

**THE GREAT COMMISSION AT HOME**  
**Connecting Through Relationships**

**By Leonard C. Albert**

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## **THE GREAT COMMISSION AT HOME** **Connecting Through Relationships**

**By Leonard C. Albert**

The Great Commission is one of the most significant passages in the Holy Bible. It is the last recorded personal instruction given by Jesus to His disciples and it is a special calling from Jesus Christ to all His followers to take specific action while on this earth. It is the greatest speech ever been given in the history of the world which has motivated millions of man hours and billions of dollars of expenditures. It is found in Matthew 28:18-20:

*“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” Amen.*

Noted author and men’s leader Pat Morley says, “Those powerful, razor sharp, bottom line sentences have struck to the very core of men’s hearts for centuries...those words have acted as an acid to burn away all pursuits less important...and mobilized millions of believers to action.” The Great Commission is the end of a Gospel and the beginning of faith in action for all Christians. This command from Jesus is significant because it's a personal instruction for Christians to have a profound faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus says, *“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”* This is an incredibly powerful statement which demands faith in Him, validating His power in the lives of Christians and their commitment to Him. This verse acts as a clear claim to Christ's omnipotence, and therefore His deity.

Jesus also gives His believers specific directions to follow after they have affirmed their faith when He says, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the*

*Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit...*" He calls us to act and share the Good News of salvation throughout the world. In the previous chapter we learned that the importance of *Missio Dei*—the concept of God being the Sender of His people into the world to fulfill the Great Commission. Now we are going to look at us (believers) as being those representatives on this earth with a mission in mind. This is referred to as the "Image of God" (often appearing in Latin as *Imago Dei*). It is a concept and theological doctrine that asserts that human beings are created in God's image and are the ones through whom God's plans and purposes can be made known and actualized. The moral connotation of the doctrine of *Imago Dei* is that if humans are to love God, then humans must love other humans, as each is an expression of God. In other words, because God is Love then we must love others. Because of this love and compassion, tens of thousands of believers travel each year on missionary trips throughout the earth, spreading the word of Jesus Christ. Many Christians have made incredible sacrifices, traveling to remote regions of the world beyond the civilized cities into jungles and deserts. Mission fields can also be very close to home. It could be a neighbor who has not heard the Good News or a poverty stricken area just down the road where people can't afford Bibles. In the 21st century, the Internet has become a mission field where people can reach out and share Christ's love. The places and people who need to hear the Gospel are everywhere!

In the last verse of the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus provides specific direction with affirmation to His followers, "...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Christians are instructed to teach others about Jesus Christ and the entirety of His truth. We can't profess Christ as Savior and Lord, while rejecting certain elements of His teachings. As we teach Christ's truths, verse 20 declares that we can be confident, in faith, that Jesus Christ will support us. This fact has proven trustworthy throughout the centuries as millions of believers have heard, accepted and shared the

Good News of Jesus Christ. Yes, Christ has ascended back to heaven, but He is present by the power of the Holy Spirit in every believer!

In the Great Commission, Jesus calls every Christian to step out in faith and spread the Good News. This is faith in action! People who obey this command change their spiritual lives forever! It could be spreading the Good News to a neighbor or moving to another country to reach the people there. It could be sharing with less fortunate kids down the street or spreading the Word in a town two hours away. Wherever we go, every faithful Christian is compelled through obedience to share the Gospel.

### **Here or There?**

Jesus' command in Matthew 28 is clear, "*make disciples of all nations.*" So, for 2,000 years Christ's followers have gone to neighborhoods around the world to share the Gospel. It seems that we have always thought of the Great Commission as being fulfilled in some distant land—a land called "over there." In the minds of many, the people needing to be saved live in a remote jungle, a foreign city, or a strange culture. We tend to think of "world missions" in visions of khaki clad missionaries fighting their way through impenetrable forests. This line of thinking doesn't work in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Something has been happening. "The nations" are on the move. The ethnic makeup of neighborhoods in America has been changing. The world has moved in next door.

The publication *Mission America Monthly* (January 1998) says that "the United States is now the third largest mission field in the world—only India and China have more nonbelievers." America is truly a mission field. Consider these facts:

- South Korea has the church with the largest attendance in the world
- The church with the second largest attendance in the world is in Lagos, Nigeria
- The largest Buddhist temple is located in Boulder, Colorado

- The world's largest Muslim training center is in New York City
- The world's largest training center for Transcendental Meditation is in Fairfield, Iowa
- Each year nearly 500,000 students and scholars from virtually every nation on earth are enrolled to begin a four year sojourn in American colleges and universities
- Every day more than 175 different languages are spoken in this country, and millions either do not speak English or have a poor understanding of it.

The challenge of the Great Commission to reach “all the world” can be fulfilled in our neighborhoods. Our new neighbors were born in different cultures, speak different languages and have different values than many of us. Those of us who were not called to be missionaries overseas can now be missionaries in our own zip code! God has brought the nations to our doorsteps and is calling us to serve Him in where we live, work and play. Today, more than ever, we have the chance to grasp the full meaning of loving God with all of our heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving our neighbors as ourselves. The big question is, “How?”

How do we love our new neighbors? If you desire to fulfill the Great Commission in your personal life then living as a missionary in your neighborhood is not an option. There is a “mission on your doorstep” and in order to fulfill this mission you must be inspired, informed and equipped to reach the nations living in your own community.

Almost everyone living in America is from an immigrant family, but immigration today looks a lot different than it did 200 years ago. Now we have to ask questions like, “How do we respond to the immigration question?” “What does the Bible say about immigrants?” “How should our evangelical churches respond to the thousands of undocumented immigrants living among us?” We’ll talk more about this later, but our first response should be to seek God and try to understand not only their culture, but their plight. We need to try to figure out what life is like for a Mexican, Korean or Filipino immigrant family living in the U.S. We need to learn how to cross race, class and

culture lines. We need to deal with prejudice, apathy, indifference and busyness that can easily short circuit our attempts to help these people and bring a credible witness of the Gospel to them.

From God's point of view the “there” is now “here.” For most of us that means that we are already where we've been sent. The greatest mission field we could ever hope for has arrived right where we reside. God has placed us in neighborhoods and our church in communities all over this nation so that we might make disciples right where we live and work. Thus, not only do we not have to go elsewhere to fulfill the Great Commission, but in fact our primary mission is here, right on our doorstep, right across the street, right in our schools, neighborhoods, and offices.

### **Missionary or Minister?**

First, a statement of truth: the Great Commission will never be accomplished without the laity of the church. Plain and simple. The people of God are the workers God has chosen to partner with Him in the fulfillment of this exciting command to the body of Christ. The traditional church view regarding the laity, one that we have heard for years, is “every believer a minister.” Reggie McNeal in his thought-provoking book titled *The Present Future* challenges this assumption. He says, “Every time I see the slogan ‘every member a minister’ I cringe.” “It usually means that there has been a lot of effort put into getting church members to get church work done.” McNeal calls this “myopic vision” and says it has resulted in ministry being defined largely in church terms and lay people often being viewed as functionary resources to get church work done. The “workers” in the Great Commission certainly involve the laity but they must be viewed not only as workers, but as partners in ministry with the Lord. Also, there is a vast difference between “church work” and the “work of the church.”

The work of the church is not always in the church—it is *Kingdom* work. The ministry of the Laity goes far beyond the four walls of local congregations. Laity need more than just “jobs in the church.” They have been called and gifted by our Lord for ministry in the community as well. The

Great Commission doesn't say, "Go into all the world and make *workers* of all nations *nagging* them in the name of the Lord." This is what is happening in many churches where pastors feel sad that they can't get their lay people to get "involved." We need to take a fresh look at the involvement of the laity in ministry and the concept of "every member a missionary" since the world has moved to our doorsteps.

