

Andrews University
Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary

A PROPOSED SPECIFIC MINISTRY-EMBEDDED
EVANGELISTIC CHALLENGE FOR THE
HIGHLAND SDA CHURCH

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PREFACE

This paper addresses the challenge of mobilizing Highland members to engage in mission and ministry in the Portland community by employing the Personal Styles of Evangelism. Church growth principles, theory and literature that address that challenge as well as my own personal experience and theological reflections are all imbedded in the paper itself rather than being broken out under separate categories.

The comprehensive Personal Styles training process with sermons and seminar and accountability system will have to be researched, developed and detailed more fully in my 150-250 page DMin project itself. This paper lays a basic foundation out of which my project will grow.

CHAPTER 1

THE EVANGELISTIC CHALLENGE

Profile of the Evangelistic Target Area of Portland, TN

Portland is a rural community of 10,046¹ residents, located in northern middle Tennessee, just five miles south of Kentucky and 35 miles north of Nashville, the State Capitol. During its early days Portland was a strong agricultural community, and was particularly noted for its production of strawberries. In recent years Portland has become an important industrial center due to the close proximity of Interstate 65 and the L&N Railroad. It boasts over 50 industries comprised of distribution, warehousing and manufacturing. These industries provide a surplus of jobs for Portland residents (unemployment rate is only 1.7%) as well as attract workers from surrounding towns and counties. The population is primarily white (95%), blue-collar (55%), with a median age of 36.2 and a household income of \$48,306 (cf. U.S. average of \$63,207). The percentage of population with a bachelor's degree or higher (8.8%) is significantly below the state average. There is a large concentration of churches in the Portland area (62) with Baptist and Church of Christ surfacing as the most prominent. The people of Portland are mostly church-going (77% are either strongly or somewhat involved with their faith) and tend to be more conservative in their Christian values than the U.S. population as a whole.

¹All 2004 demographic data comes from Percept Group Inc. at www.PerceptNet.com

Portland has experienced a nice growth rate of 42.8% since the 1990 Census (cf. the U.S. as a whole grew by only 16.9%). It is projected to grow an additional 11.5% during the next five years (cf. a 5.3% projected growth for the U.S. population as a whole). This steady growth pattern is attributed to the population sprawl of nearby Nashville. Families desire to move out of the metro area and live in a quieter, simpler, safer place.

A composite profile of a typical person in Portland would look something like this, let's call him "Portland Paul."¹ Portland Paul is Caucasian in his mid 30's and is part of the Survivors generational group (age 23-43). He is a graduate of Portland Highschool and has dabbled with a couple of classes at Volunteer State Community College but has no college degree. Portland Paul works in Portland in the industrial park at Kirby Building Systems manufacturing fabricated steel buildings. His wife, Paula, works at Peyton's Mid-south warehousing and distributing non-food items to Kroger stores. Paul and Paula would be classified as a Rural Working Family with a meager household income of \$45,000. They have two children ages 15 and 13 who attend the local high school and middle school. Paul and Paula's concerns which are likely to exceed the national average include: Finding/Providing Health Insurance (33.9% cf. 29% U.S. average), Dealing with Teen/Child Problems (26.2% cf. 20.7% U.S. average), Dealing with Problems in Schools (19.3% cf. 13.6% U.S. average), and Dealing with Alcohol/Drug Abuse (20.8% cf. 16.7% U.S. average). Many families in Portland are either strongly or somewhat involved in their faith (77% cf. 65.3% U.S. average). Their faith receptivity and preference for historic Christian religious affiliations is very high when compared to national averages. Paul and Paula

¹Rick Warren, pastor of Saddleback Community Church, encourages churches to make a composite profile of the typical unchurched person in the community. See Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House), 169.

are searching for a good church (27.5% cf. 15.2% U.S. average) and are concerned about finding spiritual teaching for themselves and their family (21.7% cf. 12.9% U.S. average). The field is wide open to steer them in the right direction.

Profile of the Highland Church

Highland Church is located on the south side of Portland, Tennessee, adjacent to Highland Academy which is our Kentucky-Tennessee Conference boarding academy. In addition to a large community church of 765 members, there are 140 students enrolled in our academy and 90 students in our elementary school. Highland is a blend of young and old, traditional and progressive. The church was originally planted as a self-supporting school and sanitarium by a pioneering team from Madison College back in 1907. In 1945 the self-supporting school was converted into a conference operated boarding academy. There is additionally an Adventist hospital (Tennessee Christian Medical Center), nursing home (Highland Manor), and retirement center (Highland Rim Terrace) in town. Highland could be classified an “Institutional Church.”

During the past eight years, Highland has experienced a steady membership growth from 620 to 765 (23% growth). Since my arrival here as pastor in April of 1997, our church has placed a heavy emphasis on public evangelism with six evangelistic meetings: Steve Wohlberg (Feb. 1998), Net ‘98 with Dwight Nelson (Fall, 1998), Net ‘99 with Doug Batchelor (Fall, 1999), David Hartman in Lafayette (Fall, 2001), and David Hartman in Portland (Feb. 2002 and Feb. 2005). We also participated in two global evangelism trips to Cuba (April 2000) and India (Sept. 2003). Highland also planted a church in Lafayette, TN about 30 miles to the east of Portland in 2000. This congregation of 30 is now worshiping in a brand new church facility.

In addition to traditional meetings Highland conducts a smorgasbord of community felt-needs classes in the Spring and/or Fall each year. Some of the classes offered include: quilting, Spanish, gardening, landscaping, aerobics, nutrition, Cardiac Health Improvement Program (C.H.I.P.), bird watching, witnessing and Spiritual Gifts. There is also a high level of involvement of Highland members in the Portland community, such as the Portland Chamber, civic clubs and organizations, Portland C.A.R.E.S., Meals on Wheels, Cancer Relay for Life, Red Ribbon week, Puppetry Group - Drug Awareness to local schools, joint choir with area churches at Christmas and Easter, Ministerial Association, etc. Our Adventist hospital and physicians are also quite missionary-minded and actively involved in community health events.

All of this saturation of Adventist presence in our Portland community over the past 97 years has had both positive and negative results. The primary positive result is that the community is acquainted with Seventh-day Adventists and holds us in positive regard. However, at the same time, the community has become somewhat calloused or “immune” to our message. In some respects we are still viewed as that Adventist community three miles south of town. For many years we were primarily a “light on a hill” beckoning the community to come and see. Our challenge now is to become “salt of the earth” and to go and do. We must permeate our community with a positive Christian influence and message.

The Ministry-imbedded Evangelistic Challenge

The key challenge is to mobilize Highland members to engage in mission and ministry in the Portland community by employing the Personal Styles of Evangelism. They tend to see evangelism as an event rather than a lifestyle. They depend on the “professionals” (pastors,

evangelists, and medical doctors) to do the work of evangelism rather than becoming personally involved. The Personal Styles of Evangelism will help to restore the apostolic witness of the early Christian church and prepare the people of Portland for the soon coming of Jesus Christ.

Create a Culture of Evangelism in the Highland Church

The following six-prong strategy will be used to create a culture of evangelism in the Highland Church so that the ministry-embedded project will flourish.

1. Fuel passionate spirituality of the membership. Preach “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Cor 1:23; 2:2) as our only hope of salvation. Share practical ways to enhance intimacy with God through meaningful Bible study and prayer. Introduce “Spiritual Journaling” to the members where they read through a book of the Bible and record what God whispers to their heart. Launch a vibrant prayer ministry: design “prayer cards” where members can submit prayer needs and concerns; recruit a prayer ministry team who will continuously pray for the needs of the church; challenge members to make up “Ten Most Wanted” lists of friends and loved ones who need to know Christ and to daily intercede for these individuals; encourage each Sabbath School class and small group to designate a portion of their group time to intercessory prayer.¹ Share testimonies during mid-week gatherings and corporate worship which exult the work of God in the life of the believer and the church. As the spiritual “temperature” of the congregation rises, the evangelism culture of the church will naturally rise.²

¹See Chris and Yolanda Blake, *Reinvent Your Sabbath School* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Assoc., 2001), 23-29 for creative prayer ideas.

