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Evangelism Vision Paper

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by

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**Contents**

**Introduction** 2

**Personal View of Evangelism** 2

**Vision of Personal Evangelism** 3

**Vision of Evangelism in Ministry** 6

**Bibliography**  11

**Introduction**

 The readings and videos provided during the term of the course Evangelism 502 have provided a wide scope of information and practical application concepts about how to establish and maintain a diligent evangelistic lifestyle. This paper will provide me the opportunity to share my personal view of evangelism and how my view has changed as a result of this course. I will also expound upon how I will implement my vision of personal evangelism in my daily life and my strategies to influence my family, those I work with, and those that I live with in community. Finally, I will describe how I will implement my vision of evangelism in ministry.

**Personal View of Evangelism**

 During my years as a lay leader and as a minister, I have been frustrated with the low level of expansion that I have seen in the Kingdom. The churches that I was part of were populated with caring and loving believers, yet there seemed to be very little success at evangelism. I participated in targeted training along with others, but we still could not seem to become effective in our evangelistic efforts. I personally view evangelism as becoming most effective when utilized in the context of relationship. I am not a proponent of ambush evangelism or street corner evangelism. While I will concede that some come to a saving knowledge of the Lord through these methods, I believe we can be most effective in sharing the gospel when we have developed a trusted relationship with those with whom we share. This course has reminded me that for my preferred method to be effective, I must be constantly engaged in evangelism. Whaley and Wheeler asserted that it is our responsibility to witness to others.[[1]](#footnote-2) Those whom I have developed close relationships with will still not hear the gospel unless I am purposeful in sharing my faith with them.

**Vision of Personal Evangelism**

 Our reading in *The Great Commission to Worship* challenged me to consider that the Great Commission expressly commands us to devote our lives to sharing God’s love with others.[[2]](#footnote-3) The Great Commission, located in Matthew 28:18–20 states:

All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go, therefore, and make disciples and instruct all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.[[3]](#footnote-4)

This commandment is simple in its phrasing and is very clear. Jesus is directing His followers to give their lives in service to others, motivated by their love for Him. Prioritizing this command in my life will require me to integrate evangelism into all aspects of my daily life. Each day should start with time spent listening to God and allowing the Holy Spirit to set my tasks for the day. He can provide me with insight as to those whom I should approach and wisdom to know how to do so effectively. As I journey through my day and complete tasks in my roles as father, leader, pastor, mentor, husband and others, I will need to remain in a posture of prayer and open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Not only should I listen to what He is saying, I should be ready to immediately take action upon what He says. In practical matters, I have a surplus of education to rely upon as I share with others. The key change that needs to occur in my life is the re-prioritization of evangelism over other concerns of the day.

 This change of prioritization will require my family to adjust to align with new paradigm. My wife is an amazingly capable believer and she will have to be willing to embrace a change in focus for our lives. We have often given ourselves to long hours of work to serve the church, but this change of focus will mean that we will not devote ourselves to some tasks that we have done before so that we can pursue opportunities to build relationships with others for the sake of being granted the permission to share the gospel with them. Pipes and Lee gave practical advice as to how to organize a family’s efforts to be effective as a team in evangelism.[[4]](#footnote-5)

 In each locale in which I find myself, I will have to develop strategies to speak to others to share my faith. At home, I will need to document who is in my extended family that is not a believer. I will need to spend time in prayer for those individuals and ask the Holy Spirit to guide me as to how to properly reconnect with those individuals so that I can have the window to share my faith with them. At work, I will need to develop a way to move outside the everyday tasks that take up so much of my day and seek to provide room to respond to those the Spirit guides me to interact with. With each of these individuals, I will be mindful to assess their spiritual condition and move forward to share my faith in a way that is highly relational and caring. Beyond work, I will pursue relationships with those who have hobbies similar to mine and use those activities as bridges to create opportunities to share my faith with them.[[5]](#footnote-6)

