

Everyday Missionaries: God's Game Plan for Evangelism

by Bill Peel

Observing people make a beeline for the parking lot at noon on Sundays has become, for me, a strangely contemplative activity. I watch and wonder if these men and women see any connection between the church service they've just attended and the other 98 percent of their waking hours?

Have they mentally checked God off of their weekly to-do list or are they anticipating a week of exciting opportunities as His ambassadors in the workplace?

Unless our congregations understand the strategic nature of the workplace in God's kingdom game plan, it is likely that they will see themselves as nothing more than His water boys, instead of the first-string players which they are.

Contrary to popular perception, U.S. Christians need not move to a Third World country in order to make a significant contribution to the kingdom of God and help fulfill the Great Commission. Perhaps the most significant mission field in the world is right under our nose.

There are 235 million non-Christians in **America—the fourth largest non-Christian nation in the world**. And if we are going to reach these individuals with the love of Jesus, we're going to have to send faith to work.

The strategic nature of the workplace in God's plan for impact is not a new idea. The vast majority of evangelists of the first century church were not preachers, teachers, or gifted debaters. They were the nameless thousands of people who brought Jesus to their daily work.

Because ordinary men and women shared the gospel with colleagues, customers, and clients, the early church grew from a few hundred to well over one-half million in less than seven decades. A 1,000 percent growth rate!

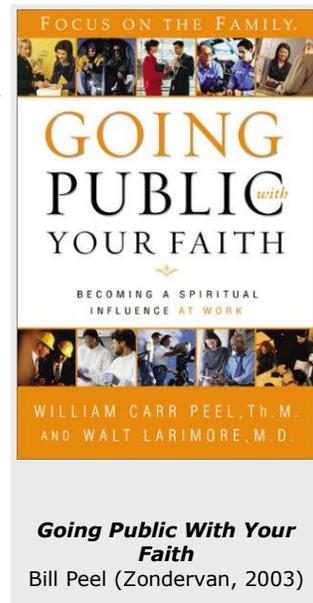
Now, fast-forward to the present and envision what could happen if the people warming our pews did the same. Could our churches grow in like manner?

Absolutely! Who knows what extraordinary things God might do if the men and women in our congregations became serious about their spiritual calling and personal mission field Monday through Friday.

How can our churches equip men and women to take their faith to work? Here are three ways we can launch our flocks into full-time ministry as God's ambassadors to the workplace:

First, help them understand that evangelism is not an event, it's a process.

The journey of faith takes place as a person makes many seemingly small decisions that lead to the big decision of trusting Jesus. The longer people live, the more emotional, intellectual, and volitional barriers build up to harden their hearts.



God's intention is to use ordinary followers of Jesus to slowly erode the barriers in the hearts of the men and women with whom they work -

preparing them to accept God's gift of salvation. The erosion process takes place over time through caring relationships, meaningful conversation, and thought-provoking presentation of the truth.

For Christians who love to "close the deal," these preliminaries can seem like a colossal waste of time. This is simply not so. It's not coincidental that the Bible uses agrarian metaphors for evangelism. As any good farmer knows, picking green fruit spoils the harvest. Hard work - clearing the land, cultivating the soil, seeding, watering, and fertilizing - always precedes the joy of the harvest.

In much the same way, significant heart barriers must be recognized, addressed, and overcome for a person to come to faith - and, more often than not, this takes time.

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Second, teach people to look for how God is already at work so they can join Him there.

Is evangelism the art of forcing spiritual conversation on a reluctant stranger? If this is what, "Go ye into all the world and make disciples," looks like, then it shouldn't surprise us that evangelism classes are seldom "standing room only."

Few Christians aspire to be the telemarketers and high-pressure salespersons of God's kingdom. Peter reminds us that it is our job to answer, not force the question. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks" (1 Peter 3:15).

It is incredibly freeing to see that God isn't asking us to "corner 'em and convert 'em." He wants us to be alert for how He has already broken ground in a person's heart and be ready to join Him there.

The most obvious indication that God is at work is an individual's question or expression of interest about a spiritual issue. Comments about background, current needs, and previous religious experiences can also indicate spiritual openness.

Third, help your flock see that being an effective witness has as much to do with what they do as what they say. There are many sincere, committed Christians who believe that becoming a person of spiritual influence in the workplace is beyond their reach. They've bought the erroneous theory that sharing the gospel requires a magnetic personality, profound answers to deep theological questions, and the ability to persuasively argue the latest apologetic for the faith. This is simply not true.

Though all of us should be able to articulate the gospel message, **we have way over-complicated evangelism.** Being an active player in God's game plan for bringing people to himself can begin with something as simple as having a cup of coffee with a colleague, listening compassionately when a customer shares why she's had a hard week, or doing something above the call of duty for a boss or employee who's under the pile.

Simple efforts to serve others in the course of everyday life can have a much more profound and positive impact than canned talking points.

Impacting someone's life has a lot more to do with being a thoughtful person than with fancy theological words and memorized strategies. **Small acts of kindness are a way for even the most reluctant witness to cultivate the soil, and join God in the process of evangelism.**

Being a person of spiritual influence is every Christian's calling. If we take this job seriously and act on it courageously, who knows what fruit our flock might bear in their Monday-through-Friday mission field? Countless people coming to Christ? 1,000 percent growth rate in our churches?

Overflowing pews might be our next challenge, if faith goes to work!

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This was adapted from [*Going Public With Your Faith*](#) (Zondervan, 2003), by Bill Peel.