



Evangelism – Sunday School

Section 4

The Practice of Evangelism

I. Evangelism from the pulpit.

II. Evangelism in public settings outside the church.

III. House to house evangelism.

Two general principles that every church should responsibly apply to its evangelistic ministry.

- Every church ought to have a systematic plan for attempting to reach as many people as they can in their area with the gospel.
- In that plan we should aim to pursue reaching people in private situations where they can ask questions and we can speak to them more directly.

IV. Friendship evangelism.

Field surveys indicate that about 90 percent of new converts first become interested in Christianity not through social media or going to church, but through some sort of interpersonal acquaintance.¹

Kenneth S. Latourette: “the chief agents in the expansion of Christianity appear not to have been those who made it a profession...but men and women who carried on their livelihood in some purely

¹ Interestingly, even Atheists have websites teaching other Atheists how to persuade Christians to become Atheists through friendship. For example, see <http://www.wikihow.com/Persuade-a-Christian-to-Become-Atheist>

secular manner and spoke of their faith to those they met in this natural fashion.”²

What exactly is friendship evangelism?

Luke 5:29-32

Friendship evangelism involves making friends with non-Christians for the purpose of seeking to win them to Christ.

- **“Friendship” evangelism requires that we treat them as friends treat friends, seeking to love them in word and deed.**

- **Friendship “evangelism” requires the proclamation of the gospel, otherwise it is not “evangelism.”**

Two important matters related to friendship evangelism.

A. Some suggestions for how to conduct friendship evangelism

- **Genuinely care about them.**

- **Cultivate two-way communication.**
 - Through two-way communication you can build trust and respect by which you open the door for more talk about Christ.
 - Two-way communication enables you to better understand their thinking and thus better address what their real area of confusion or disagreement is.

- **Approach each person as an individual.**

² Kenneth S. Latourette, *A History of the Expansion of Christianity*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 1:230.

- **Ask questions that set the stage for sharing the gospel.**

Ask useful questions that will help them identify how the person understands what has gone wrong in their life and what they think will fix it – that is, the person’s own version of the Fall and Redemption. After gaining clear understanding, the church member then shares the true story of their problem, starting from that person’s view of what is wrong with their life – linking it to their sinful condition before God, and then working to explain the only solution to their real problem – God’s forgiveness through Christ.

Try to connect with the lost where they are at – and this beginning through questions. Therefore, if someone meets a person who presently shows no interest in the gospel, they might respond: “You know, I was like that several years ago, but now I believe in Christ. I would really be interested to know what your thoughts are and why you are not interested.”

- **Avoid only asking those questions which simply require a “yes” or “no” answer.**

- **Beware of using “Christian” language they will not understand.**

Freedom

- **Start slow and build towards more.**
 1. Let the person know you are a Christian (in a natural, unforced way)
 2. Ask him about his faith – and just listen!
 3. Listen to his problems – maybe offer to pray for him
 4. Share your problems with him – testify to how your faith helps you
 5. Share the gospel and your personal conversion story
 6. Answer objections and questions
 7. Give him a book to read
 8. Invite him to a church event
 9. Offer to read the Bible with him
 10. Take him to an “Explore the Bible” course hosted by your church

B. Some arguments against friendship evangelism**1. Some argue that “making friends for the purpose of evangelism is just another form of manipulation.”³**

Another person writes: “It seems insincere and, therefore, contrary to love of one’s neighbor to establish a relationship with an ulterior motive. If there were no intention to share the gospel with the ‘friend’ at some point, would the relationship even exist?”⁴

This is a delicate issue that needs careful handling.

- On the one hand, some Christians admittedly can go overboard.
- On the other hand, making friends for the purpose of evangelism is exactly the thing that Jesus did (Luke 5:30-32).
- Furthermore, is the salvation of strangers really a nefarious motive for making friends?

2. Some argue that friendship evangelism “flies in the face of the doctrine of total depravity” and hence is “unbiblical.” They assert that since humans are closed to the gospel apart from regeneration, then there is “nothing any Christian can do to open the hearts of the lost to the gospel.” Thus they conclude that “Befriending the lost may make them more open to **you**, but it could never make them open to **Jesus**.”⁵ How would you respond to this argument?

This argument is an example of misapplying true theology to reach a wrong conclusion. T

3. Some argue friendship evangelism is a direct violation of the warning in Proverbs 13:20 which reads: “Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm.”

First, I would note that in Luke 5 Jesus did not immediately remove Levi from his old circle of friends.

³ Heidelblog.net/2013/08/one-reason-why-unbelievers-don't-want-to-talk-to-us/

⁴ <http://www.puritanboard.com/showthread.php/46691-Friendship-Evangelism>

⁵ <http://www.bereanbailey.org/?p=366>

Second, the words “walk” and “companion,” in Proverbs 13:20, are speaking of friendship in the sense of walking with them in their way of life.

It is important that we note here that such friendships with the lost were not Jesus’ closest friendships.

4. Some argue that we are not to be confrontational in friendship evangelism but should share the gospel /// only with those who “want” to hear it.⁶

Concerning this matter it is important that we strive for balance.

In fact, many are the testimonies of those who did not want to hear the gospel when it was first presented to them, but who later trusted in Christ, and said it was through the sharing of the gospel by a Christian friend when they did not want to hear about it that God began to draw them.

Of course, as mentioned above, please do be wise and considerate!

Proverbs 26:4-5 - “⁴ Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest you be like him yourself. ⁵ Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own eyes.”

Also, please do give other believers grace in these situations!

⁶

V. Literature Evangelism.

First, I would contend that the means by which the Holy Spirit works unto regenerating a dead sinner is through the transmission of the Word.

1 Peter 1:23

Second, when possible, I would recommend that this not be the **only** method used.

Third, I would strongly encourage you to use literature as a supplement to the other methods mentioned above.

Two common mistakes with tracts.

- First, a tract that speaks to a non-believer as if he is a believer is not helpful.
- Second, a tract that speaks of oneself to the degree that Christ is eclipsed or not given first place is not helpful.