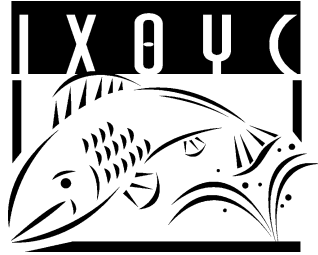


Intro to Evangelism In Churches



Inviting, Welcoming & Connecting New Believers

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What is Evangelism?

For some Christians evangelism is an unpleasant word. It evokes visions of TV preachers and pushy reactionaries shouting into bullhorns on street corners. But in its thousands of years of tradition and practice, the church has built a profound understanding of evangelism that we can't throw out with the ugliness of some of the brokenness of modern evangelicalism.

At its heart, evangelism means sharing the good news of knowing God through a relationship with Jesus Christ. It is about building personal relationships through which individual lives are changed. And, importantly, it is also about proclaiming Christ's good news of freedom and justice in communal, societal and global contexts. Holistic and needs-based evangelism in the Wesleyan tradition can never be only about personal conversion, but also must include societal transformation. Conversely, our witness can never be only to social issues, but must also include individual salvation.

Congregational (Institutional) Evangelism

Congregations have specific roles in inviting and welcoming people into the institution of the Church as an expression of the welcoming nature of the gospel. This mode of evangelism is effective in gathering into a specific church family people who are mostly already Christian. This process has three steps:

1. Invitation:

The most effective and efficient form of inviting people is to train and equip current church participants to reach out to others personally. This method has the dual benefits of being the least financially expensive and having the best rate of acceptance to contacts. Other methods include marketing efforts through direct mail, newspapers, television, radio, posters, signs, billboards and neighborhood canvases. Generally, mass-marketing techniques will help build a positive view of the church in community, but it often takes personal invitation to result in a first-time visit.

2. Welcome:

When a guest attends a church for the first time, they will make a decision on whether they like that church within the first 6-10 seconds of entering the church property. That decision is based entirely on their first impressions of how welcoming that church

appears. There are obvious physical indicators of a church's welcome: well-kept property, easy to read signs, open doors, visitor's parking spaces, and the like. Most important, however, is the frequency and sincerity of the personal welcome they receive. Most physical problems can be overcome by putting warm, smiling, enthusiastic, welcoming people out on the curb or in the parking lot to greet new guests. The second phase of welcoming is whether a new guest finds the programs and styles of ministry that they are looking for. Understanding the needs of your community will help you make sure that you are offering what people are looking for.

3. Connecting:

People will pass through our church doors if they don't get connected within 2-4 weeks after their first visit. Find ways of personally connecting new people with others in the congregation and with the vision and mission of the church. Most people will visit a church because they are looking to be connected somehow with God. Make sure that you are offering this opportunity early and often for everyone in your church and community.

Personal (Relational) Evangelism

The most effective witness to non-Christian folks and to social systems is the witness of individual and groups of Christians living according to the gospel of salvation and justice in the world. Improving this witness often takes intentional training in a three-fold process of faithful living and faith-sharing:

1. Prophetic Living:

As Christians, we are called to live a life that is different from the lives of other people. We are motivated by love not greed, by community not individuality, by compassion not consumption. By our piety, passion, charity and justice, we should seem odd enough to raise questions in the eyes of those whom we live among. Our lives should declare God's good news.

2. Christian Friendships:

Christians need to cultivate real friendships with people who are seeking God. These friendships are different than our other friendships because they are focused on meeting the needs of others, not on having our needs met. Christian friendships are vessels of love that model Christ's love for all people.

3. Authentic Testimony:

Christians need to be able to clearly share the real, personal power of their faith in God through Jesus Christ. When asked, they should be able to tell why faith is important and why it makes a difference in the lives of individuals and the world. Many Christians have never done this, and will need some good models, training and practice before feeling comfortable sharing their own faith. Most importantly, however, this testimony should be their own, not a memorized explanation. Personal faith in a personal God has power, but dry indoctrination won't help anyone.

Resources:

www.Link2Lead.com

This web site has demographic and leadership information that will help you understand which ministries and styles will best meet the felt needs of the people in your community.

Conspiracy of Kindness, by Steve Sjogren

This book outlines an incredibly effective strategy of doing acts of kindness throughout your community as a central part of your program of marketing and invitation. Also see his web site at www.servantevangelism.com and his other books, "Community of Kindness" and "101 Ways to Reach Your Community."

www.ignitingministry.org

This is the marketing and advertising ministry of the United Methodist Church. Check out their planning guides and study resources to vastly improve your publications, advertising invitation and welcoming process.

Becoming a Contagious Christian, by Bill Hybels & Mark Mittelberg

This book provides an excellent training tool for equipping your church for personal and relational evangelism. Check out the group study guides and videos or "Building a Contagious Church" or visit www.contagiouschristian.com.

Just Walk Across the Room, by Bill Hybels

More Ready than You Realize, by Brian McLaren