

THE BARNABAS PAPERS

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“And that’s the thing about trellis work: it tends to take over from vine work. Perhaps it’s because trellis work is easier and less personally threatening. Vine work is personal and requires much prayer. It requires us to depend on God, and to open our mouths and speak God’s word in some way to another person. By nature (by sinful nature, that is) we shy away from this.”

The quote above is from a book called *The Trellis and the Vine*, by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne. In the first chapter, where we find these words, they paint the picture of a garden trellis that has a great jasmine vine growing on it. The vine grows because it has the trellis to give support. The link to church work is that we need both the vine and the structure of the trellis in our churches. To break down this point even more the book tells us that we can get so focused on doing the work in the church (For example: committees, structures, programs activities, fundraisers, management, finances, infrastructure, organization, governance, etc.) and neglect the tending to the vine which is the planting of the Gospel seed, the growing of disciples, the shepherding of the flock; the people.

Already, this book has identified that my work has not been dedicated to evangelism and the shepherding of the flock God has entrusted to me. Evangelism is life on life. Evangelism cannot just be a learned process or a memorized presentation. It has to be out of love and devotion. It must come from a life dedicated to God’s Word and Work. Matthew 28 is not just an account of Jesus talking to his disciples, but a command to do what he is saying.

I have now found myself convicted of doing almost all “trellis” work and not much “vine” work over the past few years. I enjoy working on the structure. But the reality is that this type of work; office work, structure work, has not produced the results that are the driving force for what we do as a collection of churches. We are, as our motto says, “Churches working together to advance the Kingdom of God”.

I love our association and I love it so much that I am not willing to let myself get carried away again in this area. It has been said that a man who holds the same position in associational work as I do, is called a *pastor to pastors*. I need to become this for GCBA. I need to love my pastors. I need to love our churches. I need to love our counties. I need to love the vine.

So, let me ask you this question; “Do you love the vine that God has given you?”

This month we are honing in on the theme of evangelism. I hope that the following articles will encourage you to tend to the vine of your church, ministry, or community. That they will encourage you to do the hard work of opening our mouths and speaking God’s word. Join with me in not shying away from this command of God.

Preston

What does An Evangelistic Church Do?

What Are The Top Evangelistic Churches Doing That Mine Is Not?

By Joel Sutherland, December 10, 2015

<https://www.namb.net/your-church-on-mission-blog/what-are-the-top-evangelistic-churches-doing-that-mine-is-not>



Your Church on Mission Overview

“A church cannot develop an excellent evangelism strategy without planning far in advance.”
 –Nathan Lorick in Dying to Grow

The evangelism decline among Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) churches has been well documented. When you look at the numbers as a whole you see a disturbing trend. In 2013 Southern Baptists baptized approximately 310,000 people, which represents the lowest number since 1948. It takes about 50 Southern Baptists to reach one person for Christ and see them through the baptistery.

The median baptisms for a SBC church is three. That’s down from five in 2005.

In 2013 about 26 percent of our SBC churches were growing and the rest were plateaued or declining. That gives us a good picture of the situation. We are headed in the wrong direction in almost every metric possible. However, not all of our churches are dying. Twenty-six percent are growing. If you take a statistical snapshot of the most evangelistic churches in every state and in 3 size categories (1-249, 250-499, 500+), you see a different picture.

Notice the difference between these and the normative church with three baptisms:

Average Baptisms among Top Evangelistic Churches in the South	114
Average Baptisms among Top Evangelistic Churches in the Northeast	31
Average Baptisms among Top Evangelistic Churches in the Midwest	37
Average Baptisms among Top Evangelistic Churches in the West	52

That is a big difference. There is an enormous gap between the normative church and the top evangelistic churches.

Continued on page 16

Pastoral Ministry

I was invited to attend The Midwest Leadership Summit – Advance 2018, on January 23-25. This was put together as a collaboration from 10 different Baptist state conventions and the North American Mission Board. While I was there I was able to take six different sessions, from over 100 to choose from. The conference was paid for mainly by the Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program is money that we send each month to the Missouri Baptist Convention that funds ministries here in Missouri, and a percentage is then sent to the Southern Baptist Convention. I really picked up a lot of good information at this event. I hope to find ways to implement this information in our church, but not all at once. The sessions I went to focused mainly on becoming more missional as a congregation and becoming more evangelistic as a congregation. I attended one session on intergenerational worship.

One important thing I picked up is that as a church we should always be about God's mission. Why? "If God is a missionary God, then the church is a sent missionary people." (Brad Brisco NAMB) What is God's mission? This is the grand story of scripture; creation, fall, redemption, restoration. God's mission is to redeem a fallen people and restore them to the perfect way they were created.

With that in mind we need to discover what is God doing and discern how God wants us to participate. God has given our church unique abilities and resources to use on this mission. So, whatever the size of your church, God has given you a mission. God has called us to this purpose, to reach people from our community who are fallen (all of us before we were redeemed by Jesus) and help them know Jesus, through faith and repentance, so they can be restored to a relationship with God. Everybody needs Jesus to be right with God! Let's work towards reaching our communities with the Good News of Jesus! The church must see itself as a sent missionary people.

"God's church doesn't have a mission in the world, God's mission in the world has a church" (Brad Brisco)

Unfortunately, most of our churches baptized 2 or less people last year. What we are doing to reach our communities for Christ clearly isn't working very well. Albert Einstein once said, "We are perfectly designed to achieve what we are achieving." Alan Hirsch said, "What got us here will not get us where we need to be." One way to adapt in our ever-changing culture is to change our perspective. Years ago, many people were professing Christians and lived by that moral standard. Today, not so much. We need to understand that North America is a vast mission field that knows less of Jesus every day. When we understand that our culture has shifted, we know that we cannot do things the same way we did years ago and expect to reach people for Christ.

