

**Evangelical Engagement with Contemporary American Culture:
Developing the mode and message of effective one-on-one evangelism in America**

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Project Introduction

This project uses an exegesis of contemporary culture to highlight strengths and weaknesses of one-on-one evangelism in contemporary American culture. The cultural understandings then will inform a discussion on the message and means of evangelism, resulting in practical suggestions for both. A definition of evangelism will be presented through interweaving three critical topics in the field of evangelism. This definition will assume the commitment to evangelism found within Campus Crusade for Christ. It will also consider a variety of evangelical techniques and be refined to one-on-one evangelism, the most common method of engagement in Campus Crusade for Christ. The cultural context of evangelism will then be presented focusing on relevant characteristics of contemporary culture as determined primarily through textual research. Finally, the message and messenger of evangelism will be introduced and discussed. The discussion of the message will focus primarily on the *Four Spiritual Laws*^A as published by Campus Crusade for Christ. The goal of the project is to create a trinity of these three areas of evangelism study – providing tools for future study and suggest a practical method of evangelical engagement in contemporary American culture.

Particularly in the discussion of defining evangelism there will likely be more questions raised than answered. One of the challenges presented in studying evangelism is a lack of academic work on the practical aspects of evangelism. In *Logic of Evangelism*, William Abraham speaks to the fact that there has been very little work in the academy on evangelism. He writes, “One of the undeniable features of modern theology is the scant attention it has given to the topic of evangelism. It is virtually impossible to find a critical, in-depth study of the subject by a major theologian.”¹ In Abraham’s words this is, “Nothing short of a disaster that evangelism has been relegated to the fringes of modern critical theology.”²

The complexity of the topic is due to its intersection of theology of salvation and society, which requires a complex analysis of each. Some of the most defining questions of Christianity must be answered to even an adequate understanding of evangelism. Abraham acknowledges the considerable breath of material encompassed in studying evangelism,

“Reflection on evangelism forces us to wrestle with what the essence of Christianity is and with such topics as conversion, faith, and repentance; it leads us to come to terms with the nature of the kingdom of God and the place of the kingdom in the ministry of Jesus; it leads us to think deeply about the nature of baptism and of Christian initiation; it encourages us to explore the relation between the intellect and the emotions in Christian commitment; it draws us to examine how far the faith of the early centuries can be expressed in the modern world; it makes us tackle anew

^A Refer to “Appendix A” for the *Four Spiritual Laws*.

the nature of apologetics; it makes us focus on how far, if at all, theistic proposals are amenable to rational persuasion. This is just the beginning of the list of topics that can be drawn up.”³

It must be stated that this project by no means provides or encompasses all possible considerations of the church and evangelism. One of the most perplexing, challenging, and divisive discussions in an age of religious tolerance is the justification of evangelism. This discussion is outside the scope of this project. Therefore, the evangelical commitment of Campus Crusade for Christ is embraced.

Given the diversity of the American culture it would be a challenge to even a well-trained sociologist to provide a comprehensive understanding of society. What will be attempted is to present some characteristics of the culture with an intention of focusing only on those characteristics most challenging to a one-on-one evangelical engagement through the use of tools such as the *Four Spiritual Laws*. This tool has been selected due to its wide publications and the similarities it displays with other widely used evangelical tools. The original *Four Spiritual Laws* booklet has over 2.5 billion published copies in 200 languages⁴, not including the publications of very similar evangelical presentations, making it possibly the widest deployed evangelical tool in contemporary culture.

Campus Crusade for Christ is an interdenominational organization with a primary focus of evangelism. Their mission statement reflects this saying, “our goal for this decade is to help give every man, woman, and child in the entire world an opportunity to find new life in Jesus Christ.”⁵ The primary focus of evangelism and this project will be to enable each person an opportunity to find a new life in Christ. This requires sharing a message that will be both meaningful and understandable to the recipient. To this end the primary task of defining evangelism will be engaged.

Evangelism

Before turning to the topic of cultural context, a moment must first be taken to normalize definitions of evangelism by looking at the theory of evangelism and refining that to a segment of evangelism that will be dealt with by this paper. This section will embrace both theological and popular publications on the topic of evangelism bringing together a perspective on evangelism from both the academy and the field. It is important to clarify that this section will look at the role of evangelism in the church and the purpose or goal of evangelism. After looking at cultural context we will then turn to the practicalities – the message and the messenger - of evangelism and be equipped to consider how well these function in meeting the goal of evangelism within the current cultural context. Finally, it is important to understand that there is a wide variety of definitions for evangelism’s role in the church and the goal of evangelism. This section will serve to clarify *one* possible understanding of evangelism, which will be used in this paper, and to provide relevant questions so that the reader may appropriate this definition and following discussion into their own understanding of evangelism.

For many people the term “evangelism” brings with it negative connotations. C. Norman Krause writes that, “Words like pity, monologue, arrogance, exclusivism, and intrusion are associated with evangelization or proclamation.”⁶ We live in a post-Televangelist culture, one that has seen the destructive of those who claim to be the church’s spokesperson. Misconceptions of evangelism can hinder Christians from even considering evangelism as part of the spiritual and devotional life. The misconceptions of evangelism on either side of the equation can hinder participation in evangelism, cause people to abandon evangelism altogether, or become a barrier to faith for the unbeliever.

There is no single definition for evangelism within the Christian church. Seemingly ever denomination and/or church has their own understanding of what evangelism means. For some churches evangelism may be limited or focused to running a food pantry, yet for another evangelism may be wearing sandwich boards downtown and handing out flyers and brochures. As William Norgren writes, “There is a widespread confusion about the definition of evangelism... What one group identifies as evangelism is totally excluded from evangelism by another.”⁷

In an article titled *What The Mainline Denominations Are Doing in Evangelism*, Alfred C. Krass highlights a number of beliefs that mainline churches hold in common. He writes that all definitions of evangelism fall into one of two categories. For one group evangelism can be defined as a separate category of church ministry, while for another group evangelism is integrated into all ministries. For the first group, “Evangelism is an identifiable, unique activity. It centers, in the presentation of Jesus and the response of the Liturgy, education, social ministry may have evangelistic elements but they are *not* evangelism.”⁸ For other denominations all ministries done with a loving outreach to non-Christians is considered evangelism. Without the element of the gospel it would not be considered ministry at all. “Unless social ministry is done within the context of a clear proclamation of the evangel (gospel) it lacks the dimension that makes it ministry.”⁹ Some authors, including Krass and John Witte, hint at these differences by indicating that a distinction is often made between *mission* and *evangelism*. The term “mission” would be focused on the social actions of the church where “evangelism” refers to the verbal proclamation of the good news of Christ crucified. In most cases the work of “mission” includes, but is not limited to, “evangelism.”

Similarly William Abraham writes that there are at least four identifiable conceptions of evangelism. The first concept focuses on the proclamation of the good news about the grace of God in Jesus Christ. This concept is primarily focused on the sharing of the message with few regards to the results of this sharing. Secondly evangelism is constructed as converting people to Christianity. Here the focus is on engaging in a way that will end in a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. In this second conception the focus is on the results more than the message. The third concept of evangelism is more ecclesial with the focus being on incorporating a believer into a fellowship of believers. The fourth concept of evangelism focuses on the intention to initiate people into the reign of God.¹⁰ Abraham incorporates all these definitions into one broad understanding of evangelism being, “the attempt to win others to allegiance to the Christian faith.”¹¹

These definitions or conceptions of evangelism cover a wide range of the activities and beliefs of the Christian church. They include the verbal sharing of our faith with non-Christians. They involve the meeting of physical needs through social ministries. Each definition encompasses different assumptions on the church's role in salvation. If one were to consider for a moment that the overarching goal of evangelism is eternal salvation and reconciliation with God then the earthly goals leading up to this goal are integrally related to one's understanding of salvation. For example, if the goal of evangelism is the initiation of a person into a body of believers, this suggests that salvation comes through becoming a part of a body of believers. If the goal of evangelism is that someone makes a personal commitment to Christ, this implies that a salvation comes through a personal commitment in Christ. The way evangelism is described and the goals of evangelism directly reflect, and are reliant upon, a theology of salvation.

Abraham and Witte both provide their own definition of evangelism. Within these definitions are the typologies outlined by Abraham. Both definitions may appear similar in nature but have different goals, which correspond with a differing opinion on what is important in evangelism. Witte uses a very ecclesiastical understanding of evangelism. He defines evangelism as, "The task of sharing the good news of Jesus the Christ, inviting people to a personal commitment to Christ, and consequently to join the Church."¹² Abraham's approach to evangelism is less focused on the church or on a personal commitment. Abraham defines evangelism as "that set of intentional activities which is governed by the goal of initiating people into the kingdom of God for the first time."¹³ In the definition by Witte there is a place for evangelizing those outside of the Church or those who have left the church. The ultimate goal for Witte would be the initiation of an individual into the church whereas with Abraham's definition the goal is initiation into the kingdom of God. These are only a small sampling how widely the topic of evangelism can be defined.

There are three critical questions that define evangelism. Asking these questions of various definitions of evangelism will serve to clarify the variations between the definitions, and help to identify the commonalities. The questions will be presented with one possible set of answers, which will lead to a focused understanding of evangelism, which will be used for the purposes of this paper. These will also empower the reader to evaluate their own understanding of evangelism so that the discussion following can be appropriated into their beliefs.

What is "The Gospel"?

Many people often refer to the task of evangelism as "Sharing the Gospel", but what exactly is the "Gospel"? The heart of the question is a challenge to consider what message is being shared in the course of evangelism. For some people this may be the story of their own life, for others, the story of Christ's life, or even an interweaving of the two stories. The New Testament offers us four narrations of the story of Christ's life, death, resurrection, and ascension, each with some variation. In the discussion preceding this section there were a number of terms used for the message of evangelism. Terms

such as, “the life, death and resurrection of Christ”, “good news about the grace of God in Jesus Christ” can all refer to the message of evangelism.

In an Catholic-Pentecostal dialogue on evangelism the two denominations came to agreement that the core message of evangelism is centered in Christ. “The content of the message of salvation is Jesus Christ himself, the way to reconciliation with the Father.”¹⁴ A more explicit definition of what constitutes the message of evangelism is found in the words of Pope Paul VI who says, “There is no true evangelism if the name, the teaching, the life, the Kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God are not proclaimed.”¹⁵

The understandings of the meaning of the “Gospel” often carry assumptions on the language in which the message of Christ is presented. Terms such as “sinful”, “sacrifice”, and “forgive” are tightly associated with what identifies the gospel. The pre-Christian relationship with God could be defined as broken, or in need of repair. What constitutes “the gospel” often assumes the use of similar terms. In this case, one might disregard a certain message as the gospel due to the lack of anticipated terminology. In *Case Studies in Evangelism* Tidings asks the question, “Is there a special language of Zion without which many persons do not consider that they are speaking religiously?”¹⁶ Is the understanding of what the gospel is couched within a certain set of terminology that must be used? If so, can the gospel be proclaimed without using this terminology? As will be discussed later a separation between the “gospel” and the use of a particular language must be made in order to evangelize to a cultural and religiously plural society.

A theological discussion on what composes the core message of Christianity is beyond the scope of this paper. For the purpose of this paper, the term “Gospel” will be defined as the message of redemption through the grace of God in the life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ. The “Gospel” then is the historical message of the Christological event as well as the message of Christ’s substitutionary atonement for our sins.

