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Drop By Sometime

**The Simple and Effective Method
to Reach Newcomers for Your Church**

Gary V Carter

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1. The Long Beginning

It took a long time to get to compiling all the tips in this book. I have read and written widely on the subject of growing the church. I have been particularly concerned with the fact that most churches that grow numerically actually don't win as many people as they think. They collect people from other smaller churches. Often the people gave up on their smaller church because it didn't seem to have any momentum. Often that lack of momentum is measured in raw numbers of attendance. This year is at best the same as last year and the people who leave want something more. But the people who stay want something more as well.

A few years ago now I got a phone call from a good friend telling me he had put my name forward as a good choice for a transitional pastor role in a church. The church didn't have a stellar reputation nor did the community. When I took the call from the church itself asking if I would be willing to consider the role a long standing rule of mine kicked in. I don't allow myself to say "No thanks" before I know the story. The story had some good and bad elements. The church under the guidance of a competent consultant had by vote agreed to take a risk. They agreed to set aside all the organizational elements and put all the decision making under the leadership of the new transitional pastor. So they basically told me I would be in charge if I accepted the role. I believe that in any successful church the pastor has to be in charge as the real leader in the church. However, the bad was that this church had been dropping in attendance for years and was slowly bleeding to death.

Before I fast forward I want to say I had always believed that having a baby was easier than having a resurrection. Fixing an ailing church is much more difficult than starting one. While I have been engaged in attempting to rebuild dying churches before with only moderate success, I have a predisposition to starting churches and have invested most of my years working with

those who were in the process of starting. I have helped start over a dozen churches. But I had to go back over a decade to an experience of leading in a successful regeneration of a church.

In the interest of following Jesus I agreed to travel to this rather remote mid-sized city to do a weekend seminar for them to see if they were actually ready to do what they had voted to do. I planned on shaking the dust off my feet and moving on when I got on the plane Monday morning.

I based my seminar that weekend on some of the material from *See You Next Week*. In a sense this book is a prequel. Logically this book – *Drop By Sometime* – comes before the other but in reality the other book touches on things that are important to get right at the same time – or perhaps first if you want to delay the blessings.

*See You Next Week** is about making your church friendly for a newcomer. If it isn't you have a Teflon coated floor. I presumed that this church was one of those. They didn't have any records but it was clear that new people weren't coming in at a rate to overcome the people leaving for one reason or another. Without ever meeting anyone or examining their church as I would as a consultant I just knew this was a problem. That is true in almost every church in North America. Newcomers are coming in the front door and sliding right out the back before they are even noticed. The single most important thing you can do to grow your church is to take proper care of newcomers. Most churches I work with tell me their church is the exception and they are very friendly. When I explain it is likely true that if a newcomer walks in without an advocate bringing them, they are usually ignored they don't believe me. So I just have to move on to the next church. However, during that weekend my wife and I came to the conclusion that they did believe and were serious about changing. We were stuck and within a few short weeks we began our ministry there on a three quarter time basis. But you will have to wait until the end of the book to hear the rest of that story! The one clue I will give you is that it is a happy ending because the church did take *See You Next Week* seriously and they also took *Drop By Sometime* seriously even though it wasn't written until now.

* Purchase *See You Next Week* at SeeYouNextWeek.info or find the book on Amazon. Purchase additional copies of *Drop By Sometime* at DropBySometime.info or on Amazon. For volume discounts email gary@garyvcarter.com. See other books by Gary at GaryVCarter.name. Visit Gary's blog at GaryVCarter.com.



2. Attempted Fixes

Churches have tried all manner of ways to get people to church. But they miss the point more often than not. None of these components are bad. But neither do they hit the “sweet spot.” Golfers and baseball players know that when the club or the bat hits the ball on the “sweet spot” the ball goes farther in the direction they intend. It isn’t about more effort; it is about making the connection perfectly. Here are some elements that aren’t the sweet spot for a church that grows. However, they may be present in a growing church and are not to be set aside.

- Better teaching/preaching
- Different/better music
- New programs
- Childrens programs
- Youth programs
- Special events
- Aggressive evangelism programs
- Discipleship programs
- Community service
- Church culture (dress, coffee, food etc.)
- New building or building expansion
- Advertising

If you are predisposed to getting people to leave their present church to come to your church the elements on this list will create the opportunity for you to become a collector church. Once your church is over about 200 people on a typical Sunday people will start to find you. But when you peel back the wrapper you will find that most of those people are coming to your church from some other church. This is particularly true if you attempt a “big box” church start with multiple staff and “full dealership” programming right

out of the gate. People like something new better than something old. It is just a predisposition in North America at least. They also like something big better than something small.

However, most churches are on a plateau or in decline. They have lost momentum forward if they ever had it after their first five years of existence. Most Christians go to the larger churches. You can check the statistics in your context but I expect you will find that 70-80% who attend churches attend churches that are above the mid-line or median. If you arrange all the churches in a list from the largest to the smallest and take the middle church on the list, that is the median size. You will find it is in the 100 range.

On the other hand, in the 50% of the churches on the small side only 20-30% of the believers are found. So the simplistic believer draws the conclusion we should give up on the small churches and just go big or go home. Not so fast!

Those smaller churches are significant in a number of ways. First of all, the most normal size church has attendance in the 60 range on Sunday. And that includes all the upper size churches as well. Those churches don't have all the items on the list. However, all the research I can find without exception proves that those small churches bring people to Christ at three to four times the rate of the big churches. Even most pastors find that hard to believe. But it is true. It would appear that the reason those smaller churches often don't grow is that too many people migrate to the bigger churches to outnumber the new believers. To put it another way, the back door is bigger than the front door.

The big boys often bad mouth the small churches as being unsuccessful because they are small. Those small churches are – not may be – winning more people per capita and then accidentally feeding them into the collector churches. The big boys should put the pictures of the small churches around them up in their office because they are a major source of their growth!

Whether your church is large or small doesn't impact the content you are about to read because the *Drop By Sometime* system depends on simple actions for individuals. By the time we are finished this book you will know exactly the things you must do to see your church put on a major growth track and it will be like a mustard seed. Small is good if you grasp Kingdom growth.



3. How We Got to Church

Everyone reading this book has a different perspective. I am going to assume that you, whoever you are, do not have a basic attitude problem. You believe in the “Great Commander” the Lord Jesus Christ. You know the “Great Commandment” to love your neighbour as yourself. You are committed to the “Great Commission” even though you may have faltering experience with it. I am also going to assume that if you were to take a church vote on those three clear components you will get a strong majority vote in favour. So if you don’t have an attitude problem but you aren’t growing, what is the problem?

If you are a church leader you have some ideas about what is needed. If you are a pastor you come to the question with plans even if you are having a hard time getting those plans in gear. You may even think that numerical growth is shallow growth. I doubt you really believe that but it is a comfortable place to rest. Some of what you can do from a leadership perspective is organizational and I will touch on a few things. You may be thinking sequentially. That is, you may think that if you get the [fill in the blank] fixed first then growth will follow. I want you to give up sequential thinking and think in terms of both/and, not first/second.

The focus in this book is on what you can do as an individual to make a difference whether or not you are in an official leadership position. If you are a leader you must set the pace. But if you haven’t been appointed as a leader you too can set the pace for others to follow. When others in the church see the joy your behaviour is creating they will either follow with joy or get sour with you and attempt to push you aside.

To help you understand what works I want you to do an experiment. I suppose you can only do this if you are the pastor. Take a straw poll on a

Sunday morning and ask people to raise their hand when they can identify the one of three groups they fit in.

Group #1 is the group who grew up in church – not necessarily your church but they attend church as a carry over from their upbringing in some way. Include those who were perhaps new to your community and found your church on their own by some form of advertising or seeing your building. Hands up?

Group #2 is the group who came to your church solely because of advertising, the church sign on the building, the building, media of any kind or they attended a special multi-church evangelistic meeting on their own without any human personal invitation. These people were formerly unchurched until on their own they decided to find a church. Hands up?

Group #3 is the group who started coming to church because somebody invited them. That invitation could have come from a family member, a friend, a co-worker or even someone they had never met before the invitation. They didn't grow up in church but somebody got them there. Hands up?

I already know the answer. If your church is the exception I would like to hear about that. If your church does not have a pattern of growth, Group #1 is almost everyone. If your church has grown Group #1 might be as small as about half. Group #2 is the smallest by far. Bear in mind that if someone was looking for a church and they already had a church background they aren't in Group #2. You might have one out of ten in this group. And if they have come to the church recently they probably found you on the Internet. And that is a good thing. The rest of the people are in Group #3. That roughly speaking will be half your church. Somebody invited them. It is that simple.

Personal invitation is as inexpensive as you can get and it works far better than anything else. Since that is true, doesn't it make sense to put your concentrated effort into the method that works best?



4. The Striking Opportunity

Various research studies have shown that in North America the vast majority of non-church people say they would be open to an invitation to church. Think in terms of about four out of five people who say that. Now we can agree that they polish their own halo a bit before they answer but nonetheless they are not negative about such an invitation. At the same time, of the church going crowd about one or two out of a hundred has issued an invitation to church to anyone in the last year. And don't forget they too adjust their halo before they answer. They know that zero can't be the right answer so they pick the lowest number that seems reasonable to them to get away with. I'm not recommending this but you could prove it by asking a close friend to tell you about those two conversations. Watch them squirm if you like. But what would be the point?

There are standard excuses church people claim as the reason they don't invite others. We aren't going to spend much time on that because if a church needs to be fixed everyone needs to become part of the solution or get another church. Most churches are plenty good enough as they are. And if you go there the church is worth attending – apparently.

When your church is gradually filled with new people the atmosphere rises rapidly and the culture changes in no time flat. All you need is a unified way to get a little uncomfortable and risk talking to some people who don't go to church. Do that often enough and the results will be remarkable.

You need the simplest system possible to get out there and talk to people. This is the simplest system I know of and have ever heard of. If you know a simpler system tell me about it and I will promote it!

One note of explanation as we begin is in order. I have deliberately

ordered the chapters in this book in a way that might seem disjointed. I am imagining that I am sitting with a church leader in a local diner. In my imaginary conversation I am trying to answer questions and objections as they arise in that conversation. Everything does link up but you might not see that in the first pass. This book won't inspire you if I give you all the foundational structure first. And I want you to be inspired. Ready? Fire. Aim! Once you have the basic idea firmly in your mind we can invest in adjusting the aim. You just need to get started.

In a nutshell you – personally and collectively – need a non-threatening way to invite people to church. Then when they do come you need to be friendly. It can't get simpler than that.

Premise #1: Unchurched people are open to your invitation.

Premise #2: You haven't been inviting as many as you could with voice-to-voice personal attention.

Premised #3: If you invite more people more often in more ways you will get more results. The number of people who start to attend your church will outnumber those who no longer attend. Therefore you will grow.

Premise #4: If you get more people attending, over time, many of them will meet the Master. This will happen after they start attending church in addition to those who meet the Master before they engage in church life.

Premise #5: If those new people make friends in your church that are better than their old friends they will keep coming long term.

Now let's move on to look into the application of those premises.



5. Your Basic Questions

Church work is tricky. The church is the very best organism on the planet. It gets things done. It changes people. It molds societies. And yet you may be secretly thinking that doesn't happen in your church. Oh yes it does! Look back and see all those road markers where something good to great happened. Maybe the markers are farther apart than you wish but they are there when you look for them. Your church holds some of the best hope for your community. The potential is awesome. Does that mean you don't fail? Of course not, you fail over and over. Maybe you fail more than you succeed. But your successes vastly outnumber the successes that would have been there in the vacuum if your church didn't exist!

The thing is, you need to find the new sweet spots for tomorrow's road markers. You are building them today but will they last? There are many components to successful endeavours. When you get enough of the potential components working in synergy you gain a firm foundation for a road marker.

You are looking for something that will create progress and significance. The shiny objects hit your inbox hourly. All of them claim to have success built in. But you know that everything won't be possible in your context. You have to choose. How will you choose? Here are some questions for you to ponder.

Question #1: Does it work? You want to know that the method you are going to attempt will get you at least some of the results you were hoping for. In the context of your situation you need to evaluate the potential.

Question #2: Is it simple? Everything is harder than it looks. But as Einstein said "Everything should be made as simple as possible but not simpler." You

have to find an approach that is explainable and simple enough that people will understand. I can't find anything simpler to fill a church with new people than what this book is about to explain for you.

Question #3: Can we do it? Is it possible in your context? It could be that you are working with lethargic people. You may not be sure that a particular approach is possible. All you need is a few people who have the ability to say some simple things. You don't need everyone to make this work. You just need a few good people. Of course, more is better. It takes very little organization to get started. You only need a few people to take ten minutes a week or if you want to grow faster ten minutes a day.

Question #3: Can we afford it? You may not have a pile of money. Advertising can be expensive. For what we are going to talk about, advertising is worth very little. You have all you need right now in your hands or freely available on the *DropBySometime.info* website.

It won't take much. You don't need much paper. You don't need any new technology. You certainly don't need a better preacher, music, building, organizational structure, new programs or special events. The *Drop By Sometime* system is amazingly powerful and it all comes down to 12 words in two steps. It couldn't be easier. The multiplier effect of what we are going to share in this book will radically change your community if you use it. When you find a few to work with who experience the joy of human bonding with one or two others who need what your church has to offer, others will see how easy it is and give it a try. As a few touch a few others the results will begin to add up. If you keep the concepts before people you will see some multiplication in time.

Does it work? The realistic potential is to double attendance in a few years.

Is it simple? The system is built on just 12 words. That's all it takes.

Can you do it? You can start with one person.

Can you afford it? It takes no money at all.

Yes! It works. Yes! It is simple. Yes! You can do it. Yes! You can afford it. So let's get started.



6. The Nine Word Sentence

I always know when someone immediately says, “I’ve got it.” they usually haven’t and I will explain why as we go. This is different and needs careful focus. That will become clear over several chapters.

The nine word sentence is, “I would like to invite you to my church.” This is the core of the *Drop By Sometime* system. It is straightforward and everyone with a voice can use it.

This is how it works. Say those nine words and stop talking twice a week to two different people you run into. You will learn to make that fun and will see results in your church very soon. You don’t have to spend months nurturing a relationship before you start the conversation. Since you aren’t being overbearing with these nine words you won’t be burning bridges. You can always come back at them in a few months with another approach.

It’s fun because you never know what people are going to say. And they say the most interesting things. You will hear what is obviously just a lame excuse. But keep a record because people give very creative excuses. You will hear some profound responses. You will hear pat answers they learned from someone else. You will also hear people tell you of their church experience in the past. You will hear some say a maybe someday after something else is done. You will hear some say nothing.

The interesting thing here is that you don’t actually ask a question with the nine words. What you do is gather some information. The person you are talking to might take your sentence as an invitation but when you look at the words it isn’t an actual invitation.

It is important to understand that unless you have a church trained

to reach out or there is one in your area, it is highly probable that you are the first person to even broach the subject of church with your friend. Many church going people assume that if they take a chance and say the nine words they are going to get an earful about how bad church is. That does happen, in which case you have certainly gathered some information. But usually the basic response will demonstrate that they had never considered church as having any relevance.

What is likely to happen if you say the nine words a hundred times a year? All I can tell you for sure is that you can't even begin to guess. But it breaks down something like this. A portion of the hundred people will say, "Thanks but no thanks. I already have a church." There is some conversation to follow but maybe not an actual invitation. A portion of the list will just give you a flat out, "Don't bother." and that ends the first conversation. But there might be some follow up for later and we will explain later. A portion of the one hundred people will show some modest interest. Another portion will show some enthusiastic interest. How many will be in each category? Well, that depends on your research. Keep track for yourself! You must not quit after five to ten attempts and then conclude you are not good at it. This is about finding the right people not convincing people. You may go through twenty or thirty people before you find three in a row who are interested. Keep at it!

I will hazard some guesses for you. Those who say they have a church might make up half the list. If that were true you would be fighting traffic jams on Sunday mornings! Maybe another one third will come up with creative excuses such as, "I'd love to come to your church but Sunday morning is the time I trim my toe nails."

Now we are down to about twenty people left. This includes those who will teach you new ways to curse at the church and those who are just flat out not interested.

There will likely be five to ten people who actually consider going to church with you. Again, we won't know until the year is up. Maybe six will promise to come to church with you when they get a chance. (Whatever that means!)

Of those half dozen maybe three will actually come out once. If, and only if, your church is friendly one of those will start attending your church on a semi-regular basis.



7. The Three Word Sentence

Once you have a firm grasp on this nine word sentence you will realize it eliminates all that fear you have had bottled up for years! You don't need to know much. You can see all you are really doing is sifting and sorting until you find the few who are ready to respond at the time you reach out to them. Now imagine if everyone in your church said those nine words twice a week. With the ratios we can reasonably project, you would have a church that doubles in size in one year! It truly can be done. So what if it takes five years to double? Would that be a good thing or a bad thing?

Step #1 in the *Drop By Sometime* system is the nine word sentence, "I would like to invite you to my church." There is a big punch in that sentence and we are going to explain that soon. But first, you might be curious about where you go from there. It gets easier.

Step #2 is only used when someone shows interest and we will cover that later in the book in more depth. But for now, this is the three word sentence of Step #2. "Come and see." It doesn't matter what subject of curiosity they raise, you can always simply say, "Come and see!" Inevitably some will ask a question about what your church is like or what it stands for. The best way to deal with that is to take Step #2. When you attempt to disengage the Gospel from the church you break a bond that Jesus himself created. The very best context for people to understand the Gospel is in the church for several reasons we will get to later in the book.

