

A Model for Organizing Your Evangelism Effort

By Bob Young

Introduction to the Model

Through my years of ministry, I developed an organizational model to facilitate local evangelism. In simple description, the model categorizes contacts by level of interest or involvement, using a 5-4-3-2-1 approach. The model reflects that evangelism is a process, and not a one-time event. An important advantage of the model is the ability to identify where a person is in the evangelism process. The model also reflects the importance of the church and the prospect knowing and understanding the process of becoming a disciple of Jesus.

The model is simple enough that it requires no special tools or forms. It can be used with a set of 3x5 or 4x6 cards, although I prefer a loose-leaf notebook that allows me to record information for each individual on an 8x11 page and then to move the sheet to the appropriate section in the notebook. The larger sheet of paper gives more space to record relevant information and notes. It may be helpful to develop a template and make copies, thus providing one a “form” and designated spaces to record the desired information.

A brief description of the model

The first step in evangelism is to find people who are interested. Although Jesus said the fields are white to harvest, our church buildings are not overflowing and a smaller and smaller percentage of the U.S. population are practicing Christians. If people are not interested, what is needed is interest. This model is based on evaluating increasing interest and guiding prospects through a sequence designed to pique and increase interest. If the role of interest is not honored, evangelism efforts may end up “converting” people who are not really interested and thus they fall away quickly. The model also seeks to honor the process of faith development as a person moves from observing faith, to experiencing faith, to seeking personal faith, to owned faith.

To focus efforts, I suggest that one maintain a list of possible prospects, those most likely to be interested when opportunities come for initiating spiritual conversations. The development of this list is the first step in the model. Most Christians can easily list dozens of acquaintances who are or might be interested in spiritual matters. The advantages of having such a list is that it reminds one to seek contact with those people and to attempt to steer conversation toward shared spiritual concerns, thus testing and developing interest. Some people like to make a separate sheet for each prospect so identified and to put them in the system immediately, but I found it easier to maintain only lists of names, and perhaps to carry in my pocket a list of my “Top Ten Prospects” as reminders for prayer and seeking contacts and connections through correspondence, phone calls, etc.

That interest is important explains why some evangelism training tools begin with instruction in “developing interest.” A person outside of Christ or not involved in the church must be helped toward interest or re-interest. This most often occurs according to personal felt needs or wants. Interest may come through relationships, curiosity, knowledge, fear, and many other motivators. As Christians take the gospel to the world, seeking to make disciples, the world is the field and the fields are white to harvest, but not all the field is ready for

harvest. In contemporary evangelism efforts, this speaks to the need to develop interest. When one seeks to develop interest, and the person responds positively, the organizational process begins. The person is placed “in the system” as described below.

Possible Interest. When possible interest is shown, that person becomes a “5”, with an information sheet in that section of the notebook or card file. (I organize my notebook from back to front, with this category toward the back so that the goal is to move people toward the front of the notebook. I alphabetize within each section.) In this model, the first goal is that the person should demonstrate some developing interest. This goal should be kept in mind as one follows up on referrals, contacts visitors, works in benevolence, provides counseling and other ministry services such as funerals and weddings, meets family members, makes spiritually-oriented contacts, has spiritual conversations, makes hospital visits, and also through many other contact types and sources. When people show possible interest and thus enter this category, they should be placed on mailing lists, receive information concerning events, and be encouraged in a variety of ways to move toward the next level. They should be encouraged to respond and be given multiple response opportunities. Communication at this level is often one-way, with the prospect as recipient. But it is essential also that the prospect in some way encourages the communication. **Summary: A person seems to have some interest and we are trying to help the person become more interested.**

Responsive. When a person makes any kind of next response, that person moves to category “4”. The response could be attending a church event, requesting a visit or contact, asking questions or requesting information or a study, assisting with a church function or ministry, or any one of a number of other “involvements” or “interests”. A common measure is that the person attends a special event, or even better, a regular church activity. At this level, communication is expanded, and the prospect also responds. This is the beginning of two-way communication and developing a relationship. People at this level should have the opportunity to observe faith in action. It is vital to capture information when people move to this level, thus the importance of good records for VBS, visitors, correspondence courses, information requests, benevolence and ministry contacts, etc. **Summary: The person is demonstrating interest by initiating contact.**

Continuing Contact. When a person requests or is willing to maintain continuing contact, that person becomes a “3”. This can be shown through regular attendance, a personal Bible study, and other indications of interest and increasing assimilation into the life and work of the local church. People at this level should experience faith in the activities of the faith community. Two-way communication at this level is regular and frequent. **Summary: The person has regular contact with the Christian community, ideally with multiple members of the faith community.**

Initial Commitment. There are various ways to describe this level. The point is that the person desires to become an identified part of the faith community. People who desire assimilation are beginning the process of seeking personal faith. In the process of evangelism this step is often marked by baptism, although it is the result of much previous effort and is

accompanied by faith, changed attitudes and lives, new commitments, and new life approaches. It is important that this step include by baptism and connections to the faith community. When a person becomes a Christian and member of the faith community, he or she becomes a “2” in the organizational system. **Summary: The person is taking the baby steps of faith in initial obedience to the gospel, and must be encouraged in becoming part of the faith community and continuing to see and own a personal, sustaining faith.**

Consistent Commitment. The ultimate goal of evangelism is to help a person incorporate their Christ-commitment into their lives so that the commitment is continuous and not sporadic. The significance of including this step in the model is that baptism is not the end, but is another step toward the ultimate goal of owned faith. I generally maintain a new Christian in this category for at least three months after baptism, and usually continue personal Bible studies with new Christians as they enter this classification. Persons who reach this “1” level and continue to grow in faith, involvement, and interest can with confidence become the responsibility of the shepherds who can monitor faithfulness and mentor and equip for increased service. **Summary: The evangelism process is effectively ended and the shepherding process is beginning.**