



Ambassadors For Christ

Text: 2 Corinthians 5:16-6:2

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1. Think about your circles of influence. Would you say that most of your friends are Christians? What do your relationships with non-believers look like (outside your family)? Are you actively seeking out non-believers?
 - a. Take a moment to think through the places that you frequent regularly (see Post Script for more).
 - b. Who are people you can be intentional about building relationships with? Do you frequent the same coffee shop, do you use the same person to cut your hair, or the same dry cleaners each week?
 - c. How comfortable are you with beginning to develop relationships in those spaces?
 - d. Share with the group how you have engaged someone in this way and developed an opportunity to share more about your relationship with Jesus.

2. What is your strategy for sharing the Gospel with them? What do you find most difficult about sharing your faith? Try and put yourself in the shoes of a non-believer; what would be an effective way to reach you? What would turn you off from the Gospel? (See Study Deeper for more)

3. The heart of sharing the Gospel, is sharing how God has changed your life. Introducing people to Jesus through telling them what He has meant for your life.
 - a. How comfortable are you talking about how you came to know Jesus?
 - b. How comfortable are you talking about what God is currently doing in your life?
 - c. Take a minute and articulate a quick one minute testimony. If you are comfortable, practice sharing with the group. This is the best place to start and practice with each other!

4. Read 1 Corinthians 2:10-13. TA talks about how no one is born a Christian. Every Christian has, at some point, had a radical encounter with the living God. We often feel like evangelizing is done by our own power, but that is simply not true. How is it that we come to “understand the things freely given to us by God”? How does the Holy Spirit help us spread the Gospel?

Challenge: As a group, take time for each person to share the names of the people in their life that are non-believers. Whether that’s a teacher, coach, neighbor, nail stylist, etc. Compile a list and pray over those names as group.

Prayer: Father, I come to you in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. Please fill me with the power of Your Holy Spirit so I can be an effective witness for you (Acts 1:8). I pray that the fruit of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – would be evident in my life (Galatians 5:22-23). Cause my light to shine before others so that they may see my good works and give you glory (Matthew 5:16). Lord, help me also to be prepared to verbally share the gospel. Enable me

to share it with gentleness and respect for others (1 Peter 3:15). Please open doors for me to share your Word, and help me to make it clear when I speak (Colossians 4:3-4). Help me not to be ashamed of my Lord Jesus, and to remember that you have not given me a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7-8). Empower me to speak boldly as I proclaim the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19). Lord, please also give me your compassion for the lost. Help me to see their true condition, and to be moved with love to reach out to them. Send me as a laborer into your harvest (Matthew 9:36-38). Amen

STUDY DEEPER

Are You Too Christian for Non-Christians?

Google the expression “know your number” and you’ll find screen after screen of reportedly essential life metrics ranging from prostate-specific antigens (PSA) and cholesterol to the amount of money you will need in savings to retire and your enneagram – which is a quantification of personality which, depending on whom you believe, was either the brainchild of a fourth-century Christian mystic or a twentieth-century Bolivian spiritualist, give or take 1,600 years, but who’s counting?

Well, it seems everyone is counting. With each passing day some new app, gadget or wearable technology, or fill-in-the-blank-o-meter emerges to help us capture, measure, and analyze the big data we generate while simply going about living our lives, all holding out the promise of living life better, longer, and more fruitfully – some of these meters serious and helpful, some of them silly and distracting.

It is written, “Why, even the hairs of your head are all numbered” (Luke 12:7).

A Personal Great Commission Number

Jason Meyer preached recently from 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1, and as he compared and contrasted separation from and engagement with the world, I thought, “Wouldn’t it be great if we had an app that measured our engagement with unbelievers?” Something that kept a running total of:

Amount of Time x Depth of Relationship x Unbelievers

Sadly, for many, the product would be small, low, single digits. It is so easy to fill our time with the activity and fellowship of Christian life. Block out time for prayer, quiet time, worship, Sunday school, small group, committee meetings, accountability partners, Christian entertainment, political action, and socializing with your best friends with whom you just so happen to also attend church and, well, there really isn’t much margin left for, let’s say, evangelism.

Separation from the world isn’t really so hard. One could suggest it is a preferred and more comfortable course than engagement with it, especially if your love of God is strong. It is easier in many ways to be not of the world than it is to be in it and not of it.

The Two Block Mission Field

Last year, our pastor in suburban Cincinnati challenged us at the holidays to pray for our neighbors by name, take them some baked goods, and then seek opportunities to invite them into our home. I confess that, first, we had to figure out most of their names in order to pray for them. When we did visit them with our jars of holiday snack mix, all of the neighbors were delighted that someone had finally instigated “neighborhood.” Most notably, when they started visiting our home and sharing our dining room table, it became quickly apparent to us, “We’ve been spending way too much time with fellow Christians.”