When a person doesn't know what your church is like or what it stands for you are far better off to show them than to tell them. They only need enough information to get them to their first meeting. If they won't risk attending once to check it out, you are bound to confuse them more no matter

what you say. You have many things defined in your mind about your church and you can't pack them all into one conversation. So don't try.

Here is a parallel illustration. Suppose you are a fan of the game of cricket. Further suppose you are a cricket evangelist and want to build up the crowd at your local matches. Where would you begin? "Hey, I'd like to invite you to a cricket match!" When the person says, "Cricket? I don't know much about that game and I don't think I would like it. It seems boring to me." You could go on all day talking about the atmosphere, the field, the uniforms, the players, the wickets and whatever but your friend will be none the wiser. In fact, your description might even make the friend more certain of his hesitancy. "How long is the match?" "What are the other players doing while the one guy is trying to hit the ball?" Things could get complicated and go downhill very quickly. You are just better off to say, "It's too hard to explain. Why not come with me and see for yourself before you form an opinion? I can explain it as the match progresses."

Nobody has ever invited me to a cricket match. How about you? I can recall two people in my life who were devoted to the game. Neither of them invited me to a match. Maybe I would like it. I don't think so at this moment. But if they had asked I would have gone. Wouldn't you go with a friend to check it out?

In the same way, the first step is, "I would like to invite you to my church." It isn't even a question or an invitation. That's the disarming part of its power. And we are going to dissect that one word at a time later. But you now know exactly what to say after the nine words if your contact lights up at all. "Come and see!"

There is nothing to write on the napkin in the restaurant. There is no booklet to go over. Yet, when someone says, "OKayyyyy." you just have to make arrangements to pick them up and take them. Easy.

Try it out this week. And then you will know more about the questions you need the answers to. Most of your questions are about to be answered in the coming pages.



8. The One In a Hundred

The good news is that you can actually win about one in a hundred or maybe more. Ending up with one in a hundred sounds like a really bad idea until you realize that right now you are coming closer to zero because you aren't managing your words to a hundred. You need one simple collective system to use together. The simpler the system the better. The more people using the system the better. You will take courage from each other.

You might actually do better than one in a hundred. How will you find out? Try it for a year! How hard can it be to say nine words twice a week? And you might bear in mind that with some you could go back to them in a few months and test them again.

It is a magnificent success for you to say your nine words and leave the results up to your friend and to the Lord. Think of it as a fact finding mission. That is all you need to do to start. Keep track of what people say when there is a chance you will talk to them again. When you come back a second time much later you can reflect with them on the fact that you remember their first response. There are some great ways to treat this next conversation and we will cover them later. When you remember the response of people it creates a prayer reminder for you to ask the Lord to change their hearts.

You only fail if you fail to try. The ratios are not your primary concern. Your concern must be to do what you can with your trust in the Lord. Later – often much later – you will learn that your sincere words left a life-long impression because you backed them up with prayer. Remember the Holy Spirit wants your friend saved more than you do and will be at work when you are not around.

When you risk saying the nine words you will find the joy quotient

in your life will rise because you have a much richer understanding of your world, the lostness of the people around you and the tremendous benefits you hold dear because of what the Lord has done and is doing for you.

With many people you won't get as far as the three word sentence for a variety of reasons.

For those who claimed they go to church we know some of them are stretching the truth. And they know they are stretching the truth. That gives them something to think about. Why would they lead you astray? Their resistance gives you the opportunity to reflect on the kernel of truth in their perspective. It also gives you the opportunity to fine tune your own approach and to help others in your church when they come across similar objections.

Some people actually do go to a good church already. Think for a moment on that. You don't need to move them from their church to your church but you do need to ask yourself a few questions. "Why didn't I know that person went to a good church?" "Why didn't my friend know I go to a good church?" You might even become the inspiration to help your friend grow that other church across town. Isn't that a blessing? Why make this a competition? We are all on the same team.

For those who give you a negative rant they will wonder about their own words after the fact if you give them a meek response. Often they will come back to you with a further less heated set of observations. Great! You will gather more information.

Now let's look back. Is this really one in a hundred? No, because you have had some amazing and informative conversations that will give you a much richer life. When you give everyone the opportunity to talk about church you are bound to find the few who are ready to respond positively right away. And you will enjoy doing it!

Don't take people too seriously on all this. The reality is that they will not tell you the truth often. Well, at least not the whole truth and nothing but the truth. You see, when people don't want to do something, one excuse will serve just as well as another. You can't control their reaction; you can only control your positive action. You don't have to believe their story; you just have to tell yours.



9. Building Your Church Culture

From the church perspective when you see this system as part of your collective culture it creates power. This power comes because the positive results you are looking for with more people in church is based on the total number of times your church says the nine words.

At two sentences a week it takes an individual a year to get through one hundred people. However, when fifty people are diligent with two sentences a week it takes one week to get to a hundred. So if you have fifty people and they all give it a try, next Sunday you are likely to have up to five newcomers. Now that is results! While most of the people will not get a positive result in any given week, the church will have new people every week who have been invited in the previous week. This is team work. The whole team celebrates when one person scores.

Another factor in play is the synergy created by the multiple invitations. There are overlapping networks with the people that you don't even realize. For example, there are likely several people in your church who get their car serviced in the same shop. They don't all get their car serviced in the same week. However, over a year they see the same person behind the counter. If all the church people say the nine words to that person over a year how many invitations would that be? We will never know. But what we do know is that it is likely to be more than half a dozen.

The conversation doesn't include the name of your church until the person asks. So the generic conversation the first person has might get an "I don't think so." sort of response. But by the third conversation the person behind the counter realizes that there are many people in town who go to church. They are more likely to warm up over time. There is an advertising

maxim that says, “After six the message sticks.” Your team effort will eventually get beyond six if you keep at it.

Always remember that when Jesus sent his disciples out to make disciples, there were people who are ready to follow. That was true then and it is true today. Finding lost sheep is at the heart of what all Christians are called to do. It is not hard to find lost sheep; they are all around us. How far do you have to go to find a lost sheep who is ready to respond? As far as you have to go. How long will it take to find a responsive lost sheep? As long as it takes. What direction should you go to find a responsive lost sheep? The direction that seems to make the most sense. Pray boldly as you move out to find the right person. You must talk to the many before you find the one. The Lord usually won’t give you the name in advance of the one responsive person you are to reach now. Pray for the ones you think of by name and the Holy Spirit will move in some of them without your advance knowledge.

This past week I heard a story of a woman who went to church for the first time two Sundays ago. She had been invited by this one person over and over for a period of eight years. She got so far in the past as to go back to her own church where the Gospel is missing. Two Sundays ago for the first time she attended a church where she heard the Gospel. She admitted it was different. She promised to bring her husband the next week. I always say 50/50 chance. This was one of the wins! He came. I just learned that a few moments ago. Everything was average in a good way but the sound system did quit. His wife reported that she heard him telling his mother on the phone about the service and almost quoted the sermon word for word. Next week? It will become clear in time, won’t it?

The nine words repeated countless times over nearly a decade is what it took to get this far. Imagine what might have been if several people had extended that invitation. Would they have started earlier? We can never know for sure. Will they keep coming and meet the Lord? We don’t know yet.

There may be another story. What about the mother? God knows. Perhaps in time there will be a very happy ending!

When the church exceeds expectations and shows true friendly love more first timers will return. Why wouldn’t they? We will dig into a lot of foundation material as we go but first we need to invest some time learning about church friendliness next.



10. The Friendliness Factor

If you don't know you have a problem you don't realize you need a solution. So before we get to the solution let me agitate the problem a little.

Most churches aren't growing. Those that are, usually are growing with people moving from one less attractive or convenient church to a more attractive or convenient church. Emptying one church in favour of filling another doesn't help the global cause. Our attention must be on moving people from unchurched or dechurched to churched. In a few chapters we are going to talk about some of the fallacies the church has been taught over the last generation about how to grow the Kingdom but first let's think of this as a one person at a time issue.

Often church leaders become upset when told their church is unfriendly because they see friendliness among the people who are attending. Really what is happening is that the people are friendly to each other and not to the newcomer that ventures through their church door. It is always easier to talk with someone you know than make the effort to reach out to someone you don't know. So to be more precise the church is unfriendly to newcomers – especially first time newcomers who don't come by way of someone bringing them. If you ask someone who came recently and stayed with your church if the church is friendly they will tell you it is. But if you ask someone who came recently and walked away you will get a different story. They didn't connect.

A newcomer to church is almost always very nervous and uncertain. They don't know what to expect particularly if they have had no church background to speak of or if their church experience has been entirely different. They feel unsettled and insignificant. Their minds are filled with lots of questions. They don't know who they will meet, where they will sit, if

someone will draw attention to them and embarrass them, if they are dressed appropriately or if they will fit in. Their anxiety is further increased if no one from the church family speaks to them before and after the meeting. After the meeting they slip out and reach the safety of their car in silence. It is offensive to them to be ignored particularly when they have stretched themselves to make the effort to walk through the front door and attend in the first place. Initiating a good conversation with a newcomer in an appealing manner is a skill that must be learned because the people of the church themselves feel awkward initiating conversation until they learn how to do it. They don't know what to say even if they wanted to.

Part of the problem is that it is way too easy to forget to look at the church through the eyes of the newcomer. When we shift the blame and say something like, "They don't need to feel that way because we are really a friendly bunch once you get to know us." we miss the whole point. They aren't going to get to know us unless two things happen. First of all, in the off chance that they do give us a chance, we had better be friendly before they get to know us. That is what *See You Next Week* is about. Most often, a new believer becomes friends with the friends of Jesus before they become friends with Jesus himself.

Research shows that the typical church keeps about one out of ten of its first time attendees. A friendly, loving church with good natural follow up systems keeps one out of three newcomers. If you have most or all the other things in place from the bullet list in chapter 2 you might bump that up to four out of ten. However, it is unrealistic to think you can win them all. So as you think of gaining more people you not only need to put them through the front door once, you need to assure by your church life that many will come back again and again.

In *See You Next Week* you can learn a variety of practical lessons on how to become friendly. It is not difficult. For example, the next chapter is one sample chapter taken from *See You Next Week*. If all you do is inspire your leadership team to live by this simple rule you will change your church almost overnight!



11. Fitting In

Every first time guest in a church does a quick scan of the room and silently asks themselves, “Do I fit in here?” Perhaps there is nothing more awkward to an individual than the perception that they don’t belong. The standard by which they evaluate their answer will depend on many factors.

Some who come from the background of a group that feels they are on the margins of the society will look to see if there are people like them. People from a particular racial background might wonder if they are welcome because of their different skin colour. People from a particular socio-economic group might feel they can’t measure up in terms of the clothing they wear.

A church should be a place for every type of person. Since there are far fewer rich people in the society than poor people it makes sense to encourage people to leave their expensive clothes in the closet. This isn’t a new problem. “My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in. If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, ‘Here’s a good seat for you,’ but say to the poor man, ‘You stand there’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet,’ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:1-4)

The people who lead the meeting will set the tone for what is acceptable in the church. If the vocabulary is unfamiliar newcomers feel alienated. If the tone of speech has a special sort of churchy sound the newcomers will raise an eyebrow. This is difficult to notice for those who have lived in it all their lives. You can ask your newcomers if there was anything that seemed a little strange to them; the frank ones will tell you.

If your church is dominated by a particular age demographic it is difficult to engage other groups. A church that has not grown in some time has aged during that time. Therefore, the people who attend are bound to be older than the society in general. It will vary from place to place but typically the median age will be somewhere in the 40 year old range. The median is the middle. Therefore half the people in your church should be 40 and older and half should be younger than 40 if you are representative of your community.

If you don't care to be representative of your community then you can go for a style to represent the part you want to be like. Take music as an example, if you want to focus your ministry on older people go with a musical style they like. If you care to reach younger people go with a musical style that includes what younger people like. That doesn't mean just tolerate it; it means embrace it. There is nothing quite so compelling as seeing older people playing younger style music and vice versa. Your newcomers will see the platform people as the example of the range of what is acceptable in your church. You aren't going to get the old people to dress in fresh current styles of clothing. They will look ridiculous if they do. By the same token, you are not going to get the young people to look old. Don't even think about it.

To create any shift toward any group of people you want to reach you have to normalize the engagement of that kind of person in what happens on the platform. If you want to reach more children, include more children in the public meetings. If you want to reach a particular ethnic group then get individuals from that group in front of the others. It is hard to shift a church culture one way or another. You can't demand it; you must simply demonstrate it.

What if your church is out of sync with the society in general? Then, you have to do more work on briefing newcomers about what to expect before they arrive. We are going to cover some points in that area later in the book.

Your church isn't perfect and it never will be as long as you are in it! But you can move toward perfection and your church will grow with you. You can believe your church is attractive even though it may seem very familiar to you. Let your friend decide on the answer to the question, "Do I fit in here?" Don't answer it for them. You might be surprised about how comfortable they feel.



12. The 5-10-15-Link Rule

This simple rule can change the atmosphere in your church. And it is not hard to live by. Here's how to become intentional about what you are doing.

When newcomers come in they are likely going to show up just before the meeting starts or even after it begins. At the end they are going to set a record in getting to the parking lot after the meeting because they don't know anybody. When several key people live by this rule that is no longer the natural course of events.

Five is a key element. When you live by this rule, five minutes before the meeting starts and five minutes after the meeting ends you don't talk to anybody you know until you have scanned the zone around you to see if there is someone you don't know. It is so easy to think, "I have to talk to Alice." and ignore that newcomer. Five minutes before every meeting and five minutes after every meeting your first job in every public meeting is to scan the crowd. Make it your pattern not to initiate a conversation with anyone you know if you can see someone you don't know who is not engaged in a conversation with others. If a person is unfamiliar to you seek to start a conversation with them. Your friends who know the rule will understand if you need to excuse yourself from them to talk with somebody.

Ten refers to a symbolic magnetic zone of about ten feet around you. If you are engaged in a conversation with people you need to notice if there is somebody in that area who is not engaged in a conversation, Release yourself, if it is appropriate, from the first conversation and go talk to that person whether they are new or not. If it seems by their body language that they are noticing your original conversation, invite them into the circle of discussion.

Always have your antenna up. You can't allow yourself to be too concerned about your own desire to communicate your message or topic of interest.

Fifteen is really important. You are late if you don't arrive 15 minutes before the starting time and you are leaving early if you don't stay 15 minutes after the close of the meeting. Add on to that if you have a task such as setting up the sound system, then you will need to be a half hour early so that in that important 15 minute window you are not distracted from the people business. Don't pretend to look important and create excuses to avoid people by attending to physical things. Most of us will take those excuses and do busy work if we are not careful. Make a conscious decision that you are there for the people. You may have to work at it to break an old habit.

Make sure everyone you come to church with understands your new rule. They won't understand it if you don't explain it. Encourage them to take on the same approach.

Link is the final element in this rule. When you meet someone new, do your best to link them up with someone who is like them. Link the construction worker to the construction worker, the single mom to the single mom and so on. Your job is to help create the conditions out of which friendships can grow. If that newcomer makes several friends early on they are much more likely to keep coming back and make your church their church home.

Living by this rule will not guarantee that every newcomer/visitor will stick with your church. People come and go. You could have the friendliest church on the earth but they may turn, head out and never come back again. However, many more people will stay and learn to enter your circle of loving relationships if you sensitively give them the best opportunity to do so.



13. Understanding Church Friendliness

It is easy to think that churches don't need help with friendliness because the church has smiling people who genuinely care about others. Their fondness shows as they greet their friends. But from a newcomer's perspective so much is missing. My wife and I have been to dozens of churches where we are not known. We always – no exceptions yet – get in and out without one friendly conversation that goes deeper than a basic smile and hello. We don't avoid people but we don't go out of our way to meet them. And they don't reach out to us either. After decades of visiting one new church after another it is still difficult to get from the car to the seat on the inside. It feels awkward.

Here is a start at understanding the problem. You must distinguish three different elements as you move forward once a newcomer comes.

1. Greeting is important – as in official greeting. This is like the big box store greeter. On the way in a newcomer takes some initial comfort when someone hands them a piece of paper and points them in the right direction. This helps them know things are organized.

2. Ushering is important. This does not necessarily mean showing people to seats like at a wedding. It does mean making sure seats are available. And a simple statement that says the newcomer can sit where they like helps. This is not hard. "Good morning! Have you decided where you would like to sit?" Aisle (escape) seats are for newcomers. Good ushers are proactive. They ensure there is a place for the family of four or five should they all come at once. It is awkward to the newcomer if the usher has to ask people to move over to make room. Getting people to move up and over is a huge challenge.

These are information points to teach your regular people behind the scenes in a tactful manner. Regular attenders won't automatically think of this kind of courtesy.

3. Engaging in conversation is the most important thing. This is the informal friendliness offered by people who don't wear a tag or look like they have an official job to do. Bear in mind that if the conversation starts before the meeting with a newcomer, the person from your church has some time to think about how to move the conversation forward at the end of the meeting. Don't let that newcomer slip away without an attempt to move the relationship forward. This takes skill that must be developed. You have to be bad at it before you get good at it. You didn't learn to ride a bicycle the first time they took the training wheels off.

There are two front tires on your car. Which one would you like to go flat? Neither. You need both.

