

## Evangelism in a Church Plant

A recent report from the Southern Baptist Missions board reports “Southern Baptist churches baptized 3.4 people per 100 resident members, while new churches baptized 11.7”

In fact, dozens of denominational studies have confirmed that the average new church gains most of its new members (60–80%) from the unchurched, while churches over ten to fifteen years of age gain 80–90 percent of new members by transfer from other congregations. This means the average new congregation will bring six to eight times more new people into the body of Christ than an older congregation of the same size.

Although established congregations provide many things that newer churches often cannot, older churches in general will never be able to match the effectiveness of new bodies in reaching people for the kingdom.

New churches often best reach new generations, new residents, and new people groups. Our culture are more accustomed to start up churches, and thus more comfortable trying one. A congregation filled with people fresh from the world will have be motivated to invite their friends into their new life. A church plant’s focus survival is on new people, not on propping up the old, cynical saints. The environment a church planter has been called to is ideal for evangelism.

The difference between “by chance” soul winning and consistent soul winning can be summed up with two words: INTENTION and RELATIONSHIPS.

### Intention

We will only succeed at that which we undertake with intention.

- Nobody accidentally gets out of debt.
- We “set out” to cut up credit cards and make extra payments to erase indebtedness.
- Nobody accidentally flies to another part of the country.
- We “with purpose” pack a suitcase, pay for a ticket and board a plane to reach a new destination.

2 Corinthians 5 defines us as “*ambassadors*” for Christ...” as though Christ was imploring through us be reconciled to God!”

Because of this calling we must intentionally build relationships with people, with the purpose in mind, to let our light shine. We must intentionally and prayerfully approach opportunities to share our testimony/God’s Word.

In a poll conducted by the Institute for American Church Growth, 14,000 people were asked how they came to know Christ and enter the Church. 75-90% of them said it was the result of a friend or relative.

In fact, Jesus did much of His ministry around dining room table; so much so that they called him a glutton and a winebibber.

## Relationships

Jesus taught the example that evangelism is most effective in the context of relationships.

Proverbs 18:24 *He who has friends must show himself friendly.*

Where will the candidates for relationship come from?

### RELATIONSHIP CANDIDATES

There are three groups of people who are candidates for relationship evangelism;

- people we already know,
- people we used to know, and
- people we would like to know.

In each of these groups, it's important to be intentional. Create a list of individuals for each category, and track your progress. (the iMap has been included in this resource for help in this area)

Each individual should move through segments of this very simple path:

1. Initial Contact
2. Becoming Better Acquainted
3. Serving Them
4. Move to Friendship Level
5. Sharing Your Testimony
6. Expose To The Gospel
7. Invitation

1. People you already know – (Lifestyle Evangelism)

*Examples:*

- Friends
- Family
- Coworkers
- Neighbors
- Acquaintances

Suggestions to reach this group:

- Pray for them
- Remember to talk to God about people, before you talk to people about God.
- Include them in the activities you're already doing
- Hobbies
- Work (Bi-vocational/Volunteer)
- Socialize first. Invite to dinner, or to your home.
- Invite them to a church-focused event.

2. People you used to know – (Cultivation Evangelism)

*Examples:*

- Past friends
- Previous church members
- Past coworkers
- Mailing lists
- Visitor lists

Suggestions to reach this group:

- Pray for them
- Refresh the relationship
- Write a letter
- Invite to dinner

3. People you would like to know – (Prospect evangelism)

*Examples:*

- Coworkers
- Neighbors
- Kids' friends' parents
- Store clerks

Suggestions to reach this group:

- Pray for them
- Listen
  - “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”
  - Ask questions about them, then just listen to them. The time will come when you can give good sound Biblical direction. You have two ears and one mouth... Don't mix that up. Listen twice as much as you speak.
  - I've learned that most people can't hear until they've been heard. ~Rick Warren
- Build on areas of common ground.
- Mention spiritual matters early.

There are hundreds of ways to meet people, get involved in the community, and build relationships. It’s easy to feel that you need to do everything that other churches are doing. It’s best to remain sensitive to God, and concentrate on doing fewer things, better. An excellent resource for outreach ideas is [www.outreachmagazine.com](http://www.outreachmagazine.com)

Here are just a few outreach ideas:

- Hospital visitation (volunteer as a chaplain)
- Laundry-mat outreach (distribute ‘quarters & cards’)
- Offer free gift wrapping at Christmas at various mall stores
- Jail Ministry (congregation ready and waiting)
- Celebrate Recovery class (or other type of small groups)
- Sponsor a school or classroom
- Angel Food Ministry
- Block parties / or booth at Community festivals
- English as a Second Language class

- First Responders Luncheon (police/fire)
- Free 'grass cutting day'; free car wash; etc
- From 'single moms' to 'migrant workers'... find a need your passionate about, and fill it

Our goal should be to get Bible studies from our contacts. Bible studies will be discussed more thoroughly in a separate article.