The Purpose and Goal of Evangelism

The purpose and eventual goal of evangelism must be understood if there is any hope to have a meaningful definition of evangelism. The hope of Christianity is our salvation and redemption through the Christological event. Evangelism is done with the hope of providing others with access God’s grace. The purpose of evangelism then is tied to the belief in the possibility of redemption and reconciliation of our relationship with God.

Abraham reminds us that a relationship with God is a personal one and one that must be embraced on an individual basis. He writes, “God has no grandchildren. Each new generation must find its own way into the kingdom.”¹⁷ Evangelism therefore must be generational to help each generation find their way into the kingdom of God. This necessitates a careful exegesis of the culture is therefore necessary.

The goal of evangelism must go beyond a simple informational message, it must be directed towards eventual conversion. In the words of Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg in *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, “The goal is not merely to tell people about Christ. That’s just the process we use to reach the goal, which is to lead people to Christ.”¹⁸ The message alone does not constitute evangelism but must challenge a transformation in the receiver. Hybels and Mittelberg again write, “A good message helps people understand something, but it also inspires them to do something: to make a decision about an area of their life that really matters.”¹⁹ The Catholic- Pentecostal Dialogue affirms a goal of eventual conversion as the goal of proclaiming the Christian message.²⁰

Conversion and initiation into the kingdom of God is not a simple matter. To understand what the end goal of evangelism might look like the unanswerable question of human salvation that must be defined or at least considered. This must be understood as the purpose of evangelism lies on the course of this journey. There are a number of possible answers to the question of salvation. Some believe in what is termed the “silent Christian” where salvation is bestowed upon the entire population regardless of their beliefs. For others, someone with a faith, public, or private, in the Christ is sufficient. Others suggest that Christ must be personally “accepted” in order to be a participant in Christ's redemption. They gate can get narrower to include only those being baptized and formally initialized into a Christian church or even into *a particular* church. The Catholic-Pentecostal Dialogue highlights the different understandings of conversion. “For Catholics, conversion means a lifelong experience, whereas Pentecostals generally think in terms of a radical, sudden conversion experience.”²¹ Christ only tells us, “Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.” (Matthew 7:13-14)

For the purpose of this paper the goal of evangelism will be conversion and initiation into the kingdom of God. This conversion and initiation is through placing one’s faith in the Christological event as substitutionary atonement for our sins, resulting in our forgiveness and reconciliation through God’s grace. This faith is both an acknowledgement of God's actions as much as an acknowledgment of one’s failures. Faith may be expressed in words or in one’s heart or actions and is equally valid in any means. This faith must go beyond an intellectual acceptance of facts and signify a transformation in the source of the individual’s assurance of forgiveness. There is no membership requirement to be a participant in the Kingdom of God. A faithful person may choose, and must be encouraged, to become a member of a particular community of faith and may seek to be initialized and baptized into that community. Abraham provides a crucial reminder that the process of evangelism is not one single event, but a chain of events following and leading one into the kingdom of God. “we need in our evangelism to find room for conversion, baptism, and a commitment to love God and neighbor as elements of initiation.”²²

Verbal Proclamation and Evangelism

Even understanding the message and the goal of evangelism does not fully provide an adequate definition of evangelism. It is important to consider what actual act constitutes evangelism. As previously discussed many consider much of the Church's ministry to be evangelism. For example one might consider praying for a non-Christian as a valid means of evangelism. Others may consider meeting the physical needs of a disadvantaged person as a form of evangelism. Is verbal proclamation of the gospel a necessary element in evangelism?

Alfred Krass identified as the first common characteristics among mainly denominational definitions of evangelism and acknowledgement that proclamation has not been sufficiently emphasized.²³ There are benefits to including proclamation of evangelism as a crucial element in evangelism. Abraham writes that, "We need to emphasize that by 'proclamation of the gospel' we mean the *verbal* proclamation, in order to prevent evangelism from sliding into a thoroughly vague notion that stands for everything and anything that the church does in witness and service."²⁴ Declaring verbal proclamation of evangelism provides a measure of accountability within ministry to ensure that evangelism is actually occurring not simply being assumed. Abraham writes that "defining evangelism as the verbal proclamation of the gospel provides a clear, manageable concept that is rooted in the early history of the world and that calls the church to excellence in communicating the Christian gospel to those who are prepared to listen."²⁵

Verbal proclamation will be considered a required component of evangelism. In the case of this project the verbal proclamation will be the focal point regarding the discussion of evangelism.

Conclusion

For the purpose of this project the focus of evangelism will be on a one-on-one style of evangelism. Within this evangelism, the "gospel" will be construed as the historical Christological event and the message of Christ's substitutionary atonement for humanity's sin. The goal of evangelism will be initiation into the kingdom of God. The initiation comes through faith by God's grace and may or may not be verbally manifested. Finally, evangelism must consist of verbal proclamation in a manner that will challenge the beliefs of the receiver, however is not comprised of only verbal proclamation. The focus will be on the challenging proclamation of the gospel in a one-on-one evangelical engagement. In order to understand how the Christological event can be proclaimed in an understandable and meaningful way the cultural context this message is proclaimed within must be analyzed in order to find their intersecting points.

Culture

Evangelism is the act of creating an intersection between the gospel message and the experiences and lives of the recipients and their culture. The needs and challenges of each culture continually change. As the challenges of each culture arise, evangelism must adapt to present the gospel in a relevant fashion; considering the challenges and needs of the culture. This requires a continual discernment and reading of the culture.

Any given culture will not be homogenous. There will always be dissenters in the culture who do not express the same needs or pose the same challenges, or present different challenges. The goal here is to bring together various works presenting the major challenges facing evangelism within the current cultural context of America. This information is not composed from a scientific study but rather a collection of works and observations. In the section following four prominent characteristics will be discussed that present modern challenges for evangelism. Following the discussion on culture evangelism will be revisited to see what message and mode of communication is adequate for these challenges and how the *Four Spiritual Laws* material from Campus Crusade for Christ meets or fails to meet these challenges.

Religious Pluralism

One of the many realities presented by the globalization of the economy and the age of information is the prominence of a diversity of religions encountering one another on a daily basis. People of different religions encounter one another daily in their places of employment as government officials, as teachers, as social workers, counselors. As David C. Scott writes, "Sikhs are our taxi drivers, accountants and dentists. Buddhists are professionally basketball coaches as well as our financial advisors and grocers. Hindus are our doctors, computer programmers, and scientific researchers. Indeed, America's diversity is now more visible than ever before."²⁶ In a sense there is a spirit of an ecumenism that occurs as people of these religions come together for their common economic or societal cause. The danger is that the culture can become one that is populated by a blind population who are not aware or interested in their spiritual surroundings but rather put them aside in the interest of their everyday activities.

The reality is that there are spiritual interactions within the culture. These interactions occur more often in a corporal sense and but can also become very personal. Traditionally it has been accepted to leave religion at home, or not to talk about "religion and politics" at work or in social settings. Many Christians however do not feel comfortable compartmentalizing their beliefs in such a way. In the corporal sense, religious communities may join forces for social action or mourning. As was the case on September 11, 2001 a diverse community of religions came together for communal mourning and prayer. For one wishing to participate in any such conversations or activities the implications of this diversity must be taken seriously.

Dr. Peter Berger has called the issues surrounding religious interaction in a pluralistic society "the most important topic in the contemporary religious world."²⁷ Modern culture doesn't just happen to be pluralistic, it is defined by its pluralism. Leslie Newbegin describes modern society as, "not merely a society which is in fact plural in the variety of cultures, religions, and life-styles which it embraces, but a pluralistic in the sense that this plurality is celebrated as things to be approved and cherished."²⁸

There are two main contributing factors to the increased importance of religious pluralism and evangelism. First is the increasing difficulty to "write-off" other religions. In the circle of Christianity, it is often heard that you can know of someone's faith through his or her works, which has often been used as a litmus test for religious validity. Other religions with violent tendencies were easily discounted, as their works were deemed outside of God's will. Atheism could also be discounted through comparing the works of an atheist to those of a Christian (assuming one would find more charity in the Christian believer). Additionally, theologians such as Leslie Newbegin propose that the plausibility structures of society have long been tied with the dominant religion of that society. Newbegin writes that, "Most people for most history have lived in societies where one religion was dominant and others were marginal. What the sociologists call the 'plausibility structure' was provided by the dominant religion."²⁹ As pluralism becomes more of an embraced value than a fact, the dominant religion no longer enjoys this privileged associating with the plausibility structure of the society. The position once occupied by religious systems is now occupiable by tangible facts and values of tolerance. In this society the increasing prevalence of peaceful faiths such as the Bahá'í faith confessing that "The principle of the unity of religion is at the center of the Bahá'í teachings"³⁰ begin to challenge the ethics of Christianity as the one true religion. In the pluralist society, the other religion can easily be conceived as more accepting and loving to the neighbor.

Secondly, religions have lost the ability to maintain spiritual isolation. As Konrad Raiser writes, "There are no frontiers any more and no empty spaces into which people can move to find safety and a basis for their existence."³¹ Furthermore, Raiser remarks that this is not a reversible process, "there is no way back into the previous existence of secluded cultural communities."³² Simply stated, religious pluralism has reached a state that cannot be ignored. As culture makes claims against religious practices and religious practices make claims against culture the issues of pluralism must be taken into account. Writing in the context of a Lutheran response to pluralism Paul Rajashekar reaffirms the importance of this topic.

People from different religious traditions have not only come into greater contact but are also being exposed to mutual claims and commitments. Religious faiths that used to be self-enclosed and accustomed to living in isolation from one another now find themselves in a situation where they can no longer ignore the presence of the others... This new awareness has thus compelled Christian theologians and scholars to address the issue of religious pluralism and diversity as a significant issue on our theological agenda. For many, it is the single most important topic facing Christian theology today.³³

Christianity must also face the fact that other world religions have not only survived but they have expanded. The pluralistic encounter is one that is most prevalent in the event of an evangelical witness. The nature of this witness has often changed. The missionary activities of the world are no longer predominately from mainline Christianity. With the participation of other religions in missionary activities, confrontation is inevitable. Burlan Sizemore states this transformation in his article "Some Reflections on the Christian Encounter with Other Faiths", "Confrontation with vigorous, non-Christian faiths is a fact. Not only have the traditional faiths refused to fold before Christianity, they have become missionaries themselves."³⁴ Diana Eck makes the challenge that pluralism actually requires this encounter and must go beyond a simple tolerance of others. She writes that, "I would ask whether pluralism does not ask more of the encounter with one another than simply tolerance.... Sometimes tolerance may be all that can be expected. It is a step forward from active hostility, but it is a long way from pluralism."³⁵

The challenges religious pluralism imposes on evangelism cannot be under emphasized. A response to pluralism both affects the act of evangelism and the way in which evangelism is done. As Sizemore writes, "The disposition one has toward other faiths will determine the shape of the missionary task or, indeed, determine whether it is to be done at all."³⁶ In *Reinventing Evangelism*, Donald Posterski comments on the method of evangelism and writes that,

"The emergence of a pluralistic culture has serious consequences for determining what are acceptable methods of evangelism. Confrontational styles of witnessing were never popular, but today there are offensive. The claim that there was only way to God was at least marketable in the past, but in today's milieu it is repulsive. Some people would like to turn back the cultural clock. But that is not an option. Engaging pluralism with a full awareness of how the informal laws of life work in this age is the better alternative."³⁷

The challenge of pluralism is twofold. First is the theological question of how other religions are to be accepted and if evangelism is necessary. Such a broad question deserves a brief comment and is best addressed through referencing outside scholarship on this topic. In the text written by the Lutheran World Federation's working group on pluralism Carl Braaten grounds this discussion in the fact that as Christians whose faith is found in the words of the historic creeds that Christ is our only known means of salvation and this fact necessitates evangelism.