In church terms, one tire is the welcoming friendly family atmosphere. That tire always has a slow leak and you need to constantly be pumping it up. Do that with *See You Next Week*.

The other tire for your front wheels of the church is the presence of new people. This tire also has a slow leak. That is what we are talking about here. Let's pump it up with the *Drop By Sometime* system.

If your church is typical when you do have someone new come out and you don't know how to be friendly you will have lost your opportunity to see them the second time. It is hard enough to get a newcomer there for the first time but getting them back for the second time is even harder if all you have is a nice program.

At first you may have to shadow newcomers to protect them from the hungry old saints who want to get them fixed right away. Never allow an eager beaver to attempt to correct their theology or lifestyle on any point. The new guest may be way off base but give that newcomer some space or they won't return. Sanctification follows salvation; give them a chance to understand salvation first without feeding all the facts to them at once.

Friendliness is the glue you need to keep them. So we have one more chapter to go on friendliness before we actually get back to the *Drop By Sometime* system.



14. Developing Conversational Depth

Becoming a good conversationalist takes practice. Most of us find it hard to know what to say when we meet someone for the first time. But then some people never develop deep friendships because they don't risk taking conversations forward to the next level of depth. Here is how you do that.

1. Mouth-to-Mouth Level conversations include the normal happenings around us on a superficial level. We talk about weather and current events. If we are shoulder to shoulder with someone in a line at the store we might talk about the specials of the day. If we are sitting beside someone on a plane we might complain about the delay. You don't need to know much about the person you are conversing with to have a Mouth-to-Mouth Level conversation. This is an important level. It is worth getting good at it. In a church context you can talk about simple things like finding a good parking spot.

2. Head-to-Head Level conversations take it a little deeper. This level follows naturally once you find something in common to talk about. In a subsequent chapter I am going to give you a formula to follow to develop conversation at this level. Most people are willing to tell you some things about their life or share news about your community as long as you don't hit any sore spots. So questions such as, "Did you hear they are talking about widening the street?" come quite naturally.

3. Heart-to-Heart Level conversations may take some time to develop. It is unlikely you will get to this level the first time you meet. This is the level when people make themselves somewhat vulnerable to you by telling you where they stand on a subject or how they feel about something deeply. The

Gospel is a message for Heart-to-Heart conversation but you don't need to get to it too quickly unless the other person opens the subject. And even then you need to be aware that they may be testing you by asking a question. Don't lie to them and don't avoid them but don't give them an answer that lets them write you off either.

Engaging people in conversation should start before you ever get to the opening of a meeting. Then you can carry it on after the meeting as you naturally move into a deeper relationship with a new friend.

Be very slow to jump to the Heart-to-Heart Level. Wait until you have permission to do so. A new friend will give you permission by their body language more than their words. They only share what friends share when you have become their friend. They may need to go home and decide if they want to take it to the next level with you.

The key here is to use gentleness in your initiatives. Don't be too direct in your questions until you are sure you are about to ask a safe question. What you think is safe may not be a safe subject to your new friend.

Learn to move through the levels at a pace that is comfortable to your friend. Set your own eagerness aside and let them come along at their own speed.

Don't fall into the trap of waiting until you get this right before you find some new people to talk to. You can't learn the art of fishing in a classroom. There are things to learn about fishing once you have some fish in the net. You can't learn these conversational skills until you have new people to get to know.

Now that we have that briefly covered we can move on to developing a steady stream of newcomers. New friends of your church are only strangers you haven't met yet. Let's move on and learn how to find those new friends.



15. The Nine Words Dissected (Part 1)

It is very important when we deal with unchurched or dechurched people that we start with the right attitude. The beginning of the nine words tells people a lot about you. It doesn't put them on the spot. If you force them to answer a question you might just get to "no" and have no data to save for the next conversation.

"I" starts off with pointing to information about you. When you start with "You should" it sets you up for failure. Nobody really enjoys someone else telling them how to run their life. Start with what is in your heart. "I" says that you are about to say something personal. You will find far less resistance if you talk about yourself and what is in your heart. Most people enjoy it when you disclose something about yourself in a conversation. It lets them know they are special to you as long as you don't use an ego bursting "I" that starts with an exclamation point heralding that your opinion is the one that needs to be heeded. Make sure you start gently with humility.

"Would" is a word that your grammar teacher referred to as a verb form in the subjunctive mood. The subjunctive mood is typically used to express various states of unreality such as wish, emotion, possibility, judgment, opinion, necessity, or action that has not yet occurred. It is future oriented but not taken in any sense as a command. The full verb here is "would invite." It portrays a welcome tentativeness to your position. It may not seem like much but this is very important to set the table for the rest of your sentence and the ensuing conversation. Your hearer won't be evaluating your grammar but they will be hearing your tone and responding accordingly.

"Like to" are words interjected into the middle of your verb that further

soften the sentence. These words expose the desire in your heart. When you use a warm soft tone it opens the filters of the other person. People are far more used to saying “No” than they are to saying “Yes” so you want to be sure you do what you can to get their guard down.

“I would like to ...” doesn’t even imply that there is something for the hearer to do. They haven’t even thought of the word “No” and you are half way to finishing your conversation starter. This part simply exposes that you have a desire in your heart you haven’t declared yet.

You see, if you say, “Would YOU like to ...” at the start, you are setting them up for their standard negative response. Even before you finish that sentence they are accessing their internal database to come up with the appropriate excuse. It is as if they are already formulating an answer when they don’t even know what you are talking about. “Stop right there. No matter what you are asking me to do I have a reason to say ‘No.’” Failure to start a meaningful conversation is almost guaranteed if you start with something you want them to do.

Your objective here is to start a conversation, not a confrontation. If you have a cordial relationship with the person they are bound to be receptive to you. You don’t have to know the person well to get this sentence started. You just have to have their attention.

The last half of the sentence depends on the good start you make with this half. It is simple enough, isn’t it? You don’t have to fear rejection because you aren’t placing demands on them; you are just being a true friend.



16. The Nine Words Dissected (Part 2)

There is no rush as you speak your words. But you might feel some anxiety the first few times you try this. After just a few attempts you will find that these nine words start the most interesting conversations. No matter how the person responds at the end of the sentence you can say to yourself, “Isn’t that interesting!”

Now let’s get to the heart of the matter.

“Invite” is the key word in the sentence. But you have given it a pillow context because you haven’t actually invited anyone to anything. It is almost as if you are talking to a friend as a teenager and saying, “Do you think I should invite her/him out on a date?” You are not even at the date part yet. You don’t get to the date part until you get to the last word in your nine words. And you certainly haven’t mentioned your friend yet. So far, what you have accomplished is starting a heart felt sentence and they don’t even know what you are about to finish with.

“You” is the first word to indicate that this is personal between you and the hearer. That’s nice, isn’t it? You would like to invite your friend to something. So far, that could be a movie or a dog fight. But your contact now knows they are involved in the conversation. This gets their attention for the final climb to the peak!

“To my” lets the friend know that this is really personal whatever it is. The way you say the word “my” is very important. You don’t want to say it in all caps as in “MY” but at the same time you want to let them know you are already in on the final word whatever that is going to be. You see, if you

used the word “a” it would be taken as something that was generic and you weren’t really committed to it. “I would like to invite you to a movie” leaves the actual movie open ended. But this isn’t going to be open ended; you are being very specific. This is not about church in general; it’s about a church in which you take pride and ownership.

“Church” – ahhh finally we get to the point. However, your friend may have no idea what that is in actuality. For example, if I were to say, “I would like to invite you to my lodge.” that would mean nothing to you if you had never been to a lodge meeting. If your friend has no experience what might they think? You have no idea – yet. If they had a bad experience what might they think? You still have no idea. That was then; this is now. An open minded person doesn’t give up on driving a car because once upon a time they owned a lemon.

You might think this is making way too much of nine words. I have learned that it isn’t. It has amazing power to start a conversation. But if you botch even one of the nine words you will diminish the power.

Part of the power is in the unity this affords the church. If people know this sentence like they know the words to the national anthem they will have more confidence to speak it out. When more and more people say the same thing it creates even more confidence and heightens the results. When a friend shares a story on the inside of their experience with a friend on the outside, fellowship abounds.

This approach is as simple as it can get. There is no food to prepare, no curriculum to study and no specific dates or times to work around. These nine words are evergreen in that they are useful in all seasons at any time of the day because on Sunday your church is going to do its thing again. You don’t have to wait for something else to happen first. You don’t have to win their confidence. Just say the words and see what happens next. If they don’t light up with interest you have lost nothing. You can come back and try again later. Doesn’t that sound exciting or at least interesting?



17. The Compelling Three Words

Where you go next with the conversation will depend entirely on their response. How hard can it be? “Come and see!” If they reject the possibility out of hand the conversation is over for now.

You don’t get very far by being pushy. Create a safe place to return to the conversation another day if that is what is called for. And for those who are eager – and definitely you will find eager people – you can move immediately to step two. It just takes three words. “Come and see!”

Evangelism has always been a word loaded with emotion. For some, the primary emotion is negative and often unidentified. It might be fear, distaste, distrust, guilt or something else but it is a yucky feeling. For others there is hope, yearning, warmth, desire and passion. For most Christians the emotion is something in between. But as soon as the word is spoken it evokes a response in most everyone. Usually that response includes the emotions of failure.

It’s not that complicated but it is complex. The essence is that evangelism is an “ism” promoting the evangel.” “Evangel” simply means “Good News” so let me coin the word “Goodnewsing.” The content of the Good News is variously expressed. But at its heart it is bringing the potential of a transaction between a person and God where the person changes their mind and life direction by trusting in Jesus the Christ alone for eternal reformatting, forgiveness of permanent life failure, purpose for living and reformation of their entire human organism into a new creation. There. I tried to use some different words to explain what the Bible calls “new birth” on a few occasions. You might not know how to describe it but you know it when you see it. “Goodnewsing” is bringing the potential of that change, which is exclusively available through Jesus Christ, to someone who hasn’t yet grasped it

personally. What they do with the opportunity isn't the issue for us as true believers; what a true believer does with the opportunity to bring the offer is the issue.

When we isolate the offer from the collective experience of the church we do it a great disservice. I made reference to that fact in the Three Fallacies chapter. While bringing someone to the church isn't bringing them to Christ, it is bringing them to the place where they can be exposed to the well-rounded expression of the whole package of truth the Good News contains – most importantly to the crowd of people who are committed to it. At first these people may look merely like a group of satisfied customers for some religious perspective or experience, but over time it will dawn on the sincere observer that these people really are a different kind of people. They will almost imperceptibly fall in love with the people and their Good News. They will find themselves hungry for “some of that” even though they might not know what “that” is at first. Jesus said it best, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

It is close to impossible for an unregenerate person to come to this new life without seeing it in the context of others who possess it. They need to know this is genuine by seeing it in action in humble believers living the life before them. Don't ever think that living the life doesn't include talking about the life. Give your friend a full access pass to your life so they can see it working in you. If perchance because of the longing in their heart for an “internal soul bath” and fresh start at living they make some form of commitment to Christ without the influence of believers, they most certainly cannot maintain their new direction or perpetuate it without the group experience. No way. Go ahead. Find the exception for me and send me the photo. You can find people who claim the newness but without their oral claim you won't see much, if any, evidence in their lifestyle. It is all superficial talk.

When there is love in the house it gets noticed. If your context is short of the expressions and actions of love, get to work on it. The “Eleven Wills” in *See You Next Week* are a great place to start.

There will be other concerns to talk about and we will give you some help on that but you must always drive towards getting your friend to take the test drive and “Come and see” for themselves.



18. Sliding Into The Nine Words

You may be apprehensive about how to get started towards those nine words. At first you are likely to feel very nervous. The biggest problem isn't with your friend's response. It is the thoughts running through your own head about the potential. The Enemy will show up as "the accuser." (Revelation 12:10) "Who are you to be imposing your religion on a friend?" "Are you crazy? Your friend doesn't want to hear about your church." "Are you so stupid that you would open yourself up to being laughed at?" You have to remind yourself of the truth. Remember that Jesus quoted Scripture when Satan took him on. You should do the same.

All that aside, you do need some ways to slide into the conversation before the nine words. You have to change the subject to get to the nine words; they won't fit in until you do. If you wait for just the right time it may never come. This is your subject to open up, not theirs. You are the fisherman; your friend is the fish.

It is usually not a good time to ask if others are around because your friend might not feel comfortable with the others listening to the conversation. You are best to wait until you are alone. Have this conversation face to face because as you will recall this isn't a black or white issue; this is information gathering on your part. Much of the information you can gather is in the facial expression and body language of your friend. But regardless of these two points you are better to get this done. Don't hide behind your phone unless you have to. Make it a face to face conversation. Ask the Lord to give you the right moment. He will. Guaranteed.

In your personal conversation try this whenever there is a lull. "By the way [name], this might not be [something you are interested in at this

time] [your ‘cup of tea’] but I’ve been thinking of you and it occurs to me that I would like to invite you to my church.” Now start listening.

Another version of that is based on your knowledge or previous discussion, “By the way [name], I know [you are not a religious person (and neither am I)] [you are a very busy person (and so am I)] [you had a bad experience before (and I truly get that)] but I’ve been thinking of you and it occurs to me that I would like to invite you to my church.”

If you have had a relationship with this person for a long time, for example, they have been your next door neighbour for years, here is a good way to start. “By the way [name], I need to apologize to you for something. [You might have noticed that we leave the house at the same time every Sunday morning.] [I know I have mentioned that we go to church before.] I need to ask you to forgive me but it occurs to me that I should have said this to you [a long time] before now. I would like to invite you to my church.”

Even more simple than that is to link two subjects together that don’t really link. “Hi [name], this is a beautiful day, isn’t it? And I would like to invite you to my church.” The word “and” is very powerful when used instead of “but.” For example, “I know you think religion sucks and I would like to invite you to my church” is a great way to confuse and motivate at the same time. One would expect an apologetic stance, “I know you think religion sucks but I would like to invite you to my church anyway.” The first version puts you on offence. And you can slip in all the “because” material you have from your research.

Get started. Make it your aim to identify two people a day to initiate the conversation with. It might take you the whole week to get to the two but if you put it off until tomorrow you may never get to it. Over time you may find that two a day isn’t out of the question for you. Two a day times five days a week times fifty weeks a year equals 500.

Five hundred a year likely equals five or more new people coming to Jesus! That is way more than the joy most people experience in a life time.



19. Nine Words Plus Because (Part 1)

Because is a very powerful word. When you tell people the reason you have made a particular choice or are recommending a choice for them it nudges people in a direction because they want to think they make decisions logically. Notice the use of that powerful word in the previous sentence.

There is a well known study completed by Ellen Langer on using the word “because.” It concerns getting ahead in a line up for a photocopier. Rather than tell the story I will let you Google it. But it demonstrates that using the word “because” has a major influence on how people respond to you.

Unchurched people don’t go to church for reasons that are more emotional than reasonable but they often think otherwise. Their justification for staying away seldom makes sense. That is why it is really useful to build your own set of reasons for church attendance. Church is a good idea, plain and simple. You can use the word “because” as an aid to your nine word sentence.

As you get to know a person you will learn some things they have as real needs in their life. Seldom do people realize that church is the best medicine no matter what the problem. Here is how this works. Say your friend is having health problems. You can say, “I would like to invite you to my church because research shows that people who attend church are healthier.” The predictable response is, “No! You’re joking.” Your next response is, “What if that were true? Why don’t you Google ‘church attendance and health’ to do your own research?” Then you can go home and Google “church attendance and health” and send them the link to a good article. There are hundreds of thousands of links to choose from on that subject. The

same is true for many subjects. Go ahead and try it on the problem that is bothering your friend and see if you can find a link to send them.

Dr. Harold Koenig wrote the book, *Is Religion Good for Your Health? The Effects of Religion on Physical and Mental Health*. Over the years he has documented a positive answer to the question posed in the title from many directions. This is actual scientific research. Many others have conducted similar studies with similar results. Here are some seed ideas for you to research for yourself.

Blood pressure: Church attenders who pray and read the Bible have significantly lower diastolic blood pressure. Those who attend more often have the best results.

Hospitalization: Church attenders are hospitalized less than people who never attend.

Depression: Church attenders are less likely to experience depression and recover faster than the non-religious people. The deeper the faith, the less the depression and the faster the recovery.

Lifestyle: Church attenders have healthier lifestyles.

Immune System: People who attend religious services regularly have stronger immune systems than their less religious counterparts.

Cardiovascular disease and cancer: Religious faith appears to protect the elderly from cardiovascular disease and cancer.

Old Age: Elderly people with personal religious faith have a strong sense of well-being and life satisfaction than their less religious peers.

Longevity: Religious people are both physically healthier into later life and live longer than their non-religious counterparts.

This is not an exhaustive list. It is not based on the opinions of the masses; it is based on actual studies. Church is good for life.

So when your friend says they aren't interested in church attendance, you have something to say! "Oh I'm sorry. I thought you were a person who was interested in [subject]. I thought you might appreciate the tip and go and research the subject for yourself. Just Google 'church attendance and [subject]', then get back to me and tell me what you discovered."



20. Nine Words Plus Because (Part 2)

Good results for church attendance are documented in many realms of health and social science. It is really simple. Get more people in regular church attendance and you change the society for the good. Now with the curating power of the Internet you can find evidence for a wide range of personal and social benefits. People want all the benefits. They don't know that church will help them receive those benefits.