Besides understanding that the church is a sent missionary people. We also need to see ourselves as an active, Godly presence in our communities. Brisco said that John 1:14 means that Jesus became flesh and blood and moved into the neighborhood. We need to be involved in our neighborhoods. He said that God told the Israelites in Jeremiah 29:4-7, *"This is what the Lord of Heaven's Armies, the God of Israel, says to all the captives he has exiled to Babylon from Jerusalem: "Build homes, and plan to stay. Plant gardens and eat the food they produce. Marry and have children. Then find spouses for them so that you may have many grandchildren. Multiply! Do not dwindle away! And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for its welfare will determine your welfare"'"*

We need to embed ourselves in the local communities where our churches are.

Lastly we need to be participants in the "Mission of God" He went on to say that "God's church doesn't have a mission in the world, God's mission in the world has a church" (Brad Brisco) This is where we need to discover what God is doing and discern how we can be a part. Church we need to see our communities as God sees them, lost and needing of a Savior. We need to roll up our sleeves and be intentional about accomplishing God's mission!

Article was written by Bryce Kristofferson, pastor of Centennial Baptist Church in Mexico, Mo.

Preaching Ministry

The Partnership of Evangelism and Preaching

By Chris Hefner

<http://www.lifeway.com/pastors/2014/09/24/the-partnership-of-evangelism-and-preaching/>

It is fascinating to me how the lessons from history apply in contemporary settings.

For example, the religious and philosophical culture of the first century was intensely pluralistic. Many religions were accepted. Many gods worshiped. And oftentimes people “practiced” more than one religion through rituals and rites. When Paul entered Athens in Acts 17, he encountered a number of religions, philosophies, and ideas. In some ways, Paul’s experience in Athens echoes contemporary Western society where religious pluralism is prevalent. I realize that pluralism in the first century was practical in nature while contemporary pluralism is more philosophical. In the first century, the practice of religion was more important than the beliefs, philosophies or truths that undergirded it.

Things have certainly shifted. But the reality is that the religious culture faced by Christianity’s first evangelists is not that dissimilar from the religious culture of today.

As such, we should learn some lessons from Paul’s evangelistic methods as well as his preaching themes from Acts 17:16-32.

While the truth of Scripture grounds our evangelism, culture’s idolatry and false worship should impassion our witness. Paul was provoked by the idol worship he witnessed in Athens, and his provocation spurred him to evangelize in the city. The current religious culture should motivate us to evangelize those who have been blinded by the enemy to worship false gods.

Our initial goal in evangelism is not to offend by our manner and tone (though the message of the cross does offend), but to gain a hearing for the gospel. In the story, Paul was invited to preach to the crowds at the Areopagus. But he did not begin by condemning their false worship. Rather, he complimented their religiosity while refuting their errors with kindness. In other words, Paul was not afraid to speak the truth, but he did so in love and gentleness. Speaking the truth does not mean we have to be mad, angry, or volatile in our tone when evangelizing or preaching. We should speak the truth in love, especially toward lost people.

When evangelizing in today’s pluralistic climate, we should seek to understand the religious viewpoints that surround us. Yes, preaching the gospel is enough to convict sinners. Paul preached the gospel here and in many other places. But if you explore his sermon, he quoted from non-Christian philosophers and was well acquainted with the religious milieu of the day. In other words, what he understood about the religious and philosophical opinions of the Athenians shaped his gospel preaching. He contextualized his message so his hearers would respond.

Successful evangelism in a hostile culture must first get the hearer on the same page as the communicator. Paul’s hearers on that day in Athens were not on the same page with regard to God, human nature, and salvation. They were engrained with false religious views and philosophies. Sometimes, I think contemporary evangelism is hindered because we talk past one another. We say “God” and what someone else hears is not the one true “God” of the Bible, but a god of their own making, a false god from another religion, or an incorrect view of the biblical God. Paul addressed the broad theological concepts of God, creation, idolatry, Christ and the resurrection, and repentance in order to help his hearers understand his message.

Because pre-evangelism and evangelism requires communication of such broad aspects of the gospel, preaching is a natural and effective means of evangelism. In this example from Acts 17, some were converted on that day, some outright rejected Paul’s message, but others said, “We will hear you again about this.” Preaching is not only the prescribed means by which God communicates the gospel to people (1 Corinthians 1:21-25), but it is also the most effective place to teach the grand concepts that form the framework for the gospel: God in his love and holiness, creation, humanity, sin, redemption, Christ in his incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection, repentance and faith.

I’m all for evangelism privately and publicly. I believe we should have consistent personal conversations with lost people.

Evangelism is a personal responsibility. But it is appropriate and utterly beneficial to invite lost people to church to hear the preaching of the Bible.

If the preaching in our churches is aimed at communicating these grand concepts that form the framework for the gospel clearly and we have done our part to invite lost people by creating an environment where they are welcome, we will reap the benefits of seeing people come to faith in Christ in our churches.

The biblical example of preaching is that it partners with evangelism rather nicely.

Discipleship / Sunday School Ministry

Where We Began

I was born in 1972. Some of you are thinking, "Wow, that's a long time ago!" Some of you are thinking, "What a young man you are!" While the first group is not wrong, I'm much more appreciative of the second group. Of course some of you are right around me in age so you are wondering what the big deal is. Here's why that matters for this month's topic. In my lifetime, church training or discipleship training has all but died as a program in our churches. Before, you go cheering one way or the other, there are good (a revival of personal discipleship now) and bad (many churches neglecting discipleship altogether) consequences of this phenomenon. There is no question, however, that it has put a unique strain on Sunday School classes which are the primary group ministry in most of our churches.

If you can remember back to the 50s and 60s, you remember when Sunday School was a "front door" to your church. That is, people came to Sunday School before they came to worship service when attending for the first time. If you are much younger than me, I'm sure you think I'm making this up but it's true! Southern Baptists used to go door-to-door in their neighborhoods asking people to be enrolled in Sunday School. Times have certainly changed.

...it is very difficult to simultaneously go deep into the nuances of the scripture and keep lessons accessible for new folks each week.

The strain on Sunday School comes from the fact that many churches started, intentionally or accidentally, combining discipleship and evangelism in their Sunday School ministry. While the two are not completely separable (another topic for another day), it is very difficult to simultaneously go deep into the nuances of the scripture and keep lessons accessible for new folks each week. From a different angle, if you want to remain open to new students joining your class each week, a 12-week curriculum that builds on the content from previous weeks like Experiencing God or a Beth Moore study is not going to fit. One priority will have to be the emphasis with the other becoming secondary. Which to choose?

