**7 Habits for Highly Effective Personal Evangelism**

“But I am so afraid to start a conversation,” confessed a pastor.

“I have non-Christian friends, and spend time with them, but I’m so afraid of ruining my friendship.”

Does that describe you, even if you are not a pastor?

From the seminars I give around the US and in Latin America, this is a common fear.

So to address this fear, let me throw out my list of **7 Habits for Highly Effective Personal Evangelism**.

Practicing these habits knock out a lot of fear.

I’m sure the list would be 10 if I thought long and hard, but these are the first 7 that came to mind as practices in my life.

**1.  Prayer for those apart from Christ.**

Prayer prepares your heart, and God uses prayer to draw people to Christ.

Not sure how to create a [prayer list](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/2009/evangelism-prayer-list/)to help you with that?

Action step: [Make a prayer list of friends.](http://www.evangelismcoach.org/2010/make-a-prayer-list-of-friends/)

When was the last time you prayed through your list of friends?

**2.  Regular Assessment of Current Friendships.**

Real simple: Do you have someone with whom you can share your faith?

I regularly review how I spend my time and with whom.

I intentionally cultivate authentic relationships with people who don’t know Christ.

If I don’t have enough non-Christian friends, I look for ways to cultivate some new ones.  Always a challenge when a new friend comes to Christ.

**3.   Look for spiritual thirst**

In all my conversations, I [look for spiritual thirst](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/spiritual-thirst-the-key-clue-to-faith-conversations/).

I have learned to recognize spiritual thirst in how people talk, what they talk about, and how they often initiate discussion with me.

I’ve come across a tool that can help you see a person’s spiritual thirst.  It’s explained at length in Gary Rorhmayer’s book [Spiritual Conversations: How to Sustain them without being a jerk.](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1889638919?ie=UTF8&tag=evangcoach-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=1889638919)

**4.  Regular Devotional Time**

Nurture your own relationship with God.  Spend time in worship, prayer, fasting, Bible reading.  Allow God to speak to you and guide your life.

As you spend time in Scriptures, you’ll be growing spiritually.  You’ll be discovering how God is leading you.  And often out of the overflow of the current activity of God in your life, you’ll have fresh content to share.

**5.  Intentional Relationship Building**

Most effective evangelism to produces discipleship happens between friends.  Thus, one highly effective habit to be intentional in building deep and authentic relationships.

As you look over your list of friends you are praying for, who do you need to “get to know better” or “spend some time with” this coming week?

I often make some notes after wards if there was some significant spiritual thirst shared with me.  I use that in my prayers.  I’m often praying for the next step in my friend’s spiritual journey.

**6.  Debriefing Every Evangelism Conversation**

Some questions I like to ask myself are:

1. “How did God point out that person to you?  How did you [notice that person](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/2009/the-art-of-noticing-people/)?”
2. “Where did you notice [God was already at work](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/2007/god-is-at-work-do-you-see-it/)?”
3. “What was their [spiritual thirst](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/spiritual-thirst-the-key-clue-to-faith-conversations/)?”
4. “What would you do or say differently?”
5. “What did you share about Christ?”
6. “How can you help that person along in the next step towards Christ?”

**7.  Space in your life for impromptu conversations.**

Phillip had margin in his life for a [spontaneous conversation with the Eunuch](https://www.evangelismcoach.org/2007/conversion-stories-from-the-nt-ethiopian-eunuch).

Peter and John had margin in the life to heal the lame man at the gate called beautiful.

Most of us pack such a full day that we don’t have time to notice those spiritually thirsty people whom we encounter.

Leave some room in your life to be available during the day.  This happens to me on a regular basis, not all the time.

## Strategic Evangelism:

## 3 Effective Outreach Opportunities

Evangelism is the responsibility of every believer. [There is no such thing as the "gift of evangelism,"](http://is.gd/oxeuV0) rather, all Christians have the obligation to share the gospel. It is, and should be, on the heart of every believer to look for opportunities to share. That's why we call people to lives of [incarnational mission](http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/july/incarnational-mission-part-3.html?paging=off), showing and sharing the love of Jesus—personally—to a broken and lost world.