When you use the word "because" at the end of your nine word sentence you have a tool to open up a life changing discussion with a friend. Such an approach may jar them out of their negative emotional connections with church and turn them to the truth because truth is found in Jesus and Jesus is found in church.

There is one hesitation I hear more than any other from church people I talk to who find it difficult to say the nine words. It is that they just don't know how to get the conversation started so they can work the nine words in.

First of all, get this straight; unchurched people are highly unlikely to start this part of the conversation. You will wait a long time for someone to come to you and say something like, "Would you mind if I come to your church with you?" Many wrongly believe that all they have to do is be ready with an answer if someone does ask. It is important that you do have answers. In fact, the Bible specifically commands you to have your answers ready. Here is the passage, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keep-

ing a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Peter 3:15-17) There are so many good points in there. If you don’t live with Jesus as Lord, of course, you will be too embarrassed to start. If you don’t have hope, of course, you have nothing to say. If you don’t speak with gentleness and respect, of course, you will have bad results. If you don’t keep a clear conscience, of course, they will have a reason to attack you. And if you do have a clear conscience, of course, some people are going to speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ.

There can be no question that for some who are not living a godly life, they are not about to say the nine words no matter what. For that part of the crowd it isn’t that they don’t know what to say; it is that they know that if they say it their friend will push back because of their lifestyle hypocrisies. Such carnal believers have deeply limited joy in their lives; they aren’t even open to the unspeakable joy when someone they started the process with truly repents. They miss the party with the angels! “I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.” (Luke 15:7)

On the other hand, when they see you enjoying the ride they might just get on board.

Get your heart right with God. Get your act together with the way you behave. Get your answers prepared. No really. Write them out. Nobody can prepare you other than you. Think through your answers. Practise them in front of the mirror. You are going to need them. After the nine words the cat is out of the bag; you are going to have to say something. After you use the “because” technique, the conversation won’t be finished with your friends. In fact, it will just be starting. You are responsible for you. Jesus said, “But I tell you that everyone will have to give account on the day of judgment for every empty word they have spoken.” (Matthew 12:36) James said, “If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.” (James 4:17) When you link those two verses together you come up with a way to measure your guilt. How many conversations have you had with empty words about everything from the weather to the news? How many of those people need to have someone say the nine words (or some equivalent) to them instead? You are responsible and you know it. So, fix it!



21. The Contacts

It is normal for people to invite the people they know. Those people are likely to be similar in age, economic status, race and lifestyle. You want more people so don't ever send out a message that says a certain type of person won't fit. At the same time, to shift the demographics in a direction, you can meet with the people who fit that description and work a little harder at getting them to invite their contacts. Teach the people of the economic group you want to build to be out on the front lines in inviting others. Ask the people from the other demographic groups to be especially supportive of the efforts of the featured demographic. Specifically, if you want your church to reach younger families, get younger families to invite their friends and encourage those who are older to provide the support and services needed by those young families. Get the support systems in place ahead of the actual need. For example, if you don't have a place for babies, you won't have any babies.

While there are many factors in the decision to move from a non-church person to a church person, there is one that stands head and shoulders above the others.

Will there be friends for my children? Will there be friends for my teenager? Will there be friends for me? People come to church with these questions in their minds. Often the hidden questions include other things. Will you be able to straighten out my wayward teenager? Will you fix my spouse with wandering eyes? Will I find that new relationship I long for?

On average this is how that works out. If a person starts at the church and makes seven friends in six months they stay. After about six months they ask themselves, "Are my new church friends better than my old friends?" If they aren't they slip away to their old friends. And as they go they will give

you a reason that is not the real reason. It will be something like, “I don’t get anything out of the messages any more.” The strange part is that often they think their excuse is original.

You must program to meet this friendship need. The program will include the organized events of the church but it must also extend to the natural and informally developed relationships. So, when you do find a friend to bring with you to church you need to have a strategy to get the friendship chain started. You need others to realize what you are doing and join you in this friendship building task.

Do your best to set this up. Tell your church friends that you hope to have a guest with you this week and you want to introduce the two of them because they have something in common. They might have children at a similar stage in life, work at a similar job, have the same hobby or what have you. At the same time make sure your church friend doesn’t say, “Ohhh! You’re the one! So-and-so told me they would be bringing you and that they wanted to introduce us!” Ouch. I have watched people do this over and over. It ruins everything.

People absolutely hate being processed like in a meat packing plant! Don’t put your friend in a Styrofoam tray and wrap them in plastic! Make sure this is natural, not canned. See if you can engage three friends in your church to pray with you about that newcomer you long to bring because they genuinely care and not because they are on the welcoming team.

As you think about your friend gather information. Think in terms of **FORM**. Find out and care about **Family**. Learn what they do, love and dislike about their **Occupation**. Show some curiosity about what they do for **Recreation**. Dig deep into what makes them tick or their **Motivation**. Let them know in your conversations that you know and care about what concerns them. You can do this at any stage of the process before or after your nine words.

After you get your friend to church once, your job is to get them out twice and so on. You increase the odds if you meet with your friend before the next meeting. Don’t meet to interrogate how they felt about their experience. But it will be a natural topic of conversation so that you now extend your acronym. You actually get to fill in more detail on **FORM-C!** C is for **Church**. Get it?



22. Available People

The more personal the plan the better. The *Drop By Sometime* system puts the focus on the people who already come to your church investing their interest, prayer, time and effort in getting people who are already known to church. There are four kinds of people everyone relates to.

Friends: Everyone has friends with whom they have varying degrees of relationship. Each of these friends ought to be exposed to the opportunity of church in some way. You can be the one to create that opportunity with the person at the check out counter in the store, across the street or hall, at a desk in the office or station on the assembly line. There is a reasonable possibility that person has someone else concerned about their spiritual welfare. It could be one of their old friends from a former life or a relative. You won't know about that person until later, if ever. Perhaps you have had the helpless feeling of having a relative in another town who needs someone to befriend them for a good church. You might even call up the church office of a church in their location and ask if there is anyone who can contact them on behalf of the church. This is always worth a try but often meets with an incomplete response — especially if it is known to your old friend or relative that you put them up to it. In this case, the church is in a position to attempt to create a new friend. However, there is a reasonable probability that there is someone in the neighbourhood, workplace or school who already has a more natural point of contact with that friend of yours. Take courage in the fact that if a person is on your heart that the Holy Spirit has other influences to bring to bear on them and may already have done so.

Relatives: About 20% of the people who are active in your life are blood relatives. There are likely some of them who don't go to church. Probably not all your relatives live in the same town as you. Probably some of them already go to church at your church or another. But if you have a long

lost cousin living near enough to your church you should give them the opportunity to respond to the ministry you love. What is the worst thing that can happen if you give them a chance? The worst thing is that you will have had some practise to build your confidence for others.

Associates: Normally people have associations with others based on their workplace, hobbies, favourite places, clubs, teams, commercial or health care relationships. Those associates are all on your list of people to contact. Not all of them will be favourable to the discussion you want to start – but some will. The number of people who respond positively will depend on how many you talk to. If you talk to ten, even though you hope all ten will be positive, that is rather unlikely. But the thing is you have no idea who will be responsive until after you give all ten the opportunity. Nor will you know how many will be responsive. If one out of ten is responsive that is wonderful. At that rate, the way to find ten responsive people is to talk to one hundred.

Neighbours: You can consider anyone living on your street as a neighbour. If someone lives at 100 Any Street and you live at 150 Any Street you are neighbours even though there are about a dozen residences between you and them on your side of the street. You can probably look up their phone number in online sources and you can certainly ring their doorbell. All you have to say is, “Hi! I’m So-and-So from 150 Any Street?” You will have an immediate connection. And if you have been following closely you know how to start the conversation since it is unexpected.

Those people make up your list of FRANs. All of them deserve your interest in their spiritual welfare. If their house was on fire you would never stand idly by and watch it burn. The hard reality is that their spiritual house is likely on fire and you can sound the warning. No other person on the planet has the same list of FRANs you have. You are the only one with them all in one potential list.



23. The New Advocates

The best advocates for the Christian church are often those who have just discovered salvation and the church. They are full of passion to help others find the same newness of life they have found. So if you are new go ahead and use the twelve word program. You will learn answers to the questions as you go. This is a just-in-time approach. And it works. Don't over complicate it; just use the tools.

If you are a seasoned church veteran you might want to partner with a relative newcomer as they approach a friend. They need your support. But don't be the answer person. "Good question! Come and see!" That is all you need too – just like your rookie partner.

Everyone has a person to the left of them and a person to the right. Whether that be on the street, in the family or at the workplace, everyone rubs shoulders with or bumps into two people who don't have a church home. Think of the first two people and go with the program. Don't become hyper and talk too much. Say less and wait for a response. Take pride in the fact that you opened the conversation. Their response is secondary. You gain confidence every time you try. Go ahead; make your day!

What do friends do? That is a simple question to which the answer seems obvious. However, it seems that sometimes in church the answers are different than in everyday life. Church experience shouldn't require a special tone or vocabulary.

Friends go places where their friends go. Their friends speak normal English (or their native tongue). Yes, their friends may speak with some profanity and about subjects that are disgusting that have no place in your

church. But they probably don't speak that way in front of their four year old, so we know they know how to turn it off when they want to.

You don't need any special terms. I even object to the term pastor. Why? Well where else do you talk that way with people you know or relate to? You don't speak of "Store Manager Joe" or "Catcher Bob." Well you do a little with maybe Doctor, Professor and some other terms. But those terms are by their nature separator terms, not joiner terms. We want people to feel connected so even though "brother" and "sister" portray reality in a church, they are not useful terms to the newcomer.

When you speak of participating in a church meeting why speak of "fellowshipping together" or "worshipping together?" Those terms are accurate but not helpful to someone who doesn't use the terms in their everyday language. I suggest you might want to take a look at that and see if you need to lighten up so that people feel more included.

From time to time I run into a newcomer at church who makes himself look silly by pretending he knows all the lingo. He usually sprinkles the conversation with terms that are designed to make him look spiritual. But as often as not the context for the term used is several degrees off centre. Imagine how much psychic fuel such a person has to expend to attempt to speak in a foreign language they don't really know. Make it easy for them to converse with you without knowing special insider terms.

When a newcomer considers the possibility of attending a church that is a different brand than what they are used to, they feel like they are taking a big risk. They need to feel normal as can be.

When you say, "Drop by sometime." to a friend, you are extending an open invitation without obligations. For example, if a new friend were to take you up on the invitation and knock on your door on a Saturday morning they wouldn't give a whole lot of thought about how to dress or how to speak. They are unlikely to show up in their pyjamas or a suit but would you really care if they wore jeans or shorts? Not likely.

The more ease you create in your approach as you invite people to your church the more likely they are to take you up on the offer.



24. Finding People

You might think it hard to find enough people to talk to. But it isn't hard as long as you don't decide for others what they might or might not be interested in. You probably don't like it when others make decisions about what you will or will not do so don't be guilty of making decisions for your other friends on the outside of church.

Don't just sit there and rack your brain because you will draw a blank. Look in your contact manager and make a list. Look in your phone and make a list. Look in your social media accounts and make a list. Go through a list of surnames and ask yourself, "Who do I know with the last name ____?" Do the same for first names. Go through a list of occupations and ask, "Who do I know who is a ____?" Oh yes, you will have a long list of people you know who ought to be in church and aren't! Don't try to build a list of people who you think are worth talking to. Put everyone on your list. You might start with the most obvious choices when you say your nine words but the others all need your initiative as well.

Don't forget this principle. Your list of people is different than everyone else's because you have a different circle. However, your circles overlap. It is likely that you have someone on your list that is on the list of two or three other people in your church – or at least should be. You might not know a person well but still use the nine words. That person may be the best friend of someone else in your church. When they hear the nine words from that friend you will have already set them up because they will have heard it before. In such circumstances, commonly people say, "Maybe God is trying to tell me something."

Think through each of the people and decide what might be the best door of entry for them. Let's say you are a senior citizen. The obvious list

of people for you will also be senior citizens. So invite them to your church seniors program. If you don't have one start one. Find all the seniors in your church and invite them one at a time to join you in a local restaurant for breakfast or lunch. Don't make this a big announcement in front of the church; make it a personal invitation and get everyone in your church to "yes" or "no." "It depends on how I am feeling that day" is not an answer.

Once you have that new social network all lined up you can add to your nine words, "I would like to invite you out for breakfast with some of my friends from my church."

Lest someone mistake your initiative for an attempt at a palace coup, let the pastor in on your little underground initiative. If your pastor isn't interested in stronger relationships on the inside of your church, you need to fix that.

What works for seniors will work for young couples, middle aged parents of teenagers, singles, disabled people and so on. All you require is about three people to get the momentum started.

Never doubt that great churches all start and grow best with small initiatives. The famous anthropologist, Margaret Mead, after examining people groups around the world said this, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has."

There are people for you to work with. Don't make the mistake of hoping you can gather a large group of people and start big. You need the social glue of voice-to-voice and face-to-face relationships to get things started. If everyone works with the program it will grow very quickly.

Inevitably many people will go for the ride and won't even invite one person to church. Don't worry about that; just keep encouraging them to get in on the blessing. It might take a year before they make their first attempt with the nine words. That is not what you want and so in that sense it is not OK. But if they get to it a year from now that is much better than what will happen if you don't start now!



25. Family Dynamics

People live together in families. A large proportion of those families aren't configured in a way that has been traditionally looked upon as ideal. It helps when you are aware of your friend's family situation and understand some of the difficulties they may face.

The proportions are different in every situation so we won't project the demographic numbers in your part of the world. But the following groupings exist.

There is a portion of the society that has a criminal record. This may be a small percentage but it is significant. Few are willing to talk openly about the crime they were punished for. Their on going sense of guilt is something the enemy uses to convince them they aren't good enough for church.

There are people who have experienced sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse. This is a shockingly large portion of a community. You won't be far off if you presume one out of three women and almost as many men have these debilitating memories.

There is a percentage of people in every community who have thought about suicide in the past year. It is likely you know a few of these. This can be tricky because deeply hurting people can become expert at covering their hurts with a jolly demeanour. Think in terms of between one in five and one in ten.

Secret alcoholism is always a big problem. Within families drunkenness behind close doors may be the secret sin that is destroying home life. For example, if Sunday morning is the time for people to nurse a hangover

they won't willingly give up the drunken stupour of Saturday night so they can be ready for church. This portion of the community is about one in five.

These are a few problems – and there are many more – that make the relationships within families difficult. Some families structure themselves to insulate their secrets from the rest of the world. Some won't let you past the front door to even look at their living conditions let alone delve into the dysfunctions they are hiding from others. You can't change these secrets directly but you can love the family of the individual you are working with as the gatekeeper to that household in such a way that it gives them courage to break out and invite the rest of their household to join them. This may take some time as you can imagine.

A large proportion of the society does not live with a marriage partner. And another large proportion of the society does live with a marriage partner who is unresponsive to spiritual things. Both represent different challenges with some similarities. The basic similarity is that if the adult you are dealing with is to change the pattern and attend church, they must do so without the encouragement of another adult in the home. That is a daunting challenge that requires a great deal of support from outside the family.

Where there are children involved that lone parent has so much extra to do. Find the ways to help that parent get ready so they can change the pattern and bring the whole family to church. Enlist your own children who are friends with the children in that household to encourage and help.

Where there is total aloneness in the household – and that is a lot of people – you can find ways to help your friend. Even something as simple as a Sunday morning wake up call makes a significant difference. Even better if you can take that friend out for breakfast before church. Single people are notoriously bad with nutrition. An empty stomach in the morning is a very bad idea seven days of the week but you can make sure Sunday is different for that single person. Your single friend is more likely to get ready for breakfast for the first time than they are likely to get ready for church so take advantage of that opportunity.



26. Household Salvation

There are several examples in the Bible and many from history that demonstrate that people who come to Christ often do so as a family with most or all members making their individual decision at or about the same time as all the others. We do the society a great disservice when we are not sensitive to this fact.

Make it your ambition to win the whole family to Christ using the power of your church. Even though you are relating to one person in the family, do what you can to extend that friendship to all the others. Know their names and situations. Pray for them all. Show individual interest in the others who are not your primary contact. Keep track of their interests.

The other family members are not going to be supportive of your friend attending church with you if they don't like you. The Gospel does divide families and Jesus promised that would be true. "For I have come to turn 'a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law – a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.'" (Matthew 10:35-36) However, while such divisions are inevitable you don't want to be the cause of the division with your lack of sensitivity to family needs and structures.

Show your interest to the whole family unit. Often it will be the children who encourage their parents to attend church. If you have a positive Sunday program for the children they will often be the ones begging to come back for more.

Small churches aren't big enough to have age graded womb to tomb programming. That doesn't need to be a disadvantage because every family with children and teens can be matched up to a similar family. Use your

homes and share meals together. Make sure you have plenty to keep everyone happily engaged with age appropriate activities. If you need to bring someone in to keep the children entertained so you can have meaningful adult conversation, do so. Think it through.

It is easy to arrange household excursions to go on hikes or favourite sporting events. Picnics aren't new but they are always fun. Hey, Wendy and I went on a picnic outdoors when the temperature was well into negative numbers. Do something memorable like that with your contacts.

Get creative. The more creative you become at making good memories the more you will find that people are open to your lifestyle and the Gospel that makes it work for you.