²Monte Sahlin argues that passionate spirituality is the strongest indicator of church growth in the Adventist Church. See Monte Sahlin, “What Makes Churches Grow? What Recent Adventist Research Reveals,” *Ministry*, November 2004, 10.

2. Empower an evangelistic point person who will rally a team of evangelistic leaders (known as a Frontline Team) to champion evangelism and implement a strategic outreach plan in the Highland Church. This point person is someone who is fired up about evangelism and is willing to: a) own and model evangelistic values, b) instill the values in others; c) empower additional evangelistic leaders; d) liberate and equip every believer via quarterly training events; e) develop a diversified evangelism team; f) coordinate high-impact outreach events and ministries.¹

3. Turbo charge evangelistic training in the Highland Church. Offer a training event once a quarter where members learn how to be “Contagious Christians”² and share their faith through the employment of the Personal Styles of Evangelism (this training process is detailed on p. 9).

4. Multiply outreach ministries and events where members can interface with the community and build active relationships with the people of Portland and utilize their Personal Style of Evangelism in witnessing. These service activities should be presented more as “community-based” than the traditional “church-based community service paradigm.”³ The evangelism point person and his Frontline Team will evaluate the existing needs in the community: secure the Percept Group, Inc.⁴ demographic study for the city of Portland and note

¹The evangelism point person and Frontline Team is adapted from Mark Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church: Revolutionizing the Way We View and Do Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), 132-151.

²An excellent training resource by this title is Bill Hybels and Mark Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994).

³Sahlin, “What Makes Churches Grow?”, 6-7.

⁴Contact Percept Group Inc. at www.PerceptNet.com

the primary concerns of the community; interview the Mayor, chief of police, city council persons, president of the chamber of commerce, and other community and civic leaders and inquire about the greatest needs of the community; survey the neighborhoods in the immediate vicinity of the Highland church and evaluate the existing needs. Once the primary concerns of the community or target group have been identified, then the Frontline Team will prayerfully brainstorm how the church family might best address these perceived needs. Vital questions might be: Should the needs be addressed simultaneously or one at a time? Can the needs best be met through Super Tuesday community classes, ministry weekends, free-market groups, or by cooperating with other churches or community agencies that are already addressing the needs? Adopt goals and plans for implementing a strategic outreach plan in the Portland Community. When an overall plan is developed, then market ministry opportunities and solicit volunteers: post the community needs on an attractive display table in the church foyer, the bulletin board, website and church newsletter; feature a “parade of ministries” Sabbath with ministry booths in the foyer or fellowship hall and accompanying emphasis during the worship service; provide sign-up sheets and contact numbers so people can engage in the various ministry needs. Challenge all Sabbath School classes and small groups to “adopt” a ministry/outreach project. Conduct a ministry weekend once a month (on Sabbath and/or Sunday afternoon from 2-4 pm) so groups or individuals can get involved in community ministry projects (ie. handing out cookies, raking leaves, washing windows, etc.).¹ Empower individuals to launch free-market ministry

¹See Steve Sjogren, *101 Ways To Reach Your Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001) for excellent community outreach ideas.

groups that meet practical needs and interests of people in the church and community.¹

Designate a quarterly “Friend Day” as well as an annual harvest/reaping seminar so members can invite their friends and neighbors to hear the proclamation of God’s end-time truths. Also train those 10% in the congregation who have the “gift of evangelism” to give Bible studies to interests, friends, and relatives of church members.

5. Provide a support and accountability system that encourages members to witness over the long haul. Do this through: a) Coaching - allow each member to choose a Witnessing Mentor who will provide modeling and coaching. b) Community - encourage each member to choose an Accountability Partner to provide mutual support and accountability. c) Commendation - affirm and recognize the “evangelizers” for their faithful efforts in soul-winning. Give them time during the worship service to share their stories. Allow them to say a few words at the baptism of their friend or family member. Give thank you notes and other special recognitions. d) Celebration - feature the stories of new believers during the worship services and in the church newsletter. Pin their pictures and bios on the church bulletin board.

6. Focus every phase of church life on evangelism and church growth. Encourage each Sabbath School class, small group, ministry, and department to have an “evangelism coordinator” who will keep the group outward focused. These coordinators will comprise the Frontline Team. Increase the church budget allocation for evangelism from 2% to 10% (a “tithing” for evangelism). Emphasize some aspect of evangelism once a month during the Sabbath sermon

¹See Ted Haggard, *Dog Training, Fly Fishing, & Sharing Christ in the 21st Century* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2002). Free-market groups are explained further in chap. 4.

or some other special feature.¹ Evaluate every church board decision in light of the Spiritual Growth Continuum (explained in chap. 3). Ask, Will this board action assist individuals in progressing to the next “faith stage” on the continuum? If not, then scrap the action or idea. Simplify the schedules of the Highland Church. We keep our most mature and faithful church members so busy in programs, committee meetings, and church work that they have no time to minister and witness outside the building.² Ron Hutchcraft reminds us that “people are drowning while we have lifeguard meetings, sing lifeguard songs, and go to lifeguard committee meetings.” His exhortation to us is “to get off the beach and into the water and there are more in the water than there are on the beach by far.”³

Implement the Personal Styles Training Process

Implement the Personal Styles of Evangelism training process within the context of the fertile culture of evangelism outlined above. The training process will consist of three integrated components.

1. The first component is a nine-part series of Sabbath sermons introducing the seven Personal Styles of Evangelism to the Highland Church family. This sermon series will include an introductory sermon, seven sermons on each of the Personal Styles, and a concluding sermon

¹Mark Mittelberg suggests that the evangelism “vision” needs to be restated every 28 days. See Mittelberg, *Building a Contagious Church*, 119.

²Will McRaney Jr. makes a case for freeing up church members so they have time to witness outside the four walls of the church. See Will McRaney Jr., *The Art of Personal Evangelism: Sharing Jesus in a Changing Culture* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 199.

³Quoted in *Ibid.*, 200.

that will challenge people to take the discovery journey.

2. The second component consists of the *Personal Styles of Evangelism* seminar. This four week seminar will give people the nuts and bolts of the seven Personal Styles, including a Personal Styles assessment. It will also cover core evangelistic principles and skills that are imbedded in the Personal Styles such as: evangelism is a lifestyle, not just an event; Jesus' four-step model of evangelism - socialize, sympathize, serve, and save;¹ the art of developing redemptive relationships with the unchurched; basic witnessing "tools" such as spiritual conversation starters, personal testimony, gospel presentation, and invitation to Bible lessons or other harvest events. The Personal Styles seminar will also acquaint trainees with the various Faith Stages of Conversion (explained in chap. 3) so they can choose the style that best matches the "faith stage" of the person they are trying to lead to Christ.

3. The third component involves an accountability system that encourages members to witness over the long haul. This accountability system consists of three different dimensions: a) Witnessing Mentor² - each trainee will select a witnessing mentor, a seasoned soul-winner who is actively engaged in witnessing. Trainee will accompany the mentor on outreach outings once a month for twelve months. Trainee will first watch while the mentor witnesses; then assist; then do while the mentor coaches.³ When the twelve months is up the mentor/coach will continue to

¹This model was originally presented in Ellen G. White, *Ministry of Healing* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1942), p. 143, but is expanded in Philip Samaan, *Christ's Way of Reaching People* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1990).