It does not mean, however, that you should not create special times within the body of your church for evangelism with some strategy. Churches can and should partner with Christians to create evangelistic opportunities.

This might include preaching through a special series intended for evangelism outreach.

#### Evangelistically Intended Sermon Series

Established churches can use special times to reinforce evangelism and outreach. At[Grace Church](http://gogracechurch.com/), we preach about two-thirds of the time at our church through books of the Bible. We are strategic about the other third. For example, every year between Mother's Day and Father's Day, we do a family series to draw attention to an overwhelming need in our community—the need for strong families. It's a time when people bring their friends and is often a time when their friends hear the gospel for the first time. Since the key to a strong family is to be centered around Jesus, it's a natural time for evangelism.

In addition, every spring and every fall, we launch a four-to-six week evangelistic series of sermons. We intentionality lower the cookies down to the bottom shelf for a series of Scripture-based topical messages. The messages are focused on the everyday needs of people and how the Bible addresses them—topics range from stress, to faith, to relationships, etc.

This is a designated time when people are encouraged to bring their friends and family to church. We encourage them to reach out to (typically) seven people—we give them cards to write their names on, pray for them, and reach out to them over the weeks leading up to the series.

We encourage our church members to bring people to church all year, but this is a special time. Why? We believe that people need times to help reengage in evangelistic intent.

Evangelism naturally wanes. Churches need to help people reengage.

#### Special Days and Holidays

Churches can use [Easter](http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2013/03/26/survey-one-in-five-americans-undecided-about-easter-church-attendance/), [Christmas](http://www.lifewayresearch.com/2010/12/20/lifeway-research-finds-christmas-is-prime-time-for-church-invitations/), [Mother's Day](http://www.lifeway.com/Article/lifeway-research-mothers-day-2012), Grandparent's Day, and Super Bowl Sunday, among others as designated times when you have an evangelistic message and service. You must let people know this is the intent and then let them know how they can use these special times and civic holidays to invite unbelievers to attend.

[LifeWay Research](http://www.lifewayresearch.com/) has repeatedly found the unchurched are open to church invites during holidays. They are thinking more about spiritual matters around those seasons and many would welcome an invitation. Take advantage of the openness to make a special emphasis during those times.

#### Connecting Small Group for Evangelism Emphases

While much of this is related to the church as a whole, small groups can be especially successful in their outreach attempts and evangelistic emphases. As mentioned before, every fall and spring we create a teaching series about some topic that's going to relate well to both believers and unbelievers.

We design a strategy in our groups for members to begin to pray three months prior to the series to identify five people they would like to reach. We design intentional opportunities for members to share the gospel in the context of the small group and at church. The important thing is that the church gatherings and the small groups work together to make a special push to reach out to unbelievers.

We invest significant energy in this strategy to get widespread involvement. Every person who attends our church gets a phone call from either a group leader or a staff person to remind him or her that we are launching a new series at church and to encourage them to bring friends.

Our leaders ask them if they have started praying for seven unchurched people. If they have, we ask them what they think the Lord is doing in those relationships.

The week prior to the start of the series, they get another phone call, where we pray with them about their friends. The results from this effort are always encouraging because the whole church is mobilized.

#### By All Possible Means

We see the results of this regularly—every fall or spring we see new people beginning to attend and eventually trust Christ. We've found the church is energized by our unified times of evangelism and outreach. We see the results during the series and outreach times, but also for the months that follow.

The Apostle Paul said, "I have become all things to all people, so that I may by every possible means save some. Now I do all this because of the gospel, so I may become a partner in its benefits" (1 Cor. 9:22-23).

Help your congregation engage in evangelism by partnering with them in special days and times. Lead the flock to take advantage of times for evangelism in order that the gospel might take root in your church and community.

In helping them to evangelize in special times, you are preparing them to do so all the time.

What is the best method of evangelism? Depending on whom you ask, the answer will vary. The only correct answer, however, is “whichever one presents the gospel clearly and asks for a response.” Unless the gospel is explained and the person is asked to respond to the gospel, then there is no evangelism.

