

Understanding Incarnational Evangelism.¹



Three Key Texts:

- Matthew 28:18-20a (The Message)
Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you.
 - This instruction has paralysed us with guilt and fear
 - We feel have to become weird and step waaay out of our comfort zones.
 - We often think that “Go!” means Timbuktu
 - Ordinary disciples began in their neighbourhood and changed the world
 - Jesus promises He will be with us!
- John 1:14&18 (Holman Christian Standard Translation)
¹⁴ The Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We observed His glory, the glory as the One and Only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth....
¹⁸ No one has ever seen God.
The One and Only Son the One who is at the Father’s side – He has revealed Him.
 - One could translate v.14 as:
“The Word became human and pitched His tent in our neighbourhood”
 - If you were to ask John how it was that we saw God, he would answer:
“Jesus came and Jesus showed us what God is like.”
- John 1:44-48 (Holman Christian Standard Translation)
Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the hometown of Andrew and Peter. ⁴⁵ Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the One Moses wrote about in the Law (and so did the prophets): Jesus the son of Joseph, from Nazareth!”
⁴⁶ “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” Nathanael asked him. “Come and see,” Philip answered.
 - When Nathanael had questions, Philip didn't argue. He invited him into an experience: “Come and See”
- Who did God use to bring you nearer to Christ?
Reflect on that for a moment... For most of us, that experience was a fairly natural one-thing-leading-to-another-journey.

Video – Brian's Story

1. Looking at Brian's story...

What do you think were the key things that Bill did right in his approach to Brian.

¹ A lot of the material in this workshop has been inspired by:
“Just walk across the room” by Bill Hybels and the Willow Creek Course with the same name.
“Fresh Expressions” or “Mission Shaped Shaped Ministry” (Modules B07-08).
“Servant Warfare: How Kindness Conquers Spiritual Darkness” by Steve Sjogren.
“The Outward Focussed Life” by Dave Workman.

2. What obstacles/temptations/excuses might there have been for Bill to miss the opportunity that he had with Brian?
3. What do you think motivated Bill to take the steps and risks that he did?
How does the example of Jesus in Luke 19:10 fit in with this?
How will having a clear vision about our mission assist us to take the same risks?
4. Bill made the important statement that *the single highest value in the evangelistic endeavour is to be attuned to and co-operative with the promptings of the Holy Spirit...* How many times in Brian's Story did Bill obey the prompting of the Spirit?
5. It is important to note that the change in Brian's life wasn't the result of one conversation, but the culmination of a process. How does that make you feel about the task of reaching others? Is it easier if you see it as *a series of interactions and conversations* that God can use?
6. What role does prayer play in this?

Part 2: Living in 3D.

Big Idea: Living in 3D

Effective, relationally based evangelism can only happen when Christ-followers are truly engaged in the lives of people around them. This means that they choose to **D**evelop friendships, **D**iscover life stories and **D**iscern appropriate next steps based on the Holy Spirit's promptings – in other words, live in **3D**.

Develop Friendships

(It's not about **doing** evangelism but **being** a friend and **wanting** your friend to know your best friend)

- The longer we are Christians – the less we interact with non-Christians.
- It's easier to remain in our comfortable Christian circles
- Evangelism, however, isn't left up to superstars – its everyone's job.
- Because we fear telling people about Jesus we barter with God saying; "I'll do the service work (pour tea, attend meetings, etc) just don't send me out there.
- Jesus believed in the power of God to transform human lives – this fed his insatiable pursuit of all sorts of people at all points on the spiritual spectrum."
- He lived a life RADICAL INCLUSIVENESS.
- *The astounding truth... is that as we work to develop friendships with anyone and everyone we meet, we just might be the one the Holy Spirit uses..."*

Discovering Stories

(People don't care how much you **know** until they know how much you **care**)

- Create "proximity points" - where we connect with non-Christians regularly
- Intentionally discover their stories. What life has been like for them? Hear their dreams and their hopes.
- Remain who you are – God has made you who you are for a reason.

- Find points of commonality with those around you. These are shared interests, similar life stories or life stages. "I remember when my kid was three"
- In these conversations it is important to be sensitive and keep doors open.
- Constantly try to hear more about their story rather than sharing your own.
- Be radically inclusive and accept them without being judgemental.

Discern Next Steps.

(Wait for God to open the door – don't force it!)

- In every case these friendships and conversations will reach a point of decision. Will you take it to the next level or walk away?
- Watch for the crystal clear signals people send – often unintentionally – that inform you about their needs... and from this you can discern the next steps.
- Our agendas take a back seat as we allow for God to 'interrupt' our lives with the needs of others.
- We should view ourselves as 'resource providers', living by the question 'How can I best assist this person?' Thus our focus is on what they need – not on ourselves.
- And there's no rush! We can patiently wait until they are ready to ask for help.
- Listen for the Holy Spirit's promptings in order to discern next steps.

Questions for discussion:

1. How many non-christian friends do you have?
2. Share ways in which you could connect with more non-christians?
3. When we connect with people outside the faith, why is it so important to understand their stories before trying to engage in spiritual discussions?
4. We are tempted to rush in on "closing the deal." Why do you think this is so?

Closing Clip

5. Discuss: "Get with people who are far from God and get to know them and if the Holy Spirit is alive and well inside you something will happen...."
6. "Even beneath the value of evangelism is the value of love. Heaven will never be disappointed if our bottom-line value in relating to others is love." Discuss.

Session 3: Serving is an Incarnation Value

Dave Workman

Disciple: *A surrendered and transformed person loving God and others.*

Many sceptics would say that "The ugly truth about Christians is that Jesus may love you but everyone else thinks you're a jerk."

A waitress's story.

She saw Christians who came to her restaurant after church as:

- Hypocrites
- Judgemental

- Critical
- Mean, Demanding and Cheap (and leave brochures about hell)

Servanthood changes things:

* Mark 10⁴⁵ The Son of Man came to serve and not to be served.

* John 20²¹ As the Father sent me, I am sending you...

* Philippians 2⁵⁻¹¹ – Our attitude should be the same as Christ who became a servant.

Ideas:

- Turkey Fest – for Thanksgiving – A meal hamper. Can we pray for you?
- Buy the meal for the person behind you.
- Rake or clean a park.
- Connect cards. Handed out when you serve. “What kind of people do this?”
- One dollar Car-wash.
- Young families not upgrading their home, but moving into apartment blocks to intentionally connect with people who are at another economic level.

Mindsets for reaching others:

- Develop a heart of Generosity because God is generous.
- Be available to be used and prompted by God .
- We can't just hand out pamphlets, we have to earn the right to speak.
- Not apologetics any more, but touching people by serving them.
- Service is unexpected – it discombobulates them.
- Evangelism is a process and not only a harvest. We nudge people closer to or further from God.
- Serve them all and let God sort it out.

Examples

- Ryan: People gave him a bottle of water or washed his car. Gave him a care card and prayed for him. He asked “What kind of people do this?”
- Bouche, Nigeria. 25 Pastors who had their homes burned down. “How can we serve the people who burned down our homes...”
- One dollar car-wash. Wash people's car and pay them a dollar.

Getting our congregation serious about Outreach.

1. Teaching: Mission is Generosity & Servanthood. It's not about you but God and others.
2. Routinise outward focussed activities.
3. Over-resource the outward focus values, because Evangelism as a value can atrophy.
4. Make it easy to do this. “Everyone can play!”