²An idea posed by Will McRaney Jr. in his book, *The Art of Personal Evangelism*, 202.

³This plan follows Jesus' model of making disciples. The twelve disciples did not learn witnessing methods in a sterile classroom, but out on the beat in a "living lab."

keep in touch once a quarter by asking: “How is it going (both successes and challenges)?” “What direction would you like to go (witnessing goals)?” “How will you get there?” “What resources do you need?” “Is there some way I can assist you or pray for you?”¹

b) Accountability Partner - trainees will pick an accountability partner of the same gender whom they will hold mutually accountable for growth in Christ and witnessing for Christ. Partners will report to each other once a week for twelve months by asking the following accountability questions:² What have you learned about God in your personal Bible reading this past week? (Members are assigned one to seven chapters of Bible reading between sessions). How has God answered your prayers? (Members intercede for their own “10 Most Wanted List” each week). Have you shared your faith in Christ with anyone this past week? (Members share the results of utilizing the Personal Styles of Evangelism). Close with prayer for specific individuals on your prayer lists. At least one of the accountability sessions per month should be spent in an actual outreach together. These accountability relationships provide the “spark plug” that will keep members witnessing over the long haul. c) Free-market Small Group - trainees are encouraged to join a ministry-oriented (free-market) small group where members exercise team ministry together and encourage each other to utilize their evangelistic style.³

¹See Robert E. Logan and Sherilyn Carlton, *Coaching 101: Discover the Power of Coaching* (St. Charles, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 2003) for excellent coaching suggestions.

²See Neil Cole, *Cultivating a Life for God* (Carol Stream, IL: ChurchSmart Resources, 1999) for excellent accountability questions and strategic prayer focus questions.

³A full explanation of free-market small groups is given in chapter 4.

Limitation of my Project

My project will be limited to the Personal Styles of Evangelism training process as outlined above.

Definition of Terms

Following is a definition of terms I will be using in my project:

Personal Styles of Evangelism - a biblical approach or method of evangelism. There are at least seven different styles spoken of in Scripture: Confrontational, Intellectual, Testimonial, Interpersonal, Invitational, Service, and Intercessory. Each evangelist will naturally play to his strength and prefer the style that best fits his or her unique personality, temperament, talents, and background. At the same time the evangelist will be sensitive to the individual situation, need, and level of receptivity and choose the style that best fits the person they are trying to lead to Christ. We will use what's most effective in a given situation regardless of our comfort level.

Faith Stages of Conversion - describes the different levels of receptivity along the pathway from unbelief to belief. The five discernable stages are: Antagonistic, Resistant, Indifferent, Receptive, Hungry. We must first seek to discern the level of receptivity then tailor our evangelistic approach accordingly. Our goal in all of our evangelistic encounters is to move people just one step closer to a faith relationship with Jesus Christ.

Free-market Groups - ministry-oriented small groups that focus on addressing felt needs and special interests. They have an obvious starting and stopping point (usually 6-13 weeks in length) so people know what they are committing to. They are based on the "free-market" principle of individuality, initiative, free-choice, and innovation so that people are given the

freedom to start any kind of group they want to as long as it is consistent with the basic core values of the church. People's preferences will naturally dictate which groups survive and which groups dissolve. The emphasis of free-market groups is to form friendships with the unchurched so that opportunities are multiplied to share faith in a natural way.

CHAPTER 2

PERSONAL STYLES OF EVANGELISM

Introduction

A cursory view of Scripture reveals there are many ways to communicate our faith. The Gospels and the Book of Acts identify different “evangelistic styles” that correspond with our gifts, temperaments and personalities. We should work within our own evangelistic “armor” in order to maximize our evangelistic potential and effectiveness while at the same time being flexible enough to use whatever style is needed in a given situation to lead a person to Christ.

Mark Mittelberg and Bill Hybels have identified six different Personal Styles of Evangelism in their witnessing manual, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. These include: Confrontational approach, Intellectual approach, Testimonial approach, Interpersonal approach, Invitational approach and Service approach.¹ I would like to add one additional style to the list: the Intercessory approach. Following is an overview of the seven styles with a brief description of each.

¹Hybels and Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 119-132.

Overview and Description

1. Confrontational Approach

A person who utilizes this approach is not afraid to proclaim the absolute truths of God's word in an authoritative, matter-a-fact way. Jesus sent His disciples out to proclaim¹ the word (Luke 9:2,6).² An example of this approach is Peter preaching boldly on the day of Pentecost when 3,000 were baptized (Acts 2:14-40).

The Adventist Church was born in the cradle of the Great Second Advent Awakening in the 1840's.³ Early Adventist believers asserted that Jesus was coming on October 22, 1844. The imminent return of Christ compelled them to herald, "The Bride Groom cometh, go out to meet Him!"⁴ This confrontational style of evangelism has been our normative mode of witnessing ever since. Most of our witnessing manuals have emphasized knocking on doors, passing out literature, giving Bible studies, and preaching evangelistic sermons. This style of evangelism is "event" oriented and "message" driven.

In recent years many voices within the Adventist church have advocated less confrontational and alarmist forms of evangelism. Many are suggesting that the traditional prophetic emphasis is outmoded and outdated. When I pastored in Gulf States Conference several years ago, a tornado was sighted one evening during our annual Campmeeting. I was

¹Gk. *karuso* means to announce, herald, proclaim aloud.

²All Scripture references are from the NKJV.

³Mervyn C. Maxwell, *Tell It to the World* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1977), 15-22.

⁴Ibid., 31.

awakened in the dead of night and directed to sound the warning in the tent area. I dashed from tent to tent yelling, "A tornado is coming! Get into the hallway of the dormitory!" I never once felt intimidated or embarrassed for disturbing the sleep of the canvas dwellers because I was saving lives from potential disaster. After the danger had passed though, I would be eyed with grave suspicion if I followed such an alarmist course. Many today believe the "danger" has past, and we need to be preaching more relevant messages for our times.

In reality as we approach the end of time, there will be an increasing demand to preach the end time truths of God's word, not a lessening demand. Rev 14:6-12 depicts the end-time message going forth like three angels flying "in the midst of heaven." When I grew up in Pensacola, Florida our family often retreated to the beach on the weekend to enjoy the surf and sand. A crop duster would occasionally fly overhead trailing an advertizing banner for some pizza parlor or seafood restaurant. When that plane flew overhead, all eyes of sunbathers, swimmers, and beach combers were directed upward. Everyone took note because of the plain, unmistakable message.

A whole generation will soon face horrific deceptions in the spiritual realm. The beast power of Dan 7 and Rev 13 is stealthily gaining momentum. According to Bible prophecy the whole world will soon wonder after the beast and worship the beast (Rev 13:2,4,8). God urges His last day church to warn the world of this rising deception and to appeal for all to give allegiance to the Lamb, Jesus Christ. This final proclamation must be visible and audible so all will notice. Now is not the time to ground the planes in the hanger. Now is the time to fly in the heavens and proclaim the final message with a "loud voice" (Rev 14:7; 18:2). We will be held accountable for doing otherwise.

2. Intellectual Approach

This approach involves an intellectual exchange or discussion of ideas. It is more dialogical, inquiring, and Socratic¹ in nature and presents a logical defense or proof of the Christian faith. The intellectual approach is especially effective in reaching a highly educated, intellectual, philosophical mind-set which disdains easy answers or platitudes. Paul frequently reasoned² with the Jews and Gentiles in the synagogue (Acts 17:2,17; 18:4,19; 19:8; 20:7; 24:25). In Acts 17 he reasoned with the Athenian Greeks by starting with a familiar object, an idol to an unknown god, and bridging to an understanding of the true God. People who enjoy debates and apologetics are especially attracted to this form of witnessing.