"The redeeming presence of the historical Christ must be communicated through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. We simply have no certain knowledge about how the same salvation might be communicated through non-churchly channels. Therefore, the church is under orders to follow through in mediating to the nations an explicit encounter with the historical Christ through words and deeds that witness to his salvific significance."³⁸

The popular counterargument for this is that of the silent Christian. The silent or unknowing Christian is someone who falls under the salvation of Christ's grace simply by not having rejected the message of salvation through Christ. Abraham gives some justification to this point using the example of Abraham's relationship with God.

If Christ's activity extends through all creation, and if it is possible in principle to be saved without hearing of Jesus, then it is reasonable to infer that people outside the biblical traditions may also be saved and acquitted. Clearly such people will not know that their salvation has come to them through the work of Christ, but then Abraham did not know that either and this does not at all disqualify him from salvation.³⁹

This issue concerning the quiet, unknown, idle, Christian cannot be fully developed here. The validity of this argument does not affect the validity of the ministry of evangelism. If one is saved by God's grace through Jesus Christ then one deserves to be told that message.

The second issue raised by the engagement with those of other religious beliefs is the logistical problem. The logistical problem is primarily grounded in the language or ideas that may have certain significance to one religious group and a different or no significance to another group. For example, the message of a reconciled relationship with God is something that has eternal significance to Christians that is typically referred to as "salvation." The significance of this term would differ for someone who does not believe that there is more to existence than life on Earth. The use of the term "salvation" also implies that there is something that one needs to and/or can be saved from. This may not be the beliefs of the evangelized. It is important therefore to seriously consider the terms which may have alternative or no meanings to the other group or individual and properly establish the usage of these terms or ideas. Sizemore writes, "The language of one faith tends not to be interchangeable with the language of another faith."⁴⁰

Secularism

Religious pluralism allows for the identity for a people of different religious beliefs including those who are irreligious but does not account for those who fall somewhere in between. Many in society claim membership to a religious tradition, yet do not practice that tradition or know the basic beliefs of the tradition. Secularism provides a means of understanding and identifying this portion of society. In *How to Reach Secular People*, George Hunter III describes three types of secular people. The members of the first group are what he terms "agnostics." An agnostic is someone who has no understanding or knowledge of what Christians are talking about and have no Christian memory. The second group is "notional" Christianity. Unlike the first group, they have a distinct memory of Christian stories however they consider themselves Christian because of a cultural affiliation with Christianity. The final group is "nominal" Christianity. These members identify are often active in churches but mistake civil religion for Christianity and miss the message of the gospel in their lives.⁴¹ Hunter writes

“all three groups are secular, for their lives are not significantly influenced by the Christian faith.”⁴²

Secularism has a prominent role in the religious demographics of the United States. Hunter estimates there are at least 120 million secular people who are age 14 or older in the United States.⁴³ Based on the data of the 1990^B census 74.4% of the population is 18 or older, with a total population of approximately 249 million people.⁴⁴ Assuming equal distribution of ages for those 18 and under this means that 80.1%, or 199 million people, of the U.S. population is 14 or older. Therefore, by Hunter’s estimates 60% of the U.S. population is secular. In Fox and Morris’ book *Faith Sharing* they recognize a continued trend towards secularism in the U.S. and comment that this has been a fundamental shift from two or three generations ago.⁴⁵

George Hunter provides a list of ten characteristics of secular people.⁴⁶ Of these characteristics, the following are most significant to the task of evangelism and are unique to the identity of secular.

- Secular people have little to no knowledge of Christianity. We therefore cannot assume that people will know or understand the stories and concepts often referred to in evangelism.
- More importance is given towards life than death. People are primarily concerned with living a full and rewarding life rather. Quoting Alan Walker, Hunter writes, “Religion used to be related to the moment of dying; now it must be related to the moment of living.”⁴⁷
- There is a shift from a feeling of guilt to a feeling of doubt. It should not be assumed that people feel an anxiety or an awareness of being separated from God. Those who do feel guilt, we are reminded by Hunter, are more likely to see a therapist than a minister.
- People have a negative image of the church and are skeptical of the message of the church. Secular people assume that the Christian faith only applies to the private life of an individual and do not believe that their hopes can be met by Christ.
- Secular people have shifted from a culture of belonging to isolation and alienation. Hunter argues that people have been alienated from others in society, their neighbors, and nature. Along with this alienation is the loss of felt needs to belong, which has been replaced with a satisfaction and acceptance of isolation.

Unlike religious pluralism, there is no direct challenge to the ministry of evangelism. It is in secularism that the need for evangelism can be most clearly seen. Paul Tillich proposes that secularism should be rejected by all religions and writes,

^B Most relevant data as *How to Reach Secular People* was published in 1992.

“Secularism, i.e., the affirmation of secular culture in contrast to, and to the exclusion of, religion can only be rejected by Christianity as well as by every other religion.”⁴⁸ The need for evangelism is expressed by secularism’s drift from religion and should be challenged to return to religion. Secularism, however, presents its own needs, challenges and skepticisms to the evangelical message of the church in return.

Postmodernism

The postmodern notion of authorities and the rejection of meta-narrative is the most challenging aspect of engaging postmodernist with the Christian message. As Richard Mouw writes, “Evangelism is the propagation of a meta-narrative.”⁴⁹ The Christian story has traditionally claimed to be the story of the salvation history of the world, a meta-narrative of God’s revelation to humankind. The notion of a universal truth has been lost with the advent of postmodernism. What used to be true for all people is now true for only one person at a time. Rich Richardson writes that, “The idea of the truth has been transformed. In medieval culture, truth was religious and universal. In modern times, truth was scientific and universal. In a postmodern world, truth is experiential and personal or communal.”⁵⁰

Christianity has lost any preferential treatment in a postmodern, pluralistic culture. As Harry Poe writes, “Christianity has no special status in the postmodern age, but it is as valid as any other worldview and worth of exploring.”⁵¹ The postmodern age is one of exploration, where all possible destinations are equally valuable and interesting, and the most genuine destination, if one is found, will be the one accepted as true. As Richardson writes, “People aren’t looking for absolutes or universal truth. People today are looking for truth that is real, truth that resonates with their lives, their experiences and the experiences of their community.”⁵²

Postmodernism has also introduced a new meaning of authority. In the past authority was gained by the validity and sensibility of the message, which was easier separated from the messenger. Within the postmodern society, the validity of the message is integrally tied with the messenger. As Harry Poe writes, “In a pluralistic society, the legitimacy of any idea, religion, or belief will often depend upon the character and personal qualities of the person expressing them.”⁵³

Between the combination of religious pluralism and postmodernism, scripture has also lost cultural authority. Many postmodernists take offense to anyone or anything that tells them how they should live their lives and seek self-discovery. The rejection of meta-narratives extends even to the rejection of meta-ethics. There is nothing universal and everything is subjected to an individual’s understanding and experience.

It is important to understand that postmodernism does not explicitly reject the authority of Christ or even scriptural authority. Many have not had the opportunity to know or understand Christ is or what the Bible says. What is rejected is Christianity’s claim to be an authority. Postmodernists are on a quest to find an authority and Christ must be presented as that authority.

Evolutionism

Due to the challenges presented by pluralism, secularism, and postmodernism, the Christian story is not accepted unquestionably as a truth for all humanity. This is partially due to the postmodern rejection of meta-narratives however is also due to scientific advantages. The prominent acceptance of evolution as the theory of human development poses an underlying challenge to evangelism. A 1997 survey by Gallup as reported in ABC News reports that 49% of Americans believe in evolution.⁵⁴ Of these 39% believed in theistic evolution, a God-guided evolution theory, however even this is significant.

What is significant for evangelism is not the validity of the creationist theory but an understanding of the state of humanity at this point in time. Traditionally Christianity and evangelism have relied upon the understanding of a “fallen” humanity. A sense that humanity once was something better and can return to that through the grace provides the understanding of reconciliation. With the rise in the acceptance of evolution the image of Eden as the starting place for all humanity is easily forgotten. Haven left the Garden of Eden as just an image of misinformed science culture has lost the notion of a broken relationship with God. Without Eden, there is no image of an untainted humanity and no notion of fallen humanity. There is only an image of humanity perfecting itself through evolutionary chance.

The underlying challenge presented by evolution is that chance will improve humanity and that humanity is becoming perfect through evolution. A message of fallen humanity is contradictory to an evolving humanity. Evangelism must be able to demonstrate the separation between God and humanity without reliance upon the concept of original sin and fallen humanity.

Points of Engagement

Although a number of challenges are presented to traditional evangelical message in the current culture, humanity continues to need of God. The beliefs and needs of culture have changed and are expressed differently, however societal needs still exist. These expressed needs and desires of culture can and should be a place for engagement. Engagement with the expressed needs provides a method to ground any discussion on the authority in individual experiences.

Paul E. Little writes of seven human needs that are helpful in evangelical engagements. They are: inner emptiness, purposelessness, fear of death, desire for inner peace, loneliness, lack of self-control, and desire to integrate thinking.⁵⁵ Pritchard also lists the following expressed needs of the postmodernist: personal fulfillment, identity, companionship, marriage, family, relief of stress, and meaning and morality.⁵⁶

Taken together with the characteristics given of secularism there are two main needs of current culture that are common to all three descriptions. First, the focus has shifted from death, where a life-after-death message is sought, to life. This means that

people are becoming more concerned with the life they live than with what happens after death. This manifests itself in the desires for things such as purpose, self-control, inner peace, fulfillment, etc. Secondly, there is a desire for belonging. People are alienated and isolated and seek a community of belonging. This is found in the expressed characteristic of loneliness and the needs for companionship, marriage, etc.

Richardson's suggestion of evangelism within the current cultural context embraces these very needs. He writes, "People are looking for truth that is *experiential*, for *communities* in which faith is *lived out* and spiritual experiences that are tangible and real. So experience comes before explanation. Second, people are looking for a safe and *accepting community* in which to work out their identity. So belonging comes before believing."⁵⁷

If evangelism is to be taken seriously then all the characteristics of the culture must be acknowledged, understood, and seriously considered. It is only when the culture is understood that evangelism can be effective.

Evangelism Message

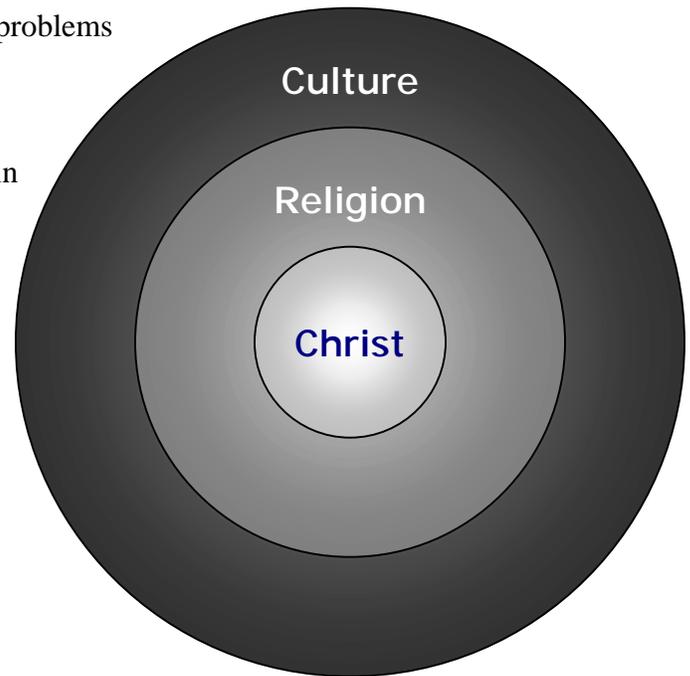
When considering the verbal proclamation aspect of evangelism two components must be considered: the message and the messenger. Evangelism really signifies a process of conversion and discipleship, but in the *moment of evangelism*, the message of crucial importance. This moment of evangelism occurs during the discussion of the Christian and the non-Christian when the conversation begins turns to a discussion of spirituality and or religion. When the Christian begins to explain the object, meaning, and results of their faith the moment of evangelism is occurring.

