

## Evangelistic styles

The people I have encountered as the most effective disciple makers in our churches usually don't stick to a program, a presentation or a course but just love Jesus and love people. They have cultivated a relationship in the Lord that just flows out. I have a mature lady who helps run playgroup who is just naturally always testifying to the goodness of God and yet she doesn't even realize she is doing it. Another lady who has the means to live wherever she wants but chooses to live in our caravan park daily prays, "Who are we going to catch Lord, show me who to talk to" and she follows His small whispers and nudges with fantastic results. The more natural and authentic we are the more open others seem to be.

I am a fisherman, love fishing! When I think of my interactions with pre-Christians I can't help but feel I am part of a greater fishing process.

Jean Blasi wrote a book called "Prophetic Fishing" and she describes the adventure so well.

**Prophetic fishing springs from the realization that we do not have to work for God to bring others to the kingdom. Instead, we have to get out of the way and let God work through us. It involves getting into the flow of what God is doing and going with it.**

Every one of us has the ability to hear His voice and follow His prompts (however they come). Sometimes He urges us to do prophetic acts, to do something radically Christian. Sometimes He gives you a word for a stranger (or most commonly a seeker) which wakes them up to the reality of God. At other times it's simply a prod to phone someone, to say a one liner, to pray with someone. The thing is He wants all of us to go and to speak and that speaking will include the use of Spiritual gifts.

### Mark 16:15-17

*<sup>15</sup> Then he told them: Go and preach the good news to everyone in the world. <sup>16</sup> Anyone who believes me and is baptized will be saved. But anyone who refuses to believe me will be condemned. <sup>17</sup> Everyone who believes me will be able to do wonderful things. By using my name they will force out demons, and they will speak new languages.*

At the end of the day Prophetic fishing is the result of supernatural living; a life that is tuned into His presence and voice. We can all do it.

In the Bible there are other styles of evangelism. Probably we use most of these styles to some degree. It's worth giving yourself a score on each style 0-5 with 0 being hopeless and 5 being brilliant, and then get someone who knows you really well to give you a score as well. The Contagious Christianity Course (Willow Creek) gives the best overview of these primary styles.

#### A. Confrontational style

One passage that I often read in services is Acts 2 where the Apostle Peter stood before a great crowd of Jews and said, "you guys have rejected the prophets and now you have killed the Messiah. You have really stuffed up and you will be in trouble one day when you meet your Maker."

That's kind of confrontational.

People with this style of evangelism are often very direct, very bold, and very assertive.

They don't spend time on small talk; they just get straight to the point.

No matter how good you think you are, you are a sinner who one day will have to give an account for your life to a perfectly holy God and you won't measure up.

This is an effective way of doing evangelism. In Acts 2 three thousand people were baptized that day.

Personally I think very few of us are good at this style of evangelism and so giving out tracts, knocking on doors etc. is both terrifying and ineffective for us. But some are very good at this!

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 \_\_\_

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 \_\_\_

## **B Intellectual Style**

We may all like to think we have this style of evangelism but in reality only some do.

When Paul in Acts 17 met a group of philosophers in Athens this is the style of evangelism he used. Now if he had confronted these guys they probably would have shown him the door but he addressed them logically, intellectually and persuasively.

He said, “You guys have built a statue to an unknown God. I know who he is. His name is Jesus and this is how you can get to know Him.”

People with this style of evangelism are very logical, analytical and often inquisitive. When they are discussing faith with others you will hear them asking questions like; “What do you think?” Or “How do you know that?” or “What brought you to that conclusion?”

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 \_\_\_

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## **C Testimonial Style**

In John chapter 9 we read the account of a blind man who is given sight by Jesus, and he runs around the city telling people about Jesus. When he is confronted by the religious leaders who try to question him about Jesus and Jesus’ theology he says “All I know is that I used to be blind but now I can see.”

Every one of us has a story to tell about our conversion and stories to tell about our daily experiences of God, and we should tell those stories.

However some of us are going to find that a lot easier and more natural than others.

I think that those people with this evangelism style typically are good listeners, good story tellers and pretty good communicators.

These are people who can relate their life experiences to others in a way that is helpful to them.

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 \_\_\_

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 \_\_\_

## **D Interpersonal Style**

While I might wish I had the intellectual style of evangelism, in reality this one is me. I enjoy people. I enjoy making friends and getting to know people. Probably 95% of the people I have discipled over the years I have genuinely treated as a friend before and after they decided to follow the Lord.