3. Testimonial Approach

The testimonial approach is a relaying from one's own personal experience the great things God has done. 1 John 1:1-3 declares, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life we declare to you." A classic example of this approach is the demoniac in Luke 8:26-40. This raging maniac underwent an "extreme make over"! He was transformed from a medium of the prince of darkness to a messenger of the Lord of Light. Jesus commanded him, "Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." As a result of this man's testimony, the whole region of Decapolis (lit. the ten cities) eagerly welcomed Jesus and received Him upon His return ten months later. *The Desire of Ages* adds this insight, "Our confession of His faithfulness is Heaven's chosen agency for

¹See George Barna, *Evangelism that Works* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 1995), 113-125.

²Gk. *dialegomi* means to discuss, dialogue, converse

revealing Christ to the world. We are to acknowledge His grace as made known through the holy men of old; but that which will be most effectual is the testimony of our own experience. . . . These precious acknowledgments to the praise of the glory of His grace, when supported by a Christ-like life, have an irresistible power that works for the salvation of souls.”¹

4. Interpersonal Approach

This approach uses natural friendships as an avenue to communicate the gospel in a low-key, non-threatening way. It is especially suited for “people persons” who enjoy developing meaningful trust relationships. Through this trust they are able to breathe their faith into the lost people around them. A primary example of this approach is Matthew, the tax-collector. When Matthew became a follower of Christ, he threw a party and invited his old buddies as well as some of his new-found Christian friends so they could meet each other and Jesus (Matthew 9:9,10). Many today have tried “Matthew Parties” (such as back-yard barbeque, Christmas party, and swimming party) with great success.² It’s an excellent opportunity to introduce your non-Christian neighbors to some of your Christian friends from church in a fun, positive environment. Jesus capitalized on social relationships in order to reach the hearts of unbelievers. “He accepted their invitations, attended their feasts, made Himself familiar with their interests and occupations, that He might gain access to their hearts, and reveal to them the imperishable riches.”³ We

¹Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1940), 347.

²Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1993), 181.

³ White, *The Ministry of Healing*, 24-25.

should follow Christ's method in coming close to the people. "It is through the social relations that Christianity comes in contact with the world. . . . Social power, sanctified by the Spirit of Christ, must be improved in bringing souls to the Saviour."¹ Witnessing works best in the context of warm, trusting relationships.

5. Invitational Approach

Scriptures abound with stories of people inviting their family, friends, and acquaintances to meet Jesus. When Andrew discovered Jesus, he implored his brother, Peter, to come and meet Jesus for himself. Andrew not only invited his brother, the Bible says, "He brought him to Jesus." (John 1:42). When the Samaritan woman encountered Jesus at the well, she raced home to her companions and blurted, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" (John 4:29). As a result of this invitation, hundreds came to hear Jesus for themselves and many became His trusted followers.

There are many non-Christians who would gladly come to a worship service, small group, or outreach event, if they were just invited. A recent poll by researcher Thom Rainer revealed that 8 out of 10 of the unchurched said they would come to church if invited.² On the flip side, the research team found that only 2 percent of church members are giving out invitations to their unchurched friends and neighbors.³ Thom Rainer calls this the "sin of silence."⁴ One

¹Ibid., 496.

²Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door: Understanding Faith Stages as Keys to Sharing Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 24.

³Ibid., 25.

⁴Ibid., 77.

clarification needs to be made here; when “cold call” visits are made from an uninvited stranger, the invitation to come to church is usually perceived as a “marketing effort” and is most often resisted.¹ On the other hand the closer the friend, the more likely the unchurched is to attend. Most of the unchurched can easily tell the difference between “drive-by” evangelism and a person who really cares.² This accentuates the need to befriend our neighbors before pelting them with invitations.

6. Service Approach

Jesus spent more time healing than preaching. His modus operandi was to first serve practical needs and then to address spiritual needs. Upon sending His disciples out Jesus urged, First serve, then save (Luke 9:1,2; 10:9). Ellen White advises, “First meet the temporal necessities. . .and relieve their physical wants and sufferings, and you will find an open avenue to the heart, where you may plant the good seeds of virtue and religion.”³ In another place she argues, “Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, ‘Follow Me.’”⁴

Dorcas is a prime example of a loving practitioner who exercised this service approach. Acts 9:36 describes Dorcas as a woman “full of good works and charitable deeds.” Specifically,

¹Ibid., 27,168.

²Ibid., 28.

³Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 4* (Nampa, Idaho: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 227.

⁴White, *Ministry of Healing*, 143.

she made clothing for the underprivileged in her community. Her quiet, charitable deeds broke down barriers and penetrated the city of Joppa with God's love. Often unbelievers will close their doors to spiritual matters but will crack their doors to genuine acts of kindness. This can eventually lead to further discussion along spiritual concerns.

Steve Sjogren, pastor of Vineyard Community Church in Cincinnati, has done much to champion service evangelism.¹ Every week teams of members from his church saturate the community with random acts of kindness such as washing windows, giving out free drinks, and even cleaning toilets! One day he and his entourage showed up at a nail salon and announced to the Asian proprietor that they had come to clean her toilets. The woman was stunned. Tears began cascading down her cheeks. Then she explained that her husband had just died two months before, and he was the one who always cleaned the bathrooms. The toilets had not gotten any attention since the funeral. After Steve and his crew scoured the bathrooms, he promised the lady that they would return every two weeks to continue their service. That petite Buddhist woman suddenly took on a whole new perspective of Christianity.² When asked why they do such disinterested acts of benevolence, Steve explains, "We're simply trying to share God's love in practical ways."

¹Following are some of the works by Steve Sjogren on servant evangelism: *Conspiracy of Kindness* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1993); *101 Ways To Reach your Community* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2001); *101 Ways To Help People in Need* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002); *The Perfectly Imperfect Church: Redefining the Ideal Church* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002); *Seeing Beyond Church Walls: Action Plans for Touching your Community* (Loveland, CO: Group Publishing, 2002); *Community of Kindness* (Ventura, CA: Regal Books, 2003).

² I heard Steve Sjogren tell share this story at a Beeson Conference in Chicago in October, 2003.

7. Intercessory Approach

Many would argue that intercession is not a valid evangelistic approach, because there is no tangible “contact” between believer and nonbeliever. Ah, but the Bible applauds intercession as our most effective weapon in spiritual warfare! 2 Cor 10:4 declares, “For the weapons of our warfare are *not carnal* [of the flesh] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.” This ultimate evangelistic weapon has nothing to do with human ingenuity or endeavor, lest the glory go to man. It has everything to do with Divine intervention. This intervention comes only in response to prayer!

Matt 18:19 promises, “If two of you agree concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My father in heaven.” This promise is given in the context of reconciling a wayward brother. 1 John 5:14,16 adds, “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask and He will give him life.” Jas 5:19,20 concurs, “Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” Vs. 16 concludes, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”

The New Testament cites Elijah as an example of an “effective, fervent” prayer warrior. In 1 Kgs 17:19 when the widow’s son dies, Elijah cradles the lifeless boy in his arms and carries him upstairs. In the upper room Elijah labors with God for the life of the son, and God honors that prayer. A short while later Elijah carries a whole nation in his arms to the top of a summit

called Carmel and pleads that God would turn their hearts back to Him (1 Kgs 18:37). Again God answers that request in a dramatic way. When our loved ones die spiritually, we can carry them in our arms to the “upper room” and “summit” and petition the God of heaven to restore their life. People go “dead” into the upper room; they come out “alive.” Prayer turns hearts around, because prayer leaves the human plain and taps into the power of God!