During the moment of evangelism, many people choose to employ evangelical tools, such as the *Four Spiritual Laws* to assist in clearly explaining their faith. This is when the message is important. The message must be something that is clear and understandable to the receiver. It must be relevant to their lives. This is where an adequate understanding of culture is important. The message must also express the conviction of the presenter; any manufactured presentation will not suffice and will be transparent to the receiver. It is crucial that the message be one that is embodied in the presenter.

These requirements do not rule out the use of evangelical tools, but do provide warning that such a tool should not be considered the only means of evangelism. This moment can be one of insecurity for the presenter, as one puts themselves on the line and becomes vulnerable. An evangelical tool can be extremely helpful in ensuring that clear, concise, and understandable message is presented. When properly used it will be used as a guide and a resource in the conversation and will not be used as *the* conversation.

The Historical Message

The evangelical message has had some problems historically speaking. The message of the Christological event has traditionally been co-proclaimed with a message of cultural and religious requirements. The gospel, embodied in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, becomes embodied in the requirements of particular religious traditions. These religious traditions have often served as the plausibility structures for societies and therefore the religious message and culture message become indistinguishable. It is only recently that the need to distinguish between the cultural message and the gospel has been realized. William Norgen writes that, “our increasing knowledge of culture and society now reveals to us what we have often preached as ‘the word’ has actually been a particular cultural expression of it; that, in seeking to convert a person to my belief, I am often really seeking to assimilate him to my culture.”⁵⁸ Similarly in describing the Hindu mission in India, H.L. Richard writes that, “‘Conversion’ in India means this sociological change; that Indian evangelicals also include a spiritual aspect in their understanding is easily missed by Hindus who are deeply offended by this sociological aspect which Indian evangelicals have yet to distance themselves from.”⁵⁹



Traditional Evangelical Message

Christianity has never been tied to a particular culture nor has it had explicit culture commitment with it. All cultures are equally incapable of being a vehicle of salvation. As Lamin Sanneh writes, “Its (Christianity’s) basic outline is very simple: from the point of God’s ‘plan of salvation,’ all cultures are equally valid, if equally inadequate.”⁶⁰ Sanneh also reminds us of the ministry to the Gentiles in the New Testament, indicating that Christ’s salvation extended beyond the Jewish culture.

The difficulty with cultures is their ability to both good and harm. The question for Christianity becomes what to do with a culture, especially given the social justice message of the Gospel. In a written discussion on evangelism in a pluralistic American society the group notes that, “A major problem for evangelism is to determine how and to what extent the church stands with a culture, how and to what extent it stands over against a culture; a major responsibility is to articulate both the revelatory and the demonic possibilities of a culture.”⁶¹

The answer to the problem of cultures has been to contextualize the gospel. Newbegin writes that a contextualization of the gospel is not to empty it of its power or

its prophetic value, but is rather to ascribe to it a trans-cultural power, an ability to retain its meaning in a variety of contexts and languages. “True contextualization accords to the gospel its rightful primacy, its power to penetrate every culture and to speak within each culture, in its own speech and symbol, the word which is both no and yes, both judgment and grace” he continues saying that, “the question of contextualization is the question about how the gospel ‘comes alive’ in particular contexts.”⁶²

Equally, the contextualization of the gospel does not result in a unquestioned toleration of all cultures. The contextualization of the gospel allows the gospel to critically speak to the culture, and critique the culture in its own way. The transformed culture can then serve as a testament to Christ, similarly to a transformed individual. Konrad Raiser writes that, “The gospel will affirm some aspects of a culture while challenging, critiquing and transforming others. Through such processes, cultures may be transfigured and become bearers of the gospel. At the same time, cultures nourish, illuminate, enrich, and challenge the understanding and articulation of the gospel.”⁶³

The gospel is for the Jew and the Gentile, the American, the African-American and equally the Latino. In presenting a pure gospel message our first call is to ensure that the culture is only presented as something transformed and redeemed through the work of Christ in the culture.

The gospel has equally been often couched in a message of religious requirements. This is not to say that religion is of no value, but it is to say that religion can be confused as a requirement for salvation. Often times Christians present Christianity in an apologetic mode, expressing the best Christianity has to offer and the worst of another religion. The problem being that in presenting the gospel message the presenter has confused the message of Christ’s work with the message of the work of the church. In engaging someone of another faith the Christian needs to be open to the fact that God can and does work in people of other religions and non-religious peoples. Jesudas Athyal challenges such self-righteousness writing; “The gospel that meets people of other faiths with the message of salvation needs also to challenge the church to transcend its walls of cultural and historical prejudices. This is a process of double conversion. While bearing witness to the redemptive act of God through Christ in history, but the evangelist and the church need to be open to the possibility of God’s presence and work among people of all faiths.”⁶⁴

Some go as far to suggest that a Christian conversion can occur within another religion. Witte and Martin write

“Such conversion can take forms other than leaving one’s religion and joining another. It may take the form of one’s revision and reformulation of one’s own religious tradition. Of course, in some other cases evangelism can and may lead to leaving one’s native tradition, community, and beliefs behind and joining a totally new community and tradition.”⁶⁵

This is not meant to suggest that religion be separated from evangelism but rather that a very fine line must be drawn, for the sake of clarity, between preaching the gospel and the initiation into the church. Although the evangelical process requires that one seek baptism and full initiation into the church the evangelical moment requires clarity for the sake of the gospel. Therefore, the gospel should be allowed to stand more on its own merits rather than be encapsulated within the message of the church. Additionally baptism and full initiation into the church is only *part* of the Christian journey of salvation. In the moment of evangelism what is most critical is to explain where one starts the Christian journey, in a relationship with Christ.

John Wesley was able to acknowledge the balance that must be made in this regard. Hunter writes that, “Wesley also apparently concluded that the two usual models for making Christians were both unproductive for these secular people - (1) the Anglican reliance upon rites of passage, and (2) the Anabaptist model of the communicating the message to people in the world and then, once converted, welcoming them into the Church. Both strategies, in Donald McGavran's words, ‘ought to work, but do not.’”⁶⁶ According to Paul Tillich this is exactly what has been done in the Gospel of John with the identity of Jesus as the Logos – separating Christ’s identity from a religious tradition.⁶⁷ Therefore, a precedent has been set, showing that the message of Christ can be freed from the message of religious requirements. As Paul Rajashekar writes, “Finally, the only unique thing Christianity has to offer the world is a witness to Christ.”⁶⁸

To engage in evangelism then means a commitment to be willing to ask the question of how the gospel “comes alive” for a particular religion as well as for a particular culture. This does not mean a superficial interpretation of their sacred writings but it is a more costly venture and requires a greater commitment. True contextualization requires engaging in a dialogue with others, telling them the story of Christ and presenting the message in a means that the Gospel of Christ challenges their beliefs.

The Four Spiritual Laws as an Evangelical Message

The first thing to acknowledge about the Four Spiritual Laws is that it is not evangelism; it is a message and a tool to be used in evangelism. Although the Four Spiritual Laws is the focus of this discussion the message presented in the Four Spiritual Laws is paralleled in many other evangelical tools such as *The Bridge To Life*, used by the Navigators, and is often found in various forms in the back pages of many Bibles. For those not familiar with the Four Spiritual Laws they can be found in their entirety in Appendix A of this paper.

Presenting the gospel using the message embodied in the Four Spiritual Laws provides a number of advantages. First, the Four Spiritual Laws are a simple, concise form of the gospel message. They divide the gospel into four concrete points that can be simple to structure a conversation around. As Campus Crusade for Christ writes, “the Four Spiritual Laws represent the basic truths of the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”⁶⁹ It is only the basic truths that comprise the Four Spiritual Laws, with no distinguishable

cultural or religious message embodied within the message of the Christological event and its meaning for humanity.

Secondly, the Four Spiritual Laws starts by affirming the worth of the individual. The first law states, “God loves you and created you to know Him personally. He has a wonderful plan for your life.” This statement speaks directly to two of the expressed needs of the postmodern culture: acceptance and a purpose for life. The acceptance and purpose are both stemming from God’s concern for humanity, and are given rather than earned.

The Four Spiritual Laws presents a message of Christ, not one of religion and culture. The second law speaks directly to this point. The second law states “People are sinful and separated from God, so we cannot know Him personally or experience His love and plan.” This law however goes on to state that there is nothing a person can do to resolve this separation. The explanation of the second law states, “people are continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through our own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion - but he inevitably fails.”

Evangelism within a religiously plural society must be different than in a purely secular society. In the past evangelism has often been seen as a recall to religion but in the modern context many people are already religious.⁷⁰ The Four Spiritual Laws accomplishes this point in the second law. It is here that the Christian religion stands on an equal playing field with all other religions – as equally incapable of being the provision of reconciliation. The message is equally poignant for both the secular Christian as it is to the non-Christian. Religion is listed as a work of humans in an attempt to provide reconciliation with God, and all human works equally fail at this task. The third law expresses that the only means available to reconcile the relationship with God is through the grace of God manifested in Jesus Christ. “Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through Him alone we can know God personally and experience God's love and plan.”

One difficulty in explaining what it means to become a Christian is to articulate the complicated meaning of faith. The fourth law provides a simple understanding of the importance of faith, “We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.” The language of the fourth law has proven to make this point controversial in the inter-denominational work of Campus Crusade for Christ however the fourth law has many strengths. The fourth spiritual law expresses that faith is more than a simple intellectual understanding and affirmation of facts but that faith represents a transformation in ones belief. Within the fourth law faith is described, “Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will.”

Regardless of its controversial theology the fourth spiritual law continues to be an effective means to aid one in beginning their faith journey as a Christian. Paul Rajashekar expresses the significance of the theology of justification by faith, a theology embraced by the Four Spiritual Laws, writing “Justification sola fide cuts at the root of

human pride and self-divinization in order to let God be God. Faith alone allows God alone to do the work of salvation; the religions try to achieve salvation through human works.”⁷¹

As with any tool the Four Spiritual Law has weaknesses in engaging the contemporary American culture. Many of the weaknesses can likely be attributed to the fact that the Four Spiritual Laws were originally written in 1968 with little change since then. Although the Four Spiritual Laws are equally valid in terms of the Christological message today as there were then, changes in the culture may make them a less effective tool for presenting the message in the evangelical moment.

One major assumption is that scripture, and God for that matter, have a cultural authority. The Four Spiritual Laws are supported almost exclusively through scriptural references. The problems with this is that many people in a contemporary culture do not know or understand the context of these scriptural verses which gives them little authority in their lives. The authority in a postmodern culture comes from personal experiences. Therefore the Four Spiritual Laws should be supplemented through helping others understand their separation from God using experiences in their own lives. The life and experiences of the presenter can also then be used as a witness to the validity of the points being presented.

