

CHAPTER 4

Event Evangelism

EVANGELISTIC PREACHING

1. What is Evangelistic preaching?

Evangelistic Preaching is:

the preaching of *the gospel* accompanied by a *challenge* to respond to the gospel and the provision of an *opportunity* for people to do so.
i.e. Gospel + call to repent + appeal.

2. The Gospel

The *gospel* we preach must be the gospel of the New Testament, i.e. the gospel of Jesus Christ. However, we should realise that the New Testament itself gives plenty of scope for preaching this unchanging gospel in a wide variety of ways. As we read the NT we should keep an eye out for the way the gospel is referred to and proclaimed.

The *Packaging* of the evangelistic message should be appealing, probably positive and with a definite challenge to the non-Christian mind. It is hard work!

The *Title of the talk* is part of the packaging, and since it can be a great help it is worth spending time thinking about an appropriate title. This may arise out of the passage you have selected to preach from.

However, often the ones organising the evangelistic occasion have thought of appropriate topics which they would like you to address. The danger of addressing a topic is that you can get side-tracked from your evangelistic task. So for example, if your topic is 'Christ and Money', you could give a Bible study on everything Christ said about money which completely obscures the fact that he shared our humanity in order to die on the cross, and rise again so that we could be forgiven and live forever! You may have done a brilliant job as an expositor, but you have failed as an evangelist.

When you are given a topic this pitfall must be avoided. This can be done by remembering that your job is to preach the gospel. It is therefore the gospel that needs to provide the framework and direction and thrust and appeal, etc. for your talk. Preach the gospel at all costs! Where does the topic fit in? It simply *defines the area from which you draw your illustrations!!* So, for example, if the topic is money there are heaps of problems caused by the love of money, greed, exploitation, etc. that can be illustrations of the **sin** for which Christ died, and from which we need to repent, etc. 'Although money is part of God's good creation, human sinfulness distorts this good thing, and we will be judged, but Christ died, so that ...'

If you remember that a topic simply defines the pool from which you illustrate your talk, you can preach evangelistically on any topic you are ever asked to address! You simply look at the world with this topic in mind, and ask how does the word of the gospel strike home here?

3. Selecting the Passage or Verse to Preach On?

The apostle Paul tells us that the response he was looking for in all of his preaching to Jew or Gentile, was "repentance towards God and faith in the Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:21). If we are preaching with this end in view we should look for those passages of the bible which will enable us to show Jesus as Lord (the response to which should be repentance) and Jesus as Saviour of His people (the response to which should be faith). See 1 Thess 1:9-10.

Evangelistic preaching is declaring the gospel so that people are confronted with the person and work of Jesus in such a way that they realise that they should respond to Him. In Romans 1:1-5 we are reminded by God that His gospel is about His Son. This seems so obvious that it must be said. You may well ask, "Is there any preaching which is not evangelistic?" The answer is no, provided the text on which you are

preaching is set in its' biblical context. Then it must be evangelistic (Luke 24:44-49). The work of the evangelist is to find those parts of the bible which are summaries of the whole and which enable an explanation of the bible's message about Jesus (biblical theology) with ease.

1. Select a passage which is simple and clear.
2. Select a passage or verse which is likely to be familiar to people (John 3:16, Psalm 23, 1 John 2:1-2).
3. Select a passage or verse which easily enable you to do what is described in points 1. and 2. above. (Mark 4:35-41, Matthew 16:13-28)

4. The Content of the Sermon

When you have done the exegesis on the passage and are sure that you know what it means you are in a position to decide what points will need to be made to bring people to make a response.

I follow a simple pattern of constructing the body of the talk as follows:

1. **State** each point.
2. **Read** out the part of the bible that sustains this point.
3. **Explain** the points and why it is important.
4. **Illustrate** the point.
5. **Apply** the point.

Now go on to the next point and do the same.

It might be worth sounding a word of caution. Don't try and tell the listener everything you know. You can't teach the whole bible in twenty minutes. Be selective even in the emphasis you place on the points you are making. Remember many of the hearers have heard the gospel before.

