

Chapter 2

MINISTRY EVANGELISM

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“Building relationship bridges through ministry over which Christians intentionally share the Gospel of Jesus Christ”*1

A MINISTRY EVANGELISM HAPPENING

Monday was a scheduled Night-Life Ministry outreach*2 – usually 10 pm – 2 am. It was a bitter cold winter night. Snow and sleet. Miserable weather conditions. I had no idea ministry team members would be out that night . . . not until the phone rang. It was that “do not answer” ring. But I did. I was asked to join two others to make a Night-Life team. It would have been nice to stay home where it was comfortable and warm. God’s prompting to go was strong. There was the feeling God was going to do something special that night. I met the team members shortly after 10 pm.

Not many “walkers” were out that night. The weather was miserable. It was not a night many wanted to be out in the cold. They were staying in the bars and clubs. From a distance I recognized George sitting on the corner curb. As usual, he was dressed with several layers of shirts, sweaters and coats. His knitted ski cap I had given him weeks before was pulled down over his ears. Loads of red hair had squished out along the edges.

George’s shoes were in ankle deep cold and icy water . . . and, he was wearing no socks. There were frozen places on his beard as he looked up and said, “Hi Chaplain. You got any socks”? I sure did – in the car and at the storage room – but none with me.

Immediately, one of the Night-Life team members sat down on the curb, took off his shoes and socks, and put his shoes back on. Kneeling in front of George, one at a time, he lifted George’s feet out to of the water, took George’s shoes off, put socks on his feet, poured water out of the shoes, put the shoes back on George’s feet. Then, he looked straight into George’s face and said, “George, I love you and God loves you, too. Can I tell you about His love”? In a strong and commanding voice, George said, “Nope”. I knew that meant for us to leave. We did.

Days later, the team was out another night in the same location where we had met George on Monday night. Again, I had gone with the team. God wanted to show me something. George was walking on the other side of the street. He waved and shouted, “Hi guys”. I wanted to go and talk with him. But this was going to be God’s time and I would be a witness of God at work. The same one that had put socks on George’s feet would be the one to go and talk with George. A few minutes later there was one of the most awesome and beautiful happenings of God working in another’s life. Across the street George and the team member bowed their heads for just a few minutes. Raising their heads, they hugged one another and George walked away. The team member returned and said, “George is our brother”.

Why was the Night Life Ministry team member the one to walk across the street to share Jesus with George? Why was he received by George? Because, on that bitter cold night, he had been just like Jesus to George. He had shown genuine compassion for George through ministry. He did a Servant Evangelism act of kindness (giving George his socks) during a Ministry Evangelism outreach (Night-Life Ministry).

George's new life in Christ was the result of Ministry Evangelism.

WHAT IS MINISTRY EVANGELISM

An on-going ministry for the explicit purpose of sharing the Gospel

Charles L. Roesel, pastor, First Baptist Church, Leesburg, FL, says . . .

“Ministry Evangelism is a ‘passion for the lost and a purpose for the church’ . . . (*he describes*) the ‘beauty of Ministry Evangelism’ as a bullet that fits any gun. Even the smallest Church can reach out through ministry. Ministry Evangelism is the most effective way ever seen of reaching people for Jesus Christ.”*3

Every ministry of First Baptist Church, Leesburg, has one single goal. It is to reach hurting people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. For Charles Roesel the basis of Ministry Evangelism is Matthew 25. He says, “It (*Ministry Evangelism*) calls Christians not to a life of ease, but one of sacrifice and service”.*4 We are to go, get involved with, and love the people around us. Ministry Evangelism provides the opportunity to go, to get involved and to love the people.

Those who take seriously the parable Jesus told in Matthew 25 are those whose eyes are open to see things the way Jesus saw them.

Ministry Evangelism is not a program. It is not a strategy. However, it is a life-style of compassion given lovingly and unconditionally through on-going ministry . . . to show God's love for lost persons.

Ministry Evangelism is . . .

“Building relationship bridges through ministry over which Christians intentionally share the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”*5

Ministry for the explicit purpose of sharing the Gospel . . . the Good News of Jesus Christ”.*6

“Caring for persons in the Name of Jesus . . . meeting persons at the point of their need and ministering to them physically and spiritually.”*7

“The intent of ministry evangelism is to present the Good News of God’s love in order to introduce persons to Jesus.”*8

“Ministry Evangelism is incarnational evangelism.”*9

“Ministry Evangelism is meeting persons’ needs in order to share God’s love and forgiveness with them.”*10

We are surrounded by the need for ministry . . . Ministry Evangelism . . . meeting physical needs . . . for an opportunity to share God’s love and forgiveness.