There are multiple evangelism methods people and churches use to share Jesus with others, but each one has its own strengths and weaknesses. The one that works best is the one that is most comfortable to each person and most appropriate for each situation. This article will highlight some of the more common methods of evangelism, briefly providing some strengths and weaknesses of each.

Note: While the exact definition of each method may vary somewhat, this article uses generally understood meanings of each.

## Lifestyle Evangelism

Lifestyle evangelism is often understood one of two ways:

* Live right and people will see the gospel in one’s life
* Live right and people will ask about God

This method is built on the foundation of how one lives, with the idea that one’s life will lead others to Christ, or at least lead others to ask about him.

**Strengths**

* Encourages righteous living and self-evaluation
* Helps one’s life accord with the gospel

**Weaknesses**

* It is not biblical evangelism, only a means to possible evangelism
* Employs a highly passive approach

**Final Analysis**

Lifestyle evangelism is best summed up in a phrase I’ve heard many times: “My life is my witness.” That statement, however, falls apart when one considers being a witness (cf. [Acts 1:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.8)[http://www.logos.com/images/Corporate/LibronixLink_dark.png](libronixdls:keylink|ref=[en]bible:Acts1.8|res=LLS:ESV)). This is best illustrated by a story a former professor of mine often told his evangelism students.

Court is in session, and the prosecutor calls his star witness. As she takes the stand, the jury awaits her testimony. The lawyer asks the woman, “Did you witness the events in question?” She replies, “Yes, I did.”

“Please tell the jury what you saw,” he says.

The witness sits there smiling. Unsure if she heard him, the prosecutor repeats, “Ma’am, will you please tell the jury what you saw.”

“I did,” she replies, continuing to smile.

Frustrated, the prosecutor retorts, “No, ma’am, you did not. Again, please tell the jury your testimony!” Yet, she continues to sit there smiling.

Impatient and angry, the prosecutor asks the judge to order the witness to answer the question. “Ma’am, you will tell the jury what you saw,” instructs the judge. “You will say what you witnessed.”

Insulted, the woman replies to the judge, “Your Honor, I did share my testimony. My life is my witness!”

The woman honestly believed that her life served as her witness, but she never shared her experiences. She did not serve as a witness for the prosecution, but only as a courtroom seat warmer. In the same way, many Christians warm the church pews, and although instructed to be witnesses, they silently sit there expecting their lives to be their witness.

Living is not evangelizing; lifestyle is not evangelism. Only proclaiming the gospel is evangelism, and one’s life affirms or detracts from the credibility of our testimony.

## Servant Evangelism (aka Service Evangelism)

Popularized by Steve Sjogren’s [Conspiracy of Kindness](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0830745726/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0830745726&linkCode=as2&tag=johnrothmini-20&linkId=SJNUKPBQ33ALUXEL)http://ir-na.amazon-adsystem.com/e/ir?t=johnrothmini-20&l=as2&o=1&a=0830745726 and Alvin Reid’s manual,[Servanthood Evangelism](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0840085052/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=0840085052&linkCode=as2&tag=johnrothmini-20&linkId=UCHEWHAPADFEXMW5)http://ir-na.amazon-adsystem.com/e/ir?t=johnrothmini-20&l=as2&o=1&a=0840085052, this approach uses simple acts of kindness, or service, for evangelism.

**Strengths**

* Emphasizes showing love as a way to open doors to evangelism
* Simple and often affordable to implement
* Can be done at any time
* Tries to create opportunities to share the gospel

**Weaknesses**

* People can improperly believe the service to be evangelism
* Serving may be emphasized, evangelism de-emphasized
* Limited training on personal evangelism
* Though doable by individuals, seems more apropos for group outreach

**Final Analysis**

I am a fan of servanthood evangelism, especially for churches, small groups, and youth groups. It doesn’t require a large budget, can be done with relative ease, can be exciting and fun, and has a tremendous opportunity to open doors to the gospel. The world accuses Christians of preaching love and not showing love; evangelists critique Christians for showing love and not preaching love. Servanthood evangelism done properly shows love and preaches love, addressing both criticisms.