27. When They Promise to Attend

When you find the person who is interested in joining you for your regular Sunday experience it helps to alleviate their stress by explaining what to expect. Don't forget that you know what you expect but they don't know what you know.

Your friend has many different questions about their first experience in your church. Their questions are based on their previous experience, lack of experience or something they have heard from someone else. The difficulty is that you don't know what they don't know. Here are some of the things you need to brief them on.

Describe to them how to dress. Do so in comparison to something they are familiar with. For example, you might say, "If you are wondering what to wear, just wear [what you would wear to work on a Monday morning] [what you would wear to an ordinary sit down restaurant] [what you might wear on a fancy date]." This of course depends on your context and what is appropriate. But don't make it seem like a negative. Don't say, "You will have to wear a dress or you will feel out of place." Rather say, "Most of the ladies wear a nice dress." if in fact that is the way it is in your church.

Wherever possible plan to bring your friend with you. Take the same bus or drive them in your car. People always feel better when someone is with them. If your friend resists you picking them up it may be because they simply don't want to put you out. However, often it is because they are still tentative about whether or not they will actually show up. They have a different category of commitment for church than they might have for other appointments. "I'm sorry but I had to feed the dog." could seem like a good excuse to them. So you can firm that up by saying, "I will be in your drive-

way at 9:22 am and I will text you that I am there waiting for you. I won't leave without you!"

If the person plans to bring their own car tell them exactly where to park. "The best place is to enter by the lane on the left side of the building and park about five spaces down to the left under the trees." This might not seem obvious but people do wonder which way the car should face and where they will draw the least amount of attention. Explain how many minutes before the starting time is best for them to arrive. However, since people often miss their target time make sure they know you will still be waiting for them for up to twenty minutes after the meeting starts.

Make sure they know when the meeting starts. Concerts and banquets often start a half hour late at secular events; however, movies start on time. But it is general knowledge that there are commercials and trailers before the actual movie begins and a person doesn't feel awkward walking in during those. So you need to be sure they know what to expect about the starting time. Is there a prelude like at a wedding? Is it OK to stand in the aisle and talk to a friend during that prep time?

Explain what will happen when they arrive. Is there a specific seat they are to sit in? Will you show them to a seat? Will they be ushered to a seat similar to a wedding? Are the front rows reserved for certain people like family at a funeral? Should they plan to be quiet and reverent or is there a lot of friendly chatter? Is there water, coffee or tea? Is it OK for them to take their coffee to their seat?

Do you usually start the meeting in a certain way? For example, is there music to sing? Will they feel funny not knowing the words or melody to sing along? How will they know when to stand or sit? Will they have to file to the front to give an offering or participate in something else? Will they be expected to kneel? Are they expected to make a donation? Will anyone make them discuss something in a group, speak out loud, introduce themselves publicly? Do you sit in rows or at tables? How long will the meeting be?

Don't bring any of your own negative perceptions to the discussion. "The preacher is often too long because he speaks for twenty minutes." Rather, "The spoken message is usually a little over an hour and it is really interesting!"



28. Debriefing After Their First Experience

One of the reasons to bring someone with you in your car is that you have an immediate and automatic debriefing session on the way home after the meeting. The ideal for this debrief is to start it during the ride home in the car together. That is not always possible. The next best thing is to have the conversation as soon after the meeting as possible. If your friend comes Sunday morning see if you can take them to lunch or get together Sunday evening. Yes, that fast. It is very important to do the follow up as soon after the meeting as you can. Definitely you want to plan for this before 48 hours has passed because the longer you leave it the more time the enemy will have to snatch the seeds from the soil of their heart.

You don't want to interrogate your friend or make them feel uncomfortable but it is really good to get an immediate response. You definitely don't want to apologize for anything that bothered you but that they might not have noticed. Your friend will likely start the debriefing or show by their facial expression or body language how they felt. If your friend is quiet it might not mean they had a bad time; on the contrary, it might mean they are overwhelmed, challenged, convicted, confused or have some other emotion they themselves are trying to figure out.

Your response will need to be measured to meet them where they are. If they show enthusiasm you can show enthusiasm; if your friend is quiet you need to start where they are.

You might say something as simple as "I really enjoyed that." or "That story about ... really touched me." Those are statements not questions but they evoke a response from the other person to get the conversation roll-

ing. Think in terms of starting with your own impressions rather than asking for their's. That is the easiest way to get feedback. There is nothing bad about asking a simple question in most situations but attempt to form your question so you don't get a "yes" or "no" sort of answer. For example, don't ask, "Did you enjoy that?" Instead ask, "What about that did you find meaningful / inspiring / challenging / interesting etc.?" So for greater certainty, avoid saying, "Did you find that meaningful / inspiring / challenging / interesting etc.?" That will get you to "yes" or "no."

You don't have to pretend you have all the answers. "I don't know." is a perfectly good answer. "I'm not the best person to answer that. Why don't we set up a time to talk about that over the phone / in person because I would like to hear what he/she has to say about that one too!"

It is always useful to say, "That is a really good question." or "Wow! I hadn't thought of that." When the person gives their own opinion and you believe that opinion is false it probably isn't a good time for a debate. You can say, "That is a very interesting perspective I need to think about." Never put them down with something like, "I'm not surprised that you say that because you can't understand until you are a believer like me."

You might be so passionate about your friend coming to Christ that you blurt out something that drives them away. Remember, if you say something that makes them an enemy they won't be your friend. Be very careful to avoid correcting them and telling them what they should think. Put the onus on yourself. "I understand how you could arrive at that conclusion. From my perspective I think it is important to factor in ..." It is not likely your friend will do so but if they complain about something or someone don't be defensive. Just say, "We should work on that, shouldn't we?"

You should only have one thing in mind for now and that is how you are going to get them to the next meeting. There is a sense in which the purpose of every meeting is to get them to the next meeting. Curiosity may be your very best friend – even when the response is negative. "I'm curious to see if you feel the same way after you take a second look because sometimes our first impressions don't tell the whole tale." A negative response is commonly based on one small part of the presentation or meeting. It might even come down to the use of one particular word or sentence that seems offensive. At the next meeting it is likely that your friend will walk away with a more balanced viewpoint.



29. Participation Options

Your Sunday service is probably not your only option. The programs that are publicly available in your church each present a door of entry for newcomers. Here are some principles to keep in mind.

There is never a need to wait until you have a special program designed to share the Gospel. They can get started right in the main stream. There is nothing wrong with an evangelistic home Bible study or something of that nature, however, when the room is full of people who aren't on the inside with you, you lose the dynamic of the love for one another as believers. And you risk them feeling like they have targets on their shirts.

You, in all likelihood, meet on Sunday morning. In some cases there are multiple Sunday options at different times but with the same general purpose. Therefore, that main weekend meeting will always be the prime meeting to invite people to. Your prime meeting could be at another time but the principle remains that you will have one meeting that creates the anchor participation meeting for your church. This will always be the one meeting you think of first when you use your nine words. Probably the people you are talking to with your nine words will automatically think you are talking about Sunday morning because it is traditional.

The obvious places to invite people will always be the meetings you have on a weekly basis. These create the greatest traction because the world has a built in seven day cycle. Yes, that seven day cycle was designed by God so take advantage of it. In reality, only about half the people who call your church their church home will be there once or twice in a given week but the cycle will continue with or without everyone attending.

Some people are more open than others in how they communicate.

Therefore, some people will find the easy door of entry to be a more high touch meeting than the general experience of a low touch Sunday morning. High touch is distinguished by more interaction compared to low touch which is more oriented to observation. High touch people might feel the need for a context where they are invited to express themselves openly in the group. So if you have small groups of some form in your church these high touch type meetings make excellent doors of entry for some. Others simply don't want to get caught revealing much about their inner life. Some will come to high touch meetings and talk but do so only for the purpose of attaining acceptance in the group. Smile and nod. Over time they are likely to settle into a more normal level of interaction.

Monthly meetings for demographic groups are often present in churches. By all means use these as doors of entry as well. For example, some men will come to a men's meeting before they will even venture into a general meeting. When someone rejects your main option you can always say, "I understand. Would you be more open to coming to an XYZ?"

You won't know which door of entry is most appealing if you don't try them all over time.

Commitment follows involvement and not the other way around. One magnetic force to gain engagement in church is to ask people on the outside to help you with some task the church has taken on. Your church might have an annual food drive to help the needy. Don't just ask for the cans of food; ask for volunteers to help you pack the boxes. There are always jobs to do in and around a church. Make sure you don't put a vulnerable sector of the society at risk by allowing the wrong people access. People on the outside are as good with a paint brush as people on the inside. Therefore, when your church has a task oriented event to fix someone's home or weed the garden this is a great opportunity to ask for help. "I would like to invite you to help the people of our church move a needy family this Saturday. Could I interest you in helping with that?" "No? OK, I just thought you would be a great person to ask!"

Do you really need more hands for these work projects? Maybe not. But always think this way. It isn't about getting the job "done"; it is about getting the people "done!"



30. Special Events

Special events have value. But you won't get the traction you hope for without a strong personal dimension of one-on-one contacting.

You must be wise and measure in terms of hour for hour, pound for pound and dollar for dollar. The question is not whether or not there are some results. But given the hours and dollars invested you need to measure how things are working as gateways for new people participating in church. Ultimately you must have a calculation of how many people were moved from hell to heaven based on the efficiency of the efforts.

It takes maybe 1,000 person hours of practice and preparation to do a full Christmas production. The attendance at the event with a reasonable amount of effort at letting outsiders know about the event is usually at least double the regular attendance at church. However, it isn't about the initial appearance of fruit; it is all about the fruit that remains after the set is dismantled and put away. It makes far more sense to simplify the preparation and conduct the event with a total emphasis on inviting people one at a time and then being truly friendly to those who arrive. Even then, the carry over to the following weeks is the critical element to measure.

Consider the time of the actual event. People worry more about remembering their lines and adjusting their costume than they prepare to be available and relaxed and show warmth to newcomers. Generally, the best workers in the church are consumed with the event and its many variables. This leaves the less competent people to be the ones to form the relationships. Further, when "Jesus" has a false beard, he is hard to recognize in the lobby after the play. New people are left to sort out the false persona and the real person.

Consider the time out of regular schedules in people's lives that are dedicated to the stressful elements of pretending they are performers. They might want to be good at this but if they aren't professionals, they aren't – well, professionals. They probably aren't even as good as the people in the local volunteer choir or community theatre troop.

Now don't forget that I am not saying there is no value. People find confidence when they sing, dance or act and get better at it. But that is not what we are measuring. We are focused on measuring how this works in terms of people ultimately finding the Saviour and His church.

Collective evangelistic events are even more problematic. When the famous evangelist and world renowned band show up this has little to do with people making connection with the local church. It makes for an enthusiastic, energy filled atmosphere that will be remarkable to all and even especially to those who are new to such experience. But the carry over when it comes time to follow up yields meagre results on a dollar for dollar basis. It is not uncommon for such events to cost \$1,000 per first time profession of faith. That isn't so bad if you see carry over into church participation. However, church participation with these people is normally less than 5% initially and less than 1% measured a year out. This ends up with somewhere between \$5,000 and \$100,000 per convert. Nobody would suggest that one soul saved isn't worth \$100,000, however, the same dollar investment should yield over 100 new converts who are actually engaged in church when the church takes full control of its destiny and uses the natural processes of relating to people.

The additional benefit is that when a newcomer comes to church they bring their wallet. On average, each convert will give over \$1,000 a year to the church. (Most will give less and many will give more.) Therefore, the acquisition of a new convert costs less than what they bring into church income in the first year. Everything after that is a bonus which can be used as seed money for the next crop.

Here is a suggestion. If you are in a church that just must have its special events with bouncy castles in the park every June, monitor the hours of preparation it takes to create your event. Find a way to shift some of those hours away from the fine points on the preparation to the *Drop By Sometime* system focused on the Sunday following your big event.



31. Advertising

General advertising is normally only noticed by someone who already knows about the product being advertised. It is hard to get someone's attention for the first time. Moving them from attention to interest requires an extra element like the human contact. Desire will only be aroused if something generates some interest. Therefore, a billboard will probably only be noticed by someone from another church or the people who have been approached by your fellow church goers. There will be exceptions but generally not enough to justify the expense of the ad campaign. The main point is that there is no easy way to reach people without having one person use the magnetic force of their face and voice to reach another.

After all is said and done there is one simple principle about growing a church that people seldom grasp. More people in the church have to talk to more people outside the church in more ways more often saying things that are most likely to start a new relationship with people and the church. Inviting people needs to become a habit for every week. Special events or Sundays deserve an intensive effort. It is useful to plan one Sunday of the month as a "Come and See Sunday." That won't make much difference to your friend but it may create some attention among the regular church attenders so that they remember to use their nine words.

Almost every failing church I have ever worked with has fond memories of the good old days. Folks, those good old days weren't as good as the memory of them is. There were trials. Probably you have no idea how bad it was at times. But if your memories are sweet those negative things if ever known are now forgotten. The good days are probably those in front of you if you choose to make it so.

Growing the church isn't the job of the pastor. Well yes, it is because

the shepherd must lead the sheep and he must lead by example. If the pastor isn't willing to do what the sheep should be doing trouble is ahead. But the pastor cannot do the work in place of or on behalf of the sheep.

Some pastors live under the illusion that a church will grow because of their preaching. Not often. And definitely not often enough. If there are a lot of church going people looking for a particular style of church, they might fill the ranks of the one church and empty the other. That isn't church growth. That is like moving five dollars from one pocket to the other and feeling richer for the exercise. Unchurched people aren't walking around town looking for the church where they can hear the best sermon – or best music for that matter. Once they do come the sermons, music and programming have to be acceptable but those things seldom get people there in the first place.

More inside people have to talk to more outside people more often in more ways. That's how this works. So if inside people are in love with the preaching they might be more likely to talk to more outside people about it. It isn't the preaching; it is all about more insiders talking to more outsiders. The same thing goes for any special programming. The more inside people are excited about it the more outside people they will talk to.

If you can get excited about what you do week by week on a regular basis then you are likely to talk to more outside people. You already do something worth doing on Sunday so feature that. This next week is going to be better than last week because last week is gone and will never return.

If you want to find the new residents to your community and encourage them toward your church the most effective means is the Internet. You may be able to get to the first page of a web search with some work by skilled people. But you definitely can get that new resident's attention with Pay Per Click advertising on search engines and social media platforms. This is the first place they are likely to look to find a church. Offer a free resource in exchange for their contact details. Then follow up with useful information for new residents.

The best advertising is always word of mouth. Encourage everyone to say nine words to a person on the left of them and a person on the right. The newer people in your church will probably be the very best at this. They often have more enthusiasm. They have different contacts. They have their own new story to tell to two friends.



32. All Those Questions

You are going to run into many questions as you begin your new journey with twelve words. Once you get the first nine words out and stop talking you are committed to some sort of response after you get a reaction.

At first you don't need to know anything other than the location and the meeting time.

Whatever the question that arises is you can always say, "That's a really good question. And I'm not the best person to answer it so why don't you come and see and we can find someone to answer that question. I'm really interested in a good answer for that too."

When you get a flat out, "I'm not interested in church." your best response is, "OK. I just thought I should ask." And if the person shows any sign of being irritated by you raising the subject you can add, "Did I offend you by raising that subject?" You are gathering information. You aren't selling something. You don't need to start a debate about what is so great about your church compared to their old church. You can never win a friend to your cause by turning them into an enemy combatant!

There is a key issue here for you personally. You will undoubtedly run into plenty of people who have a shelf full of stock objections. Some of them will claim to know how bad church is because they watched an online video. Some of them will cite statistics about how much damage the church has done in some place and time. Some of them will tell you a story of a bad person who attends your church. Others will tell you how churches are full of hypocrites and child molesters.

The key is this. It is not so important that they believe your story as

long as you don't believe theirs. Even when their story has a kernel of truth to it there is no reason for you to cross over to their side since you know that your church has changed lives for the better. Think about that. You can walk into your church on any Sunday morning and from the back of the heads you can point out people and tell a story of how much purpose, hope, peace, love, faith and belonging that person has come to experience since becoming a participant in your church.

There is a great story in the Bible in John 9 about a blind man who was given sight by Jesus. He was bullied by the Pharisees. As the story unfolds the Pharisees say, "We know this man is a sinner." (Always be wary of alleged facts that are simply false.) The now sighted man doesn't get into a debate. He simply says these words made famous to us by the hymn Amazing Grace, "I was blind but now I see!"

The truth is always good enough. Whatever the question, "I don't know." is a legitimate answer. Often it is the best answer if you can say it honestly. Nobody is enamoured with a know-it-all anyway. Just don't fall into the trap of believing their story if you know you were blind but now you see. And if you don't know if you can see then you need to find someone you trust to help you find your way.

Questions should never scare you. Even alternative explanations of how the universe operates should not be a threat. I have an intelligent friend who is on a quest to find the way for humans to reformat life as they near its end so they won't have to face death. Isn't that interesting? I think I like my story better. How about you?



33. Answering Objections (Part 1)

One of the things that keeps church people from reaching out to others is that they don't think they have the answers to all the questions. And they don't know what to say if a question comes up they are unfamiliar with or haven't developed just the right thing to say.

Nothing can be further from the truth. In fact if you are too full of answers you are likely to drive your friends away. Everyone knows that there is nobody on the planet who knows everything they would like to know. It is sad that some people try to pretend they know what they don't know and invent an answer.

