



“As You See the Day Drawing Near”:

Stirring Up Congregations with Evangelistic Outreach Ideas

Regional Home Missionary

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We are called to be Jesus’ witnesses (Acts 1:8; cf. Isaiah 43:1ff). Very simply this is eagerly making known and witnessing to what our God has done in Christ to redeem sinners. As Christians, we are a people on mission, and we seek to evangelize and make this glorious gospel known with deliberateness and diligence in the power of Christ’s Spirit (Luke 24:48-49; John 20:21-23). We are a people on mission, called to do the work of evangelists (or “Gospelers”) who should daily remember the Day of Christ is drawing near. In light of this truth and seeking to be earnest and faithful as Christ’s stewards, we should seek to *“stir up one another to love and good works and encouraging one another”!* (Hebrews 10:14-25). We might also remember 10 important, foundational biblical principles as we considering outreach ideas: *1. Being There, 2. Being Prepared, 3. Being Faithful, 4. Being Yourself, 5. Being Filled, 6. Being Confident, 7. Being Christ, 8. Not Being Christ, 9. Being Patient, and 10. Being Expectant* (see my *‘Ten Principles for Deliberate, Daily, Biblical Evangelism’*).

When I think of how to do evangelism in my congregation, what truths should come to my mind in order to do this in a biblical and faithful way?

Prayer- Private and Corporate- Start a prayer meeting to pray specifically for your neighbors and for opportunities to share the gospel with them. When seeking to evangelize and reach out as a congregation or as individuals, let us remember that it must be founded on faithful prayer, both corporate and private-personal. We pray for fruit that God has promised to give to us in Christ, and we pray for boldness to be filled by the Spirit, and to speak gently and clearly and faithfully and honestly to, and with compassion for the lost. We pray corporately with great expectations, knowing God answers our prayers, and is pleased to cement us together in unity and peace through our common and joint Gospel witness together. This is built on the strong foundation of prayer. From the ‘10 Principles on Daily Evangelism’ these would be numbers 2, 5, 6, 7, and 9.

Repentance and Faith- Start with repentance from your heart. The Bible teaches us in light of Christ’s salvation for us, to *“Not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the LORD”* (Romans 12:11). Oftentimes, the reason why we do not evangelize is that we can be slothful in our zeal. The world teaches us to “turn over a new leaf”, but the Bible teaches us to “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is near.” Repentance in evangelism, personal and corporate repentance, by the Spirit’s power can cause a break with our past habits, and to fill us with a new zeal, embarking on a new trajectory in the way we will live our lives out as bold witnesses. Our true repentance in reliance upon the power of Christ’s Spirit, can give us a stronger faith and zeal, and to turn from our unnecessary distractions, our fear of men, our lack of compassion, and other sins that so easily can beset the believer. Repentance is a daily practice that Thomas Watson, our father in the faith, taught consists in daily sight of our sin, sorrow for our sin, confession of our sin, hatred of our sin, and a turning from our sin to the grace and love and mercy found in Jesus Christ (Heb. 4:16).

Continuing to be Faithful in Public Worship- The primary evangelism that each of our congregations involve themselves in is in our weekly gathering on the Lord’s Day for worship of the Triune God. This is

used by Christ to witness to community and friends in ways that are beyond our understanding! Let us be faithful to attend worship on the Lord's Day together with the saints and let us be constantly inviting our neighbors and friends to join us. Statistics teach us that most folks are saved through invitation to public worship and being exposed to the Gospel and the riches of the fellowship of the saints, and then hearing the Gospel preached. Rather than merely reading a tract or hearing a brief gospel presentation, sinners are able to "try on" Christianity for size in worship and fellowship with the saints (though handing out tracts and giving brief gospel presentations are part of the seed that our faithful Savior uses to prepare the hearts of sinners to receive). But being faithful in public worship is not the end of our evangelism, there is more. While worship can be an act of evangelism, it is first for God and His people, whereas the work and privilege of evangelism moves from worship and fellowship with God's people outwardly to compassionate outreach. See *Evangelism in the Local Church* by John Shaw for more detailed insights and characteristics. From the '10 Principles' these would be all the numbers.

