

POY!
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Evangelist's Distinct Role in Pioneer Fields

In a church planting movement, a believer with the evangelist's gift must enable others to evangelize effectively, too, witnessing in the power of the Holy Spirit, rather than relying on special meetings or visiting celebrity evangelists. These may impart interest and impetus, and bring many to Christ, but they cannot sustain a movement. To do so, an evangelist in a pioneer field helps new believers do the following:

Evangelism Essentials

1. Relate clearly the essential gospel truths.
Tell the stories in an interesting, compelling way that people can repeat and pass on to others, of Jesus' *life* (His miracles, goodness and liberating teaching), his sacrificial *death*, His life-giving *resurrection*, and the need to repent and believe to receive forgiveness and eternal life.

Do not approach these truths from a philosophical or purely theological viewpoint, but rather from a historical viewpoint, simply recounting what happened. To work in another culture, you may have to lay a foundation first for belief in the supremely powerful and holy God who must punish all evil; many Old Testament stories enable you to do this.
2. Call people to repent and trust Jesus for eternal salvation, rather than simply to make a "decision" for Him. The apostles never asked for decisions, and that approach is often futile.
3. Gather those who receive Christ into new churches at once.
Count converts *after* they have been added to the church by baptism (Acts 2:41-42). Start clusters of closely-knit churches rather than a few isolated, independent congregations.
4. Mobilize "mother" churches.
Each new church should make the commitment from the beginning, to reproduce daughter churches. The evangelists are "midwives" that help "mother" churches reproduce as soon as possible, as seen in Acts.
5. Aim to reach entire families, starting first with the heads of households when possible.
Many men respond readily if you enabled them to repeat key Bible stories or verses to their families.
6. Experiment creatively with different evangelism methods.
Do this when the Holy Spirit is not working through the methods currently in use. Investigate methods used in similar cultures.
7. Use your gift of evangelism in harmony with other gifts and ministries.
Especially during the first worship meetings, it is crucial to work closely with whomever gives pastoral care to new believers, so that they bond with them quickly and not only with an evangelist whose primary focus is outside the church. Help converts begin at once to participate in serious worship and other ministries. A new church in a pioneer field must practice the essentials of worship from its beginning, in a culturally relevant way.

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Worship Essentials

These essentials of worship, with possible cultural forms they might take, are:

- a. Praise (voiced spontaneously, chanted, sung or read)
In some cultures, you would start without music, which is only an *aid* to worship, in order not to import western music; let converts write simple praise songs based on verses from Psalms, in their own cultural music style.
- b. Prayer (spontaneous, chanted, sung or read)
- c. Confession and assurance of forgiveness (read from Scripture, prayer book, sung or spontaneous)
- d. The Word (read, discussed, related as a story, sung, chanted, dramatized)
- e. The Eucharist (Lord's Supper)
- f. Giving (pass a plate or bag, have a box by the door, or let believers place coins on the altar, etc.)
- g. Fellowship
- h. (For house churches) A definite beginning and end to the worship service

Examine scriptural passages related to these essential aspects of worship when entering another culture. Then, when the nationals are able, let them add culturally relevant forms. Observe the people's non-Christian worship, to discern forms of expression (not content) that can be useful in Christian worship. Note body movements, gestures, use of candles or other objects, dress, chanting and other forms of communication. Use what is transferable without dragging paganism in along with it.

8. Arrange for new local leaders to lead the first *public* worship services.
Be sure that, when a new church goes public, local pastors/elders in training do the "up front" leading. You or others on your team prepare them by discipling them behind the scenes.