Every church and community is different but I'd like you to consider returning Sunday School to its original purpose: evangelism and assimilation. All the complaints you hear, or make, about the shallowness of the lessons in LifeWay curriculum is because that's the goal. Not to be shallow, of course, but to remain accessible for someone new to your group and/or new to the faith. You might feel foolish sharing the gospel to a room full of Christians, but, if your class knows that's going to happen every week, they know a friend they invite will definitely hear the gospel no matter when they show up. The reminder won't hurt those experienced Christians either.

I'm a huge proponent of discipleship. In fact, I think it's so important that it should have its own time. Moreover, it should be clear to your Sunday School members that there's another step in the process past attending worship and Sunday School but that's yet another topic for another article. For now, pray about how your group could be intentional about inviting new folks and making sure they feel welcome when they get there.

Article was written by LP Cook III, Associate Pastor at Union Hill Baptist Church in Holts Summit, Mo.

Worship Ministry

Facing the Music, Finding the Mission

Music Matters: An article by The Getty Team June 29, 2016

<https://www.gettymusic.com/articlesandinterviews/2016/6/29/facing-the-music-finding-the-mission>

There was something unfinished causing a splinter in my mind.

I began sensing it last year after I finished rewriting the song “Facing a Task Unfinished,” but it came to a head in January. Over the last five years, we’ve started a new family and enjoyed incredible opportunities in music we never could’ve dreamed of—and, of course, don’t deserve. All of this came out of writing music for the church.

Even so, something was just not right.

Then it arrived: the torturous day when I finally admitted to myself that little by little, we’d been moving away from what I’d set out to do at my core—write hymns. Time and focus was needed to feed new thoughts, collaborations, and sounds. It was time to face the music. Little did I know, I was about to find so much more.

As the clouds broke, our focus shifted and sharpened, so we began putting pen and melody to a new project, Facing a Task Unfinished. In the previous five years we’d only managed to write a couple of songs each year we were really pleased with, in contrast to earlier years of writing. But in the first three months of this year, we’d written eight new songs—a testament to the new perspective.

In coming back to this calling, I began to freshly realize four things that reinvigorated our cause.

1. Singing Needs Mission

There have never been more songs written than in the last generation. And yet never have we seen such a lack of passion in songs for mission. Few worship songs speak about sharing our faith in a focused way. As we’ve engaged with this project and with mission organizations, we’ve heard a desperate cry for more songs about mission.

In the last decade, Christianity has seemingly become more privatized. Christians are almost apologetic about their faith; sadly, our songs have followed suit. We no longer sing “We’ve a Story to Tell To the Nations” or “Go Forth and Tell, Oh Church of God, Awake!” Perhaps there’s a perception of offense, militant overtones, arrogance, or any number of other excuses.

But if we’re not singing about these things, there’s a good chance we’re not thinking about them. We’re not as emotionally connected to them as we could be. We’re less likely to discuss them, less likely to pray about them. Or weep for them.

Why? Because how we sing affects how we live. Singing is a key intellectual foundation to how we think, feel, and pray. And thus it shapes the moment-by-moment decisions we make that forge our character, our witness, our legacy, and ultimately, all for which we’ll one day stand before God to give account.

When I first sang “Facing a Task Unfinished,” I was deeply involved in student evangelism. Then, when I reconnected with the song after many years, I found it uncomfortable to sing. It reminded me of time in my life when I was more excited to share my faith. That was a hard pill to swallow.

Our songs and our musicians must be missional. So many church choirs and music departments have died (or have done irreparable damage) because they’ve become more excited about the music than the mission. This doesn’t have to be. Our music should fire us to mission.

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Worship Ministry - Continued

2. Mission Needs Singing

Kristyn and I lived in the Swiss Alps during our first year of marriage, during which we were asked to lead singing at an event for the first time. The invitation came from MedAir, an organization of gifted professional pilots who travel to the most war-torn regions of the world, lending their help to those in the most dire of circumstances. They witness humanity at its worst—life at its most disposable point.

The retreat was intended to be a time of rest and refreshment for these heroes in what had been a particularly difficult year. So naively, I asked if they wanted us to do something fun, maybe even a concert. They said no. What they really wanted was to spend their time studying Scripture and singing hymns. These deep believers longed to sing from their deepest recesses.

One of the ways we can become more missional is by passionately singing together. Last year, one of the guys in our office showed us some videos of singing among Chinese believers. The passion of these secret churches is extraordinary.

From leading our families in our homes to planting churches, we need to be building singing communities that will, in turn, fire us to mission.

3. Global Music Revitalizes My Artistic Soul

Artists paint with the colors they're given. And writing for the church is a curious thing since there are so many options. CCLI alone has more than 300,000 songs from which to choose. Thus you aim to write melodies and lyrics that are unique but also simple enough for people to grasp and sing. It's a distinctive niche; and after a while, what you write can begin to sound the same. I used to struggle with that challenge a lot.

The Facing a Task Unfinished project opened my ears and voice to new sounds from a global perspective. I felt like a painter witnessing something entirely new, as if I'd always been painting the coast of Ireland and was suddenly exposed to the breathtaking contours of the Grand Canyon.

This album is painted with a global palate. We worked with legendary jazz bassist John Patitucci, who has been involved at the Center for Global Music in Berkeley and has made nine albums with Chick Corea. We were also introduced to Scandinavian and Eastern European folk music. We played around with Middle Eastern music and Indian sounds. We worked with incredible Chinese folk musicians. We experimented with African and Latin American rhythms, even having the privilege of working with Ladysmith Black Mambazo. And with a number of new relationships in Nashville, we also collaborated with contemporary worship writers like Chris Tomlin, Jonas Myrin, and Nathan Nockels.

World music gave us a new sound—a fresh palate with which to paint, the ability to try different things on an artistic level.