 Earley and Wheelerreminded me how important it is to live a life that is attractive to others and that stands out against the background of how others behave in a secular world. My desire will be to exert effort to serve others and to show them my love by performing selfless acts of service to them.[[6]](#footnote-7) I actually enjoy being a blessing to others and I hope to dive deep into this kind of activity. I am aware of how I can become self-focused and seek comfort. I will be praying that God will empower me and allow me to be divinely enthused to pursue sharing God’s love and my own love with others. It is my hope that He can expand my capacity to love others rather than assessing their worth with my own eyes and delivering support only to those I deem worthy of my efforts. By humbling myself, I expect that I will have many more opportunities to serve than I have been aware of in past years. This focus on servanthood will provide me many more instances in which I can develop relationships to the point where I can share my faith with those individuals.[[7]](#footnote-8)

 Previously, I mentioned that I had plenty of education in methods and content to help me share my faith. My introverted personality has kept me from being as diligent in sharing my faith as I should be. I will pray that the Spirit will provide me opportunities to share my faith each day. I am confident He will supply those opportunities as I am diligent to ask for them. I know from personal experience that I can be quite effective in talking with others. My problem has been one of being apathetic to the needs of others. My selfish ambition has keep me busy with other matters rather than caring about the multitudes that could potentially perish around me. Jesus has provided the encouragement and the straightforward comment that “those who love me follow my commands.” Truly internalizing these directives will lead to my increased diligence in sharing my faith.

**Vision of Evangelism in Ministry**

 My duties as executive pastor of a fairly large church include developing strategies that lead to the pursuit of those far from God, equipping saints to be confident and able to share the gospel message with those they are able to reach, and preparing believers to be disciples of Jesus Christ. As such, I have developed a strategy which specifically utilizes our small group structure to become the evangelistic arm of our church. I have asked the small group leaders to intentionally reach out to their neighbors and friends, inviting them to gather in their homes to get to know each other and to enjoy each other’s hospitality.

 The small groups leaders are trained to be welcoming, to ask people to share their life stories, and to lead a short time of discussing each other’s needs. Next, they teach the group to specifically pray for each other. Those who do not know God will be naturally curious about this and are not likely to reject being prayed over. The small group leaders have been trained to avoid putting people under uncomfortable pressure and to use their discernment as to when it is likely that the group will be willing to be more closely aligned with God.

 The groups are encouraged to meet on a regular basis, either weekly or every other week. They follow a rotation of “types” of meetings, which are care meetings, service meetings, and fun meetings. For instance, the first meeting in a four-meeting rotation would be to have a care meeting. This is where the group will gather to specifically pray for each other and learn each other’s life stories.

The next meeting would be a service meeting. In this meeting, the leader will have coordinated with our outreach team to identify a local ministry where they may go and serve. Such a ministry might be a food bank, a homeless shelter, or a local school project. Each group would be encouraged to ask the group members what kind of project they would like to serve and then the leader could seek out such a place to serve. Our church staff has worked with local ministries to identify the key contacts and to gather information that available online for use by the small group leaders to explain options to their groups. They are also able to use the website to contact the ministry coordinators and to provide an “after-action” report of what they experienced at the project. These after-action reports allow church staff to identify shortfalls and areas of success to improve our future group projects. The small group leaders and the believers in the groups are trained and asked to look for opportunities to share their faith with those inside and outside of the group as they work on the service project. This strategy helps our small group leaders and their group members to demonstrate their love for others. Reid and Wheeler explained that servant evangelism was a key component in a believer’s evangelistic strategy by saying “In a post-Christian culture, Servant Evangelism offers a demonstration of the Gospel coupled with an explanation.”[[8]](#footnote-9) Additionally, Early and Wheeler propose that our witness is most effective when it is incarnational.[[9]](#footnote-10)

 The third meeting would be another care meeting. The leaders are encouraged to be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading and to look for opportunities to share their faith with the unbelievers who are part of their group. In addition, they are encouraged to invite these group members to church services, if they are not part of another congregation. Our hope is that our groups will be ever expanding and including more and more of the community inside of their reach. As the group leaders work with purpose, our community will come to know the Lord and join with us in the Great Commission work.