How is a Ministry Evangelism outreach started?

DISCERN WHAT GOD IS DOING . . . through prayer
IDENTIFY THE TARGET / FOCUS . . . the need
HAVE A VISION . . . of the ministry for evangelism
IMPLIMENT . . . the Ministry Evangelism outreach

When evaluating the possibilities for new ministries consider the following . . .

Will this ministry enable volunteers to share God’s love and the Gospel with people in need?

Is this ministry consistent with the mission, vision and values of the church?

Is there a true need for this ministry in the community?

Are there volunteer leaders committed to seeing this ministry grow?

Is there opportunity for interaction between volunteers and people in need?

BIRTH-GROWTH PROCESS FOR MINISTRY EVANGELISM OUTREACH

The birth-growth process for ministry evangelism can be compared to the birth-growth of mushrooms in the wild.

BIRTH-GROWTH OF MUSHROOMS

Mushroom spores in the soil for years
Adequate rain and humidity
Proper balance between light and darkness
Optimal temperatures
Essential soil nutrients
Necessary moisture
Mushrooms are produced as all elements unite

BIRTH-GROWTH OUTREACH

Outreach in God's plan for years
Listening ears to hear God speak
Open eyes to see where God is working
Fervent prayer for God's wisdom
Obedience to God's Word and guidance
Servant heart for ministry and evangelism
God will produce the outreach in His time

GOD'S BIRTH-GROWTH CONFIRMATION FOR A MINISTRY EVANGELISM OUTREACH:

Having peace about what God has shown you for ministry outreach

EFFECTIVE MINISTRY EVANGELISM

The Evangelical community has generally avoided Ministry Evangelism. The result has been churches becoming like gated communities. For the most part, churches are good at doing ministry. Evangelism is often omitted. Why? Often times the response is "That is someone else's responsibility". Avoiding evangelism may even be personal fear, enemies of the Christian life (I John 2) or defeat in Spiritual warfare (II Corinthians 4:4-5). As a result, opportunities for ministry cry out for Ministry Evangelism.

The task of the church for Ministry Evangelism is to unleash its members to impact people where ever they are. Churches need to retool in order to move from ministry and evangelism to Ministry Evangelism. And that is not easy. A jumbo 747 plane is not turned on a sharp left or right turn. A 90-degree turn would cause great problems and sudden changes can be alarming to the passengers. But, when done right, a 30-degree turn is hardly noticed.*11

For the most part, a traditional approach to ministry is not going to make an impact on the ministry and evangelism need. A "30-degree turn" for retooling is needed. That's why Ministry Evangelism is exciting. It is a "30-degree turn". Our message must never change but the way we deliver that message must be constantly updated to reach each new generation. The need is for a "30-degree" ministry turn – a "contemporary change".

Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, CA has keen insight into what is “contemporary”. He says, “the word ‘contemporary’ literally means ‘with temporariness’. By nature, nothing contemporary is meant to last forever! It is only effective for a while and only relevant in that particular moment – that’s what makes it contemporary.”*12

The local church is vital and strategic to Ministry Evangelism. The need is for churches to build bridges of hope, to provide ministries to attract people to Christ’s message of love and forgiveness, and to equip the believers to take that message into their world. For that to happen, pastors need to have a vision and be more externally focused for reaching people beyond the local church.*13 Ministry volunteers need training in how to meet the needs of people and how to do personal evangelism. People need a ministry to meet their needs. They need to clearly see and clearly hear the Good News . . . the love of Christ . . . Ministry Evangelism . . . touching lives through ministry, changing hearts by telling God’s Good News.

Evangelism needs to be an intentional part of every ministry. Ministry and evangelism are not separate. Ministry and evangelism go hand in hand. They are not exclusive of one another. The two are so interwoven that they are one. Those having part in an ongoing ministry outreach must look for opportunities during the ministry to give a Christian witness . . . to do intentional evangelism. Thus, it is “Ministry Evangelism”.

A church can become a people focused Ministry Evangelism and Servant Evangelism church . . . “over night”. Who would have ever thought hurricane Katrina – America’s great tsunami -- would radically change 21st century America. The region around the Gulf of Mexico changed . . . Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Texas. Neighborhoods changed. Churches changed . . . some forever. In fact, America changed. The Gulf coastal states experienced . . .

Neighborhoods under 20 feet of water and some will no longer have their name on a map;

Church buildings destroyed, flood waters up to the steeple and the membership having to relocate;

More than ever before Christians have been outwardly focused on people who . . .