The only answer you really need is, "That's a good question. Would you be open to researching the answer with me?" If your friend agrees, then all you need are two good articles to read. You read one and your friend reads the other and then you can compare your notes.

The truth is that the question your friend has which serves as an objection is probably just a way to fog things up. The problem is in the human will not in the lack of answers. One technique you can use is as follows. "Let me see if I have this right. You want to know the answer to this. [If God is such a good God why does he allow evil in the world he created?] That is a really important question. So before we look into that question, can I ask you this? If I can find you a satisfactory answer to that question would you be open to coming to my church?" "Because if you are not willing to accept the answer if I can find a good one I don't know if your question is really what is bothering you."

The Jewish leaders were persecuting Jesus as recorded in John 5. Jesus said, “You study the Scriptures [Old Testament] diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.” (John 5:39-40) They didn’t have a problem with evidence; they had a problem with stubbornness. If that is true with your friend you might not want to say it directly but you can tell then the story about how some people are just stubborn to their own eternal destruction.

The most frequent objections are time or money. These are the quick excuses. (I don’t have the time. The church just wants my money.) Taking a direct attack on these excuses won’t get you much traction. But remembering will help you in the future because it gives you the opportunity to say something like, “I know you might be too busy for this; however it occurs to me that I should check things out with you now to see if anything has changed. And I would like to invite you to my church.” Or you can say something like, “I recall that how the church begs for money is a big concern for you. Could you help me with something? I would like to find out if our church is one of those who is after people’s money. Could we research that together?”

Most of the time the reason a person gives for rejecting the discussion about attending your church is not the real reason in their heart. However, you need to get past the first objection or two to get the individual to disclose their real objection. They might not know their real objection until they start to think about it. They won’t think about it until someone starts the conversation to get them thinking.

Many of the people you talk to will never have thought about attending church. That isn’t any more of an option to most people than attending a dog fight in a dog fighting ring. Even if they might be interested they know that most people frown on the so-called sport. So when you raise the issue the first time they are likely to blow the suggestion off. However, over time their curiosity might rise if as they watch you live they see a higher quality of life with greater joy and less stress. Now don’t fake it; people are pretty good at recognizing a fake. Be the person you claim that Jesus can make one to become.

Your very best answer to any question someone can raise is the quality of your life. Who wouldn’t want to participate in church if it helped make them as happy as you?



34. Answering Objections (Part 2)

Learning about church is a process. Everyone has a different starting point. For example, I have a friend from my teenage years who looks upon our mutual church experience as “not an entirely freeing experience.” Oh how I don’t get that! We went to all the same meetings and overall I had a wonderful time and started to develop amazing freedom because of the love and learning I experienced. Same church; same love; different evaluation. I can only describe my personal story. Others think all churches are like the dying one they saw on the TV news, full of old people trying out some whacky new idea to hit the reset button. It is obviously too little – too late.

When you use the nine words you will uncover a variety of church stories. I often use the nine words with a waitress I have never met before. I have a way of starting the conversation so the nine words don’t just come like a pounce. I can tell you with certainty that more often than not there is a church story out there behind many – perhaps most – people I run into. You will find that true as well. About half the people who even tell you about a conversion experience in their life will also tell you that they gave up on church. The church they gave up on might look bad or not so bad to them now but they are unlikely to return unless someone comes alongside and encourages them to take a second look.

You have no idea what your friend is thinking about church. Stop talking and start listening. Assume this is the beginning of your research, not the end. Listen with your ears, your eyes and your heart. Whatever they say is what they want to say. They need to know you intend to respect them. You don’t need to believe everything they say and you certainly don’t need to cor-

rect their false impressions at this point in the relationship. Be like the doctor with a clipboard gathering the information about the symptoms before you come up with a diagnosis and prescription.

Where the person you are talking to has some church impressions from the past it is helpful to consider some of the general context. Back in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s many churches put a lot of energy into reaching children through various means. Remember the church busing wave? Look around at church buildings and you will see a good number of them that added educational wings during those decades. The church was focused on children. The premise often was that if we could reach the children we could get into the home and reach the parents. In my experience, that didn't work as planned as often as we hoped. Further, when the children got past the stage where the church had age specific programming for them they dropped out of church. With the Sunday School bus they dropped out around age 12-13. With the Youth Program they dropped out at the end of high school. That still is true. However, when these people grew to adulthood and their children started asking "God questions" they looked into returning to church. But they didn't want a boring old-fashioned church. Thus in the 1990s there was a flurry of activity to upgrade things like the church music and to start dress-down Sundays. We thought that if we had drums and electric guitars it would fix everything. How naive! And yet, some did rediscover church because we put in some effort to get them to take a second look. Some Christians started talking about their cool new church and invited some friends. It wasn't the "cool;" it was the invite that made the difference.

Your friend might have a picture of church from somewhere in this distant past of the 1990s but it is unlikely they go back to the ancient 1950s. The younger they are the less likely it is they have ever been to church so they have nothing to compare your church with. They really don't care about your church culture wars. It is way off base to think that changing a few cultural details will make all the difference. I grew up on the KJV Bible and it didn't scar me because of the "thees" and "thous." Today I use the NIV but then they upgraded that one recently too. We ought not waste too much fuel on resisting culture shifts nor explaining our response to them. Your friend will make an evaluation based on what you offer today so don't be overly concerned or self conscious. You have nothing to apologize for if you have Jesus. Just go. Going is much more important than upgrading. But do both.

Generally speaking, time is on your side. Keep track of whatever response you get and come back as necessary with more information.



35. Answering Objections (Part 3)

Sometimes church attenders are gun shy. They are afraid to speak of church for fear of uncovering someone else's negative attitude. Those negative perceptions shouldn't slow you down.

When a person drops out of church they consistently blame the church and not themselves. Perhaps the church squeezed out a clergyman they thought was a good person or didn't get rid of a bad apple. Maybe they left because the church was boring or irrelevant. It could be the person dropped out because they believed the church was out of touch with current cultural reality. More than one person has left the church because they couldn't negotiate a deep discount on the ten commandments. For some reason in every age some think the church should have maybe seven and a half out of ten commandments to follow. When one person leaves they spread their negative message to their children, their family and friends, their co-workers and anyone who might listen. When people talk about church they don't mind making negative comments. It is more rare to hear someone telling their true story of finding hope, meaning, friends and fun at church. You are up against a struggle with your nine words.

When a person is considering buying a car they ask a friend who bought the same car how they like it. That is hardly research with statistical accuracy but that one friend could tip the balance for or against a sale. In the same way, when someone is left pondering potential church attendance they might just talk to a friend or two before they take the chance and cross your threshold. You have to get them to differentiate what others are saying that is negative from the new life in your church. Thus your second step is very

important. “Come and see!” It won’t hurt for them to have a sample taste for themselves.

Commonly, people wonder if the church is predisposed to lurking child molesters. And frankly, sometimes they have a point. Satan does have his strategies. But then such sinners are present anywhere they think they might have access to children. The society doesn’t give up on sports because of a sinful coach here or there and shouldn’t give up on church. However, the church of all places needs to have a clear abuse policy and a proactive monitoring plan to protect vulnerable people.

The same vigilant attitude should apply to accounting procedures to assure that the church handles its money properly. The funds collected must never be in the hands of any one person without the presence of another qualified person so that the possibility of theft is eliminated. All the expenses must have carefully documented paperwork back up.

When your church has careful processes in place you have covered yourself if someone asks. Inevitably when you say your nine words, areas of concern like these will come up in the ensuing discussion. You need to know where to find good answers should a question arise.

Any reasonable person will agree that it is unfair to judge the church you love by the failed church across town. But it is also true that any reasonable person who wonders about such things might need good answers before they are willing even to visit your church. You may never have thought about such things because you know, trust and love the people in your church. But you can be sure the people you want to invite have wondered if your church is like the ones they have heard about.

When you get your friend to your friendly church they will be pleasantly surprised. They will find it interesting and uplifting. They are likely to say, “It isn’t at all like what I expected!” When you ask what they expected they might not be able to define it other than they expected to be unimpressed. Your church is already impressive because the people are warm and accepting; the music is pleasant enough if not rousing or touching; the message is more engaging than you might think because whatever you cover is all new to that newcomer. People like new experiences. You don’t need to apologize for the things that need to be fixed. Let them see your church as it is – warts and all. Your church isn’t at all like those negative perceptions to the one who comes once and considers coming back again and again.



36. Their Present Recipe for Life

For you to reach someone with the Gospel it is always best to know what they are currently resting in for completeness in life. While everyone wants a better life there are many and varied means people attempt to gain that life.

The person who crosses your path giving you the opportunity to say nine words to them is different than all the others. But you can be sure that under their cover story is a longing for something better.

There are several continuum scales to understand that will help you know how to pray. You will be able to guess at where a person is on the scale but only the Lord knows the full reality of their lostness.

Equilibrium: Life might be in a state of flux. Everyone is somewhere between disequilibrium and equilibrium. When life is steady a person experiences less stress. Then when an unexpected setback hits things change. There are many such setbacks. It could be the unexpected loss of employment, the loss of health, a broken relationship or many other things. When you say your nine words to a person who is off kilter they are more likely to consider church and what it could provide.

Satisfaction: Satisfaction is something everyone craves. Often people are dissatisfied with life without fully being able to express why. Dissatisfaction creates an open door for you. But that dissatisfaction could be hiding behind a smile or a new car. You never know completely.

Spirituality: Some people are closed off from considering any changes in life. Others are more open to explore. The majority of people will tell you they are concerned about spiritual things if you ask. They each have their

own definition of spiritual and it usually doesn't include organized religion of any kind. But it couldn't hurt for them to try a first hand evaluation of your brand of organized religion just in case it has some merit. Open people will respond more positively.

Tangibility: Many people rest in tangible solutions. But of course, a new shiny object won't fill the void in the soul. Rich people only want to get richer. Poor people also wish they had more. More things will distract for a while but they never fill the inner person with meaning. Others are willing to consider more intangible solutions to their inner disquiet. When you arrive on the scene apparently less disquieted in spirit they will show more interest in what you claim to be the solution.

Relationships: Some find their hope and purpose in family. These are the same people who worry about the conflict in their family and even the possibility of a family break up. Many naively think that reformatting into another family will solve all their problems. You know differently. You probably know families that have been saved because the family members turned to the Lord and His church. Give people a chance to find the solution.

Church/Religion: The majority of people around you have no real exposure to the Gospel, biblical Christianity or a church where both are found. When you say the nine words to them you open the door to a conversation.

These various scales from negative to positive exist in everyone. However, you don't know which ones carry more weight for any individual. After they come to Christ they will be more likely to tell you what things were like before. In the safety of a church environment they don't have to tell you any more than they want to. Give them the opportunity to experience church for themselves before you scrutinize their lives. They will open up when they are ready. Weekly experience with others in church is a great place for them to get ready.

As you ponder what might be a concern of your friend there are several common spiritual needs to bear in mind. Your friend may not think the church has anything to offer on these fronts but if you can get that friend to try attending once you open the door to them coming back again and again.



37. Their Spiritual Needs

People love to know the truth. They often doubt that anyone is telling them the whole truth but they find the notion of finding truth attractive. When you give them the chance to consider your version of the truth they may well come to believe it is more than just a version but is in fact the truth they have been searching for.

Guilt: The poison of guilt creates an unbearable weight for people. While some might choose to blame their guilty feelings on their upbringing, others will blame their guilt on the failure of having anyone to teach them right from wrong. Release from guilt is a powerful motivator. Forgiveness coming from a person is comforting; forgiveness coming from God is salvation.

This is a desired release that is held in common by people all over the world regardless of their cultural or religious background. They know their amulets and candles don't work but they don't know what does work until they find Jesus. Of course we know that finding Jesus is rather like the worried child finding their parent when lost in the supermarket. It is Jesus who is the prime seeker.

Fear of Judgment: While people don't like to admit it openly, many have a deep seated fear of eternal judgment. When facing the prospect of death the chill of not knowing what they will face when they die keeps some people awake at night and wondering. What if there is a hell to shun and a heaven to gain? That is a good question, isn't it?

Personal Problems: Some people are simply looking for a solution to a specific problem in their life. It could be a recurring nagging problem or something that is new to them. Solutions to so many human needs are found in the out workings of the Gospel in the church. While people want to think of themselves as spiritual they also want to have connection and conversation

with other people to talk through their concerns. It is hard to find answers in a lunchroom or a bar. They have friends to talk about crafts, sports and local gossip. They might even have someone to talk to about politics but they seldom have the spiritual or religious conversations they crave.

Purpose: People are made with yearning power. People strive for something more. They yearn. They might yearn for some competitive victory in a particular sport. They might want to build the world's best new mouse trap or the tallest sky scraper. Many think they have the best invention ever in their mind and will invest all they have to develop it. Yearning is at least as common as laziness. The brain won't choose inactivity; it will consume itself with a game if there is nothing more productive to pay attention to. Perhaps you have a friend who would be open to turning their yearning power into the pursuit of salvation. When you open the conversation with nine words you might be surprised what you learn.

Love: Without a doubt the thing that people want more than any other is love. Everyone craves to be loved. Sadly, most people find artificial means and methods to fulfil this craving. Some find the sexual release of all forms of promiscuity to give them a temporary sense of being loved. It is tragic when you consider what people will give up for twenty minutes of pleasure. God created sex as an expression of love between one man and one woman in marriage. Sex is great glue for a marriage. It is toxic outside of marriage.

Love is found in church. The Bible tells us to love each other over and over. Love is something you do for someone, not just something you feel for someone. The multi-varied expressions of love actions between and among people in church is often outstanding. People sacrifice time and money willingly to help others. This is the guaranteed desire of everyone. They want to be loved. There is no place like the church to find love. Your church already has a good dose of it. Show that love to a friend by inviting them to observe it and then experience it for themselves. There are several kinds of love they are looking for once they come. I explained that in more depth in *See You Next Week*, the companion volume to *Drop By Sometime*.

All these deep spiritual needs are met in Christ. Since you do know it why wouldn't you want to see all the people you rub shoulders with have an opportunity to gain such love for themselves? How could it be possible for you to keep it to yourself? All it takes is nine simple words to get the conversation started.



38. The Long Ramp For the Outsider

From your perspective there is some urgency to getting your friend to attend church where you attend. But if you create the impression that the invitation is to one special event they won't be as likely to think about the possibility once the special event date is past.

The best you have to offer is the regular meetings of your church. Just continue to strive to make this week better than last week and next week better than this week. You don't need to be all that special because what you do week by week is very special already! If you treat it that way, others are more likely to do so.

For most people there is a very long ramp up to the front door of your church. It will take them some time to get their head around the possibility. I remember one lady who had a message re-saved on her home answering system for six months before she darkened the door of the church. Every day she had to skip over that message to find her new messages but she didn't delete it. She expected that one day she would get up the courage to attend. We never knew what was going on until later. But what if that invitation wasn't left on the machine in the first place? You never know which seeds will sprout. Be friendly and give out lots of opportunity for people and over time some will come. Some might even come back when they hear the good things happening in your church from an unexpected source. Never give up or quit.

Since most people take the long road home to church you don't want to use any approach that makes your relationship awkward. Don't turn a friend into an enemy. You will have a most difficult time getting your enemy

to consider the church and the Gospel it preaches. Make it your ambition to understand your friend so that you will know the right things to say and the right times to say them.

“No” doesn’t always mean “Never.” Sometimes what sounds like a firm “No” is actually a brave cover for a secret, “Not yet.” They might be at the point of pondering but not the point of deciding. Perhaps they want to check out other alternatives. Some want to know if this is going to last or if you are just creating a flurry of activity that will go away once you get out of this religious kick phase.

Many people think that the brokenness they are feeling will go away in time. Therefore, their sense that they need God in their life is a temporary feeling that will go away when the current hurt is healed.

It is common for people to think they can fix the problems in their life on their own if they just try hard enough.

This process of attempting to go it alone may take repeated failed attempts before they give up on their own efforts and look outside their present resources to find answers. People are stubborn. They don’t think they need God. They don’t need others because there is no one you can trust. They want to do it their own way. Therefore it may take months or years before a person faces the facts.

Just be there gently checking in on those friends from time to time. It usually isn’t wise to invest too much time in people who aren’t open to listening to anyone – let alone you. When they get to the end of their own resources they need to know they can turn to you. Wait until they are responsive and ready to give up their self will.

They will know you have waited patiently beside them on that long ramp to the front door of your church.



39. The Insider Excuses

It is entertaining to invest far too much time observing the superstars wishing God had gifted us just like them. Shame. The Lord has given all of us what we need to succeed in growing the church.

The main insider excuse to avoid inviting new people is that they are embarrassed about their church. They have been watching far too many videos and hearing too many success stories from the big boys.

Most churches are far better than we fear they are and are very attractive to open unbelievers just as they are. Even a bad day in church is better than a good day at the exercise class, the ball park, the club, the course or the political party meeting. There is no place like your place anywhere near your place so your church must be the place! Don't apologize. Don't expect people to find you because you install a new high tech sign. Then again, don't show disrespect to your message by letting your meeting place run down and look dumpy.

It is foolish to think that style and technology will attract people. It is people who attract people but the people of any church have to try. Too many have fallen prey to the assumption that we have to put on a big show to get results. The thousands of hours invested in preparing some special event are seldom worth it if the key metric is how many new people engage the Gospel in our church. You can get a rush from the number of attendees and then realize that most came from other churches and ate your brownies after the show.