5. The Introduction

This is always important and never more so than in the evangelistic talk. Use it to arouse interest. Try and show why listening could be helpful and life changing. You may decide to appeal to some known need or something of general interest, which you know to relevant. Since the 'outsider' to whom this is directed, will not know you, it is a time for rapport building, where shared interests and concerns could be voiced (if it is possible this could be dealt with by you being interviewed at some time earlier in the service). And if all this isn't hard enough, it needs to be brief and snappy.

6. The Challenge

It is important to realise that we are not only giving people information but are calling on them to turn to Christ. This should be very clear and in black and white terms and done with passion. Your talk should convey the urgency of being saved, and the necessity of deciding for Christ rather than remaining against him. If you remember that when you are setting this challenge before people they are standing on the brink of eternity and you are telling them the only way from hell into heaven. You ought to be passionate at this point!

Prepare a prayer that they can pray and lead them through this step by step. Keep it short and simple. Do not introduce new ideas, which have not been part of the sermon or talk at this stage. That is, there is only a choice of two options and one of them is by no means recommended!

7. The Appeal

Before the meeting decide how you are going to organise the appeal. The use of cards is very helpful for follow up. A card with only two options is the best, i.e. 'I became a Christian', 'I want to inquire further'. Organize when the cards will be given out and how they will be collected.

Preparation

As you begin your talk tell them what you are doing:

'I am going to explain what a Christian is and how to become one. Then I am going to give you an opportunity to become a Christian before you leave this evening.'

Preaching

Preach clearly and simply, and end with a punch. For example, I heard a punchy ending to a sermon on John 4:

‘Friends, many of you here are still searching for the fountain of life. Stop searching now. Jesus offers you life today! Take him up on his offer.’

Prayer

Believe that God’s word has worked. Believe that God’s Spirit is working. Believe that people will respond.

Explain what you will do. The ‘three groups’ approach is good.

- Already

‘There are three kinds of people here today. One group have **already** become Christians...’

- Not ready

‘The second group are not yet Christians, and they feel, for whatever reason, that they are **not ready** to become a Christian today...’

- Ready

‘But can I talk to the third group of people in particular, this is your day. This third group have not become Christians before, but they realise that they are ready to do that, and want to give their life to Jesus Christ right now. You know he is Lord..., etc.

‘If you are in the third group, what I am asking you to do is to pray - that is basically what you need to do to take Jesus up on his offer.

‘Let me read through this prayer so you know exactly what I am asking you to pray...’

(Have a prayer prepared. Keep it simple, with content arising out of your talk— a crisp summary!)

(Read prayer slowly, and deliberately in its natural phrases.)

Ask them to pray it: ‘If that prayer expresses what you would like to say, if it sums up your desire to become a Christian tonight, then now is the time to pray it to God. I will pray this prayer through phrase by phrase, and you can repeat the prayer in the quietness of your own head to God. He will hear you.’

Pray the prayer phrase by phrase, slowly and deliberately.

As you say a phrase, you repeat the phrase slowly in your own head, then allow a little bit longer before giving the next phrase. Remember, it will seem longer to you than it will to others. Don’t hurry! Remember, people are passing from hell into heaven, it is a most significant time!

8. The Immediate Follow-up

Remember that what you do next is the first step in follow up. This is a crucial part of the appeal, and the better the preacher does this, the easier the next stage of follow up will be—and this means that the person will receive the best help possible in their new life. This needs to be prepared carefully and not done ‘off the cuff’ so that it does not become another sermon. Whatever you decide to do you should run this past whoever is in charge so they are happy with it.

Welcome

‘To those of you who have just prayed that prayer, and so have become Christians, let me say, Welcome to God’s family! The Bible says that when a person becomes a Christian, all of heaven rejoices. And can I assure you that every Christian here is rejoicing with you today. You have just begun a whole new life!’

Stress need

‘Let me tell you that now that you have begun a new life, you will need some help. We want to be as helpful as we can, so let me explain how we can get that help to you.’

The card

‘Would everyone please take out the card and pencil that you were handed on the way in.’
(*WAIT for them to do it!*)

‘I want everyone here to fill in this card. We’d like to hear everybody’s response to what we’ve just heard. (*An assurance of confidentiality may be given.*) Here is how you should

fill it in. If you prayed this prayer to become a Christian *for the very first time tonight*, then tick...'

