

evangelism II

introduction

FACILITATOR: *This is our second set of notes on evangelism. We want to build on what we learnt first time around and explore some of the changes, challenges and practicalities that face us as Christians when we seek to reach out to our friends and affect our environment. We are going to do this initially by contrasting an old paradigm and a new paradigm. This is not so we can knock our past, but so we can realize that we are in changing times and that even though the Christian message remains the same, the emphasis and means of communication and methods may be different in a different time and a different age.*

1: relational truth

FACILITATOR: *Traditionally, evangelism or communicating the gospel, has been about communicating the truth. Whether it is in Billy-Graham-style with Bible in hand and finger pointing, or in a more modern cultural idiom of fog machines and radical music, the underlying method is the same: I have the truth and you don't, but you are about to receive it. However, many people now are saying that telling people the truth is not going to impact them in the same way that it might have done 20 or 30 years ago. We want to discover how people receive the truth in the 21st Century.*

welcome

CELL: What do you find hardest to believe about God?

worship

FACILITATOR: *Use Philippians 1:3-11 as the focus for your worship this meeting.*

word

FACILITATOR: *Discuss briefly as a group the following thought. We live in a relative age in which people have become suspicious of the idea of truth. This cultural change is probably the most dramatic and fundamental change that has been seen in the last 1500 years. Post-modern philosophy says there is no meta-narrative; no all-encompassing truth on which to base life. The only truth is the individual's personal experience and so we all choose our own truth and live how we individually want to.*

CELL: Split into two groups and look at a story each. What can we learn about new paradigms and our evangelism?

Story 1: Breaking out of the Christian sub-culture

Acts 10 is a story of Peter who fails to realize that the gospel stretches way beyond the traditions of his Jewish sub-culture until God offends him by asking that he eat 'unclean' food. He realizes that what applied to food applied to people and that he shouldn't call 'unclean' what God has called 'clean'. For many Christians the transition the church needs to make will be as radical as when the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles! If the gospel was obscured by culture, or if it was fully understood as part of a single particular culture then it would never have been proclaimed among the Gentiles.

Story 2: Understanding and engaging non-church culture

Acts 17:16-31 is a story of Paul in Athens, a city full of idols. Firstly, Paul went to them (v17). If we are to reach this generation we must find ways of putting church where the people are, instead of calling them out of their natural networks. Secondly, he sought to understand where they were coming from (v17-21). Thirdly, he approached them in their language and even quoted pagan poets (v23-28). Fourthly, he makes the unknown, known (v23) and unpacks the gospel to them in a way they could understand.

FACILITATOR: *Within this new paradigm, then, how do we move forward with evangelism? The part of the answer that we are looking at in our cell meeting today is relational truth (truth communicated in the context of relationships). This isn't a new concept and is modeled right at the heart of God, the Trinity, who operates through relationships. In the Old Testament his primary aim wasn't to lay down a law, but to establish a relationship with a people.*

Read John 1:14 to the cell group and explain the following:

In other words, the truth came and lived among us in the shape of Jesus who could be touched, seen and experienced. The Apostle John in his first letter, said, 'That which we have seen, that which we have experienced, we proclaim to you.'

What we see here is God presenting himself in a way that is dynamic into a pagan culture.

CELL: What can we learn from this for our own evangelism?

CELL: What implications does this have for how I live my life?

FACILITATOR: *The last question above leads to the conclusion that a part of telling our friends the truth is their being able to see it and experience it through relationship with us and that when our words and the examples of our lives are the same thing then there is power.*

witness

FACILITATOR: *Spend the rest of your time together looking at these following questions and then praying for one another. Feel free to break into smaller groups if you think it more appropriate. (It may be best if the groups are of the same gender.)*

Do we have any genuine friendships with people who are not Christians?

Are the lives that we live with them and the things that we do with them compatible with our Christian faith, or are we living in two worlds at once?

Encourage everyone to be honest and confess if there are any areas in which they are living inconsistently and would like prayer. Ask also if anyone would like prayer to develop consistent friendships with non-Christians?

what now?