An easy-to-remember definition of ministry is that it is Christian work that involves the acts, duties and services of every believer where they live, work and worship. Ministry is any human activity that is entered into on behalf of Jesus and His gospel. The word "minister" is not only a noun—it is also a verb! Ministry involves finding and meeting human needs spiritually, socially and physically. We move beyond "talk" and actually "do." There is a presumption that what we hear, we know. We must gain our knowledge from experience, not just knowing intellectually. Most of our adult lives are spent on our jobs—in our "working world."

The Church has wrestled long, but never definitively, with the problem of Christian vocation and daily work in the secular world. Are laymen and women "called," or are only clergymen? Can daily work in the secular world be or ever become "sacred?" A better understanding of the term "vocation" might be helpful. It comes from the Latin *vocatio* which means "to summon" or "to call." Vocation was originally used in the 15th century for the call into the priesthood or a religious order. Originally only those in religious work had a "vocation" or calling – everyone else simply had a job to make a living. Gradually vocation came to be broadened to include all people and came to mean the work in which a person is regularly employed. The truth is that all of life, including our job, or employment is a calling from God.

The success of the fulfillment of the Great Commission really hinges on the laity understanding this "call" and responding to it. This "invitation" is really a "life calling" or general call from God to all people to live a life of service—to leave the world a better place than they found

it—more in line with God’s values. Every Christian has a “life calling” from God. Our “life calling” answers one of the deepest questions of life—why am I here? A life calling is different than career planning, or even vocational choice—it is about what we need to do with our life to accomplish God’s great plan on earth. Not merely God’s plan for the church, but His intentions for the whole earth. That is, God is at work, both in the church and the world, so that His Kingdom might come on Earth—making a world where God’s values prevail. Our role in cooperating with God to bring this to pass then becomes our life calling. A life calling will influence our vocational choices, but it is much bigger than a person’s career or job. Finding our life calling may be the most important thing we can do, for it is discovering our purpose for living. It is what God wants us to do with our life.

Primary among our purposes in daily life, where we work and reside, must be the conviction that we are placed in this world, and in our particular spot in the world, as “salt” and “light” (Matthew 5:13-16). When Jesus described Christians as salt and light, He was not speaking about just the possibility of us being salt and light. He made a bold statement and said we *are* salt and light and not only that, we are *all* the salt and light the world has! However salty we are, however penetrating our light, we are all of it there is. In our communities, in our workplaces, in our recreation places—salt and light will be coming from believers who really believe that they can make a difference in the lives of others around them. The best way to do this is by developing one-to-one relationships with the unbelievers and the unchurched. One-to-one personal witnessing requires transparency and living the Christlike life every day. There is no room for any holier-than-thou attitude that is a real “turn off” to the unsaved around us.

We don’t want to move away from the laity becoming ministers, but the laity must also learn to think like missionaries. God is looking for lay men and women who will accept the call to become a “minister,” get involved in “ministry” and then learn the wisdom of the mind of a “missionary.” When a missionary goes to a foreign culture he or she must (1) learn all about the culture (2) respect

the culture (3) communicate to the culture and (4) reach the lost within the culture with the message of salvation. The current term for all of this is “missional” thinking “missiology.” The technical meaning of this term is “mission science” and is defined as the area of practical theology which investigates the mandate, message and work of the Christian missionary. So if we are to win the world beginning at home we must become culturally relevant missionaries in our thinking and approach (our culture is not their culture, our beliefs and not their beliefs, etc.). We must understand the culture so we can build bridges to it for the sake of gaining a hearing for the gospel of Jesus. Pastor Brian McLaren of Cedar Ridge Community Church, Washington, D.C. says it this way, “We have to approach our culture with a missionary strategy as though we were presenting the gospel for the first time. Christian faith thrives in this kind of situation and provides us with wonderful ministry opportunities.”

The point is not to adopt the culture and lose the message; the point is to understand the culture so we can build bridges to it for the sake of gaining a hearing for the gospel of our Lord. We should obey the Lord wherever we are and know that the Holy Spirit will enable us to connect to others, and somehow bring a witness to the plan of God for one’s life. Elton Trueblood has called it our “Other Vocation.” It has to do with the investment of our gifts in addition to our daily work and community life. To be “on duty” for Christ in the world of work involves more than just a 40 hour work week. There are 168 hours in a week and we are to be accountable for all of them. Our role is to step out in faith, learn about our culture(s), start conversations, ask questions, explore all of the open doors and leave the rest up to God.

### **New or Old?**

The timeless message of the Great Commission always has to be considered in the context of the world as it exists today. We are told that our world is a “postmodern world.” What does this really mean to the evangelical church? Years ago, before the Oldsmobile division of General Motors

ceased production, they came out with a commercial featuring the words, “This ain’t your daddy’s Oldsmobile.” The implication, of course, was that it was a new and modern vehicle and that it had undergone great changes. This is a verbal image of our world as we know it today—it has undergone great change. One of the current buzzwords that we hear today is “raplexity” which is defined as “rapid and complex change.” We are told that we have moved from a modern world to a postmodern world.

The modern world is really a misnomer because in reality it has been around for about five hundred years! It is the period of history that followed the Middle Ages (which ended approximately 1500 AD). The modern era includes what has been called an early modern period, which lasted from c. 1500–1800. This period ended in a time of change and upheaval. The 18th century Enlightenment, then followed by the Industrial Revolution in Britain, and an Age of Revolutions, beginning with those in America and France, and then pushed forward in other countries partly as a result of upheavals of the Napoleonic Wars. The contemporary era began in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the included World War I, World War II, and the Cold War.

The modern period was a period of significant development in the fields of science, politics, warfare, and technology. It also was an age of discovery and globalization. The brutal wars and other problems of this era, many of which come from the effects of rapid change, and the connected loss of strength of traditional religious and ethical norms, have led to many reactions against modern development. Optimism and belief in constant progress have been most recently criticized by postmodernism, our current historical era. Anyone over 40 is from this “modern age.” This is the age of reason and rational thinking. This is the age of the printed word and absolutes.

But here in the 21st century we’re in a new world: the world of postmodernism. This is the age of experiential and visual. In this age we are all connected and there are few (if any) absolutes.

In just one generation we've moved from a "Gutenberg world" to a "Google world!" The printed page is being replaced by the electronic page of e-mails, text messages and the Internet.

Who are these people that are all around us? They are not just the pierced and tattooed. We are told that this group includes just about everybody under the age of forty. They have been described in different terms—postmodern, Gen-X, even the overused "contemporary." They have always had a PIN number, they have grown up with computers as a way of life. There has never been a time when they have not had a cell phone. They are parents as well as kids, they are teachers as well as students. They are engineers as well as artists. They are our community. They are our neighbors. They are the future.

They seem to be information rich, but upon close examination they are spiritually poor. They need the spiritual wisdom that only God can give them. The challenge is to help change their mind about pluralistic thinking. They believe that there are many ways to God. How do we reach post moderns who believe that "it's fine for you, but not for me?"

The challenge to reach our current culture has great implications for the evangelical community wanting to be obedient to the Great Commission. When Jesus said, "Go into all the world," what does that world look like today? Our burden and passion to reach the lost has, and will continue, to cause a clash of cultures. The big question is: how do we connect the timeless message of the past with the postmodern culture of the present in which interest in religion is low, but desire for spirituality is high?

This new era of Postmodernism officially began in 1960, but as with all historical transitions, it has taken some time to show up in our daily life. Universities are generally one of the first places where new ideas take hold, while culture at large lags behind. And what lags behind in the general culture is usually true of the Christian culture. One well known church consultant had this to say after visiting many churches that were literally in a time warp and still trying to do God's business

with traditional methods. He said, “Well if the 1950’s ever come back I personally know of many congregations that will be ready for them!” How do we reach our new culture? One thing is for sure: we can’t go backwards in time. L. P. Hartley said, “The past is a foreign country; they do things differently there.”

