

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

Volume 25 Issue 10

PO Box 892589, Temecula, CA 92589-2589

October 2013

Evangelism Training

Encouraging and equipping people to connect with non-churched friends and relatives is just the beginning of an effective evangelistic outreach in a church. But it is a very important beginning, and the right place to begin.

Churches that successfully reach new people for Christ focus on training a minimum of 10% of their people each year in friendship evangelism.

Friendship evangelism results in 78% of new believers remaining in a local church.

It takes time to build the “evangelistic consciousness” of a congregation. This is particularly true when a church has seen little or no “conversion growth” in the past several years. While church leaders may desire to train many people quickly, the fact is in most churches people are often not ready to participate in a new evangelistic program.

As a result, begin slowly by focusing on around 10% of your adults. This is about the number who will be open to nurturing more meaningful relationships with their non-Christian friends and relatives. By starting with this receptive 10%, your evangelistic emphasis will get off to a good start. The next year, other adults will have heard about the good experiences from the first year's training, and be open to taking part.

In the second year, invite newcomers to join in the training. New members and new believers tend to have more unchurched contacts than do long-term members. Newcomers also have an initial excitement

about the church and want to spread the word in any way possible. By recruiting and training newer people, you will see the evangelistic outreach of your church grow quickly.

Once a church has annually trained 10% of its members for five years, it reaches a turning point when half of the congregation has completed the training. A new attitude and sensitivity toward newcomers becomes evident throughout the congregation. And as churches continue to train 10% per year, dramatic new life and enthusiasm take root as a growing majority of members become interested in reaching new people for Jesus. There are many good books and study guides for evangelism training

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

Participate in discussions at

churchgrowthnetwork.com/site/blog

Use the correct approach to evangelism.

Train your people to be friends to friends.

that are available. We recommend keeping the course active as a regular part of the educational process in your church. And don't forget to include it in the new member's classes.

Here are some important things to consider as you plan your evangelism training...

First, realize that there is much “baggage” out there about the “e-word.” Somehow along the way, the word “evangelism” came to be associated with knocking on strangers' doors, passing out tracts on street corners, and generally participating in activities that induce sweaty palms, stomach butterflies, and too-tight collars. So, if you expect to have many people in your church sign up for “evangelism training,” realize there are many misconceptions.

Next, realize that the traditional methods that many of us have been trained for “doing evangelism” are not necessarily the only ways-or even the best ways-to participate in the process of making disciples. Three traditional approaches typically include teacher-to-student, salesman-to-customer, and friend-to-friend.

Which of these three approaches do you think come to mind when most people hear the word “evangelism”? If you said the second, you're right. However, research indicates that 81% of the people who make a decision for Christ from the “Salesperson - Customer” evangelistic approach drop out of church involvement within a year. Here's another interesting, but not surprising, result from the research: the third approach is by far the most effective in making disciples; that is, new believers and active members of a local church. Of those who make a commitment to

Christ through this approach, 78% stay active and involved.

So, the *approach* to the process of disciple making is important. But obviously, the content is, as well. Here are four simple, yet profound, questions that your evangelism training should help church members to answer:

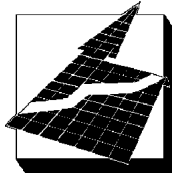
- a) How has being a Christian made a difference in my life?
- b) What does it mean to be a Christian (in words understandable to a non-Christian)?
- c) Why would I like my friend to be a Christian and member of my church?
- d) How does a person become a Christian (in understandable words)?

We recommend you take several weeks in your training for each question to discuss, research, share, role play, and reflect upon. When your people feel comfortable with their answers, they will be better equipped to share their faith in a natural, “friend to friend” manner.



Adapted from *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Baker Books April 2013), by Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn.

Growth Points is published twelve times a year. The subscription price is \$20 (Bank or World Money Order) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained. Formerly published under the title *Church Growth Network*. Copyrighted 2013 ISSN 1520-5096



Beyond the First Visit

Ministry Insights for Church Leaders

P.O. Box 892589 Temecula, CA 92589-2589
www.churchgrowthnetwork.com

Beyond the First Visit

Does your church put out the “welcome” mat or the “do not disturb” sign?

We all like to think that our church is the friendliest in town. But do visitors see it that way? Church consultant Gary L. McIntosh invites you to take another look at your church through the eyes of a first-time guest to identify the things that might be holding them back from a second visit.

This very practical book offers sound advice on assessing and improving the ways in which your church attracts people, welcomes them, does follow-up, and brings them into the church family. More than simply offering mere techniques, it gives suggestions for making a welcoming attitude part of the very fabric of your church.

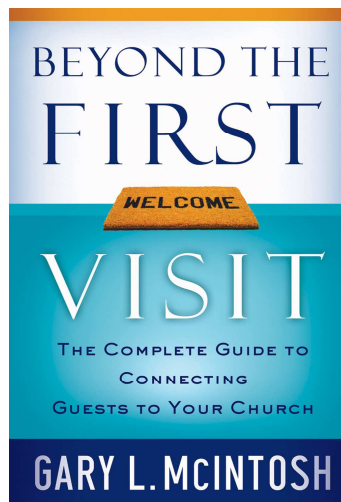
“McIntosh’s book fills a long-standing void. No one (to my knowledge) since Lyle Schaller’s *Assimilating New Members* in 1978, has addressed the challenge of effectively including new people in the church’s life with this much background, savvy, and precision.”

—George G. Hunter, III

Dr. McIntosh has served numerous churches in over 87 denominations throughout the United States, Canada, and Southeast Asia.

It is an excellent resource for greeters, the welcoming team, evangelism committee, and visitor follow-up team.

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