'If you are in that group who are not yet Christians, but weren't ready to become a Christian tonight, then can I say, you need to find out more about Jesus before it is too late! Don't miss out! Don't put it off, find out more about his offer of eternal life. What have you got to lose? If you'd like to find out... tick...'

'And if you are already a Christian, then please write a comment in the space provided.'
(Summarise, then, 'Everyone knows what to do? Okay, fill out the cards.')

(Leave plenty of time, apply no pressure, then give clear instructions about what to do with the cards. It is best to collect them straight away somehow.)

9. Some Further Reading

"When God's Voice is heard", Green and Jackman IVP 1995.

Chapman, John "Setting Hearts on Fire", Matthias Media, Kingsford, 1998.

A Fresh Start has several chapters that are adapted from evangelistic sermons. It is full of illustrations for desperate preachers!

10. A Handout

Have the passage on which you are preaching printed on half an A4 so that people can follow it as it is read and as you preach from it. It will to be numbered so that you can quickly refer to the verses you want at each step of the way. You could have the prayer you want to pray at the end on the back.

11. Suggested Response Card for Evangelistic Talk or Sermon

OPEN CHURCH WEEK			
I would appreciate help:			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Today I received Jesus as my Lord and Saviour		
<input type="checkbox"/>	I would like to know more about Christianity.		
Any Comments:			
Name:		
Address:		
.....	Phone:		
Age: <input type="checkbox"/>	Under 18 <input type="checkbox"/>	18-40 <input type="checkbox"/>	Over 40

Remember, the first fifty years are the hardest!

Peter G. Bolt (with additional notes from "When God's Voice is heard", Green and Jackman IVP 1995, chapter 11).

1990

EVANGELISTIC SERVICES

Preparing an Evangelistic Meeting/Service

There are some basic principles that should control the planning and content of an evangelistic meeting:

- They ought to be designed primarily for unbelievers who are probably unfamiliar with church services and Christian activities.
- Everything should serve to advance the presentation of the gospel of Christ.
- Establish ownership of the event from the Christian congregation so they will support it by bringing along their unconverted family and friends.
- Remember planning does not replace prayer as an essential element.

Therefore, those responsible for preparing the event should be ruthless in asking key questions of its contents: Will this help or hinder in putting unbelievers at ease? Does this support the gospel message and topic? Is the congregation equipped and willing to invite their unchurched friends along? Are we depending upon God or our own preparations?

With these foundational principles in mind, let's make some more detailed comments.

1. The Program or Service

The basic principles are keep it simple and focused on the Gospel theme for the event. Invited people should be referred to as 'newcomers' or 'first time visitors' not simply 'guests' and 'visitors'. Guests and visitors come and go whereas the other terms at least suggest this group welcomes new people and encourages future visits. The leader should prepare introductions and link sentences very carefully, avoiding 'in house' commentary and Christian jargon. Most of us are nowhere near as good at 'ad-libbing' as we think we are. Apart from informational comments about toilets, childcare facilities and refreshments, notices should be avoided. Essential notices for the regulars should be included on the back of the service handout and then the leader can simply draw their attention to this and leave it there. If a collection or offertory has to be taken, it needs to be handled with great thoughtfulness and care. The leader could say something like, 'We are delighted to have several newcomers with us today. It is our common practise to take up a collection at this time, which supports the Christian work of this parish and overseas. However, this is only for our regulars so when the 'bag' comes by please be our guests and just pass it on.' However, wherever possible we recommend that the collection be avoided.

When using a Prayer Book Service, choose one that is very simple in structure and language and stick to it. However, remember that the Holy Communion is not an appropriate service to use. The service should be reproduced along with all the congregational songs, Bible readings and prayer of commitment on a single service sheet. This is easier to follow, cuts down on directions and provides the unchurched with something to take home to possibly read over again. Finally, please ensure that the Bible reading is always close to the message.

2. The Music

Outsiders hardly ever engage in communal singing and they will be unfamiliar with most Christian songs, except perhaps Amazing Grace and one or two other golden oldies. Therefore, have a minimum of congregational singing and use musicians and singers who sing items that will be appropriate to the target audience. Bands and soloists should be made aware of the theme for the night and be asked to focus on the Lord Jesus – on who He is and what He has done. It may also be helpful, where copyright is not a problem, to have the words of the items available so that communication is as clear as possible (these should be incorporated into the text of the service where they occur).