In Luke 5 we read the story of Matthew the IRD guy. He’s just become a believer in who Jesus is and the

first thing he does is to throw a special party. He invites all his mates to dinner where they can mix and mingle with Jesus and His disciples. Matthew knows that as a relationship is established and trust grows so will the faith of his friends.

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## **E Serving Style**

While no one is ever won into the kingdom of God without words, many people feel motivated and gifted to serve and speak at the same time. There is a huge amount of evangelism that takes place every week through food banks, op shops, budgeting services, counselling services, home help etc.

Dorcas in Acts chapter 9 was a lady who loved to make clothes for the poor and helping the poor in whatever way she could. Many, many people came into the kingdom because she used humble service and words hand in hand. I guess she must have been like the late Mother Teresa, where her service and her words impacted many. In Dorcas' case her kingdom impact on the community was so great that when she died – they turned around and asked God to raise her from the dead because they needed her so much.

No one should ever think that serving replaces evangelism. When we serve others we still need to use words!

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 \_\_\_

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 \_\_\_

## **F Invitational style**

In John 4 we read of a woman at a well in Samaria. Jesus had just exercised a 'word of knowledge' over her life and she had begun to grasp who Jesus actually was. So she runs back into her village, knocks on all the doors and invites everyone in town to come and see this man who gets divine revelations from heaven.

When there is a church event or special meeting think;

- Who can I pick up?
- Who can I invite or phone?

People with this style feel comfortable asking others to come and see, come and hear, come and experience.

Statistics show that this is a very effective style of evangelism.

One survey showed that 1 in 4 pre-Christians would come to church if they were invited personally by a believing friend.

To invite someone to church is pretty effective. To pick them up and sit by them in church is very effective. The potential for kingdom growth through this style of evangelism is huge.

Are you wired for this style of evangelism?

Rate yourself 0 – 5 \_\_\_

Get a friend to rate you 0 – 5 \_\_\_

## Could child evangelism be God's priority mission field?

It's true that people new to an area or going through a crisis, or in life transition or in physical need are often open to the gospel. But there is one group in every country who are always most open: the children.

I suspect that around 50% of the churches in the west, especially Baptist churches were founded because the Holy Spirit said to a person or a group start a children's ministry in this place. Their purpose for starting, the prophetic foundation of many churches was to reach children for Jesus and now most churches have drifted away from those foundations.

I had the privilege of speaking at a special event of the Sunday School Union a few weeks ago on Matthew 18 and it struck me again, that God loves all people but God does have a priority mission field, and it's the children of each generation. Please note what this portion of the Bible says:

### **Matthew 18:1-14**

*About this time the disciples came to Jesus and asked him who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>2</sup> Jesus called a child over and had the child stand near him. <sup>3</sup> Then he said:*

*I promise you this. If you don't change and become like a child, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> But if you are as humble as this child, you are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>5</sup> **And when you welcome one of these children because of me, you welcome me.** <sup>6</sup> It will be terrible for people who cause **even one of my little followers** to sin. Those people would be better off thrown into the deepest part of the ocean with a heavy stone tied around their necks! <sup>7</sup> The world is in for trouble because of the way it causes people to sin. There will always be something to cause people to sin, but anyone who does this will be in for trouble.*

*<sup>8</sup> If your hand or foot causes you to sin, chop it off and throw it away! You would be better off to go into life crippled or lame than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into the fire that never goes out. <sup>9</sup> If your eye causes you to sin, poke it out and get rid of it. You would be better off to go into life with only one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fires of hell.*

### *The Lost Sheep*

*<sup>10-11</sup> Don't be cruel to any of **these little ones!** I promise you that **their angels are always with my Father in heaven.** <sup>12</sup> Let me ask you this. What would you do if you had a hundred sheep and one of them wandered off? Wouldn't you leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go look for the one that had wandered away? <sup>13</sup> I am sure that finding it would make you happier than having the ninety-nine that never wandered off. <sup>14</sup> That's how it is with your Father in heaven. **He doesn't want any of these little ones to be lost.***

There is a trend the world over where from about 12yrs of age onwards many children are opting out of the church and faith in Jesus. It seems, however, that where there are churches that help children hear God's voice and be baptized and be involved in ministry (i.e. children are treated as part of the church now) kids are very likely to stay with Jesus. It also seems that if a child has friendships with people of other generations, especially through their teenage years that also helps them stay with God and become lifelong followers of Jesus.