4. Global Music Revitalizes My Spiritual Soul

If these things are true artistically, they're even more true spiritually. This project allowed me to engage with God's global church. It's sobering to receive letters and emails from believers around the world—from Cuba, China, the Middle East, and elsewhere—who desire to simply sing a hymn with us. More sobering, the "Facing a Task Unfinished" hymn was written—just as so many of these churches were birthed—out of horrendous persecution.

But such global awareness is also life-giving and inspirational. Each of us has the privilege of engaging with what God is doing in the world today. Through these songs, we're singing with Christ followers of every nation and language, every talent and trade.

We celebrate with them, and with you, as we endeavor to sing about the task unfinished before us—the invitation to all people to come and experience the incomprehensible grace of our incomparable Savior.

Youth Ministry

RETHINKING EVANGELISM IN YOUTH MINISTRY

<https://youthspecialties.com/blog/rethinking-evangelism-in-youth-ministry/>

BY JASON MATTHEWS JULY 7, 2016

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE OF SHARING.

With the rise of social media, we can now share virtually anything (no pun intended). We share memes that make us laugh, selfies that make us look good, quotes and blogs that inspire us, pretty much anything our cat does, and we even share what we ordered for dinner at that trendy cafe down the street. And that barely scratches the surface of everything shared, liked, and reposted on social media every minute . . . by adults. Teens (and tweens) share even more and far more often than most adults not named Kardashian.

We live a culture of sharing that has produced a generation who is growing up sharing everything. For Generation Y and Z, what you share online is what defines you. It's what you're known for. It reflects who you are, what you love, and what you most value in life. The rise of social media has given us a virtual window into students' everyday lives. We see how they feel, what they like, who they like, who they hang out with, what's cool, what's fun, what makes them laugh, what matters to them, what inspires them, and on and on and on . . .

With all this sharing going on, it begs the question . . .

If the students in our youth ministries really are willing to share everything that defines them and everything they want to be known for, then why aren't more of them sharing their faith?

Is it that they don't know how to share their faith—they just need more training?

Is it that they don't know enough to share their faith—maybe they just need more information?

Those are two of the biggest assumptions we make in youth ministry when it comes to creating a culture of evangelism. But what if those assumptions aren't true for our students? What if we've done the training and gone through the basics (again), and our students still are not sharing their faith? Or what if they're the kids who have grown up in church, know all the answers, have heard it all before, but they aren't doing anything with it?

Maybe it's time to rethink evangelism and youth ministry—maybe we need to ask ourselves what we can learn from three basic things students share:

1) STUDENTS SHARE WHAT THEY LOVE.

Likes. Reposts. Emoji-filled comments. Students share what they love for all the world to see. If a teenager is excited about something, chances are good that we'll know about it within seconds. On the other hand, if this teen is on the fence about something, he or she won't make an effort to share it. That's where some of our students sit with God: on the fence.

2) STUDENTS SHARE WHAT THEY HAVE.

From Facebook groups where a girl can share what her prom dress looks like to the Vine videos of Daniel and his white Vans, students aren't ashamed to share what they have. If teenagers have something they're proud of or want to be known for, it will be uploaded and shared. The flip side of that is that they can't share what they don't have, and some of our students simply don't yet have a personal relationship with God to share.

3) STUDENTS SHARE WHO THEY ARE.

Maybe this one should be students share who they want you to think they are. Either way, there's an image to project and protect, and teenagers are really good at making sure that who they want to be known as is what they share online. For students, sharing their faith is like drawing a huge line in the sand—it labels them as Christians, and some of them aren't sure that's who they want to be known as yet.

What can we learn from these three things? What's the takeaway here when it comes to rethinking evangelism in our youth ministries? Perhaps it's this: More training and more information isn't the answer. The answer is more Jesus—more of his life, more of his story, and more of his teaching. The more we make our ministries about helping students know who Jesus is, the more they will love him. The more we make our ministries about helping students see that Jesus gives us the things everybody wants (peace, hope, and purpose), the more they will see why faith in him is worth having. The more we make our ministries about helping students understand their identity in Jesus, the more they'll discover that who they really want to be is someone like him.

The bottom line is our students will share their faith when they fall in love with Jesus, when they have a personal relationship with him that matters to them, and when they're ready to be known as Jesus followers. It's our calling as youth pastors and leaders to help them get there by making our ministries all about knowing, loving, and following Jesus together.

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE OF SHARING. WHAT IS YOUR MINISTRY DOING TO CREATE A CULTURE OF SHARING JESUS?

Jason Matthews is a youth pastor in Washington state, where he's been serving students for over 20 years. When he doesn't have to be in the office, he loves to be outside with his family, hiking and exploring the Pacific Northwest. He also loves to write, and you can find more of what he writes about at one of his blogs (WWW.VERSEOTHEWEEK.WORDPRESS.COM & WWW.PJASONMATTHEWS.WORDPRESS.COM).

Evangelism Opportunity

Deaf Youth Camp Needs YOU!

The Deaf are a "hidden" or "unseen" or "unnoticed" minority. They exist around you and are never noticed unless they sign or use their voice. If they were gathered in one place they would comprise the 4th largest nation in the world.

Do you know there are 750 Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing that die daily many of them do not know Jesus Christ as their Savior?

It is for this reason why Deaf Youth Camp sponsors a camp for deaf youth from Missouri & Oklahoma ages 10 through high school. For many these campers, this is the **ONLY** opportunity they have all year to understand God's Word in their own language, American Sign Language. Campers often approach staff on the last day of camp with tears in their eyes pleading for us to have camp one more week. When we asked why their responses are very moving the campers state "Deaf Youth Camp is MY 'church'. When we go home attend church with our parents we do not understand what is being said because no one uses sign language to tell us what is being said. Deaf Youth Camp understands who we are and accepts us."

We have the privilege of having camp this year at Baptist Ridge in Warsaw, MO. The dates for camp are June 3—8, 2018. Even though Deaf Youth Camp is under the umbrella of the Missouri Baptist Convention we do not receive financial support.

This is an excellent opportunity for a mission project for a Sunday School Class, or a missions committee from your church. We **need YOUR help** to support this unique ministry. For more information contact Vivian Crowley by email: praisinghim53@gmail.com.

