


10

WAYS TO PRACTISE EVANGELISM

(and 40 ideas to put them into action)





It's got a lot of baggage, this e-word, but we are all called to share the good news of Jesus and to participate in God's life-changing work. We don't have to be a completely different kind of church or have a personality transplant; God has gifted us all to do evangelism in our own unique way.

Evangelism is about meeting people where they are and listening to their stories. It's about inclusive love and welcome, healing and transformation. It starts with relationship and in community. It will change your life and the lives of people around you. Evangelism is GOOD NEWS.

Here are ten basic ways to practise evangelism, whoever and wherever you are, each with practical ideas for individuals in red and for churches in orange.

HEAR THE GOOD NEWS

1

PRAY

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him.

(Colossians 2:6-7a, NRSV)

It's obvious, but so important – if we are to be people who speak of God, we must be people who live our lives built up in God. Prayer is more than making requests to God; it is the source of our life in God. Being rooted in God through prayer gives us everything we need for evangelism. Pray in a way that feels good for you, but don't be afraid to try some new ways of praying. Here are some suggestions:

- Download an app for daily prayer, like **Pray As You Go** (www.pray-as-you-go.org).
- At the end of the day, prayerfully ask yourself this question: **Where has God been in my day today?**

- During a service, instead of reading the Bible passage from the front, break up into small groups and read it together a few times. Ask each other what is God saying to you through this passage?
- Go on a community prayer walk, stopping at key places and praying together for yourselves, your community and one another.

2

LISTEN

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6, NRSV)

God is at work all around us, and he invites us to join in. Bringing people to faith happens by God's grace and in God's strength. So, where is God at work and where is God calling you and your church to join in? The things that feel most life-giving to you are likely to be the things God wants you involved in. These questions might help:

- Who do I know who is curious about faith or who do I know who is spiritually inquisitive?
- What conversations have I had recently that have felt most like faith-talk?
- As a church group, think together: Where is there already energy in our community for meeting local need?
- Where do we see faith in action locally and what makes us excited that is happening nearby?

TELL THE GOOD NEWS

3



HAVE A CONVERSATION

“We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen ...” (John 3:11, NRSV)

Thirty-six per cent of practising Christians say having a conversation with a Christian was a key influence in their coming to faith*. Jesus shows us the healing, transformational power of conversation in the Gospels. This is encouraging; you don't need special techniques – just a conversation that flows naturally from who you are and who you're talking to. Here are some ways to integrate faith into conversations:

- Notice what God is doing in your life and when somebody asks “How was your weekend?”, talk about church.
- Ask a question such as “Do you believe Jesus was a real person/in miracles/in life after death?”/in miracles?/in life after death? Finding out what our friends and family believe can begin an amazing conversation.

- Use a conversation game, like *Table Talk* (www.table-talk.org) to help get into deeper conversation. These work especially at events where there is a mixture of people with and without faith.
- In a service or over coffee, ask people to discuss a key question (eg what has been a major turning point in your life?/how do you take care of your spiritual life?) – if we speak deeply in church, we'll find it easier outside of church. Ask people to have the same conversation in the week with somebody they know who isn't Christian.

4



TESTIFY!

“Go home to your friends, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy he has shown you.” (Mark 5:19, NRSV)

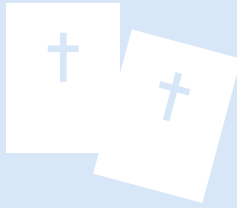
The best starting point in evangelism is our testimony – our story about being part of God's story, our own lived experience of God's love and grace. This will be much more powerful than any theological argument. Our testimony isn't a finished story; it's an ongoing story of our belonging, questioning and living with God. Testimony takes honesty, courage and vulnerability. Testimony should be authentic, current, simple and “from your scars not your wounds”. Here are some ideas about how to build testimony into your life and church culture:

- Record a video of you telling your story of faith and share it on social media or your church website.
- Check out *The Story Project* and contribute your story to it: www.methodist.org.uk/thestoryproject

- Build testimony into your services with one person telling their story each week or by including a ‘moment of the week’ in your service where people are asked to say what God has been doing in their lives. As well as enriching your worship and fellowship, this will build up confidence in story-sharing outside of church.
- Does your church noticeboard testify to the faith of the church community? Each month ask a member of your church to briefly write up their faith story – include a photo of them, laminate it and display on the noticeboard.

TELL THE GOOD NEWS

5



USE THE BIBLE

“Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” (Luke 24:32, NRSV)

In the Gospels, Jesus often uses Scripture to reveal something about the good news and we can do the same. Twenty-seven per cent of practising Christians say the Bible was key in their coming to faith*. Often people who are new to the Bible are surprised by what it says and how the people in the Bible have pain and joy in their lives like themselves. When people recognise their own story in God’s story it can be immensely powerful and healing. Here are some ideas:

- Does your home or workplace say anything about your faith? Print out a favourite Bible verse and stick it up in your house window or in your workplace – it might catch people’s attention and intrigue them.
- When you write a card to your friends and family include an appropriate Bible verse.

- If you have a church-run project like a lunch club, print out a Bible story you feel might be relevant (ones about people work well in this context) and leave it on the tables – you never know who might read it. Put on the bottom: “What does this say to you? If you have any questions you can speak to ...”
- Choose a ‘Bible verse of the month’ and put posters up around church with it on (eg on the backs of toilet doors!) – anyone using the building regularly will read them each month. Include a question underneath (eg with a verse about God’s love add: “In what ways do you feel God’s love in your life?”).