Became homeless over night and needed food and shelter;
Christians feeding the hungry and providing shelter;

Lost everything except the clothes they were wearing;
Christians clothing the ragged;

Were separated or lost from loved ones;
Christians receiving the hurting with open arms.

WHY? They were being like Jesus. Ministering unto these they have done it to Jesus.

WHY? For people to clearly see the Good News . . . and clearly hear the Good News.

John Avant, Vice President for Evangelism, North American Mission Board, Alpharetta, GA, writes that ninety-five percent of the membership of First Baptist Church, Bay St. Louis, MS became homeless, yet they continued showing and telling the Good News. Pastor Al Green tells that the membership met and decided that in-reach ministries are in the past. Now, outreach is all we do.*14

Want an exciting idea for becoming a more outwardly focused church?

In the United Kingdom (UK) it's not uncommon to see a thermometer outside a church representing the state of the appeal for funds to restore the roof of an ancient building.

Richard Pool, is he a little "crazy" when he suggests the idea of an upside down thermometer . . . a thermometer that would represent what we give away to our community, rather than what we ask our community to give to us. What if, instead of asking them for money, we gave money away? What would happen if we took some of the offering given week by week or month-by-month and set up a small grant-making fund?

Members of the community could come to us and tell us what they are doing in the community and we could offer some small level of funding. We might even get involved and work alongside them.

Is that crazy? I just wonder if an outward focused church would be characterized more by what it gave to the community than by anything else . . . characterized by its desire to be a blessing rather than to be blessed, characterized by a faith that was focused on others much more than upon itself. What will it take for more believers to realize that they have the ability to change the atmosphere through kindness, love, service and generosity?

TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY EVANGELISM

TIP 1: REMEMBER FOUR THINGS

LISTEN: Develop a listening ear. People generally talk about what concerns them.

PROCLAIM: Boldly proclaim the "cure" to people's needs. Give a Gospel witness. People need to see clearly and hear clearly the message working in the life of a witnessing Christian.

PRAY: Activate the power of prayer by praying for everyone receiving a witness. Following the witness, ask if you can pray for them (at that very moment).

Ministry Evangelism volunteers proclaim the truth, the Good News. God's job is to save the life. People need time to consider the claims of Christ and God needs time to work. That does not mean a person cannot experience salvation when first hearing the Good News . . . the Gospel. Remember: One "plants" . . . another "waters" . . . another "reaps the harvest".

TIP 2: BE CREATIVE WHEN DOING MINISTRY

Many receiving the ministry have no contact with a church. Often times, they are church "drop outs", "turned off" people or non-believers. Doing ministry in a new, creative and innovative way many times is received by those who no longer have a church relationship.

Jesus built bridges to where the people were . . . where ever the location. He didn't ask them to come to Him. He went to them. If they are going to be at a place away from the church, you can do "church" there. Take Ministry Evangelism to them. (Example: Do a "Sidewalk Vacation Bible School" on the sidewalk in the neighborhood.)

Ministry Evangelism "on a shoe string" is nearly financially cost free. It can be done as nicely and effectively as one that may cost a thousand or more dollars.

TIP 3: MEET THE PEOPLE'S NEEDS

When there is an openness and a spiritual hunger the church will not communicate the Gospel by sitting inside the four walls of the church. Needs of people are met by being where they are. Churches need to have an external people focus for ministry.

TIP 4: DO GOOD PLANNING FOR EFFECTIVE MINISTRY

Pray for God's wisdom in planning.
Who can you best reach for Jesus. Focus! Focus! Focus!
Find a need and fill it – not all needs.
Start small and do it . . . very, very, very well.
Is this on God's agenda? If not, do not continue.
Plan well and in advance for the ministry.
Review the planning and ask, "Will God be glorified in this ministry"?

TIP 5: BE TRAINED IN PERSONAL EVANGELISM

A Ministry Evangelism opportunity is more effective if some evangelism training is provided . . . i.e., One Day / One Hour Soul Witness Training, G.R.O.W., Witness Training, F.A.I.T.H.

ANY CHURCH CAN DO MINISTRIES

DECLINING CHURCHES can do ministries.
MAINTENANCE CHURCHES can do ministries.
NEW CHURCH STARTS can do ministries
HOUSE CHURCHES can do ministries.
RESTART CHURCHES can do ministries.
REFOCUS CHURCHES can do ministries.

MINISTRIES CAN BE THE STARTING POINT FOR A NEW CHURCH

**ANY CHURCH CAN DO AT LEAST ONE BRIDGE BUILDING MINISTRY
AND REACH PEOPLE THROUGH MINISTRY EVANGELISM**