## Event Evangelism

This is a popular method among churches and groups, the most famous of which are revival services, vacation Bible school, and Halloween alternatives (often called “Harvest Fests” to avoid the clear association with the secular holiday). An outreach event is held, the public is invited, and ideally the gospel is shared with those who attend.

**Strengths**

* Builds on public interest
* Can generate name identification for the church or group
* Large crowds increases potential evangelistic encounters

**Weaknesses**

* Often builds name identification for the church or group, very little for the gospel
* Can be very expensive
* Attendants is often primarily those within the church sponsoring the event and other community churches (especially with revival services, gospel concerts, and similar events)
* Most Christians do not have to evangelize or choose not to evangelize
* Evangelism limited to a scheduled event rather than a regular, daily activity

**Final Analysis**

Evangelistic events are a wonderful idea, if they are evangelistic. To be evangelistic, they should be about promoting the gospel, not promoting the church. That means event promotion should be to the community, not merely to other churches, and should ensure that the gospel is clearly presented in every way possible. However, events are never a substitute for a [churchwide personal evangelism strategy](http://www.johnrothra.com/churchevangelism/" \o "Churchwide personal evangelism strategy).

## Neighborhood Evangelism (aka Door-to-Door Evangelism)

Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons—that’s what many think of when they hear about door-to-door evangelism. This method involves going to homes and sharing the gospel with those who answer. Many Southern Baptist churches do this type of door-to-door visitation on a weekday evening.

**Strengths**

* Great for generating personal contact with new visitors
* Easily scheduled and inexpensive
* Great method for low-cost event promotion
* Common practice among many churches—easy to implement

**Weaknesses**

* Participation is generally very low
* Ubanization, gated communities, technological advances, and other cultural changes reduce access in many communities
* Evangelistic effectiveness is generally very low
* Often becomes more about church promotion and new visitors than gospel proclamation and new believers (cf. the [evangelistic delusion](http://www.johnrothra.com/evangelism/gospel-centered/vision-evangelism-statement-services-sermons/))
* Public response to this method is often negative

**Final Analysis**

Door knocking, though a traditional approach to evangelism, is becoming less effective as an evangelistic strategy and more effective as an event promotion strategy. Society has changed, along with its ways of communicating and the way people live. Door-to-door evangelism may be effective in one area and nearly impossible in another (a church can be banned from some areas if the residents desire). It is best to determine its usefulness based not on history, but on the current situation (tradition is rarely a valid basis for future success or future plans).

## Street Preaching Evangelism

This is a method greatly used by John the Baptist and [Ray Comfort](https://www.youtube.com/user/thewayofthemaster) to share the gospel with others. It involves someone standing at a location with pedestrian traffic and proclaiming the gospel to passersby.

**Strengths**

* Effective at getting attention
* Gospel can be clearly articulated
* Can lead to opportunities for one-on-one evangelism
* Low-cost, and not audience dependent

**Weaknesses**

* Limited captive audience—most people will ignore the speaker
* Apologetics often necessary
* Requires thick-skinned practitioners—there usually arises those who are hostile
* Public perception and response is often very low

**Final Analysis**

This method is not for everybody, and its effectiveness is limited, though it’s secondary and tertiary impact is potentially greater than many other forms. It’s recommended that those interested in this method be well-versed in Scripture, ready to address questions often asked by non-Christians (apologetics), and be able to articulate clearly.

## Tract Evangelism

Tract evangelism uses gospel tracts to present the gospel. There are three ways to use tracts: (1) take someone through the tract, using it as a visual aid, (2) sharing the gospel then giving the person a tract for further consideration, or (3) leaving the tract for someone without a personal conversation.