FACILITATOR: *As a cell, do something outward looking (i.e. go to a student hangout) either at the end of this meeting or some time this week. This can be a great conversation starter if friends want to know where you've been.*

2: decision and process

introduction

FACILITATOR: *Many Christians when they look back see that there was a long process taking place that moved them towards a point of making a decision. Many others cannot even pin point a specific time that they made a decision, they have just gradually found themselves following more and more after Jesus. It is important that we recognize the process and journey people take in giving themselves to God's way of life.*

If this is the case much of our response will be to help people move further along in their journey towards finding God. Acts 17 talks about God determining the exact places where people live in order that they would seek him and reach out to him and find him. The words seeking, reaching and finding suggest that becoming a Christian is an ongoing journey of discovery and salvation, not about a one time decision.

welcome

CELL: Most of the time, would you consider yourself a visual learner (show me, don't tell me), an auditory learner (skip the picture, just tell me what to do) or kinesthetic learner (don't just show me, let me try)?

worship

FACILITATOR: *Read Colossians 1:9-12 together.*

This passage tells us many things about what it means to be a follower of Jesus. Go through the different points in order to provide a foundation for your praise.

word

FACILITATOR: *Traditionally, evangelism has been about making decisions. It is still true today that we want to see our friends deciding to enter into a relationship with God. However, the framework around that has changed. Many are recognizing that we now live in a pagan society in which an understanding of the Gospel message is no longer a given. Because of this, before people can make a decision that is meaningful, they have to understand some basic realities and truths of the Christian message.*

CELL: How do your average non-Christian friends see God? What do they think God is like? What do they think Christians are like?

Read together Matthew 13:18-23.

What is this parable about? What does it tell us about evangelism?

FACILITATOR: *There are a number of different ways of interpreting this parable. One is that it has to do with understanding. It tells us there are three types of bad soil of those who don't understand.*

-Those who understand absolutely nothing: seed on the path.

-Those who understand something: the rocky soil converts, because they received the word with great joy.

-The thorny soil converts also understand something, but not everything.

-Finally there is the good soil: People who understand what Christianity is about and have honest hearts.

This tells us two things. As we evangelize, we want to make sure that, through our words and lifestyle, people understand what Christianity is about and, secondly, that they come to a place of honesty where they realize that they need God.

So, we could look at this in three stages:

Stage one - People need to know God is good and we're okay.

Stage two - They need to understand the content of the gospel.

Stage three - They need to have a way to respond.

Discuss as a group that the evangelism we do should engage with people where they are at, in their language and culture. It should encourage and provoke people to daily make decisions to seek after, reach out to and find more of God. It is unrealistic to expect our friends to have the same values, beliefs and morals as we do. We can challenge them as we chat and through our lifestyle. It is important we don't confuse our responsibility to be Jesus to people with God's responsibility to convict them of sin and save them.

witness

FACILITATOR: *The evangelistic process can take anywhere from a week to a number of years.*

People can go through the entire process, attend a cell for a few weeks, and then become a Christian without going to any kind of Christian event or attending any church service. You and your cell may decide an event or a series of mini events may help that process, but be sure that such events will be relevant and positive. A poorly thought out and planned event can rob you of progress. Where cells are part of a wider structure such as a church or network of churches events can be planned to serve the cell network evangelistically.

CELL: In the light of the above, take the rest of the time to look at the following questions and pray together.

-What stage are your friends at?

-How can you help them move a stage further?

-What specific things could you pray into their lives?

what now?

CELL: You've discussed both as a cell and on a personal level, things you can do specifically to reach out to friends. Plan this week to take action!! Commit to pray for your friends and be intentional in the time you spend with them.

3: winning and keeping

introduction

FACILITATOR: *The issue of discipleship is widely talked about but seldom carried out. This is in contrast to the command Jesus gave in Matt.28 'to go and make disciples'. A command that has yet to be fulfilled and has never been revoked, and so still demands our prayers, time, energy and obedience. The aim of cell discipleship is to go and make mature disciples who will be effective for the Kingdom of God. This session will highlight that evangelism is part of the outworking of this 'great commission'.*

welcome

CELL: Who has most influenced your Christian life?

worship

FACILITATOR: *Give people an opportunity to say what they have been learning from God over the last few weeks, what has he been speaking to people? What has he been doing in lives? Allow people to briefly share some of these things and use what is said for your worship.*

word and witness

FACILITATOR: *Ever since the Reformation, when Martin Luther dismantled the alter and put a pulpit instead at the front and center of church buildings, many churches have adopted the view that preaching and teaching is the primary way to mature Christians. That if they just hear enough information, they will catch on and grow! This is not a biblical approach - in New Testament terms, teaching and preaching is not central -discipling is.*

CELL: Read Matthew 28:16 – 20 and John 15:1-17 together.

FACILITATOR: *The Greek word for a disciple is 'mathetes' – a learner-doer. It is a learning relationship. The word 'disciple' is mentioned 269 times in the N.T. and the word 'Christian' is mentioned 3 times. God is concerned that we continue in a life-long journey as disciples/followers of Jesus.*

CELL: What does it mean for us today to 'make disciples'? How can you tell who is a disciple?