3. A Testimony

A well-prepared personal witness can be very effective. It demonstrates both the reality that people do become Christians and the relevance of the gospel for life today. Use the 'Guidelines For Sharing Your Story' booklet (Department of Evangelism). If an interview, use John Chapman's 'Know and Tell the Gospel', pages 152-154, where there are some guidelines about questions to be asked. Whether an interview or talk approach is chosen, it is important to ensure that it is well rehearsed. Ensure the person practises with the microphone, as many people are unfamiliar and nervous in their use. If they cannot be heard, then the testimony is a wasted opportunity.

4. A Drama

Short dramatic presentations can be very effective and creative vehicles for raising issues, which the gospel message is going to explore and answer. However, bad, long or irrelevant drama does nothing but hinder the process of Christian communication. A basic rule of thumb is, if you cannot guarantee that the drama will be

short (5-10 minutes at the outside), professional, and assists in setting up the preacher's topic, forget it. Also, do not cram the program with too much material, so choose to have just one of the following: a testimony or drama or extended band or solo performance.

5. The Bookstall

It is better to have one or two titles that you are pushing for the day, than have a great variety on the bookstall, which only confuses the inquirer. We recommend 'A Fresh Start' by John Chapman for young adults and up and 'A Sneaking Suspicion' by John Dickson for teenagers. On a separate table, it is a good idea to provide free copies of the New Testament or a Gospel in a modern translation and of a good gospel tract such as 'What is a Christian?' or 'Two Ways To Live'. Some churches provide a 'Newcomers Pack' which may already incorporate such material along with information about the local church. It would be a good idea to have someone inconspicuously keep an eye on the free literature to ensure there are adequate supplies and they are not being wasted.

6. Dress

It is always wise to inquire about the most appropriate dress code before arriving. Ask what the organisers anticipate the outsiders will be wearing and then dress in a way that would make them feel comfortable.

7. Sample format

Welcome and introductions

Opening song item (1 or 2)

Prayers for relevant issues (2 or 3)

Song item

Testimony/Drama

Congregational song (provides time for people to stand before message)

Bible reading

Message (including response mechanism)

Final item or congregational song

Closing brief comments (thanks for coming, quick reminders about refreshments and the bookstall's free literature).

8. Final comment

An evangelistic meeting is dependent upon clear and truthful preaching, the attendance of unbelievers and a comfortable setting where they can listen. Therefore, it is essential that Christians have confidence in the preacher and are confident about inviting their unchurched family and friends along. Christian leaders should be working hard to instil this sort of confidence in their congregations.

Stephen Abbott, 23 February, 1996

HOSPITALITY EVANGELISM

“Hospitality Evangelism” is a label that, unfortunately, can easily confuse or mislead people. Some think it means nothing more than friendship evangelism or lifestyle evangelism. It doesn’t. In fact, “Hospitality Evangelism” is a combination of three elements, all of which are an essential part of the process. They are:

1. Friendship Evangelism
2. Mealtime Evangelism
2. Team Evangelism

1. Friendship Evangelism

This is where the process begins. Since some 60% of Australians now *never* attend church (unless compelled to do so by the wedding or funeral of friend or relative) we can no longer confine ourselves to evangelising the “fringe” - those people with a vague connection with the church, or who are willing to come to the occasional special service.

But how do we reach the unchurched majority? We have already reached them! We work beside them, or live near them, or study with them, or play sport with them, or belong to the same trade or profession as them. Every Christian has a number of unchurched non-Christian acquaintances. The first step in sharing the gospel with them is to share *something* with them - in other words, to become their friends.

Hospitality can play a vital role in this. It is a Biblical virtue (Romans 12:13) which powerfully aids in building bridges of friendship. It is when we see someone from work outside the office setting, when we open our home to them, when we share our food with them, that we build strong bridges of friendship.

Every Christian is a missionary; *every* Christian has a mission- field - it is the place where we work, live, study, shop or play. By giving our time, our attention and ourselves to two or three non-Christian acquaintances we can turn them into friends. Every invitation to a dinner, or a movie, or a game of golf is a step along this road. It won’t happen by accident. It will only happen if we deliberately and consciously commit ourselves to friendship building with unchurched non-Christians as our part in God’s mission in this world.