Jim Cymbala, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle Church in New York City, shares a personal story about his oldest daughter Chrissy who strayed away from home when she was 16 years old.¹ One cold February night at their Tuesday evening prayer service an usher handed Jim a note. A young woman had written: Pastor Cymbala, “I feel impressed that we should stop the meeting and all pray for your daughter.” That prayer service turned into a “labor room” for Chrissy with members groaning in behalf of Chrissy for God’s intervention.

32 hours later Chrissy showed up at the front door. She sobbed, “Daddy, Daddy, I’ve sinned against God. I’ve sinned against myself. I’ve sinned against you and Mommy. Please forgive me.” As Jim embraced his daughter, she suddenly pulled back and questioned, “Daddy, who was praying for me on Tuesday night? In the middle of the night, God woke me and showed me I was heading toward this abyss. There was no bottom to it. I was so frightened. I realized how hard I’ve been, how wrong, how rebellious. But at the same time, it was like God wrapped his arms around me and kept me from sliding any further. Daddy, tell me, who was praying for me Tuesday night?”

Prayer is the secret weapon to turn the heart back! “It is a part of God’s plan to grant us,

¹Story found in Jim Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1997), 59-66.

in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask.”¹ In light of this weapon God’s servant inquires, “Why do not believers feel a deeper, more earnest concern for those who are out of Christ? Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?”² “Let the workers grasp the promises of God saying, ‘Thou hast promised, Ask, and ye shall receive. I must have this soul converted to Jesus Christ. . . . Select another and still another soul, daily seeking guidance from God As you do this, you will see that God will give the Holy Spirit to convict, and the power of the truth to convert, the soul.’”³ God challenges us to fasten our minds upon a soul. Make out a “10 Most Wanted List”⁴ and pray earnestly for the salvation of those on that list.

¹Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1950), 525.

²Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 7* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1948), 21-22.

³Ellen G. White, *Medical Ministry* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1963), 244-245.

⁴I got this idea from Jim Leggett, founding pastor of the Grace Fellowship United Methodist Church in West Houston-Katy, TX at a Beeson conference in Louisville, KY in October, 2002.

CHAPTER 3

PATHWAY FROM UNBELIEF TO BELIEF

THE FAITH STAGES

Introducing the Faith Stages

God’s goal is to transform unbelievers into fully devoted disciples of Christ. He’s not just interested in baptizing converts but in making fruit-bearing disciples (Matt 28:19,20).

Unbelievers rarely become disciples of Christ over night. There is a process or pathway from unbelief to belief involving several successive “faith stages.” In our soul-winning endeavors, it is not enough for us to discover our own Personal Style of Evangelism, we must also be sensitive to the “faith stage” of the person we are witnessing to.¹

In the 1970's Dr. James Engel developed a tool that helps us track an individual’s faith journey. This tool (known as the Engel Scale) maps out the progressive stages of conversion. It helps us to better understand the pathway from unbelief to belief, so we can better assist individuals in taking the journey towards belief, conversion, and discipleship.²

Another model has recently been developed by Thom Rainer, founding dean of the Billy

¹ Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Salt Shaker & Into the World* (2nd ed. Downers Grove, IL; InterVarsity Press, 1999), 224.

²James F. Engel, H. Wilbert Norton, *What’s Gone Wrong with the Harvest?* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1975), 45; James F. Engel, *Contemporary Christian Communications* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1979), ch. 3.

Graham School of Missions, Evangelism and Church Growth at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. This model (based on the Engel Scale) is known as the “Rainer Scale of Faith Stages.”¹ Rainer researched hundreds of unchurched Americans to determine their various stages of receptivity to the gospel. Then he proposed strategies on how to best reach individuals in the various “faith stages.”

Rick Warren, Senior Pastor of Saddleback Community Church in Orange County, CA, has crafted a unique “Baseball Diamond” model² which he calls “The Life Development Process” to illustrate the stages of discipleship after one comes to Christ.

I have synthesized all three models into one comprehensive model for tracking individuals’ “faith stages” from unbelief to conversion to full discipleship:

- 5 (Antagonistic to the gospel)
- 4 (Resistant to the gospel)
- 3 (Indifferent to the gospel)
- 2 (Receptive to the gospel)
- 1 (Hungry for the gospel)
- 0 (Conversion)
- +1 (Fellowship/Membership)
- +2 (Discipleship/Maturity)
- +3 (Service/Ministry)
- +4 (Evangelism/Mission)
- +5 (Worship/Magnification)

¹Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*, 21.

²Warren, *The Purpose Driven Church*, 130.

Acknowledging the Postmodern Mind-Set

In addition to understanding the various faith stages, it is helpful to know something about the postmodern culture.¹ Over the past 40 years our Western society has transitioned from an Enlightenment era to a postmodern era. During the modern Enlightenment era (1500s to 1960s) emphasis was placed on rational thought and logic and reason as the ultimate source of truth. Reality was determined as that which could be measured and observed and scientifically proven in a “test-tube.” This analytical approach to truth found expression in the Christian church in the form of propositional truth and moral absolutes. Truth was that which could be measured, observed and proven from the objective word of God. However, with the dawn of postmodernism (1960s to present), there is a growing reaction against this rational, logical, analytical approach. Truth is now created from within rather than discovered from without. It is determined by subjective experience rather than by the authoritative word of God. Whatever one believes to be true is true. Furthermore, the individualistic mind-set of the Enlightenment has been replaced by the need for connectedness in the community. Now truth is relative to the community so that whatever the community believes to be true is true. Jimmy Long summarizes the contrast between the Enlightenment and postmodernism as: truth versus preference, autonomous self versus community, scientific discovery versus virtual reality, human progress versus human misery.² Leonard Sweet characterizes postmodernity as an “E.P.I.C. culture:

¹I owe much of the material in this section to Jimmy Long, *Generating Hope: A Strategy for Reaching the Postmodern Generation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), ch. 3.

²*Ibid.*, 69.

Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven and Connected.”¹ The influence of postmodernism on pop culture creates huge challenges for ministry and outreach! Our outreach needs to be more experiential, participatory, image-driven and connected. Under the old Enlightenment mind-set, people were best absorbed into the church by first believing, then behaving, then belonging. But under the new postmodern mind-set, people are best integrated into the church by first belonging, then behaving, then believing.² Our first concern in outreach should not be cognitive teaching (sermon, seminar, Bible study) but rather incorporation into Christian community. Once people experience authentic Christian community in caring, serving groups, they will eventually embrace the lifestyle and beliefs too.

Matching Evangelistic Styles with the Faith Stages

Evaluation before Prescription

In Mark 4 Jesus tells several farming parables that illustrate how to win souls for God’s kingdom. The first parable is the parable of the soils (vs. 3-20). The four types of soil represent four stages of receptivity to the word of God.³ A surprising correlation exists between the soils in the parable and the faith stages of conversion. This correlation is demonstrated in Table 1 on page 30. Not everyone is at the same level of spiritual growth. In modern farming a farmer first evaluates the soil before planting the seed. After determining the pH and condition of the soil,

¹Leonard I. Sweet, *Postmodern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 28.

²Eddie Gibbs, *Church Next Door* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999).

