

## **Evangelism in the Local Church**

### **Teaching Goals**

The students will be familiar with the main ways that evangelism can be done in Xenos Fellowship.

The students will be motivated to take part in the evangelistic task.

### **Introduction**

As we have seen in the commissioning of the church, effective evangelism is God's will for the church. How should we fulfill this commission? We need three elements in a successful evangelistic ministry:

1. A plan for proclaiming or sharing the gospel with non-Christians, and people willing and able to implement that plan.
2. A prayer ministry that opens doors for the gospel and renders people receptive in spite of Satanic opposition.
3. A community into which we can bring those who are interested in the message. In an evangelistic community, non-Christians see the gospel being lived out by Christians, and have the opportunity to have their questions answered by more learned members if they so desire. They also are in position to begin to learn the basics of Christianity once they make the decision to receive Christ.

### **A Plan For Evangelism**

Although there are a wide variety of evangelistic methods available, the people in a local church must select the evangelistic strategies that are most suitable and effective in the context of their community. The following evangelistic concepts represent some of the stratagems preferred at Xenos Fellowship. All are evident in Scripture. Included under each biblical principle are suggestions for effective implementation.

### **Friendship evangelism**

Evangelism occurs most easily within existing relationships, rather than by talking to strangers. Since we usually already have credibility with our friends and family members, they are more likely to take the gospel seriously. Because of identification with friends, it is easier for the non-Christian to envision him/herself becoming a Christian. Also, the skills involved in effective friendship evangelism are much more common than those needed for cold-contact evangelism.

Scripture gives examples of this principle. See John 1:41-51, Acts 16:30-34, and 1 Peter 3:1,2.

### **Application**

Those of us who have non-Christian friends or relatives should be aware of the opportunity that we have to reach these friends and loved ones for Christ. Part of our motivation for sharing the gospel with others is the vision of seeing our friends find Christ and grow spiritually.

We should ask for prayer support from Christian friends in reaching these people. Then, we should patiently and carefully endeavor to share the grace of God with them. If we are unsure about how to bring the subject up, or what to say, we should ask older Christians for help in these areas. Likewise if we encounter resistance or other difficulties, we should not hesitate to ask for ideas from older Christian friends.

### **Discussion Question**

In the case of those of us who do not currently have friends or relatives who might be responsive to the gospel, in what ways can we still be directly involved in friendship evangelism?

## **Answers**

We can continue to maintain and foster a convinced outlook that outreach is right, and that it is important. This consensus is a vital part of the motivating, healthy environment needed to encourage evangelism in others.

We can pray for non-Christians by name (see below).

We can spend time with non-Christians trying to make friends, showing them the love of Christ in various ways. Christians need to be willing to socialize with non-Christians. This is directly implied in Christ's command that we not only "love them that love us"(Matthew 5:46,47).

We may be able to help those who have friends investigating Christianity by advising them, encouraging them, or joining them with their friends.

## **Acquaintance evangelism**

We can also share the gospel in relationships that are relatively more distant, or even non-existent. Neighbors and associates at work or in sports or civic groups all may be interested in spiritual things. The Bible is clear that God will give us opportunities to share our faith and will create need in those people with whom we talk. However, it is usually more difficult to do this kind of outreach, and it requires more patience. A good beginning point therefore, would be to approach God on this issue.

It would be a mistake to think that God will honor a passive attitude in this area, or that he will bring about evangelism apart from human agency. Some theologians believe that it is not up to us to worry about evangelism, and that evangelism will naturally occur if we just focus on growing with God. This perspective, which has been called "Search Theology" is not found in Scripture, and it has been discredited over and over again in dead churches that have lost their ability to reach the lost.

Instead, we believe that the church should engage in intentional efforts to win lost people, and constantly study ways to become more effective in those efforts.

## **Cold contact evangelism**

People who are regularly successful sharing the gospel with complete strangers are manifesting the spiritual gift of evangelism. For most people this is not the best approach to evangelism. However, for those gifted to do so, cold contact is a viable and important way to win lost people to Christ.

## **Discussion**

Concerning these three settings of evangelism--friendship, acquaintance, and cold-- which are you most drawn to and least drawn to using as an approach to doing evangelism? Explain why. Which of these approaches was used when you were saved?