

Creating a Culture of Evangelism

There are certain qualities that define each community. Some of those qualities are so engrained into a culture that they disseminate almost effortlessly without the community even fully recognizing how it happens. Nevertheless, sometimes even well-engrained qualities can begin to wane and, once lost, are difficult to recover. Evangelism is one such quality that, once established, can flow naturally and without effort. Yet there must be elements in place that allow evangelism to thrive within a community. The following are the primary, although not the only, characteristics of a culture that breeds evangelistic fervor.

Components of an Evangelistic Culture (PACECART)

- Prayer:** Prayer must precede and support all evangelistic efforts.
- Accounts:** People must continually hear that evangelism is actually happening in real life, among people they know and can relate to. Our community must share personal stories of the faithful evangelistic efforts happening within it.
- Conviction:** To create and sustain an effective culture of evangelism, basic core beliefs must be in place. Such beliefs include convictions about heaven and hell, God's intentions for the world, our role in reaching the world, etc.
- Equipping:** While a faithful reliance on God and His working is essential, we should not underestimate the value of being properly trained in evangelism.
- Compassion:** Without love, we gain nothing. If we do not have genuine compassion for people, we will accomplish nothing of significance.
- Awareness:** Opportunities may come daily, but we might not take advantage unless we are in the proper mindset.
- Risk:** Believers must continually surrender self-reliance and step into situations that require God's provision.
- Teaming:** Evangelism should not occur alone. Believers should be uniting together in their efforts to fulfill the Great Commission.
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Prayer

Matthew 9:37-38 ³⁷*Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

An effective evangelistic ministry is characterized by faithful and expectant prayer. People are born hardened to the gospel and require God's softening to be receptive. Before our words of truth will make a difference in a person's heart, a sincere humility must first be in place, which often comes about as the result of fervent prayer. Yet in addition to praying for our unbelieving friends, we should also pray for believers to be mobilized, as Jesus teaches in the above verse. In Jesus' words, "the harvest is plentiful." We often do not realize that people everywhere are ready to hear, and the crucial need is for Christians to recognize it and act. Our prayers can help to accomplish this mobilization.

Practical Steps to Becoming a Team of Prayer

- Pray for each team member, specifically that God would grow them to become "workers". Encourage others to offer the same prayer.
- Pray through a list of unsaved friends, both individually and as a team
- Accountability emails based on agreed upon prayer goals
- Worship and prayer nights

Accounts

Philippians 1:14 *Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.*

When we hear about evangelism happening in our own circles, among people we know and can relate to, our hearts are stirred. There is something powerful about seeing another person take a step of faith. Such faith is contagious. But unfortunately we do not hear stories of faith frequently enough. We must strive to make sure that when the Spirit moves people, it is made known, resulting in praise to God.

Practical Steps to Consistently Share Faith-stimulating Stories on our Teams

- Relaying stories between Pacers
 - Setting aside time during team meeting for stories
 - Have team members regularly share their testimonies of coming to Christ
 - Have people from outside the team come one night to share their testimony
 - Have regular times of thanksgiving in which you reflect upon what God has done in your lives
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Conviction

2Corinthians 4:13-14 ¹³*It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, ¹⁴because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence.*

Evangelism must be founded on some basic core convictions. God's revelation through the Bible must be what motivates us to move. Such core beliefs might include ones such as these:

- Heaven and hell are real
- Every person will face judgment
- God cannot overlook sin
- God wants all men to be saved
- The church is God's primary means for evangelism
- The Great Commission is God's will for every believer

Belief, of course, is built through a variety of means. It is born out of personal time with God and reflection upon his revelation. It can be cultivated from the pulpit or from other godly resources. It might be ironed out in fellowship and conversation. And it grows as faith is applied in life circumstances. Yet we are interested in stimulating a greater depth of belief by adding fresh elements to our discipleship teams. What such elements might we bring?

Practical Steps to Cultivate Conviction on our Teams

- Read Bible
- Memorize Verses
- Read books
- Listen to messages
- Share thoughts from the Word regularly

Equipping

1Corinthians 9:25 *Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.*

Although lack of training can often be an invalid excuse to not evangelize, it is true that some degree of equipping is helpful and necessary for effective evangelism. While every believer has at least some understanding of the steps to salvation, many believers cannot articulate them well. There are many evangelism tools that have proved effective, with different levels of commitment required for mastering each one.

Practical Steps to Equip Team Members

- Go through an evangelism study

- Read through/watch available methods
- Regularly practice on each other
- Go through formalized training such as the Outreach Class
- Regularly schedule times of cold turkey sharing

Compassion

1Corinthians 13:2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

Matthew 9:36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

One of the prime motivations for evangelism should be compassion for people and a deep concern for their eternal well-being. Yet our love for people will depend most heavily on our understanding of the compassion we have been given. He who has been forgiven much loves much. When we grasp the depths of the grace of God, we will be compelled to offer the same grace to others. Of course, grasping God's compassion and extending compassion to others can be developed in many ways.

Practical Steps to Cultivate Compassion on our Teams

- Spend time with the broken
- Confession (understand your own level of brokenness and your dependence on grace)
- Consider effects of sin

Awareness

Colossians 4:5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.

Many of the opportunities we have for evangelism are to be purposefully and intentionally initiated by a believer. Nevertheless, many opportunities God brings to us. Yet it is only when we have evangelism on our minds that we take advantage of these many opportunities. The book of Acts is full of such opportunities. Peter did not plan to preach on the day of Pentecost, but when people came running, he stood up and led 3000 people to Christ. Not long after, Peter and John had compassion on a crippled man, which again stirred up the city and brought an interested crowd. Peter started preaching and the number of believers grew to 5000. Later in Philippi, Paul and his companions were going to a place of prayer and ran into Lydia, who became the first convert in what would become the Philippian church. When we are aware, we run into gospel-sharing opportunities constantly.

Practical Steps to Increase Awareness

- Typically, all the other components feed awareness, so if you are excelling in everything else, you are aware
 - Meet people in church
 - Begin each day praying for open eyes
 - Think through typical conversations. Consider how to redirect them.
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Risk

Hebrews 11:26 He regarded disgrace for the sake of Christ as of greater value than the treasures of Egypt, because he was looking ahead to his reward.

Some teams are full of people that have been Christians for quite some time, who are relatively free of blatant sin, and have fairly deep biblical knowledge. Yet such teams can become stale and ineffective because they have forgotten the discipline of risk-taking. God typically acts when people are resting solely on Him, ensuring that He receives the glory for any fruit that is born.

Practical Steps to Taking Risk as a Team

- Cold Turkey Sharing
 - Passing out flyers
 - Sharing with a family member
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Teaming

John 13:34-35 ³⁴"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

Very few of us can claim that one person led us to Christ. There may have been one person that took the lead, but typically, several people minister to someone before they accept Christ's salvation. And often times, a person has been ministered to over a period of years, with potentially several different groups of people sharing their faith. So we must acknowledge the truth taught in John 13 and John 17, which indicates that perhaps our greatest vehicle for the gospel is our love for each other. If a person never gets to see authentic Christian love, a willingness to consider the gospel message may never come about.

Practical Steps to Develop a "Teaming" Evangelistic Mindset

- Maintain a roster of people that is reviewed each team meeting
- Plan events that give more than one couple/person access to unbelievers
- Share the gospel in teams of two