When it comes to culture, Christians generally have one of three attitudes:

1. **We fight it:** We hear generalizations like “Everything in our modern culture is wrong.” Ironically, when we were heavily in the era of modernism, few evangelicals bought into it lock, stock, and barrel. But now that we are past modernism, many evangelicals are longing for the good old days. Change is resisted and the old ways are used—even if they are not working. The ministry of our local churches is sometimes segmented from other parts of our life (business, family recreation etc.) resulting in a disconnect between the church and the community. This is a reality with at least two groups in the church: men and boys. Man in the Mirror Ministries, a parachurch group in Florida says that 25% of women in church worship without their husbands and 90% of the boys who are being raised in the church will abandon it by their 20th birthday.

2. **We join it:** We become conformed to the cultural values that surround us. This is NOT where we need to be. We call these groups “cultural churches” because they endorse the culture and blend in with it to the extent that they surrender their core beliefs just to reach others. Churches like this care little for society, think little of missions, evangelism, or social issues that must be addressed by believers. Some “seeker-oriented churches” continually face the temptation to put a priority on relevance over truth. In other words, some church’s willingly “water down the truth” in an attempt to be relevant and conform to the culture.

3. **Connect to it:** In John 17: 14-15 Jesus said, *“I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.”* This

truth is unchanging: we are *in* the world but are not *of* the world. What then do we do with the culture? We do the same thing Jesus did: we engage it! Luke 5: 27-32 tells a beautiful story about Jesus engaging the culture. *“After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he left all, rose up, and followed Him. Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, “Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus answered and said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”* The big surprise here is that Jesus would show up for this “great feast.” The reason is because His desire was, still is, and always will be “*to seek and save that which was lost.*” (Luke 19:10). Jesus offered no one charity. He gave Himself. Can we do any less? We have to offer the people of our world today Jesus! Paul never argued that Christ could top the mystery religions and other ecstatic cults in terms of religious experience. He offered the truth – Jesus Christ and him crucified. This was the power of God to which he wanted them exposed.

Postmodernists will respond to the gospel. They are looking for authentic relationships that offer meaning and connectedness. They are truly hungry for a real experience with God. In addition, they will attend a church that affords them the best experience – a church they will "like." It could be a church offering a warm and safe non-threatening environment with a friendly, relevant, open-minded pastor who leads an exciting Sunday morning contemporary experience and teaches biblical principles focusing upon marriage, the family, values and morals. This is a spirit-filled church where people are born again and come to church full of joy and expectation. Could this be our church?

### **Cultivate or Reap?**

Everybody likes to reap. Hardly anybody likes to spend the time it takes to cultivate. Reaping is productive and shows instant results. Reaping has the connotation of an ingathering, a return on investment; it is a recompense, or a pleasant result as in reaping a large profit. We all like to reap. The word carries the meaning of “obtaining” or “winning.” It seems like every week we hear someone say, “If I win the lottery, here’s what I will do with the money.” The success of many advertising ventures begins with a letter, or email to someone saying, “You are an instant winner!” One of the most successful Internet scams in history begins with a story of millions of dollars in a foreign bank account and how a person can get rich quick with very little effort. Reaping is the end result—the payoff. It is always pleasant and gratifying.

The problem with this line of thinking that it is nearly impossible to reap without first sowing and cultivating. Cultivating is just plain old hard work. There are always barriers, fences and obstacles. There is the time factor because it takes time to prepare the soil, buy the seed, plant it, water it and weed it. This is true whether we are planting seeds in the ground, or launching a new venture in business or ministry.

The word “cultivate” carries the connotation of heavy words like the following:

- Prepare
- Work
- Labor
- Plant
- Grow
- Plow
- Promote
- Improve
- Produce
- Develop
- Devote

What does all of this mean to the Christian church? It means that if we want to reap, we are going to have to cultivate. We are going to have to accept the task of understanding the unchurched and learn how to reach them. We will have to do what George Barna says in one of his latest books, *Grow Your Church from the Outside*. He says, “We take the first step toward truly preparing to reach the unchurched when we become models of faithfulness, obedience, holiness and righteousness.”

It has been well said that the church is the “local branch office” of God’s kingdom. It is the working agency of the kingdom. As such it exists for a two-fold purpose: (1) to demonstrate the kingdom and (2) to spread it through obedience to His commands. Our job as individual believers is to join the church in accomplishing these two goals. Think of some of the metaphors used by our Lord Jesus. He used images like salt, light, keys, water and fire. Each of these items has something in common: each figure represents some kind of penetration. The purpose of salt is to penetrate the meat and preserve it; the function of light is to penetrate the darkness; keys penetrate the lock, water penetrates the hard crust of the earth and fire continues to consume unless contained. These figures make the goal of the church very clear. In effect, they were used to lead up the last recorded words of Jesus which were words of commission. He gave us the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19,20 and His very last words before the ascension in Acts 1:8, “*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.*” There is no question about it—we are to spread the kingdom! But *how*?

We spread the kingdom by witness, by proclamation of the “Good News.” The Great Commission and evangelism are like handmaidens—they are inseparable. Evangelism involves preparing, training, equipping. It is not so much an event, but a process. This effort takes time and commitment—time to show that believers really care about non-believers (now we call them “pre-Christians!”). This process takes time because it involves building relationships with the unchurched

community. Since our current generation is so caught up in “experiential” and “hands on involvement” they will respond better to God’s love if they can see it in action. In the “Google world” of the 21<sup>st</sup> century it may not be a “Billy Graham” type of landscape with mass revivals in big stadiums. But revival is still a reality! It will show up in our postmodern world through individual believers when they connect with the commission to “go into all the world.” As one church leader recently said, “If we are going to turn the corner for revival in our present day, it is going to be through market place ministry.”

We may not see a lot of “reaping” at first because this process involves a lot of “cultivating.” In all probability it will happen because believers have built personal relationships with unbelievers. They will minister with a goal of “being” the Good News and sharing it verbally. It will be a slow but powerful process of people coming to Christ one by one—or as someone said, “Won by one.”

We want to proclaim a timeless message to a new generation: Jesus is the Way! We’ve heard that all of our lives, but think again about this amazing claim. Only Jesus really knows the Father and He says if we want to know God personally we have to come to HIM because He is the only way to God. Not Buddha, not Confucius, not the New Age, not the Mormons, not the Jehovah’s Witnesses—only through Jesus do we have the right relationship.

We have to start somewhere, but where? There are so many plans, formulas and programs. They are so many kinds of evangelism. Do we go with confrontational, relational, inquiry, evidential, prescriptive, testimonial or lifestyle evangelism? Where and when do we go? Who goes? What do we say? How do we begin? There are so many challenges associated with presenting the gospel to every person. There are gated communities, high-rise apartments, and wealthy suburbs that present a challenge that must be overcome. There are the millions who are trapped in the inner cities, mostly without hope, who must be reached with the gospel. We must not only present a clear gospel witness, but follow up with discipleship so that people understand what it means to live out their

faith. Not everyone will be saved, but we must make sure that every person is given the opportunity to accept Christ.

We need a plan! Experts say that you will only grow as big as your organizational plan allows. We need a launching point for all of this to happen. What if we just took the word CULTIVATE and broke it down in acrostic form with each letter becoming an action point. It would look something like this:

**C**onnect through caring and kindness

- Doing deeds of kindness to show people of the love of God.

**U**nderstand the culture(s)

- Learning where others are coming from in their thinking

**L**isten to their story

- Taking the time to listen to others to learn of them

**T**ell YOUR story

- Sharing your personal testimony

**I**ntercede for them

- Offering intercessory prayer for the needs of others

**V**alue relationships

- Cultivating relationships with unsaved people

**A**nswer their questions / ask your questions

- Knowing how to respond to common questions about the Bible and asking a few of your own

**T**ell HIS story

- Presenting a simple way for others to know and understand the Gospel

**E**xpect results

- Believing that God will work miracles through us

**C**onnect through Caring and Kindness

All effective evangelism and outreach begins with caring and kindness. We are here to help people along the journey, to point them in the right direction. But in the end it is what God can do for

them that really makes the difference. People will come to love God and accept Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit which draws them. John says this in his gospel account: “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” (John 6:44). The outcome of any evangelism encounter is not our responsibility, nor is it the result of our efforts only. The true evangelist is the Holy Spirit. It is our job to present the story in words as well as deeds of action and kindness.