³Robert E. Coleman, *The Master’s Way of Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1997), 71.

the farmer then applies the right formula of cultivation and fertilization that will optimize growth. Using a different analogy, a doctor first diagnoses an illness before treating a patient. Can you imagine sitting in a doctor's office, only to have the doctor troop in and immediately begin writing a prescription. You protest, "Doc, you haven't even checked me over yet!" He quips, "Well the guy who sat here right before you had a sinus infection. I prescribed Levaquin for him, and that should work just fine for you too." Our first task as soul-winners is to get to know the ones we're working with. Only after listening to their thoughts, feelings, needs, and concerns will we be able to discern their level of receptivity and tailor our evangelistic approach accordingly. Ellen White admonishes church members to, "Visit every family in the neighborhood, and know their *spiritual condition*."¹

Individualization of Evangelistic Approaches

The following table shows the best evangelistic approaches to use for the various faith stages. I have prepared this guide using Thom Rainer's research from his two books on reaching the unchurched, *The Unchurched Next Door* and *Surprising Insights from the Unchurched*.² Admittedly more research needs to be done on the precise correlation of the faith stages and the evangelistic styles. I would like to give further attention to this in my DMin project. This table is not designed to be a hard-and-fast guide, but only a rough estimate. Ultimately we cannot trust our own diagnosis, but must rely on the Holy Spirit to lead us.

¹Ellen G. White, *Christian Service* (Takoma Park, Washington, D.C.: Home Missionary Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 1947), 12.

²Thom S. Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door and Surprising Insights from the Unchurched and Proven Ways to Reach Them* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001).

Table 1. Best Evangelistic Approach for the Various Faith Stages¹

Faith Stages	Evangelistic Approaches
<p>-5 Hard soil/closed hearts Antagonistic to the gospel: reject God, Bible, heaven/hell (Represents 5% of unchurched population)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Intellectual * Interpersonal * Serving * Intercessory
<p>-4 Hard soil/moderately closed hearts Resistant to the gospel; plagued by doubts about God/Jesus, Bible, heaven/hell (Represents 21% of unchurched population)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Intellectual * Interpersonal * Serving * Testimonial * Invitational (neutral event) * Intercessory
<p>-3 Stony soil/shallow hearts Indifferent to the gospel; neutral to God and the Bible; feel no compelling need (Represents 36% of unchurched population)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Interpersonal * Serving * Testimonial * Invitational (all events) * Confrontational * Intercessory
<p>-2 Thorny soil/distracted hearts Receptive to the gospel; eager to study Bible and talk about eternal issues; cognitive understanding of cardinal Bible truths, but have not yet made a personal step of faith; perhaps struggling with major obstacles (Represents 27% of unchurched population)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Interpersonal * Serving * Testimonial * Invitational (all events) * Confrontational * Intercessory
<p>-1 Fertile soil/receptive hearts Hungry for the gospel; on the verge of the kingdom, waiting only to be gathered in (Represents 11% of unchurched population)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Interpersonal * Serving * Testimonial * Invitational (all events) * Confrontational * Intercessory

¹The Percentages in this table are from Rainer, *The Unchurched Next Door*, 23

Several observations can be made from Table 1. Three of the evangelistic approaches are appropriate to all five faith stages: the Interpersonal, Serving, and Intercessory. The Testimonial approach is also virtually universal in its use. The Invitational approach can be utilized in varying degrees from stage -4 onward, depending on the individual. It would be best to invite the earlier faith stages to neutral events first, such as common interest or recreational type events. Stage -4 onward may be receptive to attending church events if invited by a friend. The earlier stages will be somewhat reluctant to attend by themselves. The ideal would be to invite them to come along with you. The Intellectual approach works best with the earlier stages (-5 and -4) who are antagonistic or resistant to the gospel. The Confrontational approach works best with the later stages (-3 to -1). The -2 and -1 stages are especially eager to study the Bible with someone and to understand the gospel. The -1 stage is waiting for someone to give them an invitation to accept Christ. God wants to use you to give that invitation!

Often we wonder how effective an invitation to attend church really is. Table 2 below shows the likelihood of the various faith stages to attend church if invited by a friend.¹

¹Rainer, *Understanding Faith Stages*, 232.

Table 2. Likelihood of the faith stages to attend church if invited by a friend

	Very Likely	Somewhat Likely	Total
-5 stage	0%	20%	20%
-4 stage	17%	45%	62%
-3 stage	23%	63%	86%
-2 stage	46%	51%	97%
-1 stage	52%	45%	97%

These statistics should encourage us to be more proactive in inviting our friends to church and outreach events.

Consideration of the Varied Growth Rates

Mark 4:26-29 recites the parable of the growing seed. This parable enumerates the various growth stages of the plant from germination to harvest: “First the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head.” (vs. 28). The farmer does not rush the growth process but patiently waits on God to grow the harvest. Likewise in the work of soul-winning the “ripening” of an individual from unbelief to belief is a process that takes time. We must wait patiently on the Holy Spirit to do His work. If we rush the “ripening” process, we might spoil the grain.

Vs. 29 concludes, “But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.” You do not pick green fruit. You must wait for the grain to “ripen” before attempting to harvest it.

Imagine a farmer cultivating a field and planting seed, then anxiously waiting for the

blade to appear. Every morning he struts out to the open field and squats down to examine the soil. Finally one morning as he surveys the field, he spots tiny green shoots poking their heads through the dark soil. He screams, “Whoopieee!” Then runs to his barn, fires up the John Deer tractor, and rumbles through the field “harvesting” the crop.

We smile, yet in the work of soul-winning, we’re often guilty of making the same mistake. We meet a new contact and immediately push Bible studies or evangelistic sermons when it’s not time yet. This premature zeal can actually spoil the contact.

I remember when I first moved to Portland, Tennessee, I eagerly trooped across the street to meet my unchurched neighbors. I thrust my hand out and introduced myself as the new Adventist pastor in town. Over the next several months I showered this bewildered family with invitations to our church worship services, music concerts, and Saturday night socials. It didn’t work! Why? Because I was insensitive to their stage of receptivity and the spiritual growth process. I should have started with the Interpersonal approach or the Service approach first; then when I had a warm relationship established, I could venture on to the Invitational or Confrontational approach.

There is a vast difference between commercial farming and gardening. In commercial farming all the grain is harvested at once even though some may be too ripe or too green. But in gardening you go out each day and pick only the ripe fruit and vegetables. Jesus used the gardening model in His public ministry. He employed a different approach with each person. Jesus asks us to use the gardening model as our model of evangelism. Every “plant” is on its own unique growth schedule. We should respect this schedule and not work against it.

Specialization or Generalization

As we consider the subject of personal styles of evangelism, the question naturally arises, Does God expect us to be specialists or generalists? Let's compare the spiritual pathway from unbelief to belief to an auto assembly line in Detroit, MI. A single automobile may pass through the hands of 20 different technicians, all operating within their own specialty. Do we stay in one spot on the assembly line, attaching only one specialized part to all the cars that pass by, or do we stick with the same car from start to finish and assemble all the parts?

1 Cor 3:6,8 compares soul-winners to a team of farmers in a field, each one with their own specialized task: "I [Paul] planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor." When all the specialized roles of evangelism work together, the job gets done and God yields an "increase." This passage suggests we function best and the harvest is most optimal when we specialize in our preferred style.

However the Bible also compares soul-winning to fishing. In Matt 4:19 Jesus charges His disciples, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." I grew up in Pensacola, Florida and spent many a Sunday down on Pensacola Beach near the Fisherman's pier. Grizzled fishermen would hunker down from dawn until dusk with their lines in the water hoping to catch fish. What every fisherman knows is that it takes different bait to catch different fish. Mullet, shrimp, minnows, sardines, squid, ballyhoo, live bait, cut bait, sand fleas, crabs, bread, white worm, artificials, mirrorlures, jigs, feathers will all attract different kinds of fish. A true fisherman does not use his own preference in selecting his bait, but the fish's preference. Likewise God supplies each evangelist with a "tackle-box" of methods and approaches to catch men, women, and children for Christ: Confrontational, Intellectual, Testimonial, Interpersonal,

Invitational, Service, and Intercessory styles. As fishers of men we will select the style that best fits the person we are trying to lead to Christ regardless of our own preference or comfort level.