 The fourth meeting in the rotation would be a “fun” meeting. The group leader will organize a gathering for the sole purpose of having fun and inviting new friends. These events can be at the host home or an appropriate locale in the community. Since we are located in Tampa, Florida, we have easy access to beaches, restaurants, boats, and Orlando, Florida, with all of the attractions and venues there. The routine gathering to have fun demonstrates to non-believers that Christians are actually able to have fun and are actually quite adept in playing with others. Will McRaney pointed out that “Most people will be loved to Jesus, not convinced to Jesus. We need to build relational bridges.”[[10]](#footnote-11) This strategy allows us to connect in ways that will seem natural and organic to those outside of the church. The group would be encouraged to be welcoming to anyone new who comes to the event. By consistently reminding them that the group is “open” to others, we are able to avoid the stagnation that frequently occurs in small groups. This entry point allows the group leaders and the believers in the group the opportunity to easily develop relationships that might lead to an opportunity to share their faith with the new folks.

 As our congregation grows more adept at being “outward-facing,” I predict that many will come to know the Lord and will need to be discipled. It is my belief that the dynamics of the small groups would be disrupted if they became Bible study focused. However, it is imperative that a new believer be guided toward maturity as a believer. Our church has established another type of group meeting called “D-Groups”. These groups specifically gather no more than three new believers with a mature believer. This group will utilize a curriculum which helps the new believer understand what it means to be saved, healed, set free, empowered, equipped, and to serve. Each of the topics has a curriculum that requires those discipled to read and share their thoughts about the material with the mentor. A key component of this curriculum is to clarify that the new believer is already able to share their story with those they know and to lovingly lead their friends and family into a saving knowledge of the Lord. By proceeding through this series of studies, the new disciple is enriched with God’s Word and enabled through knowledge to become mature in their faith and able to begin to replicate themselves by ministering to others who are new in their faith. In addition, we will be able to utilize tools such as William Fay’s *Sharing Jesus Without Fear* to assist the new disciples to effectively open discussions with others and answer their questions.[[11]](#footnote-12)

 My belief is that as our numbers of mature believers expands, we will see more people called by God to go and plant churches. Our church has a history of planting churches and we are excited about the opportunity to prepare a new generation of church leaders to establish new kingdom outposts. We are a multi-site church and we prefer to utilize people who have grown within our walls. These new leaders could serve as campus pastors, teaching team pastors, church staffers, and those who move from one campus to another to help establish the new campus for new growth. Also, there will be some who will be led to establish new churches outside of our immediate area. Those leaders will be trained and supplied to establish their new outposts, with our church leadership’s blessing. By pursuing these church expansion strategies, we will be able to be effective in evangelism.

**Conclusion**

 I have found this course to be a good inspiration to reflect upon my purpose in life and to embrace the calling which God has placed upon me. I have clarified my view of evangelism and its importance in my life through the readings and the practical exercises we were required to conduct. I have also established a personal vision for evangelism in my own life. I wish to exhibit a lifestyle that leads other to know the amazing God that has done more than is imaginable to save me and to embrace me in an intimate relationship. This new fervor to serve God allows me to pursue my ministry projects with vigor. The desire to equip others to be amazing evangelists will lead to an expansion of the Kingdom and to innumerable people becoming saved by God’s amazing love.

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1. Vernon Whaley and David Wheeler. *Worship and Witness Workbook*. Nashville: LifeWay Press, 2012. p. 30. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. David Wheeler and Vernon Whaley. *The Great Commission to Worship: Biblical Principles for Worship-Based Evangelism*. B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Unless otherwise specifically noted, all biblical references are from the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
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5. Ibid., p. 84. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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11. William Fay and Linda E. Shepherd. *Share Jesus Without Fear*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999. Kindle. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)