

REC Evangelism In The 21st Century

The postmodern world is wired differently from anything Christendom has experienced; therefore, our approach in evangelism should be re-examined.

A. Postmodern People are determined by two things, neither of which are generational issues:

1. Who influenced you the most growing up - your family or your peers?
2. Did you or your family grow up going to church or not?
3. If you are influenced more by your peers than your family and did not grow up in church, you are most likely postmodern.

B. Another Class of people are what we might term the Baptized, unconverted. These people may have been very well raised in the Church, but are not active at the present time. The approach to these people should be different than simply giving out a tract or expecting a decision to a four or five point presentation.

1. With these people, Christian Language is not totally unfamiliar.
2. They are often intending to go back to Church, but often have not done so.
3. They have a desire to pass on a Spiritual heritage to their Children.

C. Evangelism will, of necessity, be structured somewhat differently in the 21st century.

1. Many of the people will be pre-Christian of either the Post-Modern or Baptized unconverted categories.
2. In the past, eighty-five percent of conversions have been among people under 18. This will not be true in the 21st century because a significant number of people have not been to church in their adult life. In the 21st century, eighty-five percent of the conversions will be people over 18.
3. We will have to learn how to work with adults more than with children and youth if we are to penetrate society.
4. The church must teach adults how to disciple their children once again.

D. The issue is to see evangelism not as an end in itself but as making disciples who make disciples.

1. Not simply adding members to the roles of the church.

2. Not transfer growth.
 3. Helping people become servants like Jesus.
 4. Instead of exhorting and training laity to share their faith, develop them into the kind of disciples who will naturally want to share their faith.
- E. What is a disciple making church?
1. It has defined its main mission as making disciples who make disciples.
 2. Intentionally provides an environment in which people are encouraged to grow and held accountable for the growth of others.
 3. Has structured the church so that it is capable of growing corporately. The attitude in these churches is “we can grow and we can also plant other churches.” The desire to plant churches is a spillover from the joy people receive from taking part in the Great Commission.
 4. Trains its leadership in how to be and make disciples who make disciples. This requires repetition, discipline, and coaching.

II. Let’s look more closely at this world.

- A. We now live in a time when the perception is that there is no ultimate value.
1. There are many paths to the same destination.
 2. There is no grand scheme anymore.
 3. All faiths are interchangeable.
 4. Christianity is no longer the normal starting point in one’s search for meaning.
 5. “What works for me” is more important than some eternal value.
- B. We live in a world where:
1. There is no difference between secular and sacred and that authenticity is essential to any solid relationship.
 2. The worst form of Christianity is singing “This Is Our Father’s World” and then treating it with disdain.
 3. Spirituality is a state of mind not a state of relationship.
- C. The primary longings of many Postmoderns.

1. Authenticity. Honesty over politeness. No frills, except technology. No Sunday morning only faith.
2. Community. They need to see the Gospel lived out. Rather than instant conversion, it's more like a process where they are socialized into the faith. Relationships over achievement.
3. Lack of dogmatism. Rules aren't what they used to be. The historical truth of the Bible is not as important as if it speaks to my needs. Most people do not believe that Muslims are going to hell.
4. Music and Art are effective vehicles for worship, but worship is not understood. For Most people good worship is measured by "does it turn me on".
5. Diversity. Gender and race are meaningless.
6. Interdependent. You feed me and I will feed you.
7. They respond best to radical faith

D. Other Characteristics

1. Interactive forms of worship work best. (Note Liturgy fills this need)
2. They are the most technologically oriented adult segment in the world.
3. As such, they have no ultimate value system and no ultimate truth.
4. The mental models are more Hebraic than Greek. They are more Eastern than Western. They do not separate sacred and secular. Propositions are not as important as feelings.
5. Cynicism.
6. They have a higher view of marriage and a lower view of sex. 40- 50% grew up in a divorced home and were latch key children.
7. They openly explore their spiritual and feminine or masculine sides.