We were confronted with the mainstream culture head-on, not in a cable TV shout-show way, but just as people talking about things that people talk about. We heard with fresh ears just how easily unbelievers embrace things that we church folk won’t even go near, and how delicate is the task of discussing such things with people who don’t sing from the same hymnal as we do, indeed, who don’t sing from a hymnal at all. Our neighbors left our home knowing that we were Christian people, that we respect the authority of the Bible and, most of all, that we love our neighbors. Within a couple weeks, one of them was serving in a local Christian ministry with us.

Such engagement is not easy, not at all. It requires higher degrees of attentiveness and calculation than do conversations with our brother and sister evangelicals whose sentences we can all too easily finish. It requires an ability to apply rightly the Scripture to the circumstances and conversations in which we are engaged, a capability for which we are supposedly being equipped during the times we are together as Christians loving and exhorting one another to good works (Hebrews 10:24). And it requires a great patience with the blindness, deafness, and death that Jesus asks us to speak into. Actually, it requires us to be disciplined and mature enough in our faith to see with his eyes.

Seven Simple Steps to Boost Evangelism

Develop your “personal Great Commission number” as if it were something as routine to your daily life as church, work, fitness, and carting your kids around. How much time do you spend with unbelieving individuals, and what is the quality of your social relationships with them? You can boost your number substantially by exercising these seven disciplines.

1. Pray for the unbelievers in your life by name.

Margaret Thatcher once famously said, “There is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.” Her point being that we must regard each other at human scale, not as mere components of larger social institutions. The same can be said of the way we use the term “the lost.”

Of course our hearts grieve for the millions who do not know Jesus, but we don’t know the millions personally. Most of us do know personally at least dozens, some of us hundreds, and rather than lump these precious individuals into one big prayer cohort, we could begin to take their given names before God in prayer. Start writing their names down and praying over them at least once a week.

2. Be intentional in pursuing relationships and scheduling time with unbelievers.

If you don’t make engagement with unbelieving people a priority, your life will gravitate automatically toward the pleasures and comforts of the church community cul-de-sac. Identify two people outside of

your Christian circle with whom you think you would enjoy spending more time. Look for two more who appear to need someone to come alongside of them as they struggle with burdens in their lives. Target one other with whom you seem to have the least in common, but enough of a relationship that you could see it becoming, with a little work, a friendship. You needn't feel that you must sacrifice any of your principles or values to love someone else. It's what we're commanded to do. Love God. Love our neighbors.

3. Don't withdraw from unbelieving family members. Lean in.

Family members are people with whom, like it or not, you are already in relationship. You already love them, and they already love you, despite theological differences. Don't make them a project; just love them as members of your family. Be sincerely interested in what they're interested in, even if you find it hard to be interested. Know their struggles. Encourage them. Affirm them. Don't be estranged. Lean in and never give up on any of them. Above all else, pray for them.

4. Love your neighbors.

Know your neighbors. Help your neighbors. Enjoy your neighbors. Be the epoxy that glues your neighbors into a neighborhood. Practice hospitality. Make your home a place that your neighbors associate with their love for each other.

5. Appreciate your workplace as the best place.

For most Christians, the workplace is the place where we will spend the most time with unbelieving people. Work requires us to collaborate with others to see it to completion. Relationships in the workplace are sometimes even easier to develop than with family members. You share more time and, in time, more in common. Don't allow your Christianity to be a wedge that separates you from coworkers.

You needn't compromise your values, nor engage in any unbiblical activities to secure a coworker's esteem or affection, but you do need to take an active interest in your coworkers as fellow human beings, not just the other spokes in a wheel you happen to share. Appreciate that people in the workplace are not the means of getting your work done; they are the objects of your work as an ambassador for Christ.

6. Harvest relationships from your children's activities.

Children are now involved in lots of activities year-round. If you have several children, the breadth of your relationship universe is substantial across the expanse of all the other coaches, parents, and teammates. So, go deep. Work these crowds. Befriend people in these communities. Do things with them. Bring them together in your home with family members, coworkers, and neighbors.

A word of warning: don't permit all of your kids' activities to take place in Christian-only programs.

7. Take up a new hobby, especially one shared in groups.

Diversions from responsibilities can be personally renewing, restorative, and great venues for evangelism. Find something fun or interesting to do or learn in which you are not fulfilling a specific responsibility or

obligation to anyone – just taking your mind off of things for a while. But find something that requires you to do it with other people. Here you'll likely meet people of all different walks, the bond being the shared interest in the hobby. It will help to find something in which someone else, perhaps an unbeliever, will have to be invested in you to help you along. This can be the leaven of really great relationships.

The truth is, the product of this hypothetical formula is not a score; it is joy. There are few greater joys in life than sharing the gospel with another person, even fewer greater joys than knowing you have been used as a means, immediately or eventually, in another's conversion to Christ. Yes, we rejoice in corporate worship, in Christian fellowship, and in private devotion, and also in the essential work of sharing Christ with those who do not yet know him.

<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/are-you-too-christian-for-non-christians>