6



DIGITAL EVANGELISM

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” (Mark 16:15, NRSV)

The digital world is just as important as the offline world for connecting with others and sharing the good news. Can your friends on Facebook or your followers on Twitter tell you’re a Christian? The digital world is a space for us to proclaim the good news, both in what we say and how we say it. There are some ideas below, but take a look at the full guidance on ‘digital evangelism’ at www.methodist.org.uk/digitalevangelism

- Does your Facebook ‘about me’ or your bio on Instagram or Twitter say that you’re a Christian?
- Look for opportunities to support others and share God’s love, such as by saying “I’ll be praying for you.”
- If your church uses social media, post a Bible verse or hymn regularly – you could ask a different member of the church to choose and say why it means something to them.
- Share stories of God at work in the world or in your community, and of prayers answered. You don’t have to create masses of content yourself – share what other church communities are posting.

BE THE GOOD NEWS



LOVE AS YOU ARE LOVED

Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us ... (Ephesians 5:1-2, NRSV)

Sometimes *showing* people the good news is more powerful than telling them – when we try and love, welcome and accept others in the way that we have experienced love, welcome and acceptance from God. Remember that in all your evangelism, the aim is to build authentic, meaningful relationships that embody the love of God – not to get more people to come to church on a Sunday. Here are some suggestions:

- Go for a walk, take a litter picker and clear up litter as you go – this isn't just being a good citizen, this is honouring God the creator and witnessing to his love for the whole earth. If this doesn't feel enough like evangelism, wear a T-shirt with your church logo showing that your church loves its community.
- Make sure you have posters up in church for local groups such as parenting classes, Alcoholics Anonymous, domestic abuse helplines, or bereavement support groups. Whether they're run by the church, in the church or elsewhere, signposting to these is about church being a place where you care about one another and seek healing and transformation for people.
- On Mothering Sunday and Fathers' Day, go to the local crematorium or cemetery and serve hot drinks and cakes to those visiting.



BE A BLESSING TO YOUR COMMUNITY

"I will bless you [...] so that you will be a blessing." (Genesis 12:2, NRSV)

Being good news means we don't hold on tight to the blessings we receive from God, but we let them overflow into the lives of the people around us. By connecting with your community, you can show others that the good news is a rich blessing. Here are some ideas:

- If you're gifted at craft, art or gardening, can you get creative and bless your community (with permission from relevant authorities) through a mural, a flower bed, crochet tree sleeves, etc?
- Hold an exhibition, poetry night or arts festival in your church. Invite members of the community. People can encounter God in surprising ways through the arts, which can powerfully witness to the good news.
- With a team from your church, stand by a busy set of traffic lights or at a train station during the morning rush – hand out breakfast blessing bags containing something to eat, a small gift and a gospel message.
- Have a stand at a summer fete or community fair – be approachable, give things away, have conversations. Interact with people creatively, eg set up a video camera and ask people to say to camera why they love their community, or create a prayer wall and ask people to add what they're worried about or thankful for.

BE THE GOOD NEWS



SEEK JUSTICE

If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food, and one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill,” and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? (James 2:15-16, NRSV)

Our message that Jesus came to bring fullness of life for all doesn't sound much like good news to people who are experiencing injustice, oppression or poverty. Unless we are a justice-seeking church, our evangelism is void – how can we say “come to faith” if the outliving of our faith shows us to be complicit in ‘bad news’ systems and structures? We cannot speak good news with any authority if we're not living and pursuing it. The Methodist Church has an evident, lived-out desire for social justice – and this desire is God-given. We are gifted to do mission in and through this – evangelism doesn't require us to change who we are. Our social justice projects are opportunities to build relationships with people where they are and show genuine compassion. We can create a space where people feel comfortable, known and loved, to show people that God is for them and not against them and where people can ask questions if they have them. Here are some ideas about integrating faith into your social justice:

- **Could you join an ecumenical ‘faith in action’ project in your village, town or city (eg Street Pastors/Angels, a night shelter, a refugee project, etc)?**
- **Be clear about what motivates you in your social action – and have an answer ready for when somebody asks why you do what you do (eg your hope in Jesus /wanting others to experience the love of God, etc).**

- **If you run a social action project at your church, make sure you pray as a team – this is essential. Prayer is not the opposite of action, it's the lifeblood running through all we do.**
- **You can sensitively incorporate Christian content into your social action – you don't have to turn off your Christianity. Share your own story of faith, have a Christian theme, top or tail the time with prayer, use table questions, short talks or craft activities as you feel appropriate.**



WORSHIP OR PRAY WITH OTHERS

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

(Matthew 18:20, NRSV)

Forty-one per cent of practising Christians said the most important factors in them coming to faith was an experience of the love of Jesus or a spiritual experience*. If we can help others into an encounter with the mystery, grace or love of God it will be much more powerful than us trying to explain God to them – and often people are more open to this than we might think. This might mean inviting friends to come to church with you or sharing in prayer and worship with people where they are. Here are some ways to do this:

- **Send somebody a link to your favourite worship song or hymn on YouTube and ask them if they feel able to sit and listen to it peacefully.**
- **If somebody you know is struggling or going through a difficulty, ask them if they would like you to pray with them or for them.**

- **Create a spiritual place (eg a prayer garden or prayer station) in your churchyard or out in the community in a public space for people to visit and use.**
- **Hold a service for families in the community who have lost loved ones in the last year – Christmas would be a suitable time for this.**
- **Consider ways you can take worship and prayer out into your community through schools and campus ministry, chaplaincy, healing, or prayer on the streets, holding specific services in community buildings or outside. You can't do it all – what are you gifted to do, where is God calling you, where is God already at work?**

Don't forget to check out the other resources available here:
www.methodist.org.uk/equippedforevangelism

* The statistics in sections 3, 5 and 10 are taken from the 2015 Talking Jesus Research, the full research can be viewed here: www.talkingjesus.org/research-from-the-course