For informational purposes, based on the MCDHH Statistics, the following are the populations of Deaf and Hard of Hearing in our counties.

	Total Population (2010)	Est Deaf (1%)	Est HoH (9%)	Combined (10%)
Audrain	25,529	255	2,298	2,553
Callaway	44,332	443	3,990	4,433

My question to our association is, Who is reaching the 6,986 people who are represented in this demographic. I am appreciative of the churches in this area that are providing interpretation in their services. I know that Southside Fulton has also allowed different groups use their former building to host deaf conferences at. But these can not be the beginning and end of our ministry to this unreached people group. Please pray with me Luke 10:2 for workers of this harvest field.

Technology in Ministry

3 Ways Technology Enables the Mission of the Church Tech Talk: An article from Ed Stetzer, OCT 27, 2014

Technology is a resource the church must wisely steward to accomplish the Great Commission.
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2014/october/3-ways-technology-enables-mission-of-church.html>

The technological-ification of the church is a huge issue, and every congregation and every pastor needs to take advantage of technology in order to enable the church's mission.

I believe technology is a resource that we can use for God's glory. Here's three ways technology enables the church's mission.

1. Technology Enables Communication

Through Facebook and Twitter or through a church blog, I can easily communicate directly with the people in my congregation, throughout the day and week.

Technology allows a greater sense of community that doesn't demand proximity.

For example, I have a full-time job with LifeWay, so I am able to pastor a church by preaching, meeting with the staff, and leading a small group in my home.

That's all I can physically do. But I can pastor my church all throughout the week through social media and digital technology.

Technology enables the congregation easily to have direct communication with me, and I can have communication with them on a broader and a clearer scale.

Ongoing communication through technology helps the mission of the church. In fact, as I told Leadership Journal only half-jokingly, pastors who aren't on Twitter need to repent.

2. Technology Enables Community

Technology allows a greater sense of community that doesn't demand proximity. Proximity isn't required for community.

For example, you can sit next to each other week after week and never talk. But through technology, people in our church are praying for each other thanks to our church Facebook page.

Sometimes they already know each other, but at other times they meet one another through Facebook.

Social media is where younger generations are interacting. It's the new marketplace. It may be unnatural for past generations, but it is how community for younger people is now started and developed.

Use technology in your church to enable communication, community and discipleship.

Through social media, a new attendee can connect to other church members before he or she ever has a chance to meet at a church gathering or a small group.

Of course, true community requires feet and faces and not just electrons and avatars. But those electrons and avatars can be tools to bring people into closer community with feet and faces.

This is a big shift in how we interact, but we have to use it if we want to enable community for the sake of the mission of the church.

3. Technology Enables Discipleship

Our church has an app where people can actually access the sermon outline, and people use their phones or iPads to follow along and take notes. Technology enables members and attendees to enhance their discipleship experience at church.

During certain series, we have encouraged our people to tweet questions in the middle of services, and we try to answer them.

All of these are tools to enhance discipleship. Technology, though, is not the goal. The goal is to enable the church's mission to make disciples of all people groups.

Find the Benefits of Technology

There are unintended side effects of technology that are both de-personalizing and dehumanizing. But there are some wonderful benefits of technology that enable the mission of the church.

Use technology in your church to enable communication, community and discipleship.

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Evangelism in the Rural Area

EVANGELIZING THE RURAL COMMUNITY

By Glenn C. Daman

<http://www.smallchurchleaders.org/the-small-church-shepherd/evangelizing-the-rural.html>

One of the most difficult tasks confronting the small church is that of evangelism. Of all the various ministries of the church, it is this portion of the ministry that seems to be the most difficult and unproductive. Week long evangelistic services that once attracted many people within the community now attract only the faithful few. Home Bible Studies, which are effective in the larger communities, find only moderate success in the smaller communities. Door to door evangelism, popularized by Evangelism Explosion, not only is unappealing to the congregation, but seems an exercise in futility by those who do attempt to institute the program. Friendship evangelism seems the most promising, yet, in most rural communities, there appears to be more friendship than evangelism. Everyone in the community knows each other, yet there are few who respond to any evangelistic thrust. While the pastor, who has the gift of evangelism, may experience some success, frustration and discouragement come when he attempts to motivate and involve the rest of the congregation. If the strength of the small church is found in its fellowship, its weakness is discovered in evangelism. To overcome this weakness, the church needs to not only realize the importance of evangelism as the major thrust of the ministry of the church, it also needs to develop programs that enable the church to accomplish the task.

THE MISSION OF EVANGELISM:

To be effective in evangelism, the church needs to recognize that the proclamation of the redemptive power of God to a lost and dying world is the heart and soul of the church ministry. Evangelism is neither an option, nor a luxury of the church. Christ gives this mandate to the church on two different occasions. In Matthew 28:19,20 Christ states, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." His final words to the apostles in Acts 1:8 reiterated this directive, "But you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth." To state it bluntly, every church that is not aggressively involved in the evangelization of the community in which it lives is failing to be obedient to the command of Christ. In being obedient to the great commission, it is important to realize that evangelism is not to be equated with conversion. Evangelism is the communication of the gospel message to a lost world (the Greek word meaning to proclaim or announce good news). Conversion is the realization of Christ's redemptive power in the life of the individual. Evangelism is the process, conversion is the end result. Evangelism is the task of the church, conversion the task of the Holy Spirit. The church is commanded to evangelize the world, not convert the world.

OBSTACLES TO EVANGELISM

In developing evangelism in the small church, there needs to be an understanding of the obstacles that will be encountered.

1. *Exclusivism.* Because the small church consists of a close circle of relationships, it can easily become exclusive to outsiders. Whether intentional or accidental, when the church no longer welcomes new people into the body, the church will become hindered in evangelism. To be evangelistic, the church needs to be willing to assimilate new people into the life and fellowship of the church.
2. *Law of privacy.* The smaller the community the more people know about the activities, problems and lives of one another. As a compensation for this, within smaller communities, an underlying value is that each individual is to respect the privacy of the other by not asking them questions of a personal nature. Since ones' faith and beliefs are extremely personal, it is often difficult and considered impolite to talk to others about spiritual matters. In order to avoid offending their neighbors with whom they live in close proximity and depend upon, they avoid talking about the gospel.
3. *Previous decisions.* In many smaller communities, people have been previously exposed to the ministry and beliefs of the church. As a result they have already made the decision not to attend. Marketing techniques, which are effective in larger communities, have little impact in smaller communities.