In Matthew 18 children are given as an example of how to humbly enter the kingdom and to grow in the kingdom, as examples of trust and sincerity. But there is more than that going on in this text. Jesus takes how we treat children personally. "When you welcome one of these little ones, you welcome Me."

Jesus says that if you cause one of these little ones to stumble in their faith you would be better off to have a 1.5 tonne grinding stone tied around your neck and be thrown into the ocean than to face the wrath of God.

Jesus encourages us that if we are sinning by causing any of these little ones to struggle in their faith; for example if they see us telling lies (maybe we say “Tell Uncle George when he calls – dad’s not home”), or yelling at their mum or dad or getting drunk or doubting the goodness of God, then we need to surgically remove those temptations from our lives immediately. Our sins need to be cut out severely. Our sinful behaviours have to be dealt with severely, even if it means losing friends or facing huge changes, because the consequences are horrendous.

Jesus has an interesting comment to make re angels. Angels are God’s messengers, they are there to help us. I find no biblical evidence that we all have an angel, but I know this, every child does, and the angels that are assigned to children have direct, priority access to the Father.

When Jesus talks about the lost sheep, in the context of this parable He is still talking about children.

**Jesus is the good shepherd; we all know that but look at this brief teaching and notice three things about our good shepherd.**

### **1. His love is unconditional.**

How do I know that? This lost sheep. This dumb sheep has wandered off and Jesus goes looking for him to draw him or her home. When He finds the sheep Jesus doesn’t go “you dumb as sheep, why did you wander off and be such an idiot, why didn’t you stay with the flock, hope you learned your lesson kiddo.” No, Jesus just loves the straying sheep. He says he will go after it. He loves that sheep unconditionally, whether that sheep is in church or out straying, or up to no good, Jesus loves that little sheep just as much. His love is unconditional. Now he would rather the sheep didn’t stray and do their own thing because that sheep will get hurt and will suffer life’s consequences but whether that sheep is in church or fighting with other kids at the mall; Jesus just loves that one unconditionally. Nothing that sheep could do could cause Jesus to love him or her any more!

### **2. We see that Jesus loves people individually.**

Have you ever thought, who am I; man God is so busy talking to Rick Warren and Billy Graham and Benny Hinn and ... I don’t feel that I am as important to God as any of them in fact I am not as important as most of the billions of Christians on the planet today. If you think that or our kids do, we are wrong. The love that God has for us is an individual, personal love. He leaves the 99 and searches for the 1. You, me, that child whom we haven’t seen at Sunday school for a few weeks. I really believe, though I can’t fully comprehend, that if you were the only person on this planet God would send the prophets, send Jesus to die for your salvation and fellowship personally.

### **3. Jesus’ love is emotional.**

When He finds the lost one, the wanderer, the struggler, the dumb sheep, he doesn’t yell, or lecture or kick up the backside, he celebrates.

He expresses extreme happiness. There is celebration. Jesus rejoices over the one lost sheep who has been found.

Jesus’ love for you and me and especially children is unconditional, it’s individual and it’s emotional.

Our churches prophetic foundation was to run a Sunday School and reach children and disciple children for Jesus. We can add to that foundation but it should always be our foundation. It’s something we must always do well.

It’s always a dream of mine to see our best and brightest teaching Sunday School and our mature Christian kids supporting Sunday School. All of my children helped other kids become Christians before they turned

12 years of age. That was such a life shaping joy for them. It's my dream that we have a consistency in Sunday School teachers and kids club teachers, for the kids' sake.

It's a far more effective thing to help children meet Jesus young and be led by Him and learn to love him all their lives, so that they can avoid many foolish mistakes and hurts and have really meaningful lives, than it is to focus on healing, and delivering, and de-confusing adults. If a child has far more than head knowledge but an experience of the Holy Spirit young and a habit of obeying His voice from a young age, that child will live a great life and make a big difference in this world.