Thus, evangelism becomes not only something we do, but also a way of life. In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, “Ye shall *be* witnesses unto me.” Notice the emphasis is on “being” rather than “doing.” Bible scholars tell us that the words of the Great Commission are not just “go ye” but the meaning of the verb “go” literally means “going” or “as you go into the world.” I believe the way others see us living out our Christian life can lead to effective evangelism opportunities. In his book “Witness is Withness” author David Augsburger says “You are being heard, not just your words.” Who we are and what we say really matters.

In his book *The Unchurched Next Door* author Thom Rainer says, “Eighty-two percent of the unchurched are at least ‘somewhat likely’ to attend church if they are invited.” Just think of it! If we care enough about people just to befriend them and invite them to church the majority of them would accept the invitation. Statistics from *Church Dynamics* indicate that about 160 million Americans say, “I do not have a born-again experience.” If Rainer’s research figures are anywhere near accurate, if believers just *invited* people to church 130 million unchurched people would be willing to come to church with us.

### **Connect through caring**

#### **With families:**

- Create a church-sponsored family-support center providing childcare, family social activities, and parent counseling
- Offer church-sponsored family retreats or trips for families in the near vicinity of the church.
- Provide Parents' Morning Out programs one morning during the week where the church members offer baby-sitting services.
- Offer marriage-maintenance classes to members of the congregation and to the community.

- Provide parenting programs to current parents and to young people - especially boys and young men - before they become parents.
- Create a family-to-family missions, or family clusters of six to ten families. Parents can adopt fellow parents as sisters and brothers; children can adopt each other as cousins.
- Reach out to parents and children beyond your neighborhoods by teaming up with suburban or inner-city congregations to sponsor programs for abused and runaway children, the homeless, and other families in need.
- Offer childcare and preschool programs of improved quality. Provide community leadership in creating public-private consortiums that open new child-care centers and create loan and investment funds for childcare.
- Offer mentoring and tutoring programs - especially for at-risk children facing stiffened promotion standards. Also, create community help centers for parents and children who need help with the college application process.
- Sponsor teen centers and after-school programs.
- Enlist older members of the congregation to share their talents and services with young parents and children.
- Host "alternative gift fairs" that focus on the needs of children in the wider community.

#### **In the community:**

- Celebrate the community with special worship services dedicated to a specific branch of government or civic affairs. Examples are "Law Enforcement Day" or "Government Officials Day." Invite members of these groups to the church and give special recognition to them for their work.
- Partner with businesses and financial institutions to offer free financial seminars at the church.
- Get involved in local community action programs such as clean-up campaigns, walk-a-thons etc.
- Open up the church to the community by offering the gymnasium and other church facilities.
- Sponsor local sports teams.
- Encourage individual members to join local service clubs.
- Host a "We love Our Local Businesses" church service, booth display and luncheon. Use a morning worship service to celebrate the local business owners in the church community. Introduce them in the service and allow them to set up a small display of their business in an appropriate room in the church. Provide a lunch for everyone and then allow church members to visit each display booth and learn about the services offered.
- Demonstrate a volunteer spirit. Get involved by becoming active in the P.T.A. Become a volunteer teachers' aid, help in a boys or girls club program or help with meals-on-wheels.
- Enlist Sunday school classes to participate in regular outreach ministry to the community. [Special note: for more ideas and some great video clips on ministry ideas go to [www.greatcommission.cc](http://www.greatcommission.cc)]

#### **At work:**

- Pray for your co-workers by name.
- Invite them out for lunch, dinner, coffee, sporting events, plays, etc. Do things together.

- Invite an individual or couple for dinner to provide an opportunity to relate personally.
- Remember special days of your business associates: birthdays, weddings, sickness, and births. Send cards or e-mails, make telephone calls, or drop by.
- Become active in your business athletic teams.
- Participate with associates in regular sporting events such as racquetball, tennis or golf.
- Seek out other Christian co-workers and form a small group to plan a function that would help reach an unsaved or unchurched employee.
- Use the principle of “high grace” and “low pressure.”

### **At home:**

- Host a block party. It could have a seasonal theme such as Halloween, or Christmas, or simply a birthday party. It would include food, games and sharing times.
- Have a dinner. It could be an invitation to the entire neighborhood (within reason allowing space) or a “progressive” dinner limited to a few select families.
- Have a picnic. It might be a backyard barbeque or some “outdoor” type food and setting such as a family campout.
- Sponsor a special neighborhood event such as a golf tournament, tennis match or softball game.
- Open your home for “coffee fellowships” or “tea time” for the ladies.
- Open your yard to neighborhood kids.
- Form a neighborhood food co-op.
- Prepare and personally deliver a nice meal to a new neighbor.
- Take note of special occasions in your neighborhood such as weddings, graduations or military honors.

The basic rule to remember is to get plugged into *people*, not plans, programs or words.

### **Connect through kindness**

Kindness evangelism is a simple, straightforward approach to sharing God’s love in simple, practical ways. It speaks to a person’s heart first rather than to his head (a gospel presentation).

Servant Evangelism is effective because it is

- quick
- high volume
- done in teams
- culture-current
- gives the Holy Spirit an open door to convict those we are leading to Christ
- allows shy people to launch into effective evangelism
- an approach families can do together
- easily picked up by new Christians
- simple
- friendly non-pushy, non-aggressive

- appeals to every segment of our cities
- emotionally safe
- giving-centered rather than asking-centered
- provides a safe place for ambitious people to expend their energy
- provides an open door for the miraculous—if God so moves
- big fun!

### **What are the long-term results of doing Kindness Evangelism?**

The church will become oriented toward action. The church is in continual need of redefining. It seems clear that the church in America is living in an age of great inwardness. In light of this inward focus, we need to ask the question, "Why does the church exist?" We certainly exist to worship God and to grow in wholeness and Christlikeness, but Jesus made it clear that we must also give of ourselves if we hope to keep growing. The Great Commission links God's special presence to the action of the church going into the world. God is with us in an immediate sense as we carry His life into the world.

In addition, the church will be redefined to the surrounding community. The church in general has taken a lot of blows over the last few years, especially in the wake of scandals involving sex and money. The world has falsely pictured the entire church as beggars always on the verge of going out of business. The perception of the unsaved is that "the church is just out for my money." The third picture the watching world has of the church is that of a monastery whose residents have only one message, "Come in and join us."

As we begin to do acts of kindness in the community, we will restate our identity: to show forgiveness, acceptance, and love from God. New definitions are slow to catch on, but hard work will get their attention. We become viable in the eyes of the world as we get beyond ourselves and serve our way into their hearts. In an age when the church has been judged by the world as being irrelevant and out of touch with people's very real needs and pains, we prove ourselves worthy of trust.

Another great benefit of an outreach through is that the community will be blessed with the presence of these deeds of kindness. When you begin to consider the long-term effects of this approach with teams doing many acts of kindness it causes the people in the community to take notice and opens the door for your church to reach out to them.