**Strengths**

* One of the most simple and versatile methods of personal evangelism
* Ideal for situations where a conversation is not feasible (e.g., busy store cashier, passersby, waiter/waitress, etc.)
* There is a wide variety of tracts available for almost any style of gospel presentation
* Can be great conversation starters
* Many appeal to a visual-based audience

**Weaknesses**

* Tracts can become substitutes for or tools to avoid personally witnessing to others
* Requires purchasing tracts (or the expense of self-printing)
* Some are wordy and thus may not be read

**Final Analysis**

When it comes to personal evangelism, tracts are one of the greatest tools available, second only to Scripture. Their best use is that of visual aid and guide. Some people aren’t sure how to explain the gospel, and the tract addresses that uncertainty. Furthermore, the tract can be left with the person to read through later. **When using tracts as a guide, it’s best not to read the tract, but to summarize the message.**

High quality gospel tracts are available from any of the following sources:

[Living Waters/Way of the Master](http://store.livingwaters.com/index.php?option=com_virtuemart&page=shop.browse&category_id=8&Itemid=369&lang=en) — [***Smartphone tract***](http://store.livingwaters.com/index.php?page=shop.product_details&category_id=8&flypage=flypage.tpl&product_id=842&option=com_virtuemart&Itemid=369&lang=en)***available***  
[Crossway (ATS & Good News Tracts)](http://www.crossway.org/group/ats)  
[Christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com/page/church-supplies/tracts?event=AFF&p=1028350)  
[LifeWay](http://www.lifeway.com/n/Church-Supplies/Tracts-&-Outreach?intcmp=Supplies-Main-Subcat-TractsOutreach-20140307)

## Conversational Evangelism (aka Relational Evangelism)

Some may distinguish between “conversational” and “relational.” Conversational evangelism is starting a conversation for the purpose of sharing the gospel; relational evangelism is seeking to relate to the person, looking for permission—i.e., an open door—to discuss spiritual matters. While they may be technically different, their general approach is the same: sharing the gospel during a normal conversation. Thus, they are treated as one in this evaluation.

Conversational evangelism is the method most often used by Jesus. It involves finding ways in normal, everyday conversations to share the gospel with someone else. This can occur in a store checkout line, at a sporting event, on an airplane, or almost anywhere.

**Strengths**

* It is personal evangelism
* Evangelism can occur anywhere at any time with any person
* A variety of tools can be used (tracts, the Bible, etc.)
* Doesn’t require schedules, only willingness
* Can be done by anyone
* It is the method used regularly by Jesus and the disciples
* It involves going out and sharing

**Weaknesses**

* Can be intimidating to some
* It is often misunderstood: some think it requires special training or special gifts

**Final Analysis**

In case you haven’t figured it out, this is the method that is most highly recommended. There are a plethora of ways to engage in conversational evangelism. One can use apologetics, a Q&A format (cf. [Questioning Evangelism](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B005I4JFHM/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B005I4JFHM&linkCode=as2&tag=johnrothmini-20&linkId=YWP7VFLFQAEWXF7Z)http://ir-na.amazon-adsystem.com/e/ir?t=johnrothmini-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B005I4JFHM), tracts, a pocket Bible (cf. [Share Jesus Without Fear](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B004HFS3F8/ref=as_li_tl?ie=UTF8&camp=1789&creative=390957&creativeASIN=B004HFS3F8&linkCode=as2&tag=johnrothmini-20&linkId=CW6LND5GNH3JHZFT)http://ir-na.amazon-adsystem.com/e/ir?t=johnrothmini-20&l=as2&o=1&a=B004HFS3F8), one’s personal testimony of how they became saved, or many other means.

Although conversational evangelism is probably the least common method of evangelism, it’s undoubtedly the most effective. It is simply sharing Jesus with someone in a normal, everyday conversation.

## Conclusion

Some people prefer one method over the other; some may disagree with my overall assessment of each method. Regardless, none of these methods of evangelism alone constitute a [comprehensive churchwide evangelism strategy](http://www.johnrothra.com/churchevangelism/). However, all of them can be part of that strategy, and John Rothra Ministries can help your church develop it.

When it comes to evangelism, there really is no wrong way of doing it, there’s only evangelizing and not evangelizing. As the professor who told the story of the courtroom witness always said, not everything we do is evangelism, but everything we do can be evangelistic. Sadly, though, most of what we do is neither evangelism nor evangelistic. That can change, if we are willing to become [gospel-centered believers and gospel-centered churches](http://www.johnrothra.com/evangelism/gospel-centered/gospel-centered-church-failures-fixes-local-churches/).