

5 Necessary Elements for an Evangelism Ethos in Your Church

I have read a lot of books on evangelism, and my two favorite are Bill Hybels' *Just Walk Across the Room* and Mark Dever's *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*. Yes, I see the irony in that. They are very different books—but I like them for different reasons.

As I recently read through Hybels' book, I identified 5 helpful features that I think are necessary for an evangelistic ethos, either in an individual Christian or in an entire church.

1. Intentionality & Sensitivity to the Spirit (35–54)

Hybels writes, *"I'm more convinced than ever the absolute highest value in personal evangelism is staying in tune and cooperating with the Holy Spirit"* (35). We don't hear this nearly as much as we should. We don't build the kingdom for God; we let God build it through us. That's why the first command given to the apostles in Acts is to **wait**. Until the Spirit arrived, they could do nothing.

This is the only way to keep from being overwhelmed by the massive task of evangelism. God does not expect us to convert people; he invites us to walk with him and be his instrument as he builds the church. That is something we should do every day.

Sometimes there is a wide open door, other times not. But that should not stop us from instigating the conversation. Honestly, only about 1 in every 5 of my attempts to have a spiritual conversation turn out well. Just because it turns out poorly does not mean that God is not in it. Stephen witnessed to Paul and was stoned, but that was definitely Spirit-filled evangelism!

I have heard that the average person has to hear the gospel 12 times before they believe. We may get the joy of being that 12th person, or we may be one link in the chain. But the Spirit has a role for us.

You perceive when a door is being opened through prayer. Therefore, **pray continually and listen as you pray**.

2. Practical ways to get into the conversation (158–160)

Throughout the book Hybels gives you numerous "conversation openers," and I found particularly helpful his question suggestions on pp. 158-160. These were conversation starters you could actually use, as opposed to cheesy, awkward, forced questions I've often been taught. "If you died tonight, do you know where you would spend eternity?" (*Side note: Why is everyone always dying at night?*), or "What opinions about God do you have that I could correct?" Not that those are wrong (or at least the first one is not), but Hybels gives you a few more questions for your arsenal.

3. Models

The best way to learn to share Christ is by watching someone else. That's how I learned! I watched my dad and other believers share the gospel. A book cannot in itself be a "model," but Hybels both offers stories to encourage us and pushes us to learn from other Christians.

4. An Ability to Share Your Story Concisely (115–131)

Entrepreneurs have what they call an "elevator speech" for their product: even though they could talk for hours and hours about it, they force themselves to condense things down to a 45-second summary. We should have an "elevator speech" for our story too: 100 words or less that explain how Christ met our "felt" needs, which sets us up for a sharing of the actual gospel. (*NOTE: your story of how Christ met your felt needs is NOT the actual gospel, just an intro to it.*)

5. An Ability to Share the "Actual" Gospel Concisely (133–140)

Just as we need to have a polished "elevator speech" of our story, we should be able to express the gospel in 100 words or less too. Far from making our presentation insincere, this helps us to appreciate the gospel in fresh ways. Hybels mentions some classic presentations that I've seen and used: the bridge illustration (Jesus bridges the gap between us and God) and the do/done dichotomy (Religions are all about *doing*; the gospel is all about what Christ has *done*.).

Hybels does not do, IMO, a great job of helping you understand gospel doctrine in this book. He is superb at equipping you for evangelism that engages hearers on the plain of their felt-needs, but less-helpful at equipping you to share as a "gospel-prophet" commissioned to warn others of impending judgment and preaching salvation in Christ. Both are necessary dimensions to being an effective evangelist, which is why I'd encourage you to read Dever's *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* along with this one.

Read more from JD [here](#).