There is a simple equation for this type of outreach: Kindness evangelism = deeds of love + words of love + adequate time. Good deeds create “phone wires” for transmitting the spoken message. Believers should be the good news before they speak the good news

### **Kindness Ideas**

- Cut flowers from your garden and give them to someone
  - Send a card of appreciation to someone
  - Cook a meal for someone coming home from the hospital
  - Give a gift to the trash men
  - Clip coupons and give them away
  - Give food coupons to homeless people
  - Cook supper for a neighbor
  - Help a friend move
  - Sweep your neighbor’s walk/driveway
  - Learn to say “God Loves You” in Spanish
  - Help someone carry their groceries
  - Mow your neighbor’s lawn
  - Visit someone in the nursing home
  - Pick up trash in the park or public area
  - Rake your neighbor’s lawn
  - Pay for the person behind you in the McDonald’s drive-thru
  - Buy someone a coffee at Starbucks
  - Buy an extra bag of groceries for the food pantry
  - Listen to someone
  - Write a letter or make a phone call to someone you like (or don’t like!)
- There is no way that we could even begin to print a list as comprehensive as the one you will

find at: [www.servantevangelism.com](http://www.servantevangelism.com). [Special note: please take the time to visit this web site. It lists hundreds of projects! Further, we recommend the purchase of the book titled *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren. It is available on the Department of Laity Ministries website at: [www.lifebuilders.to](http://www.lifebuilders.to).

## Understand the Culture(s)

Here we refer to a mindset or way of thinking. There are three groups that we must deal with and have a basic understand of how they think. They are the postmoderns, unbelievers, and cultists.

**Postmoderns.** We have already mentioned some of their beliefs. Here are some other critical elements that we must consider as we bring the gospel message to them.

- **Connectivity**—no one is isolated
- **Interactivity**--the ADHD generation does not like to just sit
- **Spirituality**—the goal is to unite people of like faith
- **Closeness**—relationships matter about all
- **Truthfulness**—they are all about authenticity
- **Impact**—they want to change the world
- **Relativism**—there are no absolutes including the Bible
- **Imagination**—Postmoderns live in the future, and the future is now

With regard to relativism, a Barna poll indicated that 53% of evangelicals believe there is no such thing as absolute truth. On a CNBC interview Tim Russert asked Don Imus whether or not he was a Christian. "Sure, I believe Jesus is the Son of God," Imus responded. "So, you believe you are going to heaven?" Russert asked. "Nah," Imus explained. "I'm into that karma thing." Oprah Winfrey's personal guru Marianne Williamson puts it this way: "The word Christ is a psychological term. No religion has a monopoly on the truth. Christ refers to the common thread of divine love that is the core and essence of every human being . . . Focus on Christ means focus on the goodness and power that lie latent within us, in order to invoke them into realization and expression . . . 'I accept the Christ within,' means 'I accept the beauty within me as who I really am.'" It is easy to see where evangelicals stand in postmodern thought.

**Unbelievers.** As we share God’s message of love with the unchurched we must overcome some of their preconceptions of the Christian community. Nonbelievers don’t read the Bible to find out more about God—they watch Christians. Here’s what they think we are:

1) *Fanatics.* "They're always trying to recruit me," said one woman. "They don't socialize either."

2) *Money-driven.* Many non-Christians see money as the main goal of churches and TV evangelists. One man said about Christian television, "They're always pushing and pushing for money."

3) *Wet blankets.* "They don't know how to have fun--they miss out on so much," said one observer.

4) *Judgmental.* "It's supposed to be a religion of love, but they're not loving. They're too busy telling you that their way is right," said one man.

5) *Hypocrites.* An unchurched man said, "Their walk doesn't equal their talk."

**Cultists.** There are millions of people involved in cultist groups all over the world. They are caught up in a false doctrine. "What is a false doctrine?" asked a teacher. "False doctoring," answered a little boy in the class, "is when a doctor gives the wrong stuff to sick folks." That’s what is happening in the kingdom of the cults: the people are given wrong medicine. A cult is defined as “a group of people polarized around someone's interpretation of the Bible. It is characterized by major deviation from orthodox Christianity relative to the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, particularly the fact that God became man in Jesus Christ. The glaring difference between cults and mainline Christianity is that every non-Christian cultic system denies that Jesus Christ is God in human form. All cultic systems have some Bible truth, but have some perversion of historic Christian doctrine and theology. The doctrine of the cults in the area of the deity of Christ is

the key issue. [Special note: for detailed study order the “Witnessing to the Cults Ministry Kit” at [www.lifebuilders.to](http://www.lifebuilders.to).]

## Listen to Their Story

A great way to begin an evangelism encounter is by taking the time to listen to others to learn of them. Everybody has a story and they are eager to share it. Ultimately, there will be three stories involved in this process: their story, your story, and the central story—the story of Jesus. In the next section we will learn how to tell your story, make it fit into God’s greater story—the greatest story ever told.

Listening is sometime difficult for us because when we take the time to listen to others we move away from being the center of attention and invite someone else into that space. When a believer genuinely listens to a non-Christian with real concentration and expresses sincere care for their struggles and their pains, something very powerful happens: tensions dissolve, anxieties lessen and fears diminish. Listening is so simple to do and it's a gift with tremendous healing power that we can offer to others. Learn to hear people out. Let them talk about their past, share their experiences and express their views. People like to feel that someone is interested in what they have to say and appreciates what they have to contribute. Regrettably, taking time to really listen to what others are saying is very scarce in the Christian community.

Here are some tips on how to make a “listening encounter” a better experience.

- **Pay attention.** Focus on the person sharing the story. We must not only listen but hear what is being said. Listening is always other centered—not self-centered.
- **Show genuine interest.** Ask short clarifying questions like, “What brought you to this place in your life” or “How did you arrive at this conclusion.”
- **Be courteous.** Don’t keep interrupting the one talking.
- **Be patient.** Don’t ever look at your watch when someone is talking. Don’t try to end the conversation. Let them talk as long as needed.

- **Don't pre-judge.** Listen to what their heart is saying as well as their lips. Don't "speak down" to them. Do your best to communicate acceptance.

### **How To Be a Good Listener**

- Listen for expression of interests in the area of personal background, family, vocation hobbies, recreation or culture.
- Listen for expression of felt needs. Are they lonely, fearful, or emotionally wounded? Have they been hurt or offended?
- Listen for clues of their perception of Christian believers and churches.
- Listen for expression of previous or present religious experience, without pressure or condescension.
- Learn to ask inquiring questions that are "open-ended." Something like, "So, what brought you to our city?"

## **Tell Your Story**

Your story is your personal testimony. The interrelationship of His story and our story provides the substance of our personal witness. How His story relates to the story of the person to whom we are witnessing is crucial. Effective witnessing is my telling Jesus' story in a way which is relevant to the listener. Evangelism is all about telling your story – the story of God's generous hospitality in your own experiences. It is about sharing the incredible story that is yours and yours alone to share. It is the story of God's abundant love in your own corner of the world. Everybody has an exciting testimony!

Your unique experience in coming to Christ can be an effective tool in communicating the gospel to others. A carefully prepared testimony adapts well to either group situations or casual one-on-one conversation. It enables you to speak confidently, knowing that your words are well-chosen, biblically accurate, and appropriate to the situation.

There are three parts to a personal testimony: what your life was like before you received Christ, how you received Christ, and how your life is different as a result of receiving Christ. You should take the time to write it down and practice. There should be a very brief version prepared. We call this the "napkin version" because you should be able to write all the important parts on a

napkin in a restaurant while you are talking with an unbeliever! Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts and written words. Write as if you were sharing with just one person and your testimony will be more direct. Keep it short. Three minutes (about 1½ - 2 pages typewritten double-spaced) gives you enough time to explain your experience and include a clear presentation of the gospel. That length causes you to be very selective about what you communicate.

Here is a working outline for you to follow:

- Before you received Christ
- How you received Christ
- After you received Christ
- Introduction
- Conclusion

Arrange your events, ideas, and thoughts in a logical order of presentation. Develop these brief thoughts and ideas in sentences and then tie them together with other sentences in a concise, meaningful way. Start at a time in life which relates to your experience with Christ. Remember that this is not a biography from childhood. If you became a Christian as a child, but cannot remember making a specific decision to accept Christ, concentrate on describing how Christ has been in your life and the joy that you have received from serving Him. Use language that causes people to really tune into you. Something like: "Even though my life looked all together, I knew something was lacking."

