



DOING THE WORK OF AN EVANGELIST

I think the words of Paul to young Timothy in 2 Timothy 4:5 are important words for church planters. Paul admonished Timothy this way,

*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, **do the work of an evangelist**, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*

Occasionally I come across a church planter or someone on a church planting team and it seems like evangelism is not even on their mind. They have a mental picture of their “ideal church,” and they think that if they can just do what they want to do, people will come. The truth is that there are few communities left across America where a significant number of “church shoppers” exist, who are eagerly awaiting the manifestation of the “ideal church.”

The reason we plant churches is to reach people who do not yet know Christ. That implies that we must do the work of an evangelist. The problem is that we have so many misconceptions about what that work really is. I’ve identified 4 ways that church planting leaders do the work of an evangelist.

First, we must build relationships with people who are far from God. Many pastors and church leaders have simply never taken much time to build a network of unsaved friends. However, this is imperative in church planting.

One of the key skills that serve church planters well is the skill of networking. We coach our planters on how to build a large network of unchurched friends before they ever start their church. In fact, if you are planting as a full-time pastor, I recommend that you take 6 months and build a network of at least 200 qualified prospects. By qualified I mean that they are unchurched people who are good prospects for your new church. I also encourage the core team to be building these relationships as well.

A good goal is for the full-time planter to have at least 200 qualified prospects, and a core of 20 people who each have at least 10 qualified prospects each. This equals 400 qualified prospects before the church ever launches. This is an important skill that many church planters need to develop. A good coach/mentor can help you with this.

Second, we must pray for open doors. Just because we have growing friendships with non-believers does not mean that we get authentic opportunities to talk about spiritual things. We must pray for these opportunities and be looking for them as God provides them. Then, of course, we must be able to have a meaningful conversation around the gospel. Again, this is a critical skill that every church planting leader needs to possess.

Third, we must gather a following of both believers and non-believers. The stronger church planters typically have conversions before they ever launch their church. They also have a network of seekers who are very close to committing their lives to Christ.

You set the right DNA for your new church when there is a growing sense of community with a group of people comprised of both new believers and non-believers. They create energy and they keep us focused on why we're doing this. I encourage church planters to use the Luke 10 "Man of Peace" strategy that Jesus taught His disciples. The church planter who finds 2 or 3 "Persons of Peace" (it doesn't have to be a male), will discover a large network of unchurched people immediately.

That leads me to my final point. We must look for the best ways to leverage our time to build more relationships. **Leverage** is the optimal word. One person of peace might connect you to 10-20 other non-believers. I knew one guy who brought 50 new people to a pre-launch event. That's leverage. Networking in established groups is also leverage. For example you may be able to connect with many people quickly through a home owners association, a youth sports league, a business networking group, a country club, etc. Look for the best ways to leverage your time and relationships.

Effective church planting requires that we do the work of an evangelist. Evangelism begins with relationships and prayer. Some good books that have helped me are:

Just Walk Across the Room by Bill Hybels,
Radical Reformation by Mark Driscoll,
Blue Like Jazz by Donald Miller,
Prayer Evangelism by Ed Siloso, and
The Insider by Jim Peterson and Mike Shamy.