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4. *Past history of the church and individuals in the church.* People in a small community often remember the past history of the church and people who attended. This knowledge of the past becomes the basis by which they judge and evaluate the church. If the church has had problems in the past or if individuals have had problems with members in the past, people will form a negative perspective of the church. This negative perception then hinders any outreach attempts with that individual.

5. *Discouragement.* If the church becomes focused upon the result (conversion) rather than the process (evangelism), then the church can easily become discouraged regarding evangelism. When people share the gospel and see few results they can become discouraged. Like Ezekiel, the church needs to be reminded that the body is to be faithful in communicating the message of redemption regardless of the reception it receives (Ezekiel 2:5-7; 3:17-21; see also Jeremiah 2:17ff Isaiah 6:9-13). The gospel needs to be continually proclaimed even if there are no visible results.

EVANGELISM AS A PROCESS

An examination of the ministry of Christ and the book of Acts reveals that Christ and the apostles adapted their evangelistic method depending upon the spiritual understanding and perception of the individual. Since evangelism is a process, the goal is to move people closer to an understanding of the implications of the gospel. This begins by assessing and understanding where they are in relationship to the gospel and then adapting the method to the individual.

1. *The Antagonist.* The antagonists are the individuals who have such a strong negative reaction to the message of Christ that they are openly hostile to Christianity. This hostility may be a result of their view of the gospel or perceived offenses they have experienced with Christians. Reaching these individuals for Christ begins with the demonstration of unconditional love that manifests itself in the acceptance of the individual. In this case the gospel must be communicated through actions rather than words, the goal being to break down the hostility so that the individuals are more receptive to the message of the gospel.

2. *The Ignorant.* The ignorant individuals are those who are unfamiliar with the teaching and implications of the gospel and scripture. Religiously they are ecumenical, viewing Christianity as one of the many ways to God. However they have little desire to know more about the Christian faith. The most important part of the process in reaching the ignorant is the cultivation of a personal relationship with these individuals in which love is unconditionally demonstrated. While the implications of the gospel should be carefully communicated, it should be done in a non-threatening, non-argumentative manner so that the individual will become a seeker.

3. *The Seeker.* Seekers are those who see themselves as "religious," that is they are familiar with the Christian beliefs and desire to know more. They are aware of the basic elements of the gospel but ignorant of the full implications. They are concerned about their "felt needs" and are seeking ways to meet these desires. They are seeking to know more about the Christian faith and the teaching of the Bible. Ministering to them involves meeting these needs while at the same time formulating opportunities to communicate the full implications of Christ's redemptive work so that they will desire to know more about him.

4. *The Examiner.* Examiners are those who understand the implications and personal demands of the gospel. They are aware of their sinful state before a holy God and are looking for spiritual answers to their spiritual needs. It is at this point that the witnessing process becomes persuasive in the proclamation of the gospel. The Examiner needs to be challenged to make a personal decision to accept Christ as his savior.

5. *The Responder.* Responders are ready and willing to make a personal decision for Christ. When an individual responds to the appeal to accept Christ, the church needs to be able to assist the individual in making that personal decision and then be committed to the discipleship of that person.

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DEVELOPING A WITNESSING COMMUNITY:

Developing the church into a witnessing community begins, not with the development of evangelistic programs, but with the development of an evangelistic attitude within the congregation. To develop a witnessing community, the church must become obsessed with evangelism, otherwise it will always remain a program rather than a mission and passion of the church.

1. Prayer as the Foundation. Having a passion for evangelism begins with prayer. Before Christ sent out his disciples as evangelists for the kingdom, he first called them to pray for the harvest (Matthew 9:35-38). Prayer not only changes the spiritual receptivity of the lost, it also changes the attitudes and motivations of the believers who are called to witness. Without prayer there will be no passion for the lost, no power in the testimony and no presence of God in the message. To develop an evangelistic community, the people need to begin to pray specifically for individuals who they desire to hear the gospel of Christ.

2. Building Relationships. Having identified and begun to pray for specific individuals within the community, the next step in the evangelistic process is the building of a personal relationship with that individual. Approximately 75-90% of all people who come to Christ do so as a result of a personal relationship with a friend or relative. Peter writes to the churches in Asia Minor to be "always prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15). This implies close personal contact with people. This is especially crucial in the small church where relationships rather than programs form the backbone of evangelism. The first step in building redemptive relationships is to utilize the personal relationships that people already have with others in the community. People need to be encouraged to spend time with the unchurched, cultivating relationships and ministering to their physical, emotional and spiritual needs. One of the strengths of the small church is its knowledge and awareness of the needs of people within the community. By ministering to these needs, the church can demonstrate the love of Christ that breaks down the barriers that the culture erects.

3. Evangelism as a Team Sport. To develop an evangelistic community it is necessary for people to realize that evangelism is not done by Lone Rangers, who, after converting one soul, ride off into the sunset in search of another. Typically, it requires five contacts with different Christians before a person comes to know Christ. Consequently, the evangelistic process involves the interplay between the individual Christian and the church community. Developing a personal relationship with people involves assisting the person in developing personal relationships with other Christians within the community as well.

4. Personal Invitation. To be a genuine witnessing community, the church, and individuals within the church, need to clearly communicate the gospel to the people that they have developed relationships with (Romans 10:9-15). In witnessing to people, it is important to realize that the proclamation of Christ to the lost individual is not a one-shot affair. Rather it requires patience and gentle persuasion. The Church is not merely to be a place where Christ is proclaimed to the faithful, it is to be a community that is actively and purposely involved in the process of bringing people to the point of decision with regard to the redemptive work of Christ. While the church cannot "save" anyone, God has chosen his people to be an indispensable part of the process.