Next share about when you first heard the message of Christ and your tell about your reaction to it. Tell in plain terms why you made the decision to trust Christ and specifically how you did it. Here in this "How" portion, attempt to present the basics of the gospel clearly and concisely. This may be the only opportunity for a person to know how to become a Christian.

Lastly, share what has happened to you since you became a believer. How has Jesus satisfied your needs that you stated earlier in your presentation? Share about all of the changes that have

occurred in your life as a result. Be practical in describing the changes in your life since you became a Christian. Describe how God is helping you learn how to trust Him more. Give examples of ways you have changed, or principles you have discovered in God's Word, and how you have applied them in your daily life.

Be sure to mention that you are not perfect now! You still have many problems every day, but Christ enables you to face them realistically and to solve them God's way. You are not perfect, but you are forgiven and progressing. Some practical areas that Christ has changed might include relationships, goals and priorities, good or bad habits, attitudes, the atmosphere in your home, etc.

### **The Conclusion**

Your conclusion should be a summary statement of one or two sentences referring back to your initial basic need and the fact that Christ now fills that need. An example would be, "I made this decision many years ago. It was the most important decision I have ever made. During this time I've had a growing sense of purpose, peace, and fulfillment based on my personal relationship with Jesus Christ, not based on my successes in life."

Remember that your goal is to explain what Christ has done in your life and to stimulate them to think about their own lives. Do not make your testimony a "preachimony. Leave people with a challenging thought. Keep in mind that they will generally comment on the last thing you say.

### **Some Do's and Don'ts**

- Do rehearse your testimony until you are able to give it naturally.
- Don't use "Evangelical English." Words or phrases familiar to a Christian may be strange or nonsensical to a non-Christian. Examples are "blood of the lamb," "on fire for God," "saved," "converted," "convicted," or "born again."
- Don't be long-winded. Have a clear point and direction to your words.
- Don't emphasize how bad you were. People might think, "What if he backslides in my living room?!"
- Do keep your story simple. Don't get bogged down with nonessential details. Some testimonies have more plots and main characters than a play!
- Don't speak critically or negatively about any other group or individual.
- Don't mention churches or denominations by name.

- Do be realistic. Share how Christ enables you to walk through your problems, rather than removing them from your life.

Remember that a personal testimony is dynamic in that it is constantly changing. From time to time you may want to change your theme, or update your specific details. Seasons of life change what we emphasize in our testimony. The goal is to communicate effectively with your audience, whether it is a college student or a roomful of faculty wives.

Finally, ask yourself the tough questions:

1. How does this testimony come across? Do any parts of it sound patronizing, preachy, cutesy, etc.?
2. Is the introduction attention-catching if speaking to a group and realistic if speaking to an individual?
3. Is my conclusion a good synopsis of my testimony or does it leave the listener hanging?
4. Does it avoid or explain religious terms that would not be understood by a non-Christian?
5. Do I say anything in my testimony that would be offensive to a particular person, group, or denomination?
6. How would my testimony make a non-Christian feel about Christianity?

## **I**ntercede for Them

Someone said, “You can do more than pray after you have prayed. But you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.” Every day, most of us find ourselves working besides people who have never heard a proper presentation of the gospel. Others have heard the gospel but are nowhere near to understanding or accepting it. There is a scriptural mandate to pray for them. In Psalm 2:8 God tells us, “Ask of Me, and I will give You The nations for Your inheritance, And the ends of the earth for Your possession.” Prayer is the key that opens the eyes of those that do not know the gospel of the love of Christ. Many Christians will work all their lives in secular jobs. This can be an advantage in the spiritual realm. Imagine what would happen if we all started praying consistently for our work colleagues that do not know the Lord. We need a fresh call from the throne of God to pray for the lost that are all around us.

## **Some Prayer Pointers**

1. **Praying for your lost friends and family.** When you pray for lost people, we recommend using the "Six Questions" Method of Prayer Evangelism. It is designed to help you intercede for the lost through a series of questions. These questions deal with the most basic issues of life. By praying for these things, the lost person can be prepared to hear and receive the gospel of Jesus Christ.

(1) **Why?:** Ask God to cause this person to wonder why he or she rejects Jesus Christ and His salvation. Call on Him to show this person the foolishness of rejecting Christ and of living life without Him.

(2) **What?:** Ask God to cause the person to start asking the question, "What is the purpose of my life?" Ask God to plant in his or her heart an urgency concerning this question.

(3) **When?:** Pray that God will grant this person an emptiness of heart. Ask God to show them that sin and selfishness will not satisfy. Call on God to cause this person to start asking the questions, "When will I really be free? When can I find true peace and hope?"

(4) **Whom?:** Pray that God will cause this person to doubt all the lies that he or she has concerning Christianity. Call on God to cause the person to ask, "Whom can I trust? In whom can I find hope?"

(5) **How?:** Plead that God will plant this question in the heart of the person, "How can I cope with my problems?" Pray that God will grant hopelessness in the heart of this person. Ask God to show this person that he or she cannot cope in his or her own power or strength. Pray that he or she will be motivated to look to God.

(6) **Where?:** Call on God to cause this person to contemplate the question, "Where will I go when I die?"

2. **Prayer Walking** - is defined as "praying on-site with insight". It may be as simple as an individual walking down his block and praying for each neighbor as he passes each house or as

complex as joining others to map out a whole city and systematically walking every street praying for the people in every dwelling place. It may also, in some settings, include driving.

**3. Neighborhood Houses of Prayer** - is a cluster of two or more believers meeting together on a regular basis to pray evangelistically for their neighbors. Houses of prayer may be located in homes, work places, schools, churches or other institutions.

**4. Praying for Divine Appointments** – begin each day with a simple prayer for the Lord to guide you to the right person. You never know who you will be connected to. Read this inspiring story:

Tony Campolo is a well-known Christian communicator who teaches sociology at Eastern College in St. Davids, Pennsylvania. One day he was invited to speak at a Pentecostal college near his home campus. When he arrived for the chapel service he was escorted to a back room where eight men laid their hands on him and began to pray. Campolo said he was very appreciative of the heart-felt prayers, but one guy spent a long time praying about something that had nothing to do with the chapel service. And the longer he prayed the more the other guys grew weary and leaned more heavily on Campolo. He prayed on and on about friend of his named Charlie. He said, “God, you know Charlie. He lives in that silver trailer down the road about a mile. You know the trailer, Lord, just down the road on the right hand side.” Campolo was thinking, “Knock it off, fella. What do you think God’s saying, “What’s that address again?” He went on, “Lord, Charlie told me this morning he’s decided to leave his wife and three kids. He’s going to walk out on his family. Lord, step in, do something, bring that family together again.” Campolo said the guy just kept praying earnestly for his friend Charlie, and kept reiterating the fact that he was leaving his wife and three kids and that he lived in a silver trailer, just down the road on the right hand side. Meanwhile the other guys kept leaning more heavily on Campolo’s head and he was just waiting for the lengthy prayer to end. Finally, it was over and he went in to preach for the chapel service. Afterwards, he got into his car and started heading home. Soon thereafter he saw a hitchhiker and pulled over to give him a ride. As

they pulled back onto the road, Campolo introduced himself and the hitchhiker said his name was Charlie. Campolo's heart began to race and he took the next exit off the turnpike. The passenger asked him why he was exiting and Campolo said, "Because you just left your wife and three children, right?" Charlie's eyes got real big and he said, "R-r-r-ight." He leaned closer to the door and never took his eyes off Campolo. Then things got real strange when Campolo drove him right to his silver trailer. In complete amazement Charlie asked, "How'd you know I live here?" Campolo replied, "God told me." He then ordered Charlie to get in that trailer and Charlie hurried to the door. His wife greeted him at the doorway and shouted, "You're back, you're back!" Charlie then began whispering in her ear and her eyes got bigger and bigger. Campolo then came up to the porch and said, "Sit down. I'm going to talk and the two of you are going to listen." It was the most captive audience he had ever addressed. That afternoon those two people were led to Jesus Christ and today Charlie is a preacher of the gospel.