I read of the true story of a Scottish pastor who about two hundred years ago resigned from ministry. His reason? In two years of pastoring only one person had come to Jesus, a little boy by the name of Bobby Moffat. And so he resigned. The history books said of Robert Moffat, that this boy, once he became a man and a missionary to Africa, that his ministry was so effective that his mission work was seen as the number one reason the African continent opened up to the gospel. Just one little boy came to faith. But God used that little boy to change a continent for Jesus. It's right to wonder continually, is there a little Bobby Moffat in our Sunday School now? Is there a little Bobby Moffat in our community that we are going to invite to Sunday School this year?

Jesus loves our kids that are saved and the kids in our community who will be saved soon. I believe that children's ministry is the strategic priority.

I believe that it is time that we make the main thing the main thing in mission again. There is a generation growing up in Aotearoa (in every country) that needs the Lord, their lives are not broken or messed up (yet), they are like an open book ready to be written.

The reason that God started many churches was to reach children for Jesus. I think we need to get back to our prophetic foundations again and make our children's ministry our priority and encourage our most skilled adults and strongest Christian children and young people to serve there.

God loves all people, of that we are all sure. But I am also convinced that children have a special priority in the heart of God and their discipleship is a key strategy to changing a nation for Jesus.

### **What About Community Ministries?**

**Ask yourself now, or your group. In the community ministries in your church, how many people have come to faith in the last three months?**

**How many hours of volunteer and paid service were put into those ministries?**

Community ministry is a good thing, a biblical thing, and we clearly need to love the poor, care for the widow, mentor the orphan/fatherless etc. No debate there, but in New Zealand the energy that was once put into children's evangelism and youth evangelism is now to a large extent refocused onto the more financially profitable arena of community ministries. Huge hours are being poured into this and yet very few people become followers of Jesus Christ. It seems to me that if we take a grant from a government body or a trust many community service providers (churches) feel it would not be right to talk about Jesus or to offer a holistic ministry to the community (unless they ask for it). I want to challenge that. We don't stop being Christians when we get a grant from any government organization or a trust. The services we offer are usually of a very professional and skilled level, no one is getting short-changed if we say a few things about Jesus or the church except the person who doesn't yet know Jesus.

**Ask yourself. If getting a grant for that new van or that community service means we cannot talk about Jesus,**

## does God want us to take the grant?

I read an old preacher's sermon some time ago with horror because in it he said that to provide community services without the gospel was to make people comfortable before they go to hell. I was shocked, maybe a little offended, but when I walked away I couldn't help reflecting that in fact he was right. There are lots of loving community groups that give out a food parcel or put on a community dinner or provide a parenting course or childcare etc. and they do it very well. But we are Christians.

We can offer them our professional support skills and .... Jesus. Have we become ashamed of the gospel? Have we forgotten in this politically correct generation that people need the Lord?

I do budgets for folk and deliver them furniture and teach parenting classes and thoroughly enjoy doing marriage counselling etc. but no matter what hat I am wearing, I have been bought with a price, I am His and my love for the Lord and my love for people compels me to say something.

Over the years I have supervised a lot of community workers doing PD. A huge percentage become believers because I mentioned Jesus early to them and I just supported the work of the Spirit as He did the rest.

Recently I baptized a man from a pretty rugged background. Before he went into the water I asked him to tell me his story. Some of it I knew, I had seen him around for years. In recent months I had looked him in the eyes, lovingly addressed him by name and spoken prophetically over Him that I knew God was drawing him into His family and that he would be welcome in our family.

His story went something like this. For five years he had been coming to our church for food parcels. He was struck whenever he did that he could feel the presence of God and when he left he would go away thinking about God. The people that gave him the parcels were very respectful and overtly Christian.

Three weeks earlier while he was doing a budget with one of our budget advisors I was about to baptize a lady in the auditorium (She had just come to faith. There had been plenty of words but the night before she got a personal revelation from God). As he watched this lady get baptized (something he had not seen before) God began to work in his heart convicting him strongly of his need to die to self and be raised to live for Jesus (The Holy Spirit began to turn up the heat). A week later he was getting a food parcel again when our chaplain asked him when he was going to commit his life to Jesus and be baptized (He had never been to our church before and wasn't a church goer). He walked away seemingly unmoved then returned an hour later to say to our chaplain, that he needed to be baptized as soon as possible.

I said to him just before he was baptized that if he committed his life to Jesus he couldn't go back to the old sins and not even sleep with his fiancé, and that the church would put on a wedding for him free of charge if that is what he wanted. This man has got a few challenges ahead of him.