There are several biblical examples of individuals who exercised multiple styles of evangelism based on the need or situation at hand; for instance, Paul used a variety of styles including: Confrontational (Acts 15:36; 16:17; 17:13; 28:31); Intellectual (Acts 17:2,17; 18:4,19; 19:8; 20:7; 24:25); Testimonial (Acts 22:6-10; 26:12-18); Service (Acts 14:10; 19:11,12; 28:8,9); and Intercessory (Col1:9-14). Paul concedes, “I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.” (1 Cor 9:22). Bill Hybels reminds us, “No one fits perfectly into just one of these styles. In fact, you’ll probably find opportunities to use all of them. The point is that God designed diversity on His team; and each member is stronger in some styles than in others.”¹

So back to the original question, Does God want us to specialize or generalize? The answer is “Both”! As a general rule we should specialize in our preferred style by reading all we can and by seizing every opportunity to exercise our style. But by the same token we should utilize all the styles as the Holy Spirit prompts us to do so. As I develop and teach the Personal Styles of Evangelism training process in the Highland Church, I will familiarize each member with all the styles in the “tackle-box” so they can reach all kinds of “fish” for Jesus.

¹ Hybels and Mittelberg, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*, 132.

CHAPTER 4

PERSONAL STYLES IN ACTION

A Team Approach

The Biblical Blueprint

How do we pull it all together and exercise our Personal Styles of evangelism? The Bible suggests a team approach to ministry rather than a “Lone-Ranger” approach. Jesus rarely ministered alone. The disciples usually accompanied Him. When Jesus sent the 12 disciples and the 70 lay evangelists to minister, He instructed them to go out in teams of two (Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1). Likewise the apostles and the early Christian believers always evangelized in teams. The book of Acts shows the early church studying together and fellowshiping together and eating together and praying together and sharing resources together and witnessing together (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37). When the apostles transported the gospel to cities and countries afar, they always worked together in teams of at least two. First Paul and Barnabas teamed up together (Acts 13:2,3); then Barnabas took John Mark (Acts 15:37,39), and Paul teamed up with Silas, Timothy, Titus and Luke (Acts 15:40; 16:1,3; 2 Cor 8:23; Col 4:14; 2 Tim 4:1). Evangelism in the early church was a communal affair and a team effort. Ellen White urges, “The formation of small companies [groups] as a basis of Christian effort has been presented to me by One who cannot err. If there is a large number in the church, let the members be formed into small companies, to

work not only for the church members, but for unbelievers.”¹

Benefits of a Team Approach

Support System for Believers

First team ministry provides a support system for its members. The first task of the ministry team is to minister to each other, and then conjointly to minister outwardly to others. Relationships with other team members is the “glue” that keeps people ministering over the long haul. Gen 2:18 notes, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper compatible for him.” This does not just apply to marriage, it applies to the need for partnering together in team ministry. Eccl 4:9-12 admonishes, “Two are better than one For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. . . . Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Evangelism can be intimidating and discouraging at times because we are engaged in spiritual warfare with the prince of darkness. Just as policemen call in backups as they move in on a suspect, we need Christian backup and support as we’re out on the front lines.

Greater Impact on Nonbelievers

Team ministry produces a greater impact on unbelievers because it combines personal styles and strengths. Let’s take for example a home Bible study group for seekers: Jane exercises her Invitational style by inviting her neighbors to her home; Bob exercises his Confrontational or Intellectual style by leading out in the lesson; Jim operates his Interpersonal

¹White, *Testimonies*, Vol. 7, 21-22.

style by making sure everyone feels welcome; and Janet displays her Intercessory style by pleading for the Holy Spirit to convict hearts. Combining styles produces a more effective outcome. Team ministry also offers unbelievers a place to belong and to experience authentic Christian community. Once they experience small group community, they will be more apt to accept an invitation to church.

Implementation of a Team Approach

Simple Starters

There are several ways that a local church can implement a team approach to evangelism. For starters, all Sabbath School classes and small groups should be encouraged to select an ongoing outreach project; this way groups are not just functioning as “cerebral stimulators” or “navel gazers,” but as groups with a purpose. Another idea is to conduct an outreach weekend once a month on Sabbath and/or Sunday afternoon from 2-4 pm. Provide different ministry options such as singing to the shut-ins, volunteering at a soup kitchen, handing out cookies, raking leaves, washing windows, etc.¹ A third idea is to conduct Super Tuesday classes, a smorgasbord of community felt-needs classes offered every Spring and Fall for four to six weeks. Classes occur simultaneously at the church for organizational and advertizing ease, and to provide stimulus for the presenters and participants. Examples of classes that Highland has offered is quilting, Spanish, gardening, landscaping, aerobics, nutrition, Cardiac Health Improvement Program (C.H.I.P.), bird watching, witnessing, and Spiritual Gifts.

¹See ideas in Sjogren, *101 Ways to Reach your Community*.

Free-market Groups

Ted Haggard, senior pastor of the New Life Church in Colorado Springs, proposes a dynamic system of implementing team evangelism in the local church through the formation of ministry-oriented small groups, called *Free-market Groups*.¹ Haggard maintains that people are best disciplined through relationships. Jesus shied away from sterile classrooms and canned seminars. He modeled and taught “kingdom principles” through interactive relationships in real life settings. The best way to facilitate these discipling relationships is through shared common interests.² Let’s say a woman in the church has an interest in quilting. She starts a quilting club for others in the church who share the same interest. Members invite their unbelieving friends who also enjoy quilting to come along. Thus friendships are formed and opportunities are multiplied to share faith in a natural way.

Core Components of Free-market Groups

Haggard outlines the following core components to operating a successful ministry of Free-market groups in the local church:³

1. Give people the freedom to start any kind of group they want to as long as it is consistent with the basic core values of the church.
2. Set clear starting and stopping points for groups. Three sessions are offered during the year: Fall session (September through December), Spring session (January through mid-May),

¹Haggard, *Dog Training, Fly Fishing & Sharing Christ in the 21st Century*.

²Ibid., 5-7,10,11,14

³Ibid., ch. 14.

and a shorter Summer session (mid-June through mid-August).

3. Conduct a four hour Small Group Leader's Orientation halfway into each session which trains potential small group leaders for the following session. Leaders are challenged to help each person in their group move one faith stage on the spiritual growth continuum every semester. Leaders are encouraged to do one of four things at each meeting: worship, prayer, Bible study, or a testimony. At the close of the orientation session, each potential new leader fills out an application form, completes a personal profile, and interviews with a zone leader.

4. Launch a Rally Week the first week of the break between sessions where the various groups are "showcased." A directory of the various groups is also printed and distributed. Encourage everyone to sign up for a group.

5. Offer leaders' training one night a month for continued training and growth.

6. Provide a leadership system for ongoing support and coaching consisting of three tiers: Sections, Zones, and Districts.

Potential of Free-market Groups

The beauty of this relational approach to discipling and evangelism is that it ministers to all faith stages on the spiritual growth scale including those who are antagonistic and resistant.¹ As I evaluate the evangelistic outreach of the Highland Church, I see that much of our ministry is directed towards people who are already born again believers or at least receptive to spiritual things. Our traditional evangelistic meetings and Bible studies appeal primarily to the -2 to +5 faith stages - those people who are already receptive to the gospel and open to studying the Bible.

¹Ibid., 22-29.