The author provides some statistics at the bottom of this article about the rural area. You can find those numbers by typing in the web address at the top of the first page of this article.

Children / Family Ministry

Five Reasons Why The Children's Minister is the Staff Position In Greatest Demand

By Thom Rainer, February 12, 2018

<http://thomrainer.com/2018/02/five-reasons-childrens-minister-staff-position-greatest-demand/>

It was not an unusual question at [Church Answers](#). For those of you not familiar with Church Answers, it is a 24/7 resource where you can ask any church question and get a response within a few hours.

Here is the context. The pastor was the only paid staff member at the church, but now funds were available to bring on another full-time staff person. So he asked us in the 2,000-member Church Answers' community to offer input on what his first hire should be.

I was blown away.

The responses, at least as I write these words, were 100 percent in urging him to get a children's minister. There were no divergent opinions. One church leader after another exhorted him to go this route.

So why is the children's minister position in such demand? The Church Answers community let us know, with most of the responses fitting in one of five categories.

- 1. Millennials have a lot of kids.** The Millennial generation is the largest generation in America's history (though they may be surpassed by Gen Z). There are 78 million young adults ranging in ages from 18 to 38. And they have lots of kids. If they visit a church, one of their highest priorities is the quality of the children's ministry.
- 2. A healthy children's ministry usually results in a healthy student ministry.** It makes sense. If there is quality teaching and ministry for the children, these children are more likely to move to student ministry better prepared for life and better disciplined for God's work.
- 3. A quality children's ministry requires a large volunteer force.** Indeed, this rationale was one of the key reasons the leaders at Church Answers responded in unanimity for calling a children's minister. Leading the volunteer ministry can be a full-time job by itself.
- 4. If churches desire to reach families, they must be prepared to reach children.** If the Boomer generation acted like helicopters and hovered over their kids, the Millennial generation is acting like sidecars, and want to go wherever the motorcycle/child goes. You can't reach a family with kids unless you are really prepared to reach the kids.
- 5. Parents insist on safety, security, and hygiene for their kids.** We live in a nervous time heightened by the greater awareness of sex abuse, shooters, and germs. Parents want to know the church is a safe place for their kids. The presence of a quality children's minister is a huge positive statement for these parents.

We saw this trend five years ago. It is now a reality. The staff position of the greatest demand in congregations is the children's minister.

Let me know what you think about this issue.

Missions

Why Effective Evangelism Focuses on the Resurrection

ELLIOT CLARK | APRIL 14 2017

<https://www.imb.org/2017/04/14/effective-evangelism-focuses-resurrection/>

I vividly remember the first time I tried to engage someone with the gospel. It was my boss from Big Apple Bagels. One day when I went to his home—we happened to be neighbors—my throat was full. My chest tight. I was only sixteen, but I had resolved to speak with him about Christ.

My strategy was simple. I would quote from and try to explain Ephesians 2:8–9. Salvation is by grace, a gift of God, received by faith. Total trust in Jesus' sacrifice was necessary for salvation apart from any good works he might accomplish.

To my dismay, the conversation fell flat. My first attempt an instant failure. To be sure, I had honored Christ with my words, but I failed to reach my neighbor, my employer. I walked away from his house deflated and discouraged.

Now twenty years on, I understand a bit more of what happened that day. Unconsciously, though not mistakenly, I planned my conversation points according to my specific evangelistic tradition. Modern-day gospel proclamation in the West has largely been influenced by Reformation theology and a shared understanding of Judeo-Christian values.

So I grew up practicing apologetics to Catholics and other “Christians,” to those who would try to work for forgiveness. My emphasis was on justification by faith alone. My target audience: people who already believed in the deity of Jesus and accepted his resurrection. But that's not the way evangelism used to be. It's also not the way it will be in most contexts, increasingly so, even in the post-Christian West.

The Apostolic Evangel

One of the most helpful evangelism exercises that I know of came from a New Testament course taught by Tom Schreiner. He encouraged us, his students, to trace the kerygmatic speeches (evangelistic preaching) in the book of Acts. Specifically, he instructed us to observe each encounter with a view toward the original audience and corresponding message. In some, the apostles addressed a Jewish audience. In others, as in Athens, the hearers were pagan Gentiles, those Paul elsewhere called strangers to the covenants of promise. In other words, they were people without God and without exposure to the biblical witness.

Increasingly, as America becomes more and more post-Christian, we will need to return to the resurrection in our witness.

As I set out to study the evangelistic methods of the apostles, I found significant differences in their approach. When addressing Jews, they often focused on the culmination of the promises of God in Jesus the Messiah. Toward Gentiles, they presented God as creator, ruler of all, and Jesus as the exalted judge of the nations. In neither did I find explicit arguments about faith and works.

But in each discourse one theme emerged as central. It was, as it turns out, the resurrection.

The resurrection was the culmination of their evangelism. It was the ultimate sign for which Jews should seek. It was the vindication of Jesus as the Messiah and the fulfillment of the Scriptures. For Gentiles, the resurrection was to be the demonstration of Jesus' ultimate power and authority, the proof of a coming judgment.

The Risen Christ

What never occurred to me in that first evangelistic encounter was that my boss was, of all things, Jewish. I had approached him as someone who needed to quit trusting in his own works, which was accurate, but I had overlooked his primary need. The apostolic call to repentance and faith only comes after a demonstration of the identity and authority of the Christ.

What my neighbor needed first was to see Jesus as Messiah, as the fulfillment of the covenants and promises, as the one rejected and crucified by Jewish leaders but vindicated by God through the resurrection.

Years after that encounter with my neighbor, I found myself living in a predominantly Muslim country. Surrounded by those who seek to approach God on the merits of their own good deeds, I was tempted to lead with the message of salvation by faith alone. Ephesians 2 seemed like the perfect passage for evangelizing Muslims.

But to go there initially would be to bypass the principal of the gospel message: Jesus is Lord. Risen from the dead, Jesus is the exalted Son and eternal Judge. If Muslims don't accept that premise, ceasing from good works will be of no benefit.