We will probably have a couple of years of very deliberate follow up to do, but he came to Jesus through community ministries as many others have.

When people come to the church for community services they expect to hear about God; after all they have come to a church. Don't be shy.

In a recent survey in NZ of pre-Christian Mainly Music mums they were asked: "When you came to Mainly music did you expect to hear about God?" Answer – almost unanimously, "yes". Next question; "Did you expect people to take you aside and explain how to be a Christian?" Answer almost unanimously "yes". Third question; "Did those two things happen?" Answer almost unanimously – "no". How terribly sad. They were open, would not have been offended but we were too careful and they missed out on meeting the Lord. Friends, whatever your community service; invite them to special events, share your testimony, and put tracts and information sheets in food parcels. Have DVDs of testimonies and of gospel presentations at hand.

Have your follow up material at hand whether you are in an op shop, food bank, budget service, child care etc. If you put on a community dinner, don't bother unless you give a devotion or testimony as well.

Jesus is the answer to their greatest needs, and they need you and me to be bold and respectful and to start throwing seed (spoken words of faith). Jesus would never feed the poor or heal the sick without pointing to the kingdom of God. You and I desire to be like Him. I was born and raised on the mission field in Papua New Guinea. It was a great childhood and I have godly parents. I understand how cross culturally it can take 4-5 years on the mission field before you see your first salvation but in New Zealand I suggest that if you don't see people start to come to church or church events within three months you are far too shy and need to man up a bit more for Jesus.

Within the next couple of weeks I believe I am going to baptize a man who used to do community service for me (PD). He has even cleaned out the baptismal pool before, so he has been in there so to speak. When I shared the gospel with him he seemed disinterested. Now, some six months later, a lady in our church spoke prophetically over him and he is so close to joining the team. He would say it was those conversations we had (where I appeared to have been rejected) that God used to bring him to a place of wanting to follow Jesus for the rest of His life.

Is it painful to have someone reject you or show no interest? It's disappointing, but it doesn't hurt. I wasn't concerned for my reputation or popularity anyway – it's about Jesus. I bear no scars from that earlier rejection but soon I will enjoy another brother on His team.

**Go for it. Discuss with your community ministries teams how you can be more deliberate and prepared to speak to the folk you are serving about Jesus. They expect you to, and Jesus longs for you to!**

**List each community ministry and brainstorm how you can be more strategic, honest and bold for the kingdom.**

One final and very disturbing thought re community ministries. Personally when I read of a nation's history and how Christians brought in the first schools, and medical services equality for women and the first orphanages etc I am inspired and proud of those that have boldly gone before us.

But ask yourself this question and then go through your Bible for the answer.

When the early church took up an offering for the poor in Jerusalem or deacons were set aside to look after widows and orphans, where possessions are shared with the poor;

**Was that community service to believers or unbelievers?**

To my great surprise it appears that virtually all community service was to believers, which in turn makes sense of the scriptures.

### **John 13:34-35**

*"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*

### **Galatians 6:10**

*Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.*

I have no doubt that community ministries are a good thing but, have we gone overboard? Has God initiated the community ministries in our church or did we just start them to get the grants or to look like a big organisation?



I say if it is not bearing tangible fruit which can be seen at least every three months then make it a kingdom ministry with evangelistic effectiveness or let the world do it!

## **Tools That Can Help You Be Prepared To Talk About Jesus In Any Situation**

### **A. 5 Fantastic Questions**

Last year we watched the DVD course by William Fay and Ralph Hodge “Share Jesus without fear”

This four week course is full of practical ideas and perspectives on evangelism that help take fear out of the picture.

The thing that struck me most about this course was Mr Fay’s 5 fantastic questions.

Though this is not my natural way of talking about Jesus, I have written these questions in the front of my pocket bible as a great resource/memory jogger for later. When you ask these questions of the person you are speaking to, Mr Fay suggests that you just listen and acknowledge what they are saying ... ah ah...

Here they are:

1. Do you have any kind of spiritual belief?
2. To you, who is Jesus?
3. Do you believe that there is a heaven and a hell?
4. If you died today would you go to heaven or hell? Why would he let you in?
5. If what you believe is not true would you want to know?

Asking the five questions is really simple and requires only that you listen. If they don’t know Jesus but answer question 5 that they would like to know the truth if they are wrong, you can launch in naturally and share the gospel and your testimony in a natural way.