It assumes that people are noticeably unsatisfied and that they recognize their dissatisfaction. If someone does not feel that they are dissatisfied in their life there is no need for an alternative plan for their life. Knowing that there are expressed needs of the postmodern culture it would likely be fruitful to explore how what God’s plan means and what that might look like in someone’s life.

The Four Spiritual Laws expect people to recognize what Christianity typically considers sin in their lives and to acknowledge that there is such a thing as sin. Many individuals do not believe in the concept of sin and believe that guilt is culturally imposed. This is a very difficult point to overcome and is only compounded by the issues posed by the problem of evolution and a continually improving state of humanity. An approach that would emphasize more the separation between God and humanity may be a clearer approach. Alternatively one might wish to simply emphasize the brokenness and fragmented state of humanity.

In an intellectual culture the simplicity of the Four Spiritual Laws can also serve as a detriment. There are many questions implied or present to an unbeliever; some are answered, others are not. For those that are answered the Four Spiritual Laws relies on faith not fact^C. Most importantly is that there is no explanation on how Christ is able to

^C For the non-Christian any evidence given through scriptural references should be considered a “faith” argument rather than a “fact” argument, as scripture is not given authoritative state. One must have faith in the validity of scripture in order for scripture to be seen as a factual argument.

“pay for our sins.” For someone who does not know who Christ is and what is special about Christ this message may seem hypocritical in light of the second spiritual law. The second law explains that God is holy and people are sinful but the third law does not explain how Christ crosses the gap from God to humanity. The Four Spiritual Laws would be strengthened through a further explanation of the economics of salvation: How Christ can reconcile a relationship with God and explain Christ as substitutionary atonement for one’s sins. An intellectual culture does not demand factual evidence for Christ’s life, death, resurrection and ascension but it does expect a message that makes sense.

An Alternative Message

An alternative tool for evangelical engagement should be considered. Such a tool must focus on an ability to engage with individuals of a variety of religions and non-religions and should attempt the brevity of the Four Spiritual Laws. In the secular, postmodern world there should be no assumptions that the existence of God is affirmed or that a relationship with God is affirmed as something to be desired – this is exactly what the secularist has drifted away from. In postmodernism, Scripture does not authority, nor is it considered as factual evidence for the postmodernist. According to a 2001 Gallup survey 20% of Americans consider the Bible to be a book of “fables, legends, history and moral precepts” but not the Word of God.⁷² Regardless of one’s personal agreement with these beliefs, these are the beliefs that must be considered in evangelism for this is the audience of evangelism. This leaves the only method of engagement as the felt needs of the postmodern culture, which must be taken as a grain of salt. Many postmodernists believe that even these needs are culturally conditioned and would not exist had they matured in isolation.

This does not leave much for means of evangelism however there must be faith that humanity is able to perceive a set of unmet needs. These can then be explained by a broken relationship with God – embodied in human experience, which can be resolved only through a faith in Christ. Such an evangelical tool might be similar to the following:

1. Humanity has expressed common needs. Whether learned through cultural experience or innate in humanity people express the need for: personal fulfillment, identity, companionship, marriage, family, relief of stress, meaning, and morality.
2. Some of these needs may be met by our relationships or our work but others will not. Regardless of how we have acquired these needs, the feelings of emptiness and dissatisfaction are not easily overcome.
3. These unmet needs are the result of a failed relationship with God. Dante describes the deepest levels of hell as a full separation between an individual and God. We may have filled some of our needs, yet the filling is only fragmented, leaving us with a fragmented self at best.

4. We have a creator of our soul who can return us to a completed self once again. Our needs are all unique and only God has the ability to meet all these unique needs in each individual. However just as law cannot cohabit with crime, so the profoundly sacred cannot dwell within the profanity of our fragmented, incomplete, and unclean lives.
5. We must acknowledge that although we often know what it is we should do, we fail to do it. Although we seek fulfillment in our lives, we have already resigned to being unfulfilled. We must realize that the broken cannot be self-repaired. We must find someone to break the barrier and allow God to dwell within and complete us.
6. Christ is the only one to break this barrier. Being both fully human and fully divine, he enters the world of profane with full divinity. He alone breaks the barrier of separation, allowing us to be reconciled with God because of his sacrifice on the cross. We are then indwelt with the Spirit of God and made a completed self through God's grace. As our relationship is restored with God, we experience fullness as we were originally designed to experience.

Such a message may serve to be fruitful in an evangelical dialogue in contemporary culture. It is critical to remember however that there is no single message that will speak to everyone at their moment of need or in a language that they will understand. The Four Spiritual Laws are presented as one possible way to present the message of the gospel. The above outline is simply another way to present the message of the gospel in a means that more closely meets the needs and challenges of the contemporary culture. Fox and Morris provide a crucial reminder that, "No one way is the way, but each way, by God's grace, can become a way."⁷³

The Messenger

It is one point to have a solid evangelical tool and a clear message to present but it is quite another thing to be a good messenger. Although it is affirmed that the power for salvation is in the words of the gospel, how these words are perceived are strongly dependant upon how they are presented and who presents them.

To better understand this point, assume the perspective of a non-believer for a moment. If someone who has devoted their life for the care of others, such as Mother Theresa, were to explain to someone how much she loved God and how she felt that God has transformed her life, they would be very likely to believe her story if they knew the work of her life. On the other hand consider the presentation of this same message by someone such as an unethical businessman or corrupted church leader. Although the messenger does not change the story, s/he has a great affect on someone believing the story that s/he is presenting.

This is largely due to the postmodern notion of authority lying largely in the messenger rather than the message itself. Christianity, however, affirms that *all* are sinful

and fall short of the glory of God; therefore there is no one who is righteous enough to be an adequate presenter of the Gospel. It is in the problem presented by the postmodern notion of authority that the testimony of a one's own conversion and faith experience provides an authority for the message. In the words of Rick Richardson, "Stories of transformed lives are the greatest apologetic we have in a postmodern world."⁷⁴

Secondly, as the messenger, one must ask if the evangelical engagement is entered with any presuppositions about the other person. First one must consider how they view the other person. Is the person being evangelized looked upon a fellow child of God, with whom we are equally sinful, or are they looked upon as a pitied soul? Entering such evangelism with the attitude of the other as a pitied soul can only serve to perpetuate the misconception of evangelism as "preaching" to the other person. People want to know about the journey into the kingdom of God and want to have someone on that journey with them.

The purpose for the engagement is equally important to consider and likely to affect how the other person is viewed. If evangelism is done only because it is "something you should do" the evangelized will have a feeling as an object and a goal. It is difficult to see how Christ's love could be adequately communicated in this environment. Evangelism must be done out of an outpouring of God's love for us to others. It must be done purely out of love for the other person and in humble submissions to God's grace and wisdom.

Finally, evangelism must never be done with an attitude of arrogance or superiority. Leslie Newbegin reminds that, "When Christians affirm, as they do, that Jesus is the way, the true and living way by whom we come to the Father (John 16:4), they are not claiming to know everything. They are claiming to be on the way, and inviting others to join them as they press forward toward the fullness of the truth, toward the day when we shall know as we have been known."⁷⁵ This sensitivity towards the other must begin before the engagement even begins, which underlines the importance of engaging in evangelism for the right reasons. In discussion a door-to-door evangelism Fox and Morris write that, "Sensitivity to the other person begins before you ring the doorbell or knock."⁷⁶

Types of Evangelism

The type of engagement one chooses to use in evangelism is of great importance as William Abraham reminds that, "Some forms of evangelism are so bad that they may dechristianize those subjected to them, or they may inoculate people from the gospel indefinitely."⁷⁷ There are numerous types of evangelism and equally numerous means to describe and term each. There will be two levels suggested for the classification of evangelism types. The focus will be on the first level of evangelism types, which describes what the content and feel of the conversation might look like and will be formulated around the three types of evangelism suggested by Flavil R. Yeakley in an article titled "Views of Evangelism" as published in *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook*.⁷⁸ The second level of typology would, as suggested by H. Eddie Fox and

George E. Morris in *Faith Sharing* break evangelism out into evangelism within one's social contexts and outside of one's social contexts.

Yeakley suggests three types of evangelism: Information Transmission (Type 1), Manipulative Monologue (Type 2), and Non-Manipulative Dialogue (Type 3). There is a clear bias in the terminology on the preferred method of evangelism however these types sufficiently describe a large portion of evangelical engagements and will be described on more neutral grounds. The following descriptions rely heavily upon those provided by Yeakley however also incorporate those of other authors as noted.

The first type of evangelism is that of "Information Transmission." In the information transmission model the receiver sees the presenter as a *teacher*. In this type of evangelism the communication is mostly a one-way transmission of information as implied by the title. The presenters view their task as simply presenting the gospel message that God loves them. Others may characterize this type of evangelism as proclamation and/or confrontation. Burlan Sizemore writes that the problems with this type of evangelism is that, "the evangelist does not enter into human engagement at all. He in effect denies the significance of his own humanity and speaks only as one who is enabled by divine power to proclaim a transcendent truth. His position permits no debate. It is the word of God against the words of men."⁷⁹

Yeakley classifies the second type of evangelism as "Manipulative Monologue." In this type of evangelism, the presenter is seen as a *salesperson*. One of the main characteristics of this mode of evangelism is that the influence is one-way. The presenter is interested in a discussion, but is only interested in a guided and structured discussion and only has the "illusion of listening." Many would characterize this type of evangelism as "coercion." Yeakley suggests that a message with an emotional appeal would fit into such a category however the real distinguishing factor is the willingness of the presenter to be equally vulnerable in the discussion. William Abraham cautions against this type of evangelism writing, "The evangelist must believe that everyone has to come to see the truth for himself or for herself. People cannot be coerced into the kingdom of God, for conversion always involves divine grace at work in the human heart."⁸⁰

The third classification is of the "Non-manipulative Dialogue." In this type of evangelism the presenter is seen as a *friend*. The distinguishing factor between the second and third types of evangelism is that the presenter sees the other person as a person rather than "an object to be manipulated." The non-manipulative dialogue does not exclude engaging with another with the hope of influencing them. This type of evangelism would be considered a dialogue by most other authors and is largely affirmed through the World Council of Churches as the preferred method of interreligious engagement.⁸¹ In a description of the success of the interreligious ministry of the Javanese Church, Roger L. Dixon describes their type of evangelism as, "Most evangelism is conducted in a nonconfrontational way. In general, it can be described as 'friendship evangelism'"⁸²

Along with provide a suggestion on the views of evangelism Yeakley has surveyed 720 "receivers" of evangelism and provided statistics on the resulting

conversion based on the perceived method of the presenter and the perceived method of the receiver. These have been compiled and can be viewed in data and graph form in Appendix B of this paper.

The conversions were classified under “converts” who are those who converted to Christianity and remained Christian and “dropouts” who are those who converted to Christianity but were no longer active after one year. For the sake of clarity these statistics have been rearranged to represent those who initially converted (converts + dropouts) and converts, those who remained active after one year.

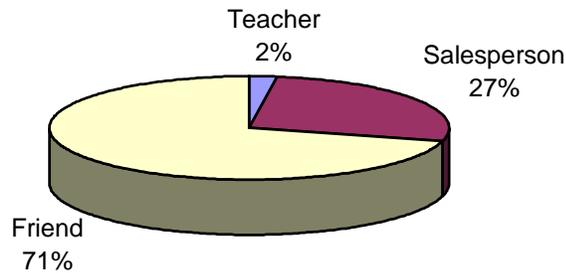
Based on initial converts the third type of evangelism, “Non-Manipulative Dialogue” was the most fruitful. When the receiver perceived this type of evangelism, 94.5% of people were initially converted. The second type of evangelism, “Manipulative Monologue” was also very fruitful. When the receiver perceived the presenter as a salesperson, 92.4% were initially converted. This is compared with an initial conversion rate of 12.4% for “Information Transmission.”