Prayers aren't always answered that dramatically, but then again, they aren't always prayed that fervently!

### **V**alue relationships

The famous French painter, Paul Cezanne said, "The relations between objects are more important than the objects themselves." Pat Morley, a men's ministry leader, says, "Relationship is the task." Leonard Sweet, church futurist says, "We're a remote-controlled, security-fenced, internet-commuting, environmentally insulated society. We're increasingly cut off from genuine experiences and expressions of community. We're increasingly removed from real, dynamic relationships. Our high divorce rates, our fractured families, our corporate superstructures, and our let's-just-move mindset all evidence our failures at relationships."

These quotes show the value and need of establishing relationships with the unchurched. People come to Christ when we love them as Jesus does: without an agenda. We can't get to know

people simply “so that they’ll come to church,” but we have to truly love them for who they are.

Because of the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives, they will come to Jesus by getting to know us.

When God’s love comes down from above into our hearts and lives and then flows out from us to others there is a compelling draw for the seeker to turn to Christ.

The added bonus of doing evangelism this way is that when people make a decision for Christ they have a clear picture of what living life as a Christian looks like. In addition, because our evangelism effort is through relationships, and thus built on friendship, there is an automatic follow-up procedure in place.

### **Seven ways to build relationships with others:**

1) **By listening.** We’ve already talked about this—you must REALLY listen. No interrupting, no daydreaming, no planning your response—just listen.

2) **With laughter.** Clip cartoons, share articles and funny stories. Your gift will say, "I love to laugh with you."

3) **Use a written note.** It can be a simple "Thanks for the help" note or a full sonnet. A brief, handwritten note may be remembered for a lifetime, and may even change a life.

4) **Share a compliment.** A simple and sincere, "You look great today," "You did a super job" or "That was a wonderful meal" can make someone's day. We call these “pedestal words.”

5) **Do a favor.** Every day, go out of your way to do something kind for someone you love.

6) **Through sensitivity.** There are times when people want nothing better than to be left alone. Be sensitive to those times and give the gift of solitude to others.

7) **With a cheerful disposition.** The easiest way to feel good is to extend a kind word to someone. “Hello” and “Thank You” are truly beautiful words that people like to hear.

Often the deepest relationships can be developed during simplest activities. Have you ever wondered what attracted people to the church and ultimately to Christ? In his book *Evangelism That Works* George Barna indicates that 7% of the unchurched plan to attend church this year. He says that another 33% of the unchurched are open to attending church and the most likely thing to attract them is the invitation of a friend. We are told that 70% to 90% of all Christians came to know Christ as a result of the influence of a family member or a friend. Just the invitation from a Christian friend can make all the difference for the unchurched.

We have to start by building intentional relationships. This relational pathway isn't the only way to get the job done, and it might not always be the best way. However, in today's postmodern world, the relational bridge might be the only way you can reach certain people. As we connect to the unchurched we must keep our focus on a relationship with Christ. George Gallup, Jr., gives the results of a study showing that "Most young Americans believe it is 'very important' that life be meaningful and have a purpose. Yet a high percentage of these same people believe that 'most churches and synagogues today are not effective in helping people find meaning in life.'"

The best way to get around people's false stereotypes of Christianity is to build a personal trust, show by your example what it means to be "alive in Christ," and keep your focus on the person's relationship with God.

We also have to be what we seek to create. Expert speech communication theorist Albert Mehrabian has shown that, in a face-to-face setting.

- 55 percent of the meaning is communicated by the body,
- 38 percent by the tone of voice, and
- only 7 percent by the actual spoken words.

As communications expert Suzette Haden Elgin says, "When the words and the body language don't match, believe the body."

Local church congregations must also do their best to connect with those who visit the services. Lee Strobel in his book "From Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry and Mary," suggests that there are creative ways in which the church can attract those who are seeking to know more about God. He lists the five reasons he was attracted to church while he was investigating the claims of Christianity:

- 1) They played his music
- 2) The unexpected became expected
- 3) They connected with the TV generation

- 4) They did not use art to preach-they used creative arts to deal more with emotions than solutions
- 5) They made him laugh.

This is a great acrostic for making friends:

**F**orgiving

**R**eassuring

**I**nteresting

**E**mpathetic

**N**ice

**D**evoted

**S**incere

Rick Warren of the Saddleback Community Church says in a recent podcast, “We simply ask people, ‘What do you love to do most? Go do that with unbelievers.’ One example he uses is “If you like to shoot guns get five guys who are lost who don’t know the Lord and take them down to the shooting range and shoot guns.”

[Special note: Go to [www.greatcommission.cc](http://www.greatcommission.cc) for additional tips on building relationships including a document titled *From Pulpit to Pew: Seven Ways to Make the Connection With the “Now” Generation*.

### **A**nswer Their Questions / Ask Your Questions

People have a right to ask us spiritual questions. Sometime when non-believers ask questions we almost feel insulted. There are some legitimate questions that really demand an answer from the Christian community. Through the years we have identified ten questions that are commonly asked by sincere people.

Before we look at them, consider these two scriptures: 1 Peter 3:15 *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”*

Jude 3 *“Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.”*

In these passages Peter tell us that we can “make a defense of the gospel,” but warns us not to be “offensive.” He says to give our defense “with meekness and fear.” Jude tell us to “contend for the faith and the implied meaning is to do so without contention.

Here are the ten questions

1. **Is the Bible reliable?** *Answer:* God has preserved His Word. In the spring of 1947, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered. These manuscripts were copies of large portions of the Old Testament, a thousand years older than any other existing copies. Study of the scrolls has revealed that the Bible hasn’t changed in content down through the ages as many skeptics had surmised. These scrolls contained portions of every Old Testament book with the exception of one and a nearly perfect copy of Isaiah. There are at least 50 prophecies of Christ in the book of Isaiah. These scrolls predated the birth of Jesus.
2. **If God is a loving God, why do the innocent suffer and how could He send anyone to hell?** *Answer:* Because God is love. If God judged evil today, all unconverted men and women would perish under His wrath. Thank God that He is patiently waiting for them to turn to the Savior and be saved from His terrible wrath. He does not send us to hell. We send ourselves by not accepting the free gift of salvation the He offers us.
3. **Isn’t being a good person all that really matters?** *Answer:* To be good we must be perfect. Why? Because this is how our perfectly Holy (without any sin) God defines “good” (Matt.

- 5:48). Nobody is perfect. Only one small sin will keep us from being good. All who have sinned are under God's wrath (John 3:36), desperately needing the Savior's cleansing blood.
4. **Do all religions lead to God?** *Answer:* The truth is, all roads don't lead to Rome and all roads and all religions don't lead to God. It all depends on which direction you take. Jesus said this, "I am the way and the truth and the light. No one comes to the Father except through me." The Bible tells us that on the road to heaven, there are only two directions, toward Christ or away from Him. You can accept it or you can reject it, that's your choice.
  5. **Why Christianity? What about the other world religions?** *Answer:* In all major religions, the followers strive to rid themselves of sin through various practices. They may pray in a prescribed way, do various good works, perform rituals, deny themselves legitimate pleasures, follow dietary restrictions, even lie on beds of nails, etc. The uniqueness of Jesus is shown in His statement, "The Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins." No other religious leader has ever made this claim. Jesus Christ alone can wash away every sin anyone has ever committed, because of what He did on the cross. By paying the penalty for our sin, He can release us from the torture of guilt. We cannot do anything in the way of religious works to wash away our sins. Forgiveness is a free gift of God through Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 2:8,9).
  6. **Will people who have never heard the gospel go to hell?** *Answer:* No one will go to hell because they haven't heard of Jesus Christ. The heathen will go to hell for murder, rape, adultery, lust, theft, lying, blasphemy, idolatry, etc. A person goes to hell for breaking God's Laws. Sin is not failing to hear the gospel. Rather, "sin is the transgression of the Law" (1 John 3:4). We cannot presume on God's behalf. We know what we must do when we hear about Jesus Christ. To those who don't hear, we must let God deal with that issue.
  7. **What about the hypocrites?** *Answer:* We have some in the church and there is no better place for them to be in order to work out their problem. We may have had a few bad meals,

but that didn't stop us from eating because of them. I still spend my real, hard-earned money even though I know there is counterfeit money out there.