8. They are Universalists.
9. Extreme experience is the highest form of reality.
10. Non workaholic. They work to gain various skills for the future. When they learn a skill, they are ready to move on to another job unless that job allows them to continue to learn new skills.
11. Everyone is okay eternally.
12. Relationships are critical.
13. They are suspicious of organized religion but they are very spiritual in their attitude.
14. Evangelism as it has been done (i.e. 4 spiritual laws, EE, Tract peddling) is obnoxious.
15. Retro behavior is one way to search for anchors.
16. First generation to know they will make less money than their parents.
17. No fear! Means many things:
 - a. An attitude about the future both positive and negative.
 - b. A false sense of bravado.
 - c. A serious statement that the world is not a safe place.
18. Family is made up of those who befriend them more than those who produced them.
19. They are having a slow transition to adulthood.
20. Education is a higher priority but is taking longer.
21. Don't trust institutions.
22. Passionate about community.
23. Express themselves through music.

III. Basic implications of this new world on reaching and connecting with the unchurched.

Comparison of the Two Worlds

	Christendom	Pre-Christian & Post Modern
World View	Grand Scheme- God Centered Contradictions - Abnormal Linear Ultimate Truth	My Story – Self Centered Contradictions - Normal Non Linear No Ultimate Truth
Evangelism	Eternal (God’s Counsels)	Daily Event
Christianity	Starting Point	One Alternative among Many
Bible	Inspired	So What?
Sermon	Linear W/3 points	Personal Story
Bible Stories	Explained	Lived Out
Religion	One Faith	Interchangeable Faiths
Salvation	For whole world One Way You Have to Believe You Need It!	Does It Work For Me? Many Ways So! Glad It Works For You Who Needs It?
Forgiveness	Sin Necessary	No Sin Not Necessary
Guilt	Basic to Society	Absent
Communication	Preaching Written	Relationships Visual
Preaching	Preach Them In	Love Them In(Word & Deed)
Growth	Propositional/intellect controls	Holistic (Truth Transforms)
Morality	Ought	Why?

A. Pre-packaged programs such as the ‘Four Spiritual Laws’ will not work well with this new generation because they do not begin with Christianity as the starting point. An educative process I based on a trusted relationship has to be established in order for the person we are trying to reach can discover ancient truth.

1. “*God loves you and offers a wonderful **plan** for your life.*” This law is viewed as okay because this generation accepts the existence of a god as long as it is defined by each person.
2. “*Man is **sinful** and **separated** from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God’s love and plan for his life.*” This law appears silly to this generation because nearly everyone has been conditioned to believe that there is no such thing as absolute sin or guilt. Those are only relative terms.
3. “*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." Same problem as with the second law with the addition that most people today believe that there is no such thing as one way to do anything.

4. *"We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives."* Again, this assumes that everyone is willing to admit they are guilty of something.

B. Our method should be based on a process that begins with relationships.

1. Conversion will be more like an Emmaus Road experience than a Damascus Road. People will look back on a longer process and not be real sure when they crossed the threshold. They just know that now they are different.
2. Transformed is a better word today than saved. Being saved suggest an event rather than a process. The word transformed suggests a long term process through which a variety of events have happened.

D. A study of 2,000 people in a variety of locations and denominations showed that radical difference existed between dying and growing churches. Here's what was found:

1. Thriving churches exists to transform lives; declining churches exist for the survival of the institutional church.
2. Contrasts in the members of declining and thriving congregations.

Declining Congregational Participants are more interested in:

Thriving Congregational Members are:

Committed to the Church as an institution Managing committees Holding offices Making decisions about the Corporation Serving at the church Preoccupied with raising money Doing church work Retiring from church work Surveying internal needs Eager to know everyone Perpetuating an heritage in a building	Committed to Christ <u>and</u> His Church Deploying missions Doing hands-on ministries Becoming and Making disciples Serving at the Church and in the world More Concerned with rescuing people Doing God's work, God's way Energized to Serve Sensitized to community Eager for everyone to know God Perpetuating an heritage in the Christian Faith
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