FRIENDSHIP & PRE-FRIENDSHIP EVANGELISM

by Ernest Eby | 2012 | ernest.eby@gmail.com

Some people are led to God through a personal relationship with a Christian. As the Christian shows care and concern, the unbeliever is attracted to the **God** who is changing the Christian into His likeness. This is sometimes referred to as **"Friendship Evangelism."**

Friendship evangelism is an effective method of converting next-door neighbors, when that is the reason for our friendship with an unbeliever.

Sometimes we as Christians may conclude that **"friendship evangelism"** is the only effective method, yet…. we never get around to doing much of it. The result is that our society "evangelizes" us more than we influence it for God. Consequently, we must become people who are willing to initiate conversations with our society. The Gospel needs to be declared through our mouth as well as through our lives

But… what about all those who will never have a Christian friend? How will they learn the Gospel? If every person in our state, country, and world is going to hear the Gospel from a Christian, we as Christians must also be committed to **"Pre-friendship evangelism"**.

Examples of people groups who can be witnessed to through friendship evangelism:

- Employers
- Fellow employees
- Relatives
- Customers, Vendors
- Store Clerks
- Neighbors
- Children's clubs, VBS, etc
- People who are anti-Christian
- Muslims, Jews, atheists, etc.
- Old people

Jesus encouraged both friendship evangelism and pre-friendship evangelism, the early Christians made use of both methods, and many Christians the last two thousand years have used both forms of evangelism.

The question we need to ask ourselves is, "Am I willing to take my place in the long line of faithful Christians who have involved themselves in these two types of

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witnessing? Am I willing to participate in both kinds of evangelism for my Lord who died for me?"

Don't get discouraged if all you do is plant seed. On the average, unbelievers need an average of seven encounters with the Gospel, before they are ready to commit their lives to God.

Examples of ways people have done Pre-Friendship evangelism:

1. Invite people to study the Bible with you or with others.
2. Begin a regular pattern or biking or walking through your local village or town. As you go through the village, pray for the people in the houses you pass. Wave and smile at people you meet. Stop and begin conversations with those God leads you to talk to.
3. Collect prayer requests and follow up on the prayer need. People are amazed that you care that much.
4. Conduct "community surveys" that help you learn more about the lives and beliefs of others in your community.
5. Knock on doors – (Take children or babies along, this often softens people's hearts.)
6. Stand at four way stops and pass out tracts or CD's to those driving by.
7. Stand on street corners and talk to people who are walking by.
8. Contact Super Markets and Department stores in your area and see if their "fund raising policies" will allow you to distribute free Gospel CD's
9. Go to bus stations or Metro stations and talk with people who are waiting for their ride.
10. Sit down with people at a city park or coffee shop and strike up a conversation about work, politics, etc, and steer the conversation toward religion and ultimately toward Christ.
11. Do open air preaching or singing and give people an invitation to learn more or respond now to the Gospel.
12. Make a commitment to talk to one person about the Lord or give someone something to read every time you go shopping.
13. Attach letters or tracts to helium balloons or place them inside the balloon.

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14. Put an ad in the newspaper like this, “Commit your life to the Lord Jesus Christ.” Include your phone number.
15. Put up tract racks in your town. Regularly check on them and rotate stock with new titles.
16. Mail Christian magazines to people in your town. Get them personalized with your church name.
17. Invite locals to a hymn sing, outdoor “Journey to Bethlehem”, Thanksgiving dinner, Sunday lunch, youth program.
18. Need passion for witnessing? Go somewhere there are lots of people and stand there and pray for all those that go by. Pray until you can’t hold still any longer because of your burden to talk to someone who is lost.
19. Can’t talk? Stand at an intersection, point to your heart, clasp your hands, and point to God.
20. Hold gospel signs at busy intersections, football games, or on city streets.

There are many more ways to share the Gospel. Obviously some of the above methods are more effective than others, but the important thing is to do something! Be willing to try new methods if the method you have been using is not effective.

WITNESSING

A few sobering facts about the state of the “fishing” industry in the USA:

- Churches in America are closing at an average of 3500-6000 per year
- According to a recent survey, 88% of youth in evangelical churches leave by age 18 and never come back
- 25,000 evangelical churches in a recent year did not report one baptism
- More professing Christians in America are being converted to Islam than the other way around
- According to a national survey, 97% of evangelicals had not witnessed for Christ in the previous 2 months
- Only 3% of professing Christians have ever lead anyone to Christ

(From *Unashamed* by Floyd McElveen)

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By way of encouragement:

- Fishing for men (presenting the Gospel) is different than being a salesman. Your Master will never fire you for not doing well enough.
- One family in Louisiana has a goal of sharing their faith with an average of three people per day. In a year's time, they witness to over 1000 people. Their goal is to make witnessing a regular part of their lifestyle and hope their children will have the opportunity to see God change sinners into Godly servants of God.
- The average person does not respond to the gospel, until he has been witnessed to at least seven times. While much of our witnessing falls on hard soil, some falls on fertile soil. We never know how God will use the seed that we plant.

How to prepare:

- Pray that God would open the hearts of the people we will meet.
- Read, "*How to Share my Faith without an Argument". (PDF online)*
- Pray for courage and boldness.
- Pray that Satan's goals for would be blocked, and that God's will would be done on earth.
- Discuss your fears with God and with friends.
- Make sure that you are not hiding anything in your life, that if discovered, would bring reproach to the name of Christ.
- Encourage those around you who also may be fearful. Practice sharing your faith with each other.

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