believe in God and are very interested in spiritual things while not being interested in Christians, Christianity or the Church.
2. The reason for the lack of interest in Christianity is usually some breach of trust in the past with God or with Christians.
3. The result is that many unbelievers think they know all about Jesus, the Church and Christians and because of a breach of trust want nothing to do with them or it.

4. This means Christians must focus on developing spiritual friendships while focusing on what the Holy Spirit is trying to do (through looking for clues) rather than worrying about learning certain scripts of how to talk to people.
5. Developing spiritual friendships (those which are genuine and not ones designed simply to get a decision) is based on common interests that friends will have in common. To have these happen there are two questions that Christians need to ask:
 - What do I love to do?
 - How could I do that with people who do not know Jesus yet?
6. Asking these questions and implementing well the answers may mean giving up a number of Church and Christian things we are now doing.
7. Spiritual conversation with friends who do not know Jesus always start with the assumption that there has been a breach of trust that cause our friends to be against Christians, the Church or Jesus Christ. Our goal is to start with people where they are in this lack of trust and be a spiritual guide helping them explore the implications that surround this lack of trust.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE POWER OF STORY

1. Stories may be the only container big enough to carry truth because stories not only contain the facts but the feelings and nuances of truth.
2. Stories reflect how life is lived and how we come to believe that which is true to us.
3. The influence of media has made us a story telling culture.
4. Our world view can be best understood by looking at four dimensions or levels:
 - All world views are framed by a grand story
 - The grand story answers
 - Who we are
 - Where we are
 - What is the problem
 - What is the solution
 - Symbols (artifacts and cultural events) give our world view shape and meaning.
 - Our life experience shapes the patterns that confirm our world view.
5. Our first job as Christians is to connect our own stories to the grand story of God and then learning to tell our story.
6. We then learn to tell the transformational stories in our story rather just focusing on our conversion story. Our transformational stories then reflect how God's reality impacts our stories either negatively or positively. This means we must learn and be able to tell:
 - When God was most real to us in our lives
 - When our encounter with Jesus was most influential
 - When we were most connected to the spiritual side of life

7. Telling our transformational stories from our life will mean sharing both our successes and our failures.
8. It is in our failures that we can connect most easily with the stories of others. And in telling our story we share bits and pieces until our friend asks us to tell more. There will come a time when we connect our story to the grand story of God.

CHAPTER SIX: JESUS OUTSIDE THE BOX

1. Jesus is the only way to the Father and then is none other. However, in communicating that truth we must start with where people are (their trust has been breached) and be careful not to play into their stereotypes.
2. Jesus did this when asked questions intended to entrap him. He answered on his terms not theirs.
3. Seekers and skeptics usually expect Christians to describe Jesus in bland and neutral terms that make him almost unreal. This means that the stereotype is a Jesus who is:
 - European in looks
 - Always nice
 - Constantly cuddling sheep
 - Mystical, melancholy and other worldly
 - One that hates conflict
4. The Jesus of the Gospels was anything but bland:
 - He elicits love-hate relationships continually
 - He hung out with sinners and those culturally undesirable
 - Stayed away from religious people in most cases
 - He was human in his enjoyment of life
 - Wept when friends died
 - Possessed an arrogant humility
5. The embarrassing questions the seekers and skeptics asked usually have other questions that are behind them:
 - Questions of power and motive
 - Questions of identity
 - Questions of trust
 - Questions of community
6. The problem with most Christians that cause us to seem hypocritical is that our American Christianity is consumer oriented, which leads to self-absorption, self-centeredness, and self-futility.
7. Jesus becomes an out of the box person by not constantly popping up in our conversations but by looking very different from the stereotype when he does appear.
8. One of the best tools to reach people today are GIGs. These are groups investigating God. Such groups let the outside the box Jesus speak and act for himself.

CHAPTER SEVEN – GREAT NEWS

1. In a post-Christian culture people neither see the Gospel as good nor as news. Their concepts of the Gospel are of old stereotypes of the way people use to evangelize.
2. The good news of the Gospel is as much about the present as it is about when we die.
3. When Jesus introduced the Gospel he spoke often about the personal and societal transformation that really began with his coming. We tend to only focus on what the Gospel will do for us in the future while failing to talk about what the Gospel will do for us now. Much of the Gospel is about current transformation and what it means for us today.
4. Salvation is:
 - The restoration of God's gracious rule, in the past, present and future, for individuals, communities, nations and all creation.
 - Spiritual and physical
 - Individual and communal
 - Personal and social
 - Human and cosmic
 - For people and nations

(All of this is what makes the Gospel good news)!

5. We share this good news as we listen to the stories of others, and show them the clues where God is working, share our stories and show where God has transformed us and then show how all of this relates to God's grand story, which is the Gospel.

CHAPTER EIGHT: INVITATION TO A WEDDING – JOURNEY VERSUS EVENT

1. We need to change the image of conversion from "doing something religious" to an image of "doing something relational" like getting marriage. This fits the N.T. image of saying that as Christians we have union with Jesus Christ.
2. Marriage is the culmination of a process that includes friendship, courtship, meeting the family, engagement, the ceremony and the honeymoon.
3. The issue is not getting someone to sign on the bottom line but to grow into intimacy, commitment and union. This process, like in most marriages, includes crucial crisis events. It also means that at some point one of the two partners does need to actually ask the question if the other person wants to marry them.
4. The marriage metaphor works for a number of reasons:
 - We do not just join another person we join that person's family
 - There is a decision at some point in the process to become intentional
 - It involves a change in allegiances

5. Biblical conversion includes several dimensions:

- Repentance
- Faith in Jesus
- Baptism and incorporation into the community
- The gift of the Holy Spirit

6. Part of being a spiritual guide is helping people whether they are on a journey away from God or on a journey to God.

7. Questions prompting a commitment:

- Where are you in the process of trusting Christ? Is there any reason you couldn't ask for his forgiveness and leadership right now?
- Are you open to joining Jesus' community and Jesus' cause to transform you and your world? Is there anything holding you back?
- Are you interested in asking God to fill you with God's presence to change you and give strength to follow Jesus?
- Would you want to pray with me now, or talk to God on your own later?

8. Summary questions:

- Will you commit to becoming a more vibrant witness?
- Can you see yourself as a travel guide more than a traveling sales person?
- Will you become a better spiritual detective?
- Can you give up a cookie cutter approach in being a witness?
- Can you begin to do what you love with people that do not know Jesus?
- Can you begin to tell good transformational stories for each stage of your life?
- Can you begin to talk about Jesus in some surprising "rock my world" kind of ways?
- Do you know the big story and how your story fits into it?
- Will you grow in the art of spiritual matchmaking?

APPENDICES:

1. Building Trust in a Multiethnic World?

2. The Great News: (What's at the Center)? Gospel Illustration

3. Spiritual Gifts and Witness