

## WHAT IF'S OF EVANGELISM #7 EVANGELISM...A FRESH TAKE

Written by: Bryce Ashlin-Mayo  
[bryce@incipiosermo.com](mailto:bryce@incipiosermo.com)  
[www.bryce.incipiosermo.com](http://www.bryce.incipiosermo.com)

I want us to look at the idea of evangelism in a little different way in this article this month. I found this excerpt from an online article that I think is profound and I wanted to share it with you...

*"What do you think of when someone mentions "personal evangelism"? Used cars? A slick and charming person in a cheap suit peddling ice water to Eskimos? Personal evangelism is not a bad word, and your church will not thrive without it. Are you not an evangelist? Don't worry. This new series will help you to understand what personal evangelism is, what steps are involved, and teach you how you can share the message of Jesus - even if you're not a professional evangelist!*

### *The Nature of Personal Evangelism*

*There is no mystery in it. Personal evangelism is an attempt to inform non-believers and to persuade them to believe. Think we can be the church without it? Not very likely! Don't be discouraged, however. With a little bit of understanding of the nature of personal evangelism, you will be able to find non-believers and convert them without having to resort to any of the tactics that can sometimes give evangelism a bad name. There are seven basic steps in personal evangelism:*

- 1. Prospecting*
- 2. Preapproach*
- 3. Approach*
- 4. Making the Presentation*
- 5. Overcoming Objections*
- 6. Closing*
- 7. Following Up"*

As you read the excerpt from the article...what did you think?

It might surprise you that the above (with a few minor editorial changes like substituting the word "evangelist" for "sales person" and "non-believer" for "customer," etc.) was a quote from the website "EZ-Net advantage"<sup>1</sup>. This excerpt was from the article entitled "Sell your services even if you are not a "Sales Person" and was written by the editor David Mortensen. The following is the excerpt in its original format:

*"What do you think of when someone mentions "personal selling"? Used cars? A slick and charming person in a cheap suit peddling ice water to Eskimos? Personal selling is not a bad word, and your business will not thrive without it. Are you not a salesperson? Don't worry. This new series will help you to understand what personal selling is, what steps are involved, and teach you how you can sell your services - even if you're not a salesperson!*

### *The Nature of Personal Selling*

*There is no mystery in it. Personal selling is an attempt to inform customers and to persuade them to purchase products. Think you can be in business without it? Not very likely in this industry! Don't be discouraged, however. With a little bit of understanding of the nature of personal sales, you will be able to find potential customers and close sales without having to resort to any of the tactics that can sometimes give sales a bad name.*

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<sup>1</sup> [www.abc.eznettools.net/reselleradvantage/0202/sales.html](http://www.abc.eznettools.net/reselleradvantage/0202/sales.html)

*There are seven basic steps in personal selling:*

- 1. Prospecting*
- 2. Preapproach*
- 3. Approach*
- 4. Making the Presentation*
- 5. Overcoming Objections*
- 6. Closing the Sale*
- 7. Following Up”*

What do you think now? What feelings does it conjure up?

As I reflected on the similarities between “sales” and “evangelism,” there was a deep level of dissatisfaction and sadness that we, as the church, had literally lowered the bar or dropped the ball on evangelism and relegated it to sales pitch (selling vacuums or magazines). I get a similar emotion when I watch a bad T.V. Evangelist selling miracles to people – there is something fundamentally wrong with it. Have you ever felt that way? When you hear about an evangelism course, project or event, do you run because it might be what you fear and even hate? I have to admit to that a time or two myself.

If that is the case we are alike and I am not alone and I would invite to you join with me on an adventure/journey, if you will, to moving beyond that dissatisfaction of the way it is/was done and move into the way it can be. Jesus called us and gave us, the church, the mission of sharing and spreading His message of love, grace, forgiveness, redemption, etc. to the world – a world that desperately needs it and is frantically searching for it. If we believe that to be true, and I do, then we either need to embrace the sale’s method of evangelism or embrace something else. I want to propose something else...

So what if we looked at evangelism in a radically different way? What if we looked at it more as the model Jesus showed through his example rather than the model of sales in our culture? I believe that evangelism, if looked at differently, can be something that is natural, loving, honoring to God, honoring to people, and freeing.

Jesus was the ultimate example of what evangelism can and should look like. Jesus spent a lot of time with people and most of his time with the irreligious. Jesus was given the term “friend of sinners” which today we look at mostly positively in the church, but in its time was a negative term. People didn’t like Jesus hanging out with sinners (prostitutes, drunks, adulterers, etc.) because they felt it was negative to His image, but he did it all the time. Do you remember how Jesus related to these people? He didn’t just answer questions but asked them, he told stories and parables rather than giving quick logical and propositional statements. He understood that people need to engage in conversation, ask questions, be listened too, allowed to disagree, question, seek other answers, etc. He loved perfectly without thought of anything in return. He spoke truth but always in perfect love. He gave answers but always with compassion. He just cared for people.

What if we defined evangelism as a passion and love for people? So when we see our neighbors, work colleagues, classmates, family members, friends, or teammates we don’t share our faith out of guilt, fear, selfish motives (how we will look in church), but instead out of genuine love for them? What if we just loved that person and engaged them in

conversation without ulterior motives and in the process we integrated our faith in Jesus into our lives and relationships in an authentic way? What if when we ask questions or are asked questions related to faith we actually care about the person rather than just giving the right or most persuasive answer? What if instead we asked follow up questions like “Can I share what God has meant to me or how I look at that...” Not in new way to sell Jesus but to live him authentically.

What if evangelism is not an argument or debate but a way of life we are all called to live and that way of life means integrating your faith and being authentic, loving your friends, listening to them and sharing your story with them? What if evangelism is not something we can turn on or off but something that beats in our hearts and is part of our very being. What if it isn't about winning an argument or solving difficult questions but about loving your neighbor, and if needed, helping them navigate through those difficult questions and maybe learning something along the way. And in a relationship built on trust and love there is room to disagree and space to grow.

How does that sound to you?

Like always, this article is meant to promote thought and discussion and if you disagree, it resonated with you, or you were challenged, please feel free to let me know. I am always open to talking - feel free to call, drop in, go for coffee or email me ([bryce@devonalliancechurch.ca](mailto:bryce@devonalliancechurch.ca)).