Witnessing Resurrection

Which brings us to the importance of the resurrection in all of evangelism. The historical fact of the risen Christ simultaneously addresses the dual reality of his identity and mission, the irreplaceable core of the good news. Not only that, but the resurrection of Jesus challenges all other religions and all other so-called gods. And lastly, the resurrection uniquely demands a response, both intellectual and personal.

Increasingly, as America becomes more and more post-Christian we will need to return to the resurrection in our witness. As we encounter more Muslims than Catholics, as we talk to secular atheists and unflinching hedonists, we will be forced to confront people with the scandalous news of a resurrected Lord, an exalted King, and a coming Judge.

It's not that we will abandon the message of justification by faith alone. But we must begin with the proper object of that faith. We must also realize that any argument against working for forgiveness will miss the mark with people who neither seek deliverance nor fear the court of heaven.

Elliot Clark (MDiv, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary) lived in Central Asia for six years where he served as a cross-cultural church planter along with his wife and three children. He is currently working to train local church leaders overseas.

What Does An Evangelistic Church Do?

What's In The Gap? What Makes The Difference?

I'm interested in what's in the gap. What is the difference? And to what degree is the difference tied to leadership?

Here's why I go to the leadership factor. **How is it that one church struggles to grow under a particular pastor and then, when he resigns, another pastor comes to lead the church to sudden and rapid growth?**

What does one pastor do differently from another? Is it even something the pastor does? Did the church actually change?

These are questions worth asking. If we can discover **what's in the gap** we can then train other pastors in principles that grow their church and help them reach people for Christ.

Some Background On The Study

In 2014 we decided to take a snapshot of the top evangelistic churches in the nation and see if we could identify what takes them out of the realm of normative into the realm of highly effective evangelism. I did not just want to study the mega-church (though there is much to learn from them). I wanted to study every size church to put more handles on the practical insights we would glean. After all, a church of 100 in worship can more readily grasp insight from a church running 300 than they will from a church running 3,000.

We used two metrics and three size categories to find the top 20 evangelistic churches in every state. For evangelism metrics, we consider raw baptism numbers and baptisms per person in worship. By doing that, we made sure the church running 50 in worship and baptizing 10 would make the list. We looked at three different size categories (see paragraph two). Then we sent a survey to approximately 1,100 churches in the U.S. Every state had approximately 20 surveys sent to their top evangelistic churches from 2013. We also included the fastest growing churches and the top evangelistic churches from the past five years.

Responses and Evergreen Principles

About 500 churches responded to the survey—enough to give a good snapshot. What we were looking for were evergreen principles. An evergreen principle is a practical principle that is true regardless of technology, time, culture or context. It differs slightly from a best practice in that a best practice has some context associated with it.

The results are, so far, a mixture of evergreen principles and best practices. As we continue to process data over time, the hope is to refine the findings. The amount of data is enormous but after spending a year with the data I can confidently describe a top evangelistic church. **(See the graphic above.)**

The Snapshot

Here's a quick summary of what makes a Top Evangelistic Church. We find in each case ...

1. A Pastor that Leads on Mission

Without a doubt, the number one factor to a church reaching people is the leadership of the pastor. Top evangelistic pastors lead their church to be evangelistic. They own this responsibility. The responsibility isn't given to a staff member or key leader.

We found some specific things pastors do to lead on mission:

- They have a **Vibrant Vision** - Evangelistic pastors have an exciting vision they continually keep in front of the congregation. You'll find it printed in all their documents, plastered on the walls, set in stone and talked about from the pulpit. It's not something written in an obscure document no one sees.
- They have a **Simple Strategy** - You won't find complexity in an evangelistic church but you will find strategy. They know how they are moving people from point A to point B. They know what they are doing to reach people for Christ and move them into a discipling relationship. And again ... it is simple.
- They create a **Contagious Culture** - Honestly, in most of these churches, you can feel it when you walk through the door. There's something different. They aren't striving to "create a culture," rather, they are striving to "be the culture"

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What Does An Evangelistic Church Do?

2. A Church that Gathers on Mission

Top evangelistic churches aren't just checking Sundays off the list. They aren't gathering because Sunday happens to roll around on the calendar again. They gather with purpose and intent. They gather around the gospel and to engage people with the gospel. When they gather, whether it's on Sunday or not, they expect to see people come to faith in Christ.

Here are some observations about their gathering:

- They are **Engaging** when they gather. The music leans toward the contemporary style and it is always lively. There is an atmosphere in the service that engages members and guests and draws them in. In most cases, the music and the message finds a way to get the listener involved.
- They are **Expectant** when they gather. We found an emphasis on God and guests. (You could say, spiritual awakening and customer service.) Evangelistic churches know they may have one opportunity to introduce a non-Christian to Christ and they don't want to miss that opportunity. They maximize the opportunity to deliver an experience that connects guests with God.
- They are **Evangelistic** when they gather. You always hear the gospel in these churches. It doesn't matter the sermon topic, you'll hear the gospel in the message. And it will be a clear presentation of the gospel. In the majority evangelistic churches there will be an invitation to receive the gospel.

3. Members that Live on Mission

Relax. It's not just about what happens on Sundays. It is also about what the members are doing during the week.

Evangelistic churches find ways to mobilize and leverage volunteers to do the work of the ministry.

We often find that their members are:

- **Seeking.** Not just seeking out lost people, but seeking opportunities to leverage their relationships, businesses, communities, passions and gifts to expand their influence for the gospel. They aren't tied to some solitary weeknight outreach. They are living as missionaries where God has placed them. They see themselves as "sent."
- **Sharing.** Evangelistic members share their faith. They don't necessarily use a canned presentation but they talk to those around them about their faith. They have gospel conversations. Evangelistic churches train their members with gospel sharing tools and encourage them to incorporate their own story into the narrative.
- **Serving.** Evangelistic churches encourage and allow members to serve around their passions and callings. They don't force them into spaces they aren't called or comfortable. Members are aware of their gifts and aware of the channels in which to employ those gifts. As a result, their service is personally exciting, engaging and feels like a natural outflow of their life purpose.

That's what an evangelistic church looks like. How does yours compare?

Joel Southerland is executive director for evangelism at the North American Mission Board.