8. **What does it mean to “believe in Christ?”** *Answer:* The Greek meaning of “believe” is to “rely on, cling to, or trust in.” It is not a process of mentally acknowledging that Jesus did exist.
9. **How can I believe in something I cannot see?** *Answer:* God has made himself very clear through the creation of the universe. When you look at a building you see the work of a builder, when you see a painting you know there is a painter, so also when you see creation you know there is a creator. This is where faith comes in.
10. **Does my life really matter?** *Answer:* We are all part of God's grand design—we are not an accident. We were created by a loving God who loves us and designed us with intricate detail in our life. Bertram Russell, the atheist, once said, “Unless you assume the existence of God, then the purpose and meaning of life is irrelevant.” The truth is, if there is no God our life doesn't matter. But because there is a God, God had a specific purpose in mind when He created us and we do matter. Personal relationships to God and to other people are the most important thing in life. He wants you to have a relationship with Him because we are worth so much in God's eyes that he sent His Son to die for us.

### **Ask Your Questions**

Here are a few really good questions you can ask people at the right time in a conversation:

- Do you believe God is actively involved in our world?
- Do you think a person can know God personally?
- How would you describe your relationship with God?
- What do you hope is true about God?
- What do you think God expects from mankind?

## **T**ell HIS story

When Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel, He did not send them unprepared. They had spent three years observing Jesus own evangelism methods in dealing with a variety of people.

Christians today can still learn from the examples that are recorded for us in the Gospels. The heart of Jesus' ministry was to individuals. While the masses were intrigued by His teachings and miracles, His true followers came through a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, the Living Gospel. This is our goal as we seek an opportunity to tell His story. Personal evangelism is the art of sharing Jesus passionately with those whom you encounter for the first time and those whom you've already have established a relationship. Discipleship is the foundational truth of evangelism and it must involve a total commitment in the life of a believer to follow Jesus daily.

Personal evangelism is communicating the love of God in Christ to a dying world. In order to reach this postmodern, radical culture for Christ, we need to go where people are, and where others will not go. The problem is that so many do not go. The average Christian today challenges nobody. He can rub shoulders with the world, can meet with unconverted people and they're no different. Moody Bible Institute took a survey years ago and found that 95% of Evangelical believers have never led a soul to Christ. Yet the inflexible precept deeply woven into the Commission of the Master is that we, as believers, should make disciples of all men, "teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you."

It is essential to build bridges through relationships with the people for whom Jesus died for and came to save. People matter to God and relationships matter to people. Our Gospel message will have no effect on the lives of the people we seek to evangelize if we fail to love them and establish

genuine relationships with them. The true motivation for evangelism is a zeal for God, a love for others, a passion for God's glory and the salvation of all people. We are reminded that successful evangelism will be impossible if we fail to make ourselves available for the Spirit of God to use us as He wills.

Here, we offer a brief, simple plan of the Gospel (**God-Offers-Sinful-People-Eternal-Life**)

### **God has a plan**

- God knows you personally and He has a plan for your life.
- *For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. {12} Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. {13} And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:11-13)*

### **Relationship is personal**

- God offers his friendship as a free gift, but many people often reject this because they think it means "religion". Having a relationship with God is simple—just as any friendship should be.
- *How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! (Psalm 139:17)*

### **Jesus is the answer**

- For every problem or situation in your life, Jesus is the answer.
- *God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him. (1 John 4:9)*

### **Faith is the key**

- Faith is the key to God's treasures. Even the smallest faith can work wonders in your life. Everything is possible with faith.
- *Whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive ... If you have faith as (small as) a mustard seed, and you will say to this mountain, "Move from here to there," it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you (Matt. 21:22, 17:20).*

### **Action is necessary**

- You must accept Christ as Savior and turn from your sins.
- *Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.' (Jeremiah 33:3)*

You can ask Him to be your Savior and Lord by praying a prayer like this. "Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. Please forgive my sins and give me the gift of eternal life. I ask you in to my life and heart to be my Lord and Savior. I want to serve you always."

## Expect results

When we tell others about Jesus and how much He loves us that's like planting God's seeds in their hearts. When a farmer plants seed, he is confident that it will produce a harvest. Most of the time people don't get saved the very first time they hear about Jesus. Maybe the first time they heard about Jesus they were not sure they believed in Him. Then later someone else told them about Jesus again, but this time they believed. That doesn't mean that the part you did wasn't important. The Bible says, "*I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*" (1 Corinthians 3:6). It is the Holy Spirit that makes the seed grow into salvation. We need to remember that even if the people we talk to don't get saved right away, we have planted a seed. Sometimes we might even be watering a seed that someone else has planted. Don't get upset or feel bad because the people you talk to don't get saved right away, just keep planting and watering the seeds of God's kingdom and trust the Holy Spirit to make them grow.

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## **From Pulpit to Pew: Seven Ways to Make the Connection With the “Now” Generation**

It’s not hard to bridge the gap with twenty-somethings. These seven tips can serve as a helpful guide.

1. Be relational. Too many churches have emphasized formulas and programs rather than people. The answers are not found in postmodern pastors and conferences, books or even magazine cover stories. The way to reach this generation is to get out of your office and go build relationships with them in the real world. You’ll then begin to understand their lives and their hearts, and will know how to better reach them.

2. Be cross-generational. Who said 20-somethings wouldn’t like a church service just because it has more traditional praise and worship? And who said the older generations wouldn’t mind a little change in their services? By bringing the generations together, give-and-take is established that benefits everybody.

3. Get outside your comfort zone. “On the outside, lose the suit,” advises Jim Poorman, pastor of H20, a progressive church in Orlando, Florida. “Be ‘scary’ real in your teachings, give the 20-somethings more ownership, lengthen the guitar strap, turn up the amps, let them meet outside your church walls, name it what they want, invest financially in it, give them your life.”

4. Put on stage those you’re trying to reach. People only feel connected with something when they feel as though they are a part of it. If you want racial diversity in your church—which is very important to this audience—you’d better have racial diversity reflected in the church staff and on stage during services.

It's the same with age. If a 20-something looks up front and only sees middle-aged suits, they don't feel as though they belong there. Make a concerted effort to have a gender, race and age diversity reflected at the front of the church. Otherwise you'll end up with a congregation full of only stodgy middle-aged men.

5. Watch your words. One of the biggest things holding back the church from truly reaching current culture is the code language it uses. Some have referred to this as "Christianese" or "Evangelical English." Be aware of how someone from the "outside" would perceive the things you say. For example, someone who is not on the "in" with Christian lingo would ask, "Who in their right mind would wash themselves in the blood of the lamb?" What does it mean to be "On fire for God?" He or she wouldn't have the vaguest idea what you're talking about.

There are others ways to convey deep, substantive biblical truth—not watered down—by using words that normal, intelligent people would understand. When something comes up in Scripture that may sound strange, be aware that some people there don't know the meaning behind the phrase. Take a minute to explain it so everyone can understand and grow in their faith.

6. Listen. "Provide a safe, comfortable atmosphere for them to be real," Poorman says. "Do the best to connect them with others who have a similar past or are presently in the midst of some of the same struggles. Bottom line: Listen to them."

7. Above all, be yourself. "Be yourself, and don't sweat this stuff," says Don Chaffer of the Christian roots/rock group Waterdeep. "Find out what [type of] church you have if you really are yourself. If everybody leaves, you're probably not pastoring the church you thought you were."

Also put these video clips up on [www.greatcommission.cc](http://www.greatcommission.cc)