

Energizing for Evangelism by Michelle Connor

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Unless ideas are massaged into reality, they evaporate. –George Nelson

A huge gap can exist between vision and reality. The above quote, hanging on my office door, reminds me and those I work with of that fact. Our goal is not to let the ideas or vision we have for missions evaporate, but to make them a reality.

Visions also evaporate when we leap into the latest and greatest program for outreach without building a foundation and insuring our follow through. A session at a recent evangelism conference outlined the following stages, helpful for any congregation considering launching a new outreach program.

Stage 1: Own and Model

Before the rest of our congregation can catch our vision for outreach, it must first be modeled in our own lives. Examples for modeling:

- a. Prayer: Ask God to use you for His mission of evangelism.
- b. Scripture: Meditate on passages in scripture that spark a fire in you for evangelism. For me, this is Romans 10:12-15. What passage gets you excited for evangelism?
- c. Partner: Find someone that shares your passion for the lost with whom you can share prayer and support.
- d. People: Develop relationships with non-believers. Then create the opportunities to engage them in spiritual conversations.

Stage 2: Instill the Values

Whatever your platform or circle of influence in your church, use it to influence others. Regularly remind people that evangelism is the mission of the church.

Stage 3: Empower a Point Leader

Identify a leader with an evangelistic passion. This point leader will partner with the senior pastor and develop the strategic plan to carry out the vision.

Stage 4: Liberate and Equip

The point leader needs to tear down evangelism stereotypes of evangelism, such as the belief that only those with the spiritual gift of evangelism can do evangelism. God calls all of us to do His work. Jesus' Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20) is for all believers. Because many people feel ill equipped for evangelism, give them tools to share their faith boldly, including personal evangelism training.

Stage 5: Build a Team

Lone rangers have a lower success rate and tend to burn out quickly. The point leader needs others to support him/her. Gather a team of people gifted for evangelism to help carry out the strategic plan.

Stage 6: Outreach

Now it is time to start your programs. From the many good programs and tools available, select what will work best for your congregation. Here are some resources to add to your tool box:

- Outreach Magazine (<http://www.outreach.com/>) - Ideas, insights and stories for the Outreach-oriented Church leader
- Salt Shaker Ministries (<http://www.saltshaker.org/>) - personal and small group evangelism training
- Alpha Course (<http://alpha.org/>) - A program for introducing the basics of Christianity to those interested
- Friendship Ablaze (<http://www.friendshipablaze.com/>) - tools for Christian churches to help members invite their friends to know Jesus
- *Seeker Small Groups: Engaging Spiritual Seekers in Life-Changing Discussions* by Gary Poole (available at willowcreek.com)
- *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* by Mark Mittelberg (available at amazon.com)
- Groups Ablaze (<http://www.groupsablaze.com/>) - a dynamic process designed to help local congregations reach out to their unchurched neighbors through small groups

This process involves risk, but it is worth it! Evangelism is one of the highest values in the church and it is one of the least practiced. Let us be the ones to change that reality. Be encouraged and motivated by Paul's words in Romans 10: 14-15: "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'"

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