The most significant difference however comes after a one-year period. When looking at the rates of the receivers becoming converts and remaining active for over one year the “Non-Manipulative Dialogue” was the most fruitful by a significant margin. After one year, the conversions remaining from the “salesperson” type evangelism had declined to 22.4% of those who received the evangelical message. The conversions remaining from those who perceived the evangelist as a “teacher” had dropped to only 2% of those evangelized. This is compared to those who perceived the evangelist as a friend where 93.9% of those evangelized in this type of engagement remained active after one year.

One might argue that these large percentage differences can be compensated for by the increased number of exposures^D for the first two types of evangelism. This fails to adequately compensate for the fruitfulness of the dialogue method of evangelism. When looking at the total number of long term converts, 70% of those who remained active after one year were those conversions that resulted from an evangelical engagement where the presenter was considered a friend, i.e. a dialogue. Not only do the increased exposures of the other two types of evangelism fail to compensate for the decreased fruitfulness, one must also consider the possibility damage done to the viability of Christianity for those individuals.

^D An exposure refers to an individual who has been presented the gospel message.

Long Term Converts (Longer Than 1Year) Based on Recievers Perception of Evangelist



Data Source: Dr. Arn Win, ed., *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982)

An Evangelical Dialogue

Although dialogue must be considered the most fruitful means of evangelism, many express a hesitation to engage in an interreligious dialogue. This fear is expressed in the Lutheran World Federation's working group on pluralism.

Christianity in general, and Lutherans in particular, have a varying measure of reservation and anxiety when it comes to dealing with issues of other faiths, especially on matters of interreligious dialogue. In some contexts, the very word "dialogue" provokes fears of compromise, cries of syncretism and warnings about our missionary imperative.⁸³

Another author illustrates the fear of dialogue writing, "They highlight the fear of syncretism as the key reason Evangelicals have not entered into dialogue."⁸⁴ One of the key fears, and misconceptions, of dialogue is that it is equated to religious tolerance. In order to understand dialogue as a viable method of evangelism a few myths regarding dialogue must be dispelled, and the meaning of dialogue clarified.

First, dialogue is not equivalent to tolerance. As a matter of fact, tolerance does not constitute a genuine dialogue. Witte and Richard write

"Dialogue is not merely a way of being nice to one another. People who criticize dialogue quite often see it merely as mutual affirmation, appreciation, and admiration. Dialogue does involve a great deal of mutual admiration and appreciation. But dialogue in the context of mission and evangelism means much more than that. It is a form of *engagement* with the other, not simply pleasant *talk*. Genuine dialogue involves challenging, correcting, and criticizing *one* another and truly learning from one another."⁸⁵

Many authors argue against toleration as a principle and urge going *beyond tolerance* and engaging in dialogue. Diana Eck writes of tolerance as, “a deceptive virtue.” Another author, Paul Griffith, equates tolerance to unspoken proselytism writing, “Toleration, we might say, is the proselytism that dare not speak its name.”⁸⁶ He warns against tolerance as in toleration implies the permitting or putting up with something that is believed to be improper. For both authors, dialogue goes beyond tolerance in its willingness to engage in this disagreed upon subject.

Secondly, dialogue is not a key sequence of events; it is an attitude. To be able to enter into a dialogue does not require a long standing friendship, or a willingness to meet at a particular time for a conversation. Dialogue is determined not by the where, when and what of the conversation but by the motivations and attitudes of those engaging in the conversation.

There are really only two necessary ingredients for engaging in dialogue. First, both members must be voluntarily interested in what the other has to say. Secondly, both members must bring a commitment to respect the beliefs and views presented by the other and respect any outcomes of the dialogue. Abraham brings this model of the dialogue into that of tolerance showing that one can be committed to their beliefs and respectfully engages with a religiously plural society.

Dialogue requires a frank exchange of convictions, and mature believers of incompatible traditions will take deep disagreement on fundamental issues in their stride. Moreover, they will bring to dialogue a commitment to respect the religious beliefs and practices of others. This is the essence of tolerance, and the thoughtful evangelist should have no more difficulty in exercising this virtue than other mortals. So there is no reason why the Christian evangelist cannot enter genuine discussion with others to explore fully and sincerely incompatible convictions.⁸⁷

The purpose of the dialogue then is not to win an argument but to simply to engage and to bear witness. In an interreligious evangelical engagement suppressing the other religion is not the answer.⁸⁸ Dialogue must always be a two way street and allows for a mutual sharing and benefiting of information. Burlan Sizemore describes this dialogue, “The Christian who permits this kind of dialogue will have to observe with respect the richness of the other's experience. He will testify with confidence to the vision he has seen in Jesus Christ, but he will listen with modesty to what the other has to say. He will have to listen knowing that he may learn as well as teach.”⁸⁹

When a Christian is willing to engage another in dialogue this is when possibilities for evangelism become significant. This is the moment that allows for a true exchange of ideas and beliefs and can convict the non-Christian of the message of Christianity. As Paul Rajashekar writes

“Every witness is not dialogue, but every dialogue is witness. Within dialogue is witness, for one cannot present the convictions to which one holds without witness. Because witness is inherent in dialogue, and

because dialogue presupposes serious respect for and openness to a hearing of the convictions of the other, personal change will take place, possibly in unpredictable ways.”⁹⁰

The contribution of the Christian to the dialogue must always be one of sincerity and interest. With this attitude and prevailing environment of acceptance and caring the Christian can contribute to the dialogue the message of Christ. As Leslie Newbegin writes, “The essential contribution of the Christian to the dialogue will simply be the telling of the story, the story of Jesus, the story of the Bible. The story is itself, as Paul says, the power of God for salvation.”⁹¹

Practical Suggestions for Evangelical Engagements

Through a compilation of materials from various authors some general practical suggestions for engaging in evangelism can be made. As discussed in the previous section, all evangelical engagements should occur with an overarching willingness to engage the other in dialogue, and one must enter the engagement with the highest respect and love for the other person. Evangelism must be done out of love, acknowledging that each party has equal need for the message.

First, engage people where they are at physically and spiritually. Fox and Morris write that, “By entering into the other person’s world, we discover their needs and share faith in relation to their needs.”⁹² It is by entering into the other person’s world that an interest in the other person, as a person, is shown and one begins to be able to contextualize the gospel. Samuel Shoemaker said, “I stand by the door [to faith in God]. I neither go too far in, nor stay too far out.”⁹³ Evangelism is a ministry of being “in this world but not of it” and requires Christianity to bring Christ to the world as Christ has brought Himself into the world.

The evangelist must contextualize and personalize the message. Hunter writes that, “Effective communicators personalize the message.”⁹⁴ Fox and Morris provide a reminder for the criticality of this expressing, “if we live in a culture in which more than half of the people cannot name the four Gospels, we can assume that many do not know the meaning of much of the language that we use inside the church. Therefore we are called to translate, interpret, and define the language of faith in terms of the hearer’s perspective and context.”⁹⁵ The message of the gospel can only be understood when communicated using a language that makes sense and does not feel foreign to the hearer. Communicating with terms such as “salvation”, “redemption”, “atonement” or even “sin” may have little meaning to the receiver of the message. Translating the language of Christianity into common, easily understood words and concepts not only makes the message easier to understand, but can also force the presenter to consider what their beliefs mean to them. As C.S. Lewis writes, “The vernacular is the real test. If you can’t turn your faith into the vernacular, then you either don’t understand it or you don’t believe it.”⁹⁶

The message itself can be either a direct message or an indirect message. Hunter, Fox and Morris suggest that the indirect method of evangelism can provide a very

powerful effect. Hunter suggests the use of “redemptive analogies” which can be stories that allow the hearers to discover the meaning of the story for themselves. Hunter also suggests that communication can be best remembered if it involves the use of word plays or proverbs that are conducive to remembering.⁹⁷ Fox and Morris suggest that a personal testimony engages people through Kierkegaard’s principle of indirect communication. Engaging in indirect communication helps the listener to lower their guards and absorb more of the message during the sharing of a personal story rather than directly communicating the gospel message. They write, “It is for this reason the Holy Spirit uses the personal testimony with such great effect.”⁹⁸

Regardless if the indirect or direct methods are employed, Rich Richardson suggests some simple points that should be considered when presenting the gospel message.⁹⁹ He suggests that the evangelist: never invalidate the experiences of the other, bank on a spiritual interest, appeal to commonly shared authorities – postmodern prophets in music and the movies, help people get in touch with their longing, yearning and emptiness. He also suggests discussion the emotional and experiential truths first before introducing Jesus and the Bible. There should be Law before Gospel as the condition of humanity is the only way to make sense of the work of God on the cross. He suggests that Jesus and the Bible should be tied into experiential truths such as a testimony or shared stories such as movies, news, etc.

Once the message has been presented a transformation moment must be created or exist. The transformational moment should not be a moment of pressure or include implied motions; it must be a moment that allows the hearer to process the information and to respond in their own way and at their own time to be able to truly embrace faith in Christ. Fox and Morris suggest there should be sensitivity towards passages in other people’s lives and that these passages are when people are most open to the Christian faith.¹⁰⁰ Rich Richardson suggests that asking powerful; poignant questions (such as the Fourth Law) can become a very intense and transforming moment for a non-Christian.¹⁰¹

Recalling the definition of evangelism, an effective message verbally presented must be one that not only presents information and is a sharing of faith but it must also inspire them to do something about their life and should inspire them to consider the gospel as a true, live changing message. Presenting this opportunity to the receiver does not need to be a sales moment, but is a way of completing the message and telling someone not only about a destination but how to begin that journey.

Conclusions

As Christians we are continually called to live in this world, but not be of this world. We are indwelt with God’s Holy Spirit and called to be prophets to non-Christians by first loving them as God has called us to and within the context of that love communicate the message of Christ’s redemptive work to their life. This will always require us to continually understand the needs, desires, and beliefs of the culture around us. Although the message of God’s redemptive acts through Christ will never change, the

means and the message, which can be used to communicate this to our culture, will forever require careful discernment.

A significant amount of work could be done on determining a more comprehensive view of what evangelism is based on the perceptions of both the presenter and the receiver. Such a survey would allow for a better understanding of how evangelism is best able to interact with the needs of the culture.

Evangelism is not a lightweight ministry. Participating in the act of evangelism involves the willingness to devote significant time and effort to the caring for others and the sharing of the gospel message. It involves a willingness to acknowledge that we do not know everything and to be open to hearing other stories and willing to have our own positions challenged by others. The evangelical moment happens when we are willing to share what we know about God's message with our fellow sinners. We are all broken vessels and equally in need of God's grace and generosity.

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- ³³ J. Paul Rajashekar, ed., *Religious Pluralism and Lutheran Theology* (Geneva, Switzerland: Lutheran World Federation, 1988) – Page 9
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- ³⁶ Sizemore, "Some Reflections On The Christian Encounter With Other Faiths", Page 173
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- ⁴⁰ Sizemore, "Some Reflections On The Christian Encounter With Other Faiths" – Page 170
- ⁴¹ Hunter III, George G., *How to Reach Secular People* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1992), Page 41
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- ⁷² Kurtz, Paul, "Bravo! Secularism Growing in the U.S.," http://www.secularhumanism.org/library/fi/kurtz_22_3.htm
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Appendix A

Common Versions of the *Four Spiritual Laws*

Have You Heard of the
FOUR
Spiritual Laws?