Don't be trapped by the notion that if you get the people of your church cleaned up spiritually, theologically or organizationally that church growth would be more or less automatic. How is that working for you? My advice is quit thinking sequentially on all this. It must always be a both/and

proposition. You must work on all aspects of church health at the same time, not in sequence. If you do show automatic church growth you may be just emptying some other churches or are in a community that is growing and prechurched people are swelling your numbers.

Too many church people come for the “Show” where they should be coming to prepare for the “Go!” Emphasize the mechanisms that create “Go” and relax the emphasis on things to create “Show.” For example, why do people invest so much time in music practices when they neglect time for the “Go?” Advocate both/and, not either/or. Make it your rule that if you want to become a part of the “Show” you have to demonstrate equal emphasis in your life on the “Go.” Oh yes, you will hear stuff like, “That’s not my gift!” Swamp water! It is your responsibility to interact with people around you. As for growing the church people must believe, “If it is to be, it is up to me!” Those are ten little two letter words that can change your church. Overnight. Then you must have simple doable mechanisms for people to use. Thus, the *Drop By Sometime* system is perfect for you.

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:2-6) Nobody should be allowed in your board room who doesn’t live like that and can’t tell stories about their witness on the street. They are not qualified. If you inherited a board room full of passive people make it your intention to get new people in there who will acknowledge their evangelistic responsibility. If you can’t do that, find a church where you aren’t wasting your time.

Certainly there are things to fix about your church. If those things were fixed you probably would get more traction. However, you have the truth. You must find ways to start small with what you have. You must personally start now and become the example for others to follow. You must start right where you are. If you won’t do it now, you won’t likely do it when your building gets the new paint and carpet. If you won’t do it now, you won’t likely do it after one more canned course with the videos of some guru in some idyllic situation and the glossy work books. Start small. Start now. Start here.



40. The Three Fallacies

The term lifestyle evangelism emerged in the 1980s as a reaction to impersonal – even obnoxious – manipulative methods to create conversions. The anchor books for this approach are *Lifestyle Evangelism* by Joe Aldrich (1981) and *Evangelism As a Lifestyle* by Jim Petersen (1985). The seedbed was *The Master Plan of Evangelism* by Robert E. Coleman (1964). I read – even studied – them and learned a great deal from these great books.

However, I have also noticed that as good as these publications are conceptually they didn't take sufficient root in the Christian community to create waves of conversions.

There were other very good resources I learned from back in the day. Another hard hitting book was *What's Gone Wrong With the Harvest?* by James F. Engel. Engel developed something known as the “Engel Scale” which gave some structure to the spiritual decision process. We are going to delve into this later in the book.

All of the books have been re-released many times because they are still relevant. There are, however, fallacies built into the application of all these books. The error is not in the material itself but it is in the application.

Fallacy #1: A pre-existing relationship is an essential foundation for evangelism. Wrong. That certainly isn't consistent with what Jesus taught about taking the Gospel to everyone. It is true that a pre-existing relationship may help but as often as not it doesn't. If after six months into a relationship and a half dozen social events together you get around to broaching the subject of personal faith, your contact can legitimately ask two questions. 1. If this is so important to you why didn't you tell me before now? 2. Is this the

real reason why you became my friend in the first place? Are you just using me?

Fallacy #2: The average person who comes to Christ will do so in a relatively short period of time with minimal exposure to the Gospel – especially if there is a pre-existing relationship with the Gospel presenter. Wrong. If there ever was a day when people already knew what their world view should be and all they needed was a nudge to raise their hand or come forward at a meeting, that day has long passed. Most people don't have a clue unless someone gives it to them. And after their first clue they need time to think about it. We must trust that conviction will rise over time; conviction seldom strikes all at once. Therefore we need an approach that keeps the clues coming. This is why any attempt to hold an evangelistic meeting meets with meager results. Even when you have a series of meetings with an evangelistic course or Bible study you have to get that to migrate over to a longer term relationship where unredeemed people get involved with regenerate people so they can participate, ponder and observe over months, not just weeks. I am fond of saying, "If you can get them coming back to the party, in time they will learn to sing the party tunes!" The simplest way to do that is to get them coming to church. Show them the respect to allow them to see how things work backstage in your church meetings. The play is out there on the street. The meetings of the church are for the actors, not the observers. It will serve you well to let the observers in on the backstage rehearsals you have each Sunday.

Fallacy #3: Evangelism needs to happen on the street, not in the church. Wrong. The application of a key principle taught by Jesus has been left out. In fact, without this element the results are low. This is probably the biggest reason we see such dismal overall results. Jesus taught that people will know we are the real deal when they see us loving each other. Our love for them is secondary. They need to observe Christians in loving relationships with other Christians. They can't see that unless they get to a meeting as an observer where Christians know and love each other. The power of love is compelling. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (John 13:35) The reverse is implied. Everyone will know you aren't my disciples if you don't love one another. When there is love in the house it is a magnetic force that is undeniable. In a loving church newcomers often find themselves crying and even bawling their eyes out as they experience the atmosphere that goes along with people loving each other. They have never seen it before! They find love to be the most compelling force and they want in on it. Who wouldn't?



41. Three Evangelism Elements

There are three interactive elements to this Goodnewsing to think about. Two out of three won't do. And moving too quickly may actually inhibit the process.

1. Presence: There must be human contact among the not-yet-new person and one or more new-birth persons. When only one person is involved there isn't the power the group brings. Even when a few Christians band together to go and join in – or join to help – another grouping of people, the power isn't as great because they cannot legitimately take over the agenda of the group they are moving alongside of. Some churches encourage their people to help with other social service agencies in their community. That is a good idea as long as it doesn't rob the time from the church's agenda to be the distributor of Good News. It is best when a small group of people from one church goes out to help somewhere. However, if the recipients of the group's love see the event or initiative as an attempt to recruit new members, the initiative will be seen as suspect. By all means help out. By all means make new friends. But go easy on the recruitment until you have earned the right to speak up. The church must not be an island with bridges to the community; it must be a collection of people who by their very nature are called out from the community and at the same time remain in the community.

Being "there" "just because" is what people are looking for. When two or three people from the same church demonstrate this altruism it has the potential to get noticed. However, if there isn't more than just the presence the not-yet-new people are likely to be confused.

2. Proclamation: The second interactive element to Goodnewsing is actually saying something that points to the message. This can be an actual Gospel presentation. There are many possible ways to make this presentation. When

it is on a napkin in a restaurant it has value. When it is the distribution of a portion of Scripture or tract it has value. When it is a link to an online video – particularly a personal story video – it has strong value. However, the simplest way to get the message out there is to get the not-yet-new person into a meeting. When you let the church do the talking they are far more open to do the listening you long for.

It drives a newcomer away from church when they run into a lobby tarantula who starts to send out “you should” messages before they are welcome. Leave it to the people on the platform to do the messaging when a newcomer comes to church. Don’t try to create a web to catch them. Un-churched people are much more likely to be receptive to the proclamation from the preacher in the meeting than they are to take it from their friend. Bear in mind that the passion of an average preacher outstrips the measured presentation of a politician. And when they hear the preacher live it has much more power than via any media because it doesn’t come across as a production. The sincerity is more obvious in a live presentation.

3. Persuasion: Without persuasion very few people come to Christ. They won’t hear without someone being sent to them. On the other hand, very few people come to Christ when they perceive that persuasiveness as pressure they don’t want to experience. There are some who are ripe and ready to be persuaded into the Kingdom. They will self declare their openness to persuasion by their facial expressions and posture. They may not actually ask, “What must I do to be saved?” but they will show it when they want someone to explain the Way to them. Be there for them when they ripen. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the needed discernment and sensitivity.

Get them to church where they will experience that draw and develop the readiness to be persuaded. That is the simplest way to get results. Don’t invest too much time, from an evangelism perspective, trying to get results. You can’t create motivation; you can only tap into motivation that is already there. That motivation is the conviction brought on by the work of the Holy Spirit; you can’t manufacture it.

If they are not ready; they are not ready. There are others out there who are more ready. Say less to more people and you will get more results as long as you give them the opportunity to get with the other people who know and experience the answer.



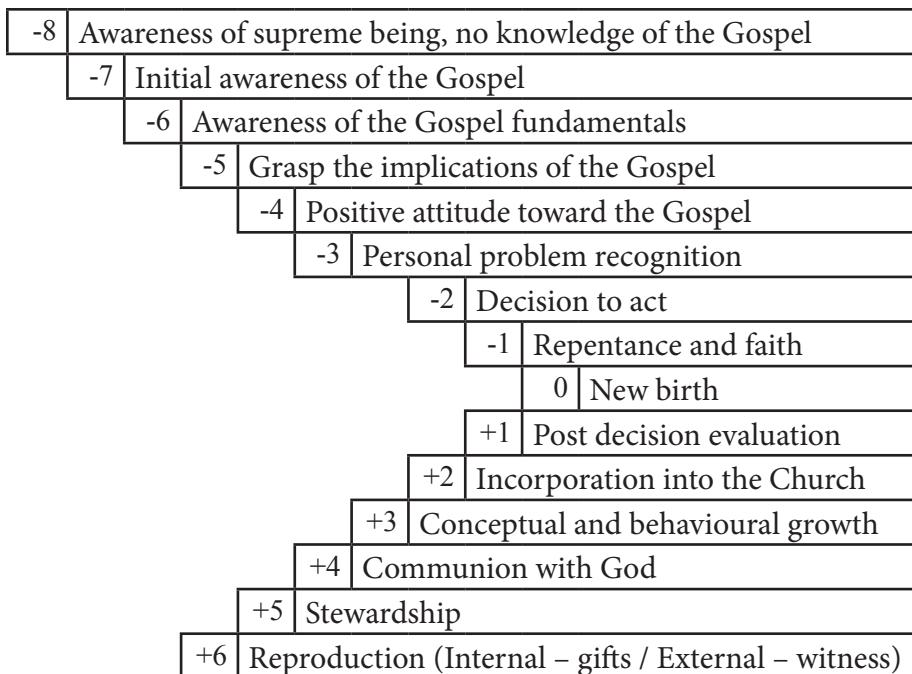
42. The Spiritual Decision Process (Part 1)

There is a process through which everyone goes on their journey to new life in Christ. Each journey is as distinct as the person themselves. Everyone is a one-of-a-kind. However, there are some common factors to consider.

I am indebted to James Engel and his writings. Engel helped me realize that people don't just jump at their first opportunity to meet Jesus personally. However, as useful as Engel's model is, it neglects to place the individual's church involvement into the process soon enough. Technically the model does deal with their actual incorporation into the church as His Body. This assertion (+2 below) presumes that the church is made up of born again people. I believe that is true. However, involvement in the meetings of the church is a different matter. That exposure needs to occur as early as possible. This could be as early as -8 below. The *Drop By Sometime* system advocates getting people exposed to and involved in the main participation meetings of the church. This does not suggest they become part of the governance and service in the church at the start. Nor does it suggest they become true Christians by simply joining with a church.

The assumption in this model is that the Gospel is received outside of the context of the church and church engagement begins after the new birth. Maybe. Not usually. Not productively. You will also see that external witness isn't framed as the initial outworking of becoming a follower of Jesus. But Jesus put it first. "Follow me and I will make you fish for people."

Here is the sequence suggested by Engel starting at -8 and working up to +6.



This approach puts all the eggs in the baskets outside the church. Thus we have means such as Internet, TV, radio, literature, crusades Bible distribution and so on. Or we have a sufficient number of trained personal evangelists to reach out and communicate the Gospel accurately. In this model they are the necessary means to get people to Jesus then, once they receive Christ, we are to attempt to get them to church. Isn't it obvious that doesn't work? Have we not all seen massive evangelistic effort expended to get people saved? When individuals actually respond to the message as presented they seldom get into a church where they grow. They tend to believe they have all they need without the church because they have been given assurance their sins are forgiven.

As radical as this may sound I say, "Stop that right now!" Let the process begin where it should, inside the church meetings. Those meetings don't need to be formatted or geared to those who are unbelievers; they just need to be welcoming to unbelievers. Paul even talks about the unbeliever happening into the church and being convicted if the meeting communicates in a way they can understand. (see 1 Corinthians 14:16) Stop putting so many eggs in the external baskets and get the baskets back in the church.



43. The Spiritual Decision Process (Part 2)

If you want to bake a cake you can't hope it will bake itself while sitting on the counter. All the ingredients may be there but you won't get an edible cake until you put it in the oven. In the same way, get the not-yet-new person into the warm atmosphere of the church and you will see highly productive results.

Taking a pre-born person to a concert with your favourite Christian band is not bad. If a name brand evangelistic organization comes to town to take over the arena for a week, take a friend there. If a new Christian movie is showing buy them a ticket and sit with them. However, you must grasp that even though those contexts are chock full of people who aren't on drugs or going out to get hammered after the show, none of it will be fully understandable to them until they see it in church. Unless you are sitting with the exception, your friend won't say, "I get this; now that I have my ticket punched, may I come to church with you?" If they do make some commitment to something as a result of the meeting, the buzz they get will seem to be all they need. They will likely say they don't need your church because they already took the obligatory steps to get to heaven.

It is impossible to fully accept Jesus without falling in love with that which he loved. "Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless." (Ephesians 5:25-27) Any other Gospel is incomplete.

There is a sense in which all redeemed people form the universal

church but the clear emphasis placed on church in the New Testament is the local churches. The church's city is usually named if not the exact address of the meeting place. But it does come close, "... the church that meets at their house." (Romans 16:5 see also Colossians 4:15) And there were multiple churches dotting the landscape. "The churches in the province of Asia ..." (1 Corinthians 16:9) Churches had to meet in locations that were geographically convenient for regular meetings every week. (see Acts 20:7, 20)

Most attempts at local church evangelism make it far too complicated. They rely on special events that soak up too much oxygen or on programs that require those who claim the gift of evangelism to do all the work. And by the way, that is supposed to be 10% of the people who have the gift of evangelism. Such a premise assumes that 10% of the people will do the work for the other 90%. That is a prescription for burn out on the one side and passivity on the other.

This Engel chart is useful but it isn't inspired, nor can it be tracked in an individual life. As with all systems that break down into bullet point sequences the Engel chart may have some holes. Sometimes people won't neatly fit into one point or the next. Think in terms of a soft focus with the spotlight moving from one point to the next as required while all the other points remain in the peripheral light.

What can be known for sure because it is inspired is this. "They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." (Jeremiah 2:13) "He has also set eternity in the human heart." (Ecclesiastes 3:11) "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." (Luke 19:10) "Your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish." (Matthew 18:14) Therefore, there is no doubt there are winnable people all around you. The Great Commission has not been rescinded and it isn't an unsolvable puzzle where you live. Sometimes you will feel like you are sowing seeds on concrete. But you must sow seeds and reap a harvest because that's your job. "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field." (Luke 10:2) The reason the harvest is meager is that there weren't enough seeds sown yesterday. Sowing and harvesting don't happen in the same season. So get to work; harvest is now!

The spiritual decision process is very real. The place in which that process is best explored is your church, as it is right now.



44. The Spiritual Decision Process (Part 3)

Let's start at Step -8 and consider what Professor Engel outlines. He asserts that all people are aware of a supreme being. Let's back that out a little. Hindus believe in many supreme beings. Followers of some 12 step systems let you define supreme being(s) any way that works for you. Some won't acknowledge there is a supreme being.

Is there such a limit in humanity to all people believing in one supreme being? I don't know about that. I do believe that all people are incurably religious and want to have a touch with something on the other side of the grave. Atheists have to fight to keep a grasp on their faith, thank God.

Engel moves to Step -7 where he inserts initial awareness of the Gospel. Whoa, not so fast. Which comes first the church or the Gospel? It seems to me that in North America there are buildings with specific identifiable architecture that people know as churches. That by no means has much to do with the awareness of the Gospel. A mosque that is architecturally identifiable doesn't guarantee that a passerby knows much about the pillars of Islam or if indeed there are pillars in Islam. Would I be welcome at the Gurdwara down the street from me? How about the gigantic new Polish Catholic Church? Or the Hindu Temple being built right beside it? That is my world here in Brampton Ontario. I don't think the non-participants know much about any of this. However, they do know there are local expressions of religion represented by distinct buildings and sandwich board signs outside of schools on Sunday mornings.

I'm not going to renumber the chart. But doesn't "bunch-of-people-expressing-some-sort-of-religion" fit in there first? And if you scan through

your own experience of religion or church of any kind, my best guess is that you can count on one hand the number of times in your life that anyone has invited you to any one of them – even if you have several fingers cut off! Can you spell o-p-p-o-r-t-u-n-i-t-y?

Here comes a digression. In a conversation not so long ago as I was writing the book *The Complete Man*, I engaged a lady in conversation in the park to research what she thought it took to make a complete man. She told me she didn't think there was such a thing. I told her I knew where she could find a complete man. Her ears perked up like a pit bull with the smell of fresh meet in her nostrils. She eagerly said, "Where?!" I said, "In a church." She said, "Oh god no, I'm an atheist." It didn't seem appropriate for me to pursue the conversation very far so I walked away praying that some woman from my church would give her the nine words. There is a high probability that if I had explored her personal network of about a hundred people who would come to her wedding or funeral that I could have found that woman from my church with a relationship to her. I left her in the hands of the Holy Spirit and continue to pray that the woman from our church in her network would be obedient to the Holy Spirit's prompting. Maybe someday I will hear the story of the woman who came to Jesus with a first step of a friendly conversation with an old guy in a park. It happens.