And as we do sow pray for them - by name - every week in our prayer triplets, and every day in our quiet time.

2. Mealtime Evangelism

The next part of the process is to invite them to hear the gospel carefully explained by someone who will challenge them to respond - but we need to invite them to the sort of event they will actually come to, not be frightened away from. We call these occasions “hospitality evangelism events”, and they consist of a meal and a speaker - just like a Rotary or Lions club dinner.

These events can be organised by a local church, or a fellowship within a church, or a Bible study group- or by just about any Christian or group of Christians. They can be dinners or lunches or breakfasts. There are only two firm rules:

1. They *must* be held **off church premises**. Suitable venues include restaurants, or the function rooms of R. S. L., bowling or golf clubs. (Much more information about the practicalities of organising these events is found in our handbook *Hospitality Evangelism: A Practical Handbook*) Your unchurched non-Christian friend will come for three reasons: first, it is not “church” (which makes them uncomfortable); second, because they have been invited by a friend; and third, because they get a free feed. At least a third of the people present at the dinner/lunch/breakfast should be non-Christian (it is often up to 50%). These events provide “safe surroundings in which to hear a dangerous message”.
2. The speaker *must* be a **gifted speaker** who will present the gospel clearly and helpfully, and will call on people to respond- a combination of *information* and *invitation*. Avoid the temptation to waste a room- full of unchurched non-Christians with a “celebrity” who gives a “testimony”. All pre-evangelism is done in the friendship building - these events are **harvesting times**. We must never get together a number of people who are utterly lost and going to hell just to hold their hands and tell them nice things. They must get the gospel, and they must get an opportunity to respond. And they must be invited to events like this again and again - we should not be disappointed if they do not respond on the first occasion.

3. Team Evangelism

In all of this, we are not alone. In the first place we are members of a prayer triplet team. There are two other Christians to whom we report on our attempts at friendship building, and who pray with us and for us.

In the second place, we are part of an event planning and organising team- our church, our fellowship, our Bible study group, or whatever.

In the third place, we bring in a gifted evangelist (as after dinner speaker) to be part of our team- to connect up the threads and make the gospel clear and unavoidable, and to do what is so hard to do in one-to-one conversation, namely, challenge the hearer to respond.

Hospitality Evangelism

It is when all three elements are operating that the whole process that we call “Hospitality Evangelism” is underway. And in this post-Christian era this is a method that really reaches out to second and third generation Aussie pagans, brings them under the sound of the gospel, and sees them converted.

You begin this process by encouraging every member of your church to do the following five things:

Look around- because your mission field is right where you live, work, shop or study. Identify two or three unchurched non-Christian acquaintances with whom you can work on building friendships.

Look up- because prayer changes people. Meet at least once a week with two others in a “prayer triplet”:. Together share the names of the people you are targeting with friendship. Pray for all the names shared, and for each other as you build bridges.

Look out- for ways to build those bridges of friendship to the people you are praying for. Friendship is more than superficial “friendliness”- it is **trust**. An invitation to dinner or a movie or a game of golf can build bridges and open the way for Christ.

Look Forward- and plan to invite your new friends to “hospitality evangelism events” as they are organised. Suggest that your fellowship or group organise such events. Help organise them. Look forward to inviting your unchurched non-Christian friends to four such events each year.

Look after- those who respond to Christ: they need your prayers and encouragement more than ever. Those who do not come to Christ may respond later- so stay close to them, keep on praying, and keep on organising hospitality evangelism events.

This is, of course, the barest skeleton of an outline. For more details, especially more practical details- read: *Hospitality Evangelism: A Practical Handbook* by Kel and Barbara Richards, \$9.95. This book contains complete training information on hospitality evangelism, and a set of five Bible studies- suitable for small groups. The authors are also available to conduct training seminars in hospitality evangelism.

PERSON-TO-PERSON EVANGELISM

It has been my experience that when I ask groups of Christians how they were led to Christ between 60-80% explain that it was through the ministry of a friend in a person-to-person situation. These statistics indicate that this must be one of the most important aspects of evangelism. But person-to-person evangelism is very different to preaching a sermon one-to-one. As John Chapman explains in 'Know and Tell the Gospel', page 100:

‘It is much more like ‘verbal scrabble’! I say something, he answers, I respond to his answer, etc. I know what I want to say ultimately—the gospel. Whether I am able to do so is largely governed by what he says to me and whether the gospel is appropriate in the conversation we are having.’