[\[Read the Four Spiritual Laws in Your Language | How to Use \]](#)
[\[Flash Version available here!\]](#)

Just as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe, so are there spiritual laws which govern your relationship with God.



God **LOVES** you and offers a wonderful **PLAN** for your life.

(References contained on this Home Page are linked to the actual verses from the Bible and should be read in context wherever possible.)

God's Love

"God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16 NIV).

God's Plan

[Christ speaking] "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" [that it might be full and meaningful] (John 10:10).

*Why is it that most people are not experiencing the abundant life?
Because...*



Man is **SINFUL** and **SEPARATED** from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life.

Man Is Sinful

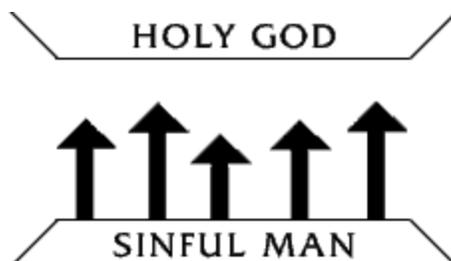
"All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his stubborn self-will, he chose to go his

own independent way, and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Man Is Separated

"The wages of sin is death" [spiritual separation from God] (Romans 6:23).



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that man is continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion - but he inevitably fails.

The third law explains the only way to bridge this gulf...



Jesus Christ is God's **ONLY** provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life.

He Died in Our Place

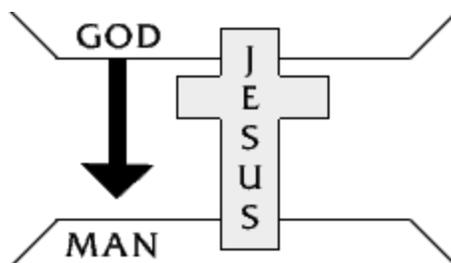
"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

He Rose From the Dead

"Christ died for our sins...He was buried...He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures...He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred..." (1 Corinthians 15:3-6).

He Is the Only Way to God

"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me'" (John 14:6).



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf which separates us from Him by sending His Son,

Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

It is not enough just to know these three laws...



We must individually **RECEIVE** Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

We Must Receive Christ

"As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12)

We Receive Christ Through Faith

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth

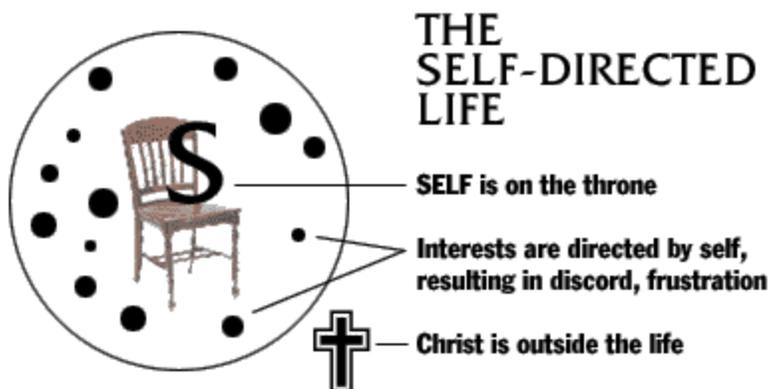
(Read [John 3:1-8](#).)

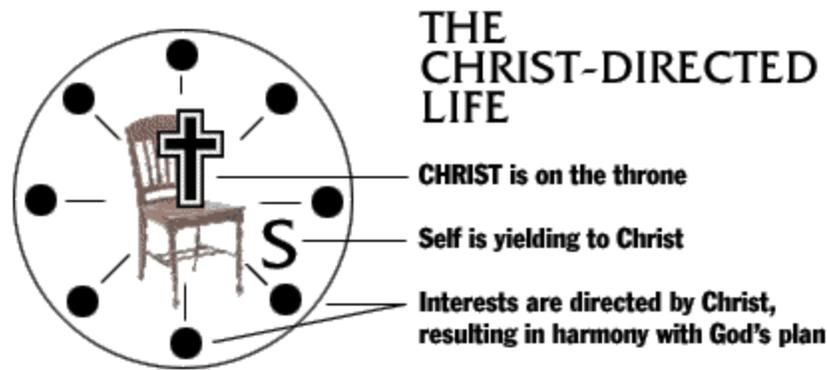
We Receive Christ by Personal Invitation

[Christ speaking] "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree **intellectually** that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an **emotional** experience. We receive Jesus Christ by **faith**, as an act of the **will**.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives:





Which circle best describes your life?
Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

The following explains how you can receive Christ:

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith Through Prayer

(Prayer is talking to God)

God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?

If it does, I invite you to pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

Now that you have received Christ...

Approximately 1.5 billion copies of the *Four Spiritual Laws* have been printed, and it is the desire of Campus Crusade for Christ that the message contained on this Home Page continues to receive the widest distribution possible. Consequently booklets are available at a nominal price for use by any and all interested individuals and organizations.



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Getting Connected:

Knowing God Personally

What does it take to begin a relationship with God? Wait for lightning to strike? Devote yourself to unselfish religious deeds? Become a better person so that God will accept you? NONE of these. God has made it very clear in the Bible how we can know Him.

Here are four principles to help you discover how you can begin a personal relationship with God:



>> Principle One: God loves you and offers a wonderful plan for your life. <<

God created you. Not only that, he loves you so much that he wants you to spend eternity with him. Jesus said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

Jesus came so that each of us could know and understand God in a personal way. Jesus alone can bring meaning and purpose to life.

What keeps us from knowing God? ...

>> Principle Two: All of us are sinful and separated from God. Therefore we cannot know and experience God's love and plan for our life. <<

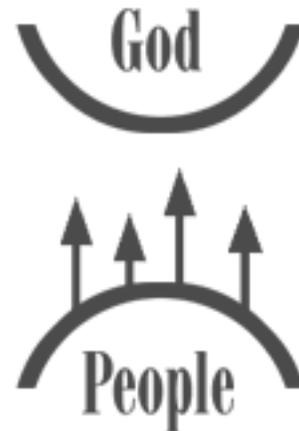
The fact is, we need Jesus. The Bible says, "...all fall short of God's glorious standard" (Romans 3:23). Though God intended for us to have a relationship with him, we naturally want to do things our own way.

Deep down, our attitude may be one of active rebellion toward God or passive indifference, but it's all evidence of what the Bible calls sin. The Bible tells us that "All of us like sheep have gone astray; each of us has turned to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

The result of sin in our lives is death — spiritual separation from God (Romans 6:23). Although we may try to reach God through our own effort, we inevitably fail.

The diagram at right shows the great gap that exists between us and God. The arrows illustrate that we might try to reach God through our own efforts. We may try to do good things, or earn God's acceptance through a good life or a moral philosophy. But our good efforts are insufficient to cover up our sin.

How can we bridge this gulf?...



>> Principle Three: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for our sin. Through him we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life. <<

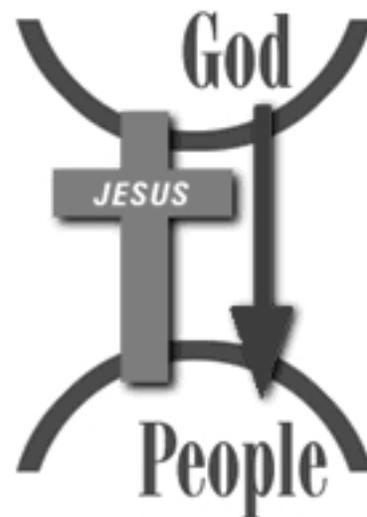
Jesus Christ is God's solution to the problem of human imperfection and evil. Because of Jesus' death on the cross, we don't have to be separated from God any longer. Jesus paid the price for our sin and in so doing, bridged the gap between us and God. "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that he might bring us to God" (1Peter 3:8).

Instead of trying harder to reach God, we simply need to accept Jesus and his sacrifice as the one way to God. "I am the way, the truth and the life," Jesus said. "No one can come to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He also said, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die like everyone else, will live again. They are given eternal life for believing in me and will never perish" (John 11:25-26).

But not only did Jesus die for our sin, he rose from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3-6). When he did, he proved beyond doubt that he can rightfully promise eternal life — that he is the Son of God and the only means by which we can know God.

Yet just having knowledge about God's plans and purposes isn't enough. We need to consciously accept Jesus Christ as the payment for our sin and welcome him into our life.

It is not enough just to know these three truths...



>> Principle Four: We must individually accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. Then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our life. <<

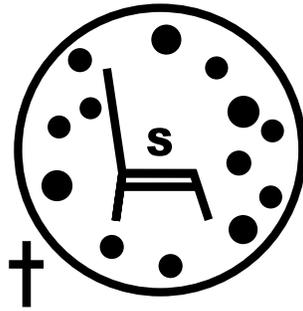
The Bible says, "But to all who believed him and accepted him, he gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

We accept Jesus by faith. The Bible says, "God saved you by his special favour when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it" (Ephesians 2:8,9).

Accepting Jesus means believing that Jesus is the Son of God, who he claimed to be, then inviting him to guide and direct our lives and make us into new people (John 3:1-8). Jesus said, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20).

How will you respond to God's invitation? What will you do with the claims of Jesus Christ?

Consider these two circles:



Self-Directed Life

- S** Self is on the throne
- +** Jesus is outside the life
- Interests are directed by self, often resulting in frustration



Christ-Directed Life

- +** Jesus is in the life and on the throne
- S** Self is yielding to Jesus
- Interests are directed by Jesus, resulting in harmony with God

Which circle best represents your life?
Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

Begin a relationship with Jesus...

You can receive Christ right now. Remember that Jesus says, "I'm standing at the door and I'm knocking. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in" (Revelation 3:20). Would you like to respond to his invitation? Here's how.

The precise words you use to commit yourself to God are not important. He knows the intentions of your heart. If you are unsure of what to pray, this might help you put it into words:

"Jesus, I want to know you. I want you to come into my life. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sin so that I could be fully accepted by you. Only you can give me the power to change and become the person you created me to be. Thank you for forgiving me and giving me eternal life with God. I give my life to you. Please do with it as you wish. Amen."

If you sincerely asked Jesus into your life just now, then he has come into your life as he promised. You have begun a personal relationship with God.

What follows is a lifelong journey of change and growth as you get to know God better through Bible reading, prayer and interaction with other Christians.

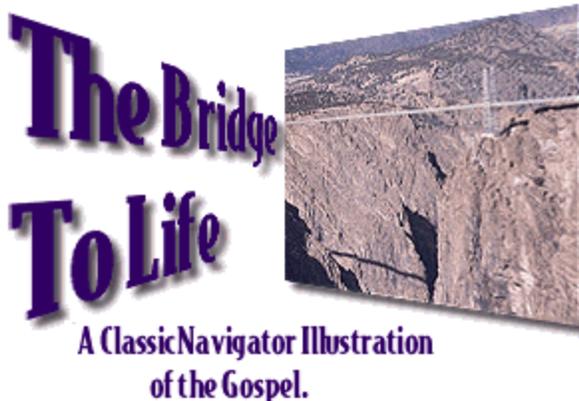
I just asked Jesus into my life. Some helpful information follows...