If this is impossible, at least arrange for a local potential leader to begin the worship, present you, and authorize you to lead. Let the public see that the church is of their culture, not controlled by outsiders. Outsiders (not of the target culture or sub-culture) must not outnumber the converts at the first meetings, especially for the first few baptisms and celebrations of the Lord's Supper. If outsiders outnumber them, they will think they are being baptized into a foreign body, not a church of their own community and culture.
9. Use "redemptive analogies" where they are useful.
These are legends, myths, customs or religious dogma planted within the culture beforehand by God (and often confused or obscured by Satan since then). Use these analogies to prepare the people to understand and receive Christ. Many cultures have some kind of friendship pact ceremony or symbol, rituals for reconciling enemies, animal sacrifice, legends about a message of salvation coming from a foreigner, etc.
10. Get to know the people well.
Do demographic studies in the community and live among the people until you feel at home there. Nothing takes the place of simply talking with many people. Establish friendships and

channels of communication. Watch how they communicate, and try to do it the same way. Use different methods of communicating such as informal discussions, coffee conversation, lunch chats, private conversation, small study groups, skits, songs, dances, chants, cartoons, murals and whatever else they already use to relate spiritual things.

11. Let a particular church planting movement focus on *one* sub-culture within a people group, at least in its beginning.

Let the good news of salvation in Jesus spread freely among friends and relatives.

Start a church among people of one social-economic level. Never force believers to abandon any major aspects of their culture (except obvious sins) to receive Christ; do not force another culture's worship forms on them. Remember how vehemently Paul defended the right of the Galatians to remain in their own culture within the church, opposing the efforts of those who would force circumcision (Jewish culture) on them; the same applies today, with other cultural forms.

In order for the church to be born within this social venue, plan for the first few meetings, especially baptisms, to be attended by a majority from the target community. Seeing too many outsiders from the church planting team make it impossible for the converts to feel that the church is being born *within* their own community: they feel that they are joining an outside organization. This cancels spontaneous church reproduction within a subculture.

12. Distinguish between *worship services* and purely evangelistic or teaching meetings.

Some missionaries fail to start churches because they confuse evangelism with worship. They preach salvation to people already saved, and provide worship for unbelievers! Give special attention to what nonbelievers should do in an evangelistic service. Do not urge them to worship yet, as believers must worship God in spirit and truth, and they should not take part in Communion. Let them hear what Christ has done for them, see the love of Christians in action and discover what Christ's church is and does. Plan for worship meetings for believers; non-believers might observe. Do not offer only one type of service, in which worship and evangelism are confused. Discern your audience; do not beg Christians to receive Christ nor non-Christians to worship. Both errors bring confusion.

13. Prepare for persecution.

As in Paul's case, your worst opposition may come not from unbelievers but from fellow Christians who impose their culture in the form of worship styles, non-biblical ordination standards, non-biblical baptism prerequisites and other requirements. Develop a disciple's sacrificial, obedient spirit, to obey the Lord's commands above and before all else.

If you foresee violent persecution, ostracizing by society or loss of job, you should leave the decision up to the convert as to when and to whom he reveals his new faith. He may prefer to be baptized in private (as in the case of the Philippian jailer and his family). His life and security are at stake; we must not make such decisions for him. Some converts will choose to suffer, even die, for Christ.

14. Plan for serious mercy ministries if you work in a poverty area.

Let the people see you working with your hands, helping others and making a sacrifice. Let new believers know that they are to give to the needy. God will bless them with spiritual blessings and sometimes with material blessings, too, if they are good stewards; but He does not promise *riches*. He gives to His children in response to our own generosity or lack of it

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(2 Cor. 9:6-8). Avoid “give-away” programs. Give converts money or material benefits only in temporary, isolated life-and-death emergencies.

15. Hold out no promises of material gain to attract converts.

Let people in a poverty area know from the beginning that their own leaders will be volunteers. Let pastors/elders serve as bi-vocational (self-supported) workers. If the churches themselves decide to pay their pastors/elders later on, that is their decision. Receiving foreign funds often stifles spontaneous church reproduction. If you are bi-vocational, you should serve as a model for pastors/elders. If you are “full-time”, arrange for someone to serve as a bi-vocational model from the very beginning, for potential shepherding elders to imitate.