Our Super Tuesday community classes and health seminars reach a little deeper to the -3 faith stage - those who are neutral to the gospel. But since these events are mostly held at our church, the -5 and -4 faith stages (those who are antagonistic or resistant to the gospel) will probably rarely attend. We need to venture out and conduct our community classes in neutral locations in the community where the -5 and -4 faith stages will feel more comfortable. Yet even the class/seminar approach in the community is limited in its scope. The relational free-market groups which center around common interests will be the most effective approach in reaching all types of people in our Portland community with the gospel.

Implementation of Free-market Groups at Highland

My plan is to follow up the Personal Styles of Evangelism sermon series and seminar, with 12 weeks in a ministry-oriented small group where members can experience the joy of reaching others for Christ, while at the same time supporting and encouraging one another. Members would not be teamed up according to their Personal Styles, but would be mixed with others of different styles so that their combined strengths could be used to reach the various faith stages in the Portland community. I will need to give considerable thought and planning to modifying Haggard's system to fit our Highland Church.

CHAPTER 5

A FINAL APPEAL

God's Purpose for His Children

_____When God created Adam and Eve in the garden, He hugged them and breathed on them a special blessing: “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.” (Gen 1:28). That which God blesses is always multiplied. 6,000 years later that original blessing is still in force. When my son, Matt, was born on June 22, 1987, and my daughter, Beth, on March 20, 1990, I was vividly reminded of the potency of God's blessing! God's high and holy purpose for His children has always been to “be fruitful and multiply.”

Likewise in a spiritual realm God desires His children to reproduce and multiply and fill the whole earth. When the Christian church was birthed in the upper room, God cradled her and breathed on her His promised blessing (Acts 2:1-4). The Holy Spirit caused the church to explode and multiply. On the day of Pentecost 3,000 were baptized (Acts 2:41); then whole multitudes (Acts 5:14); then whole cities (Acts 8:5-8); then the “whole world was turned upside down” (Acts 17:6). Disciples were first "added" to the church (Acts 2:47), then they were “multiplied” (Acts 6:1,7; 9:31) so there was exponential growth. It is still the birthright of every born-again believer to “be fruitful and multiply.” This is our high and holy purpose in life.

God recently burned this purpose into my heart on a Global Evangelism Trip to India. During the fall of 2003, a team of six members from the Highland Church embarked an exciting trip to India to conduct five simultaneous evangelistic meetings. One evening at sunset I stood on the banks of a muddy pond and witnessed a group of Hindus dressed in their colorful saris being baptized in the shadows of a Hindu shrine. As these precious people were dipped under the water, God whispered to me, "David, you are adding to the Great Multitude which will one day gather around My throne, from every nation, kindred, tongue and people." (Rev 7:9). It hit me again what my real purpose in life is - to glorify God and to add to the great multitude that will one day gather around His throne!

That's what the Great Commission is all about. Jesus commands, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matt 28:19,20). These words of Jesus are the Great Commission, not the Great Suggestion. This commission was given to every follower of Jesus, not just to pastors or evangelists.

The Birthright

The Birthright Stolen

The largest gem theft occurred at the Antwerp Diamond Center in Antwerp, Belgium, when 123 of the 160 vaults were emptied in a weekend raid that was not detected until February 17, 2003. The theft resulted in an estimated loss of \$100 million. There was no sign of a break in, alarms did not go off, and the bomb-proof vault doors were not tampered with. Documents

certifying the gems' authenticity and origin were also lifted.¹

Unfortunately, Satan has successfully stolen away our birthright to “be fruitful and multiply.” In the early Christian church the lay people, ordinary men and women with no literary training, were the primary agents of evangelism. Acts 8:1,4 indicates that the lay people scattered and “went everywhere preaching the word.” The trained professionals, the apostles, were held up in Jerusalem during the severe persecution and couldn't get flights out of town.

Michael Green, a church historian, remarks, “[The lay people] were scattered from their base in Jerusalem and they went everywhere spreading the good news which had brought joy, release and a new life to themselves. This must often have been not formal preaching, but the informal chattering to friends and chance acquaintances, in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls. They went everywhere gossiping the gospel, they did it naturally, enthusiastically, and with the conviction of those who are not paid to say that sort of thing. Consequently, they were taken seriously, and the movement spread, notably among the lower classes.”²

Over the centuries, as bishops and later priests hovered over local congregations, the people began to rely more on the clergy to do the work of evangelism rather than assuming this responsibility as their own. Hence the birthright of evangelism was snatched away from the congregants at large and entrusted instead to a few trained professionals.³

¹www.guinnessworldrecords.com

²Michael Green, *Evangelism in the Early church* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), 173.

³Russell Burrill, *Revolution in the Church: Unleashing the Awesome Power of Lay Ministry* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1993), 30; *Recovering an Adventist Approach to the Life & Mission of the Local Church* (Fallbrook, CA: Hart Research Center, 1998), 152.

The same phenomenon has occurred within the Adventist church. Robert Folkenberg, former General Conference President of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, observes that the Adventist church began as a lay movement. But over the decades, the devil has gradually stolen away the birthright of evangelism from the hands of Adventist laity. Gradually the responsibility of evangelism has shifted from the hands of laity to professional evangelists. The first step of displacement occurred when pastors served as itinerant evangelists. Then the roll of evangelism was assumed by conference evangelists, then by union evangelists, and finally by media evangelists. Slowly the work of evangelism has strayed four levels from where it was originally intended. This is not to say that pastors and evangelists should not do the work of evangelism; it merely suggests that the “professionals” should not serve as substitutes for the laity.¹

The Birthright Restored

Before Jesus returns the Adventist church will return to a lay-led, lay-driven movement where the birthright of evangelism is restored to its rightful owner.

Joel 2:28,29 prophecies, “And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see vision.” God predicts an inter-generational movement in the last days which will turn hearts back to God (Mal 4:5,6). Pentecost was just a partial fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy. The greatest fulfillment is yet to come “before the coming of the great and notable day of the Lord.” (Acts 2:17-20). This ultimate evangelism explosion and turning

¹From a sermon by Robert Folkenberg, used by special permission.

hearts back to God occurs under the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. The best is yet to come!

Ellen White describes this end-time evangelistic movement: “The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. . . . Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. . . . The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. . . a large number take their stand upon the Lord’s side.”¹

On September 11, 2001, Stanley Praitnath was chatting on the phone in his office on the 81st floor of the South Tower of the World Trade Center when suddenly a plane filled the sky outside his window. Stanley dropped the phone and dove under his desk. Steel shrieked against steel as the ceiling crashed down. Electrical wires sparked. Desks and filing cabinets hurtled across the room. Smoke poured in. Stanley started sobbing and then praying. People fled the building by the thousands. Horribly burned and profusely bleeding, they stumbled down darkened staircases.

Meanwhile, Brian Clark was running down from the eighty-fourth floor when he heard cries for help. It was Stanley, who was trapped under a fallen wall. Brian pulled away charred debris and shattered doors. Finally he reached the collapsed wall where the desperate man was

¹White, *Great Controversy*, 611-612.

huddled. “You have got to make it through the wall,” he yelled. “I can’t,” Stanley replied. “You have to do this,” Brian shouted back, Stanley clawed his way until he was partly free, and Brian reached through the hole in the wall and pulled him through. The two strangers hugged like brothers. When they finally stumbled outside, Stanley looked at Brian and said with tears in his eyes, “Keep in touch, because I owe you my life.”¹

Like Brian Clark Jesus came to show us the way out. His ultimate mission was “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). Jesus now passes this mission on to us, His followers. My greatest desire is to be part of this rescue mission and to inspire my Highland members to engage in soul-winning in the Portland community. One day when we get to heaven, we’ll be able to meet our Savior and thank Him for saving us and empowering us to rescue others as “brands plucked from the burning.” I want to be faithful to that calling!

¹Mark Finley, *Solid Ground: Daily Devotional for Adults* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2003), 20.

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