FACILITATOR: *This is the nitty-gritty of the Christian life, are we following Jesus? Living as he would live? Obeying his teaching? If we are, our lives will bear fruit. It isn't what we know, but we will be known by the fruit in our lives (Mt.7:20).*

Now take some time to look more closely at your cell. Don't be afraid to be vulnerable, but ask for some honest and frank evaluations of how you are all doing together. Would you want to join your cell?! Discuss the following:

- What are its strengths/ weaknesses?
- Is the cell 'making disciples'?
- What fruit is being produced?
- What more could you be doing?

If criticism arises, don't be scared of it but try to get people to look positively at how you can all work at it. Remember at all time that cell is everyone's responsibility, not just the leader's!

FACILITATOR: *We can often think that evangelism is something done by the peculiar few: those mad individuals who stand on street corners! What we realize today is that we will never reach this nation unless every one of us is involved. To go and make disciples is a command for us all to obey. If evangelism is a process, whether we're five or eighty years old, we can be involved: we can help to make a difference.*

CELL: Go round the group and find out how we are each involved now.
-What else would we like to be doing, whether individually or as a group?
-Are there any particular areas within this that people would like prayer for?

FACILITATOR: *Take time now to pray together for the cell's outward focus. When you pray, consider joining hands and standing in a circle, but instead of facing inward, face outward as a physical representation of your desire to have a heart for the lost.*

what now?

CELL: As a group we have been doing some honest evaluating of our efforts. As a part of this cell community, is there more you could or should be doing? Don't hesitate this week to put your thoughts into action.

Are you making disciples? Or are you more concerned with making converts and moving on?

Consider the relationships you have in your life...does your love for those individuals grow short sided when they are not "growing" in their walk with the Lord as fast as you think they should be? Pray this week for the Lord to expand your capacity to love them, just as they are, as you continue to encourage them in their Christian journey.

4: forgiveness and surrender

introduction

FACILITATOR: *'there is a hard law...that when deep injury is done to us, we can never recover until we forgive' (Alan Paton).*

Looking around the world at the bitterness and the strife, this is undoubtedly true. It might also be said that until we surrender and receive forgiveness we can never recover from the deep injury that sin has caused us. Let's continue to explore how we can communicate this message of hope.

welcome

CELL: Who do you find it hardest to forgive or what do you find hardest to surrender?

worship

CELL: Use a worship CD to worship God, focusing on His ability to forgive and heal physically, spiritually and mentally.

word and witness

CELL: What is the content of the gospel in 4 words or less?

FACILITATOR: *Ask a few people to say what they think it is. (If you feel your cell could use a bit of a 'refresher-course', go back to the Evangelism I cell notes, week 3, at the beginning of the 'word section' and look at the question regarding the basic components of the gospel according to Paul.)*

Perhaps what has come out of your discussion is a lot about forgiveness and freedom and the like. This is fine if people already understand other Christian emphases in the culture. However, if they don't, we are just offering another experience in a world full of experiences.

CELL: Read the following passages together and discuss.
Read John 8:1-11 together.

What can we learn from the attitude of Jesus for our evangelism? Do we ever play the role of Pharisees and religious teachers?

(FACILITATOR: *This is a story of 'non-judgmentalism' and forgiveness. Jesus isn't fearful of being contaminated by the sin of those present, he doesn't accuse, he just loves and protects.)*

CELL: Read 2 Corinthians 5:15 together.

How does this verse have relevance to us and our society?

(FACILITATOR: *To be radical in a pagan culture, you need a radical message. The apostle Paul was the apostle to the pagans and he has much to say to us as we seek to reach a post-modern generation.)*

CELL: In light of your discussions, what now would you say is the content of the gospel? Again, ask two or three people to say what they think.

FACILITATOR: *Give people a piece of paper each and ask them to write down all the main things that make up their lives (i.e. Family, college, possessions, relationships, etc). Then take some time in silence for people on their own to think through those aspects, asking themselves if Christ is at the center of each of these things and what it means for that to be the case. Are there areas or things that need to be surrendered again? Finish by asking one person to pray for the group.*

In summary, one of the ways to be most effective in our evangelism is to be part of a small group of people who will put it on the agenda every time they meet. We hold ourselves accountable to pray for

our friends and to live differently so that our words and our life say the same thing. If we do this, we will build real community, and if we do this, maybe we will see an outbreak of Christian life where many of the lost will be won.

Finish by asking a couple of people to summarize what has been looked at over the last four weeks; what they have learned and what they want to take with them when they leave college.

what now?

What can we learn from the attitude of Jesus in evangelism? Pray this week that God will change you more into his likeness. Lay before him specifics in the area of our attitudes toward reaching out to those who don't know him. (ex. reaching out even when it is not "convenient" or when it is someone maybe not as "lovely" as we would prefer...)