16. Help believers to visualize a better life.

The gospel includes the promise of abundant life, peace and the daily care of our Heavenly Father. Enable seekers to see by faith the better life that God has for them, their families and their community.

Proclaim social justice and righteousness as essential effects of salvation in Christ. Communities in which only a minority receives Christ still receive a blessing: a more peaceful, fulfilling society that even the non-Christians enjoy.

17. Offer apprentice training to potential evangelists.

Let them accompany you as you disciple them. There is no better way to train vital evangelists. Show them how to...

- Reach families through heads of households.
- Tell Bible stories in such a way that new Christians can repeat them immediately to their family and friends.
- Adapt worship and church organization to clusters of reproducing house churches.
- Filter out irrelevant western forms that do not fit (music, values, worship styles, evangelistic techniques, pastoral training traditions, ordination requirements, etc.).
- Discern between 1) Commands of Jesus and His apostles, 2) Mere apostolic practices (not commanded), and 3) Human customs that have no authority beside that which a local congregation assigns them.

Evangelism Evaluation

If you are failing to get converts to form a growing, multiplying church, mark any of the following factors that you should give more attention:

- [] You may need to bring in an evangelist who is culturally close, at least during the time when evangelism must still be done by outsiders. After this, an outsider can disciple them from behind the scenes even though culturally distant.
- [] If you do not have the gift of evangelism, accompany someone who does. Until a church is well established, someone on a church planting team should have the gift of evangelism.
- [] Start with heads of families. If your trainee is not the head, ask to meet his father. You might ask permission of the head of the home for what you do.
- [] Witness by telling stories, avoiding a philosophical approach.
- [] Emphasize Jesus' resurrection as the apostles did.

- [] Combine evangelism with mercy ministries; include praying for healing or freedom from demonic oppression.
- [] Work through a “person of peace” and reach entire households through heads of families, Luke 10:5-7; compare Acts 10.
- [] Become fluent in any language in which you will be communicating over a long time.
- [] Bond with the people socially.
- [] Start with the most responsive segment within a people group (normally the working class). “Shake the dust” when a community proves unresponsive. Do not delay this.
- [] Lay a foundation of Old Testament stories if necessary, especially in cultures with a non-Christian world view, of a supremely powerful , holy God who must punish evil acts.
- [] Count converts after they are added by baptism to a body that disciplines them to obey all the commands of Jesus.
- [] When persecution threatens, let the converts decide how public they should make baptisms and other events that can jeopardize security.
- [] Provide recorded evangelistic Bible studies for the less educated. If you evangelize illiterates, you may want to use recorded portions of Scripture. Take advantage of the growing popularity of Bible correspondence courses in many fields, and offer them to the less educated in the form of recorded portions of Scripture. Have someone ask these questions after people listen to the Scripture:
 - What important truth did we hear in this?
 - What did it say about God?
 - Was something hard to understand?
 - What does God want us to do?
- [] Build a foundation on the great redemptive stories. Lay these historical foundations first, as the Apostles did, before discussing the theology that grows out of them.
- [] Select Scripture portions after prayerful consideration of what people need to apply in their culture and circumstances. Deal with concepts that they have in their lore, mythology or customs. For example, where they revere "holy men" or hermits, start out with a story about Elijah or John the Baptist. Your selection would include some of Jesus' miracles, trial, death and resurrection. You might add other foundational stories such as...
 - Creation,
 - Adam's fall,
 - the flood,
 - God’s promise to Abraham,
 - Passover and escape from Egypt,
 - God’s Law at Sinai
 - Elijah and the prophets of Baal on Carmel,
 - Nehemiah and Ezra’s renewal of the nation of Israel,
 - Jesus' birth, baptism, miracles, transfiguration, ascension’
 - the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost,
 - the apostles’ adventures while spreading the gospel.