Daily Study of and Mediation on the Gospel for Oneself- Let each of us continue to think on God's blessings to us, and to consider each Gospel presentation, each Lord's Day from our faithful Ministers of the Gospel. The more we understand and daily receive the Gospel and are transformed by it by God's Grace, the more we tend to possess a desire to see others transformed and changed as well. Right now, take a piece of paper and answer this question in 1-3 sentences: "*What is the Gospel?*" Do you know how to speak this clearly to your own heart? Do you know how to summarize and share it concisely and clearly to others? Here's my answer to the question: *The Gospel is the good news of what the Father has done in Christ in the power and love of the Holy Spirit to redeem sinners and restore them progressively to their created glory as righteous servant-sons of the king. Further, the Gospel is how God's just wrath has been satisfied through the blood of the lamb, and how He has imputed a perfect righteousness to believer-sons in Christ so that we may enjoy the fellowship and communion with God for all eternity. The Gospel is something graciously planned by the Father, fully accomplished by the Son, and completely and powerfully applied by the Spirit!* From the '10 Principles' this would be number 2.

Study a Book on Evangelism as a Congregation in Sunday school or small group times- Start a book study. A study of a good gospel book on evangelism is useful to encourage evangelism in your congregation, one such as *Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus* by Mack Stiles. This is perhaps one of the best and most concise and practical books on evangelism I have ever studied. From the '10 Principles' these would be numbers 2, 4, 6, and 9.

Hospitality and Invitations to Neighbors- Most testimonies to conversions and church growth in Reformed Confessional Churches seem to begin through hospitality and personal invitations to your neighbors and friends. God may use this powerfully to change sinners into sons through these personal relationships. Be friendly and hospitable neighbors! Some will not accept or desire your invitation, but some will. For more on this, read Rosaria Butterfield's excellent book *'The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World'*. From the '10 Principles' these would be numbers 1, 2, 6, 7, 9, 10.

Take Part in Events in Your Community- Let the people of God be so oriented toward the lost with compassion and desire for Gospel witness and action, that with each public event in your community, the congregation seeks to be there (the first of the '10 Principles'!). These events may include joining the community in parades, community-wide yard sales, barbeques, etc. Some congregations have joined the community in these ways, and also held afternoons in the park on the Lord's Day or on a Saturday, where there is a cookout, a gospel reading, and singing of God's praises, etc. When the community is worshipping, this is an ideal way to witness, invite, and make known your congregation.

Encouraging and Exhorting and Challenging One Another to Witness-Action- This is tremendously important in our fellowship times! A big part of stirring up evangelism in our congregations is to remind one another from the pulpit and personally when talking over coffee and in times of prayer and fellowship that we are people on mission until Jesus returns, and exhorting one another to continue to be faithful, and to cultivate a kind of culture of evangelism in each congregation. The worship and the fellowship will not then be the end goal, but we will worship, fellowship, and remember the end goal of glory to God through witness. We will continue to be on mission and think about this specifically when we're together and when we go into our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, etc. Remember, we desire to be faithful as Christians in up-reach (worship), in in-reach (discipleship), and out-reach (evangelism). We are called to all three of these privileges of Christ's people!

Daughter A Church in Your Area- We learn in the Book of Acts that our Risen-Ascended-Enthroned King loves to build His church expansively and outwardly, not necessarily upwardly. When we think about growing in numbers and influence, let us think about addition through subtraction: planting a daughter church as our congregation is extended horizontally for God's glory to a new area and community where an outpost of heaven can be established for the worship of the Triune God, discipleship, and further expansion-outreach (see below for more information on this). A daughter congregation is a new area is like a Gospel "welcome center" in a new location; like a new school to learn about Christ and to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ; like a new garden planted in a new location for sowing, reaping, and flourishing by God's grace; like an embassy full of welcoming and graciously transformed ambassadors established for our king on foreign soil. This can be daunting but also very exciting. This can be a new way that an established congregation can grow further together in unity and sanctification as they learn to trust the LORD in more purposefully and deliberately fulfilling His mission. Our God is faithful.

Resources for Evangelism (some of my favorite books/websites for evangelism and evangelistic ideas):

Making Faith Magnetic: Five Hidden Themes Our Culture Can't Stop Talking About....And How to Connect them to Christ (D. Strange)

Honest Evangelism (R. Tice)

Evangelism: How the Whole Church Speaks of Jesus (M. Stiles)- This is perhaps one of the best and most practical books on evangelism I have ever studied.

God-Centred Evangelism (R. B. Kuiper)

The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World (Rosaria Butterfield)

Planting, Watering, Growing: Planting Confessionally Reformed Churches in 21st Century (Hyde and Lems)

A Seed Must Die to Bear Fruit (Al Tricarico and Lacy Andrews)

Evangelism in the Local Church (John Shaw)

English as Second Language- ESL Programs- Consult Pastor Chris Cashen who does an excellent work of this in the PMA.

Outward OPC: Great ideas on the Gospel and sharing the Gospel.

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