I would like you to get people in there at the ground floor. Get as many people as possible to stew in their own juice somewhere between -9 (off the chart somewhere) until they muddle it through as far as grace will take them. It won't happen all at once. If your church has some process on the inside as a bolt-on evangelism program for those on the journey between -7 and -1 get your friend to attend if they will take that option. That being said, some who will eventually come to Christ would much rather just hide in the crowd for a while. So let them. Put your effort into getting them to the next meeting. Remember, when you have a friend who comes once your job is to get them there twice. Clear the path for them. (You do have built in "babysitting" for their kids, don't you? Oh, you might call that Sunday School. I'm good with that.) Their spouse works shift work and they don't have a ride? You can solve that, right? They have chores they usually do on Sunday morning? You can drop by Saturday to cut the grass for them, can't you?

It is a process. Don't become a theologian parsing the steps. Become a practitioner helping people move through the process.



45. The Practical Plan

Many churches are in the doldrums and yours could be one of them. So you need a plan to get more inside people talking to more outside people to get more people from the outside to join you on the inside! Follow a plan.

Action Item #1: Enlist three people. Put a copy of this book in the hands of three people on the inside who you think are most likely to get excited about a two step program with twelve words. Agree on a deadline for the time they will have this read completely and carefully.

Action Item #2: Start a prayer focus. After they have read part of the book ask them to join you in praying about implementing this program. You don't need a different program. You don't need a better program. You don't need fifty people each with their own program; you need three to five people all pulling together on one program.

Action Item #3: Become the leader by example. If your three friends agree with you about prayer ask them to pray every day for you because you plan to use the nine word sentence every day for five days and test the results. But first you need them to pray for you that you will do what you promise to do. And face it; you are probably too proud not to do it and have to report your failure.

Action Item #4: Create a list of ten people. Think of ten people to use your nine words on over the period of one week because next week you are going for ninety words out of your mouth. Don't worry you can leave the results to the Lord.

Action Item #5: Pray by name. Give the list of ten people to each of your

three friends and ask them to pray for these people by name. You will want to share a little about the profile you have developed for them as well. You might want to share any social media links you have for them. A picture is worth a thousand words. Keep this initiative confidential lest your friends discover they are on a “hit list.”

Action Item #6: Execute your blitz week. Report to your three friends every day when you have a conversation with an outsider. When one outside person promises to come, remember you have about a 50/50 chance of them coming. And don’t forget to up your chances by promising to pick them up. You will have stories to tell after you talk to ten outside people. So tell your stories to your three friends. You will probably start to glow with evangelistic fire.

Action Item #7: Invite participation. Invite your three friends to develop their own list of ten people on the outside. Promise that you will pray for them as well. (They already know some of what is coming next!)

Action Item #8: Preparation week. After a week of development of their lists encourage them to try out the nine word sentence on them. They will be chicken just like you were! But your example will inspire them.

Action Item #9: Next generation. Ask your three people to find three people to read the book and pray for you.

Action Item #10: Rinse and repeat. Rinse and repeat.

If you keep in touch with your inside friends on this about half of what is promised will get done. Don’t be discouraged about the half that doesn’t get done; just rejoice that people try at least a little.

Do you see how this multiplies – at least in theory? It starts with you and then there are four. Then it expands to thirteen because each of your three find three. If each says nine words ten times then you will have 130 conversations started. Perhaps three to ten of those people will come to your church once. If you are a typical church of fifty in attendance you have the probability of about five new people starting to attend your church. Each of them represents a household and so others will come with them. In the period of about a month you can see that attendance of 50 grow to 60. Since the success will create more momentum, in the period of a year you have the potential of doubling your church without any big fanfare. You can do it. Will you?



46. Especially for Church Leaders

Leading a church is a tough job because the whole organism is based on volunteers. Often business people scoff at pastors because they don't provide the leadership they should. Sometimes they have a good point. However, there is a far bigger story here.

Volunteers are hard to control. Employees are much easier. People comply with the boss's wishes because the boss signs the front of the pay cheque and they get to sign the back. When the boss gathers the employees together and announces that the company is taking a bold new direction the employees get excited – they have to!

Unifying vision in a church can never rise off the board room table as much as some might think to the contrary. Policies never develop a church; they may maintain the church but even that is an arduous task because people are going to do what they are going to do. The paper doesn't change wills. To lead people in the true sense you have to get them to change their mind.

Changing minds is a science and an art. And from the Christian perspective it is the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time the Holy Spirit chooses to change people using the activity and influence of other people.

If you want to change your church you desire a truly noble task. The best tools to change the church are the tools generated by the human voice. It is the words, the images and the tones of the human personality that God uses. The common word today is "passion" because people are not looking as much for ideas to believe in as they are for people with those ideas they can follow. To change a church the leaders must be the passionate examples of the change they wish to see in others. One cannot demand change in others

until one is prepared to be the front runner in attempting the very change they want in others.

Pastors take courage when they hear others spreading the vision in their own words. A pastor can't make much difference in a church until he has a solid group of people around him who are predisposed to working the plan. Pastors don't need people to critique the plan or even create the plan so much as they need people to get involved in the imperfect plan as it is.

The practical plan of chapter 44 will fail to work if you fail to work it. Don't over complicate it; just do it! Then tell your stories to one another. Sometimes you will embarrass yourself. So have a good laugh at your expense. What is the harm in that?

As a church leader at any level you can provide the sizzle by talking it up. Silence is deadly. Do I hear an "Amen!" now and again? Do I see your heads bobbing in agreement? Do I see smiles on your faces? Do I see you taking notes? Do I see you befriending the people standing by themselves? Do I hear you pray out loud from the bottom of your heart?

You can become the change you want to see in others. Don't just complain about what isn't working. Get out there and make this plan work. If you do you will be amazed at how other things start to gain momentum as well.



47. Especially For Pastors

Pastors typically feel inadequate in two key areas. They don't like fund raising. But they are the church's primary fund raiser whether they like it or not. That doesn't mean they have to screw all the nuts and bolts together but they do have to be the inspirational leader and example. The pastor must be an example of sacrificial giving before others will get with the program.

The second area of inadequacy runs parallel to fund raising. The typical pastor feels inadequate as an evangelist. Pastors usually believe others are won by friendship or lifestyle evangelism. However, they invest less than two hours a week on average building relationships they hope one day will turn to evangelism. It is clear that efforts in building friendship are like efforts at ripening fruit. You can fertilize the tree but the fruit will ripen in its own good time. We are not called to spread fertilizer; we are called to reap a harvest. The pastor must set the pace in harvesting efforts. Harvesting effort is the issue; harvesting results are up to the application of wise methodology and the Lord of the harvest. There is always a pre-ripened harvest somewhere and the pastor must be at the lead in finding and harvesting it.

Pastors have an even more insulated life than the rest of their congregation because they spend almost all the time they have with people in the church. That is just the way it is. However, they do go out for lunch with people from their church and must always be an example of working up to the nine word sentence. Some conversations get there; some don't. Some conversations get to the three word sentence. And sometimes that waitress will come and visit the church. When you use all the tools provided here it puts more wait staff in church plain and simple. Pastors must use times like this to exhibit the behaviour they expect of others.

The leaders of any group in the church must by their lifestyle be

those who say the nine words frequently. If they don't they are not leading in the key area you need them to lead — harvesting activity. There should never be a person on a church board who doesn't have regular harvesting activity stories to tell. If a person can't say nine words to two different people twice a week they aren't being an example.

Since this may be foreign territory for some, when you lead this way you will get resistance. Leaders find a way over, around, under and through resistance walls. When people are weak they need help. So help that board member. When they mention they are taking their car in to get serviced ask if you can go with them and you do the nine word routine with the service clerk on your friend's behalf. If you are a small group leader in your church and you have people in your group who don't know what to do with others in their workplace, see if you can drop in on them at their workplace and have them introduce you to the person sitting at the desk on the left of them and the desk to the right. You know what to do next with the conversation – I hope!

Insist that the people you work with in your church are those who faithfully execute the nine word sentence. Expect that they will set a target of two a week unless you are in some stage of a planned and concentrated run.

Track your own activity on paper or on your mobile device. Track the behaviour of others in the same way. When your church friends see you coming they ought to be expecting that you will ask them for a report. When that report is that they did nothing, as it often will be, you must show your grief and support to help your friend get out of the gate. Strategize with them the kind of support they need from you. Pray with them then and there that together you will execute that plan.

Make regular public statements about the importance of working the unified plan. If you are the preacher work that into the sermons and not just the announcements. Tell your personal stories in a cloaked way so that nobody's confidentiality will be compromised.

Since you care about the lost you will do it! You will use this plan or find a better one. And the Lord will abundantly bless your church because you do.



48. Synergy

Synergy is the interaction or cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or other agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. When you want the combined effect to be greater than the sum of separate efforts you have to plan for it.

You amplify the benefits of the *Drop By Sometime* system when everyone knows about it and is committed to it. You might have to start small with you and a few friends. But in time you will see the momentum build if the energy of the system is in every program and plan of the church. Progress is what you need. New people in the church create that sense of progress. And new people are often the ones to bring even more people. You just have to get things started.

Once you have a start you are ready for synergy. Engage the oldest and the youngest and everyone in between. In an ideal world the energy should flow from the oldest to the youngest so you might want to start with the oldest members of your church. They will be more restricted in their mobility and in the network over which they have influence. Their peers will be some of the most resistant people in the society. However older people are a good place to start if you can. Some of them will remember a day when evangelistic fervour permeated their own world. Listen with fondness to their stories. They might want to replicate the programs of yesteryear but will gladly agree that the more important thing is to regain the passion. Whereas they may not have the people to talk to they once did there are two other things they do have. They probably have other family members and friends of those families who need a church home. They do have the time to pray for others who have hungry networks.

Never minimize the power of prayer. In a research project we proved

that when the unchurched target people were prayed for by name by people who didn't even know them personally, they were twice as likely to come to church. Did you get that? If you can get some people to pray by name for the people you are concerned about it is highly likely that you double the chances of them coming to church with you. Find a prayer partner and get synergy on your side.

Get every department of your church working on this and you will have synergy. Every teenager has friends and schoolmates and all of them live in homes with others. You never know who is behind those doors in the house of that teenager. It could be someone in the next department over right where you work. Your best friend might just be the synergy of two people in one house hearing the same nine words in one week.

The third time a person hears the nine words asked by three different people at unrelated times it breaks through their awareness threshold. They might even say, "Maybe God is trying to tell me something!" Well, yes he is, isn't he? So create the conditions where the word is all over town so that it creates a buzz. One neighbour will talk to another about their conversation with someone from your church and the second neighbour will be astounded because they too have had such a recent conversation.

Get out there and get started. You never know what might happen because you take simple steps to obey the Great Commission. Get synergy. Your joy depends on it. Get joyful!



49. Fishing School

Since the Gospel is the greatest good news ever it stands to reason that when we get it out there in the right way it changes the world. With every job there is a right way to do it and a wrong way to do it. If the Gospel is not gaining traction in your world then maybe you need to humbly look for a new approach with a new attitude. Maybe, just maybe, you have been doing the job the wrong way.

Every true believer believes in evangelism. “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” (Matthew 4:19) He said that initially to fishermen. They were commercial fishermen. They weren’t sport fishermen. This isn’t about sport; this is about work. And we believe that Jesus intended that instruction for the rest of us as well. If you follow you fish. If you don’t fish you aren’t following. Simple truth. Bear in mind that this is commercial fishing. Every day in commercial fishing both then and now isn’t a good day. There is much to contend with. But it is certain the fish don’t jump in the boat by themselves.

The Good News is that the Lord of the harvest has ordained that we get to fish! When we aren’t fishing we don’t get the benefits of the Good News in our lives. When churches concentrate on edification without evangelism they aren’t in the boat with Jesus. The moment we come to Christ we have all the equipment we need to fish. It doesn’t take a college degree or even a course. I guess, it doesn’t even take this short book if our hearts are right with God.

When the church is fishing the world is watching from the dock. When the church doesn’t fish the world loses interest. It is also true that when the church fishes it stirs things up. There may be some controversy when we start seeing results. Expect some conflict. And expect some positive results.

The results in New Testament times were linked to fishing effort. People do notice today if and when Christians fish. "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus." (Acts 4:13) The courage to fish will still bring astonishing results.

People need to note that we too have been with Jesus. Paul wrote that when we are in step with the Spirit we are characterized by beautiful fruit. (see Galatians 5:22-25) This is the fruit people want to see. Fruit in the life of every believer is directly connected with their effort at fishing. There is nothing that motivates change in a Christian's life like fishing. All the fullness of God shows through us when we fish.

Every church needs to have specific plans and systems in place to fish. I challenge you to look at that policy driven church and find fishing in their policy manual. In most church minute books you will find motions on everything from new carpet to new programs to new staff to new coffee machines but you are hard pressed to find minutes on how the church intends to improve its fishing. And yet every commercial fisherman is constantly studying the habits of the fish and the improvement of their fishing methods and equipment. Every church to be truly vibrant must have a fishing plan that is constantly evolving toward getting more and more fish in the boat.

A unified plan is all you need. A simple twelve word two step plan is an efficient plan. Expect all the people to join you in that plan. Churches tend to squabble when they don't have a unified fishing plan. To change the analogy, those in a tug of war need both hands on the rope. They can't point fingers at how someone else needs to pull harder if they are onlookers or only have one hand on the rope. Everyone needs to know that if they want to talk about something that is going wrong in the church at some point in the conversation it is going to turn back to the fishing plan.

If you want more joy, peace and love in your church get more people talking about their fishing stories. When you hear how hard people are on the outside it softens the hearts of those on the inside. Grief about lost people that shows itself in tears in a prayer meeting tends to get people forgetting about the minor details. Sitting around listening to the same guilt producing message over and over doesn't inspire change; that is like a smelly locker room full of players grousing about the coach – when he isn't there. Comfort, unity, anticipation and fun are the result of great fishing trips together. Go fishing!



50. The Rest of The Story

We started this exploration together with a small piece of my personal story. You may have noticed that I don't include many stories as I write. Some people like that; others not so much.

I know that if I add the stories to illustrate every point it will more than triple the size of the book. I also know that people only like long books when they are novels. I like to keep to the facts and this is a disadvantage to those who are motivated by the stories but an advantage to action-oriented leaders.

You may recall some of the things I revealed about myself. But here are some more facts. I decided as a young man in ministry that I would rather be a king maker than a king. Therefore I have given my life to supporting others in ministry to the point that few know my name. For the cause of Christ and in the time honoured tradition of authors using ghost writers, most of what I have had to say isn't under my own name. I have written about a dozen books.

During much of my ministry I have pastored churches while maintaining active coaching, consulting and writing activities. I know that if I can impact a few deeply enough that they in turn impact a few the multiplier effect will reach deep into eternity. The downside of that approach is that sometimes people don't take you seriously. They want to know if you can actually deliver in the real world, not just on the page and in the seminars.

Well when I was challenged a few years ago to help a church that demonstrated they were ready to be helped, Wendy and I knew we had to obey the call.

The church is over ninety years old. The building is old and in a downtown location. There is no off street parking. The auditorium is disjointed and on the second floor nineteen steps up from the street. The lobby is almost non existent. The building is in desperate need of a rebuild. There have been six major renovations since the first phase was built in 1922. And yes it is still all there as part of the conglomeration.

The church had been on a steady attendance slide for over a decade and was on a trajectory to shut down in a decade. One pastor after another had moved on, not knowing what to do next.

I had been of the school of thought that it took years to turn a church around. I no longer believe that. I now know that when people know where the “sweet spot” is and are willing to try, any church can be renewed in four to six months.

We didn’t change the programs. They were good enough. One exception was that we finally encouraged each other into a very productive set of small groups the church had been talking about starting for years. Most adults in the church now belong to such a “Community Group.”

We didn’t change the music. It was already pretty good. We didn’t do much with the building. We didn’t do any advertising. We didn’t run any special events – in fact we cut back on that. We used a rotation of preachers. So I didn’t do all the preaching.

What changed?

The number of people calling the church their church home doubled in two years. The attendance didn’t grow by that amount but it is up quite substantially. On a normal Sunday the auditorium is quite full now. Very few of the new people came from other churches. There have been a few dozen baptisms. The new pastor is carrying on in the same positive direction. He was too wise to accept the call if he hadn’t seen this vibrant church first hand.

What is different today? Nine words. Three words. 5-10-15-Link.

And the good hand of our God. Praise to Him alone!

More Help?

Call to set up a time for a personal or group consultation to discuss how to enhance your church health or implement a growth strategy for your church.

Any church that wants permanent turn around can achieve it in four to six months if they are willing to take the correct simple steps.

I can help you get that change started.

I take on a limited number of consulting relationships with the a few churches. This process will probably cost less than a part time secretary for a year but will reap huge benefits in less time. Some subsidy may be available in certain circumstances.

The change must start with you.

Ask about the cost of a one day and one week intensive training in the beautiful historic village of Churchville on the banks of the Credit River in the heart of the Greater Toronto area. Churchville is only 15 minutes from Toronto International Airport.

Call me today to have an initial heart-to-heart talk for one half hour at no cost to you. The call will finish with exact recommendations to get you kick started with or without a consulting relationship.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary V Carter".

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