What follows is an outline of some basic attitudes and principles Christians should take on board in order to be prepared and effective in person-to-person evangelism.

1. Preparation of a godly life

Several passages in the New Testament clearly indicate that observing the gospel being lived out in a Christ-like life will lead people to enquire as to why it is so (Col 4:5-6 and 1 Peter 3:8-17)! Christians need to understand that they are to be good not for goodness sake, but for the sake of the gospel and God’s glory (Matt 5:16 and Titus 2:9-10). This area is probably the most important of all for it gets the attention of the outsider, shows the power of the gospel to positively change lives and demonstrates its relevance for everyday life. Reading and obeying the Bible, regular prayer and fellowship with other believers are God-given ways to grow like Christ in the power of the indwelling Spirit. However, we must not make the mistake of thinking that we must reach a certain level of spiritual maturity before we can witness to our faith in Christ. The important concern is that we are committed to making progress in godliness, not that we have attained it. Remember, to lead someone to Jesus Christ, you only need to be one step ahead of the one you are leading.

2. Preparation of a gospel message

If we are unsure about what to say, we will probably never speak to others about Jesus. In fact, the gospel needs to be known so well that we do not need to think it out. When we have a clear grasp of the gospel in our heads, we are far more able to concentrate our thoughts on the other person, listening carefully and responding with greater flexibility with the most appropriate elements of the gospel. It is also very important to learn how to express the gospel in simple, relevant and non-technical language. Well chosen illustrations from everyday life can help people get a handle on the key aspects of the gospel message and the response that God calls for. Some examples can be found in the training manual, 'Everyday Evangelism' (Department of Evangelism) pages 26-29, which will help in getting you started. Also on pages 30-35 there are several different models of gospel presentations which are suitable for use in person-to-person evangelism. However, remember one of the keys to effective personal evangelism is recognising the need for flexibility. People are all different and will be at various stages in their spiritual understanding. This may require Christians to choose a particular presentation of the gospel which is most suitable to their situation.

One particularly effective tool for sharing the gospel is the preparation of our own personal testimony. This has the advantage of very naturally sharing the message of Jesus’ death and resurrection and showing the relevance for our lives today. Unfortunately, many testimonies are badly prepared and tend to focus on past sins rather than on Jesus Christ and the difference he has made to our lives. Therefore, we recommend that Christians use the booklet 'Guidelines for Sharing Your Story' (Department of Evangelism) which provides tips for preparing a personal testimony that honours Christ and challenges enquirers.

It is also useful to carry small gospel tracts which can be given away when it seems appropriate after a conversation. Make sure you are familiar with the contents of the tract and that it explains how a person can become a Christian. In cases where I may have spoken to a stranger, I would write my phone number down so that the person could contact me if they had any questions. Some of the tracts we recommend are 'What is a Christian?', 'Two Ways to Live' and 'How to Know God'.

3. Preparation of honest open relationships

Church research has indicated that many Christians within a few years of becoming a believer have 'lost' most of their non-Christian friends. Despite this, many Christians have not given thoughtful consideration to their existing network of weekly contacts with outsiders. Their mission field may incorporate fellow employees, neighbours, local shopkeepers, petrol station attendants, parents of children in their own child’s sporting team, etc. but they just have not thought in these terms. Having established their contacts, how do

Christians develop honest open relationships with the goal to win others to Christ (1 Cor 9:19-22)? The following suggestions are a good place to begin:

1. Pray regularly for those you have consistent contact with.
2. Think about your common interests and concerns and use these as a basis for building strong relationships and for planning opportunities to expose them to the gospel. For example, a neighbour's interest in golf leads you to invite him along with some other Christians friends to a game. Of course, you may have to be their servant by taking an interest in something which does not particularly grab you.
3. Take an interest in people and be gently inquisitive about their 'religious' opinions. Develop good listening skills and respond sensitively and truthfully to what they share. Remember very few people are neutral to the gospel and they want to know they have been heard before they will hear. Also work hard to ensure that if people take offence, it's the gospel contents which have offended and not you.
4. Be up front about your Christian world view and talk naturally about God and your faith, being careful not to sound 'holier than thou'. For example, when asked about the weekend, don't hesitate to comment about how great church was or be quick to express your commitment to pray for a friend who is going through a crisis. Over time, they will realise that this is who you are and they will be less threatened and more likely to accept invitations to gospel events.
5. Think about the interests and subjects your non-Christian contacts frequently discuss. Can you say anything distinctively Christian on these subjects. If you can, then when they come up again, as others make their contribution, make yours and see where it leads.
6. Do not be fearful of asking direct questions. For example, What do you think a Christian is? or Who do you think Jesus Christ was? or Where do you see yourself in your spiritual pilgrimage?
7. Keep practising and remember you do not have to say everything at once. You will get other opportunities and you are not the only Christian they will meet.
8. When engaging in conversations with outsiders, develop a dependent heart and ask the Lord to give you wisdom and courage to respond to people appropriately and truthfully (1 Peter 3:15).

4. Preparation of answers to questions

Experience has shown that there are only a limited number of questions and objections which enquirers ask. It is a good idea for us to familiarise ourselves with these along with an approach to answering them which is Christ centred. 'Everyday Evangelism' pages 38-45 provides some relevant material on this whole issue along with outlines for dealing with 10 of the regularly asked questions. However, if they ask a question you cannot answer satisfactorily, do not hesitate to admit you need time to think the issue over and then arrange a future meeting to discuss it.

5. A final word

The best way to develop our skills in one-to-one evangelism is to practise. Therefore engage in conversations with people while praying for both opportunities and the Lord's wisdom and guidance. I have little doubt that the Lord will honour our commitment to obedience. It is also a good discipline to meet with one or two other believers to encourage and pray for each other regarding your daily Christian witness. We strongly recommend you read John Chapman's 'Know and Tell the Gospel' pages 95-104 which has an excellent chapter on the whole issue of person-to-person evangelism.

EVANGELISM FROM THE PEW

When you're not involved in any up-front part of a church meeting there is a great opportunity for evangelism, but you need to take the initiative and make evangelism a priority before, during and after the meeting.

Before The Meeting

Arrive at church early because some newcomers to church are far more punctual than the regulars and may actually arrive before the meeting begins.

As people are coming in look out for people who are new. If you don't know many people from the congregation, be willing to say hello and introduce yourself. Particularly look out for people on their own who don't seem to know others.

If you meet a newcomer, sit with them and take the opportunity to get to know where they're from and introduce yourself. Ask them how they got to come along and what contact they've had with Christianity before.

Once the Meeting Starts

If the meeting starts and you still haven't sat down with a newcomer, wait at the back of the church and look out for people who are sitting alone. At this point you may not be able to tell whether they are new but you might as well sit next to them anyway. Try not to sit with other team members.

The important thing is, as you sit down next to them, say hello and quickly and quietly introduce yourself. It is much easier to talk later if you have made initial contact at the start of the service. On the other hand, it can seem very awkward to try and start a conversation with someone at the end of a meeting if you have been sitting next to them the whole time without speaking to them.

During The Meeting

Just be polite and helpful, eg. if they haven't got a bible let them look on with yours.

After The Meeting

It's not too late to catch up with newcomers after the meeting but you have to make it your first priority. Newcomers will often be the first to leave so go straight to the exits and engage people as they are heading out. If you spend five minutes or so talking to your friends first, the opportunity will be lost.

The other places to find newcomers are at notice-boards or bookstalls.

What to Do with Newcomers

If you meet a newcomer at any stage, before, during or after the meeting, stay with them for the whole time, unless they make it clear that they would prefer you not to.

Take an interest in them. It is important to remember that every conversation is different and people ought to be treated personally, but as a guide-line you may talk about:

- who they are
- how they spent the week
- why they came to church
- what contact they've had with Christianity
- what they thought of the meeting/sermon.

It's even OK to ask them if they are Christian and what they understand about Christianity, after all they have shown some interest in coming along. Hopefully you will be able to engage them in conversation and explain the gospel to them.

You should also introduce them to others so that they feel a bit more comfortable and at ease. Invite them along again, or better still line up a personal meeting with them if that's appropriate. Make sure you ask them to fill in a visitors card or visitors book so that they can be contacted in the future, if this is not inappropriate.