I may want to ask Jesus into my life, but I have a question I would like answered first. Please email us with your questions through EveryStudent.com

>> Growing in your relationship with God <<

Spiritual growth results from trusting Jesus Christ. "The righteous one shall live by faith" (Galatians 3:11). A life of faith will enable you to trust God increasingly with every detail of your life, and to practice the following:

- Go to God in prayer daily (John 15:7).
- Read God's Word, the Bible, daily (Acts 17:11) — begin with "John."
- Obey God moment by moment (John 14:21).
- Witness for Christ by your life and words (Matthew 4:19, John 15:8).
- Trust God for every detail of your life (Proverbs 3:5-6, 1Peter 5:7).
- Holy Spirit — Allow Him to control and empower your daily life and witness (Galatians 5:16-17; Acts 1:8).



Step 1 **God's Love and His plan**

God created us in His own image to be His friend and to experience a full life assured of his love, abundant and eternal.

Jesus said, "...I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." ([John 10:10b](#))

"...we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." ([Romans 5:1](#))



Since God planned for us to have peace and abundant life right now, why are most people not having this experience?

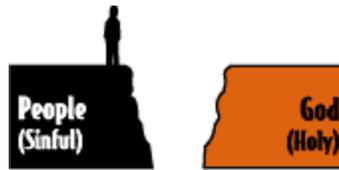
Step 2 **Our Problem: Separation from God**

God created us in His own image to have abundant (meaningful) life. He did not make us robots to automatically love and obey him, but he gave us a will and a freedom of choice.

We chose to disobey God and go our own willful way. We still make this choice today. This results in separation from God.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ([Romans 3:23](#))

“...your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you so that he will not hear.” ([Isaiah 59:2](#))



On our own, there's no way we can attain the perfection needed to bridge the gap to God. Through the ages, individuals have tried many ways...without success.

Good works won't do it...or religion...or money...or morality...or philosophy...

“There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.” ([Proverbs 14:12](#))

Step 3 **God's Remedy: The Cross**

Jesus Christ is the only answer to this problem. He died on the cross and rose from the grave, paying the penalty for our sin and bridging the gap between God and people.

“For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God...”
([I Peter 3:18](#))

“For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ.” ([I Timothy 2:5](#))

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
([Romans 5:8](#))



Step 4 **Our Response**

Believing means trust and commitment - acknowledging our sinfulness, trusting Christ's forgiveness and letting Him control our life. Eternal, abundant life is a gift for us to receive.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only son, that whoever

believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” ([John 3:16](#))

“I tell you the truth, whoever **hears** my word and **believes** Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.” ([John 5:24](#))



Is there any reason why you shouldn't cross over to God's side and be certain of eternal life?

How to receive Christ:

1. Admit your need (I am a sinner).
2. Be willing to turn from your sins (repent).
3. Believe that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.
4. Through prayer, invite Jesus Christ to come in and control your life through the Holy Spirit (Receive Him as Lord and Savior of your life).

What to pray:

Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite you to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as the Lord and Savior of my life.

In Your name. Amen.

God's assurance of eternal life

If you've prayed this prayer and trusting Christ, then the Bible says that you can be sure you have eternal life.

“...for, ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” ([Romans 10:13](#))

“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#))

“He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. **I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.**” ([1 John 5:12-13](#))

Receiving Christ, we are born into God’s family through the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit who indwells every believer...this is called regeneration or the “new birth.”

What next?

This is just the beginning of a wonderful new life in Christ. To deepen this relationship you should:

1. ***Maintain regular intake of the Bible to know Christ better.***
For more information see the [“Word Hand”](#) illustration.
2. ***Talk to God in prayer every day.***
For more information see the [“Prayer Hand”](#) illustration.
3. ***Tell others about your new faith in Christ.***
For help doing this, check out the [Bridge to Life](#) booklet at the bottom of this page, or use the same illustration that is presented above. The important thing is that you let others know about your new faith in Christ.
4. ***Worship, fellowship and serve with other Christians in a church where Christ is preached.***
5. ***As Christ’s representative in a needy world, demonstrate your new life by your love and concern for others.***

For an overview of the essential elements in living a strong Christian life, check out the [Wheel illustration](#).

Want some help in sharing your faith?

Pocket-sized booklets with the *Bridge to Life* are available in packs of 50 to order from [NavPress](#). You can [order](#)



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Appendix B

Evangelism Typology Data and Graphs

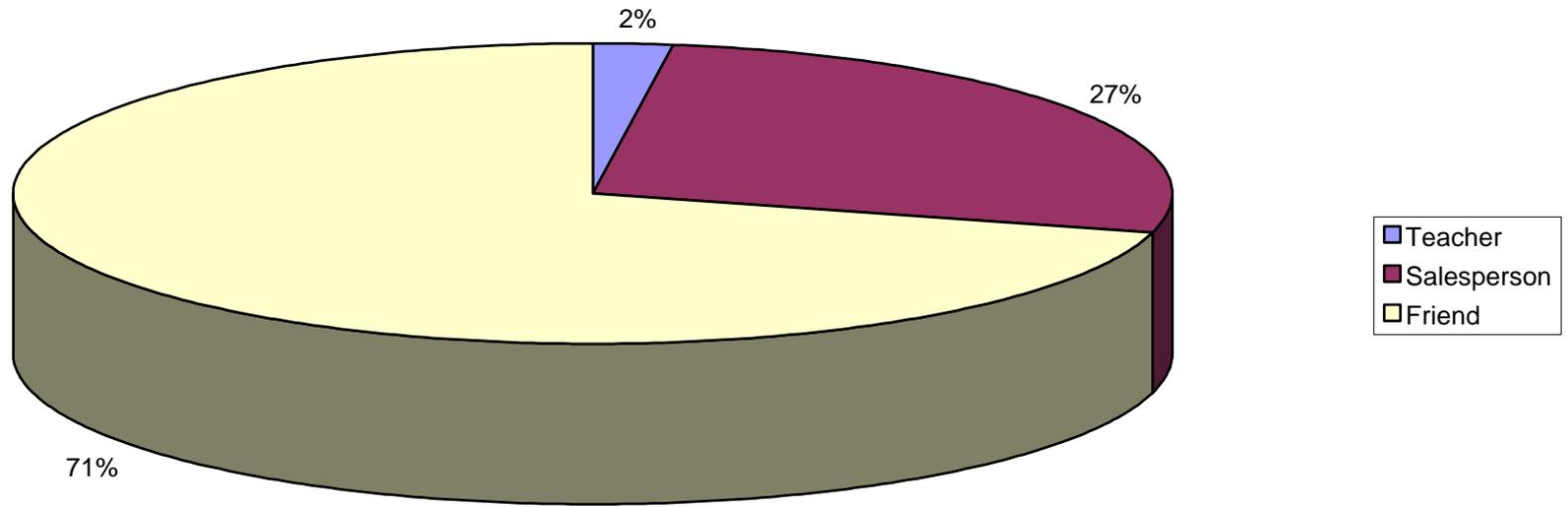
Data Source: Dr. Arn Win, ed., *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982)

Presenter's View of Evangelism				
Categories of Subjects	Information Transmission	Manipulative Monologue	Non-Manipulative Dialogue	Totals
Converts	35	36	169	240
Drop-Outs	25	209	6	240
Non-Converts	180	58	2	240
Totals	240	303	177	720

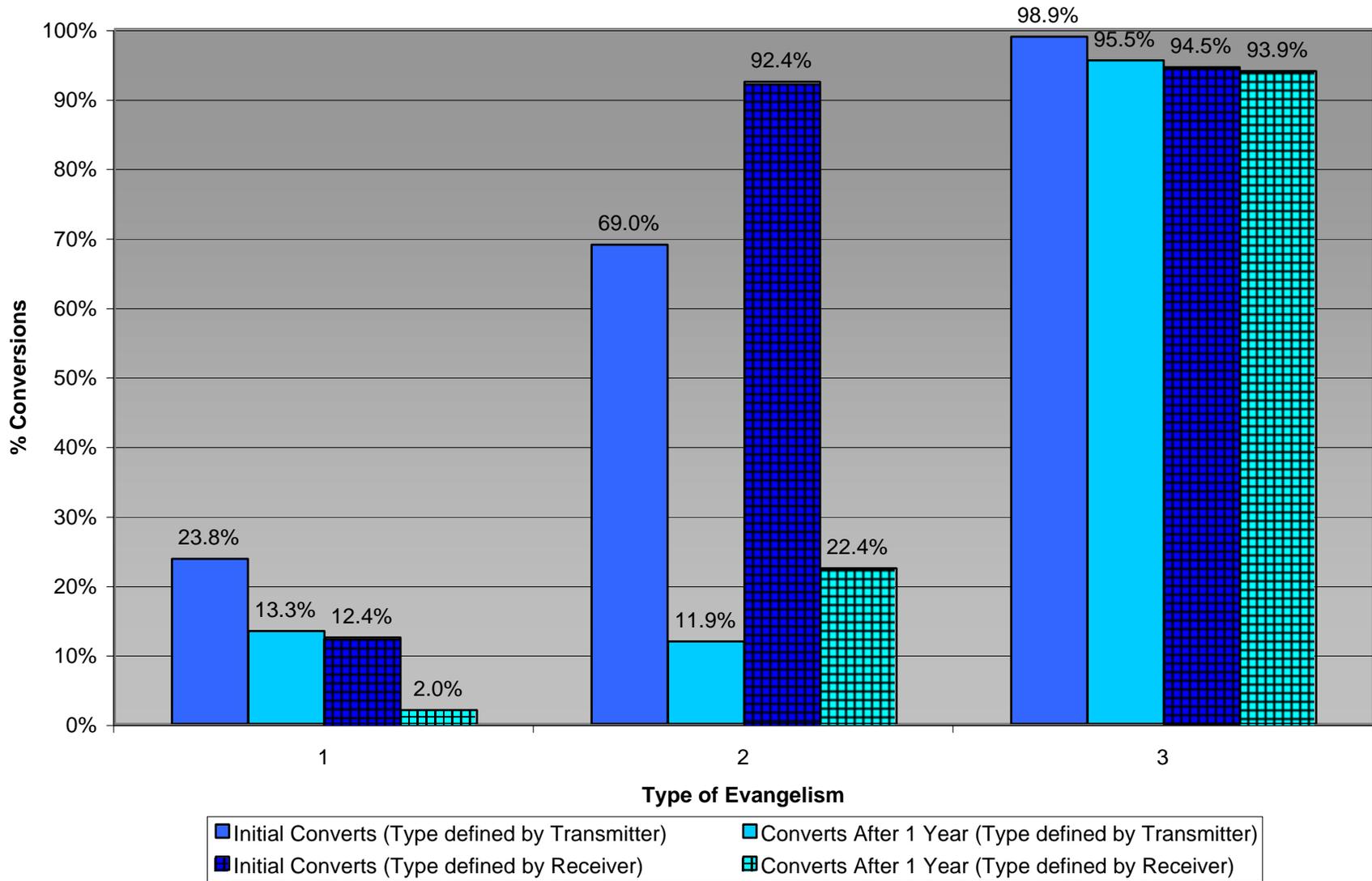
Receiver's View of Evangelist				
Categories of Subjects	Teacher	Salesman	Friend	Totals
Converts	5	65	170	240
Drop-Outs	36	203	1	240
Non-Converts	208	22	10	240
Totals	249	290	181	720

Data Source: Dr. Arn Win, ed., *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982)

Long Term Converts Based on Recievers Perception of Evangelist



Evangelism Type vs. Conversions



Data Source: Dr. Arn Win, ed., *The Pastor's Church Growth Handbook* (Pasadena, CA: Church Growth Press, 1982)