

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-27 Assessing Effective Methods: Promote Relationship with a Church

Nowhere in the New Testament do we see a person come to Christ and then wander off to be by themselves. The very nature of Christian faith is communal or relational. Jesus did not travel alone. As soon as he started his public ministry, he recruited a group of 12 disciples to travel with him.

In the opening of Genesis, we find that after creating the world, God shared dominion with people. God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created mankind in his own image” (Gen 1:26-27). Notice the plural nature of the Godhead—“Let *us*, make humankind in *our* image.” The very essence of God is three persons in one, what we call the Trinity. God’s most basic attribute is his nature of being relational. Thus, humans made in the image of God are also relational in their nature. This is important to our understanding of soul winning.

In the next chapter of Genesis, we see that Adam is by himself in the Garden. “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him’” (Gen. 2:18). The scripture goes on to tell us how God put Adam to sleep and formed Eve out of his side so he would have a companion. God gave them authority over all creation, with only one rule to keep. They gave in to selfish desires, however, and broke that rule. Their relationship with God was also broken.

It is human nature, as a result of this broken relationship with God, to be distorted by sin. People are tempted to isolate themselves into some sort of “me, myself, and I” selfish outlook on life. In this lesson, you will see that a major result of redemption is the restoring of the image of God in humans. That means becoming part of a new family, a new community of faith, which was God’s intention from the beginning.

For your evangelism methods to be truly effective, they should lead the new believer to become a part of a local church. Persons cannot find fulfillment alone. They are born as social beings. They need other humans around to thrive and bear good fruit for God’s kingdom. It is very hard to grow spiritually in isolation from the body of Christ. So the local community of faith plays an important role in their development as disciples.

There are some aspects of this community that are important to consider when assessing our various evangelism methods for effectiveness. First, it should be noted the church was not a human idea; it was God’s idea. It could meet in a building, out in a field, or in someone’s home. It could meet every day or only once in a while. It could meet openly in public or in secret, and at any time. The main priority is that the body of believers lifts up Jesus as Lord.

Churches are formed and directed by Christ. He is the one who welcomes people into the community, when they are born again by his Spirit. We baptize them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Christ is the One who guides, by the Holy Spirit, the direction that the church should take.

The Church has three distinct roles, reflecting the roles Christ fulfilled in his time on earth—the priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles. The priestly role creates a link between humans and God, through Christ’s atoning work on the Cross. It is because of this message, through his Spirit, that individuals are reached to become a part of Christ’s Body. Then they carry on his work here on earth throughout the world.

The prophetic role of Christ is seen through the work of his living Spirit in believers in the community of faith. This work of empowerment and guidance comes through the Gifts of the Spirit at work through his people. This prophetic element is the end time work of God breaking into the present.

The kingly role is one of ruling and reigning with Christ, the risen One. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father. As such he is our “living hope” (1Peter 1:3). Jesus has authority over sickness, demons, and even death itself. He delegates this authority to his Church to proclaim the rule and reign of God’s kingdom here on earth and for all eternity.

The community of faith also serves as a contrast to society in the world around it. As God’s agent in the world, the church is called to “Come out from them and be separate, says the Lord.... And, I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty” (2Cor 6: 17-18). This quest for holiness sets the saints of God apart as consecrated ones who serve God in holy obedience, for “without holiness no one will see the Lord” (Heb 12:14).

Also, the community of faith serves as sanctuary for God’s people. The church offers a hopeful outlook when it comes to giving life meaning and purpose. Its message is simple: “Here is a sanctuary from the sinful corruption of the world. God has made this refuge available through relationship with his Son. The church is made up of his followers, by Christ’s atoning work on the Cross.

The church has a distinct mission: to manifest the Kingdom of God. From the outset when Christ said, “Follow me,” he was not advising people to attend the synagogue. He was, instead, asking for lives that would sacrifice individual rights and commit to the good of the body of “Christ-followers.”

With such a mandate the Christian community must realize that all of its members are called to ministry involvement in some capacity. The mission of the church to be witnesses of Christ is the responsibility of all believers. Some may have a special gift for evangelism, but all still have a command to be witnesses to a lost world. Jesus said, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses” (Acts 1:8). The distinct task of the church is to share the good news to a world in need of redemption.

Finally, the church becomes the catalyst for change. It is a place of proclamation and also the center of God’s redemptive power at work in the lives of believers.

Let’s look at a few examples of how we might apply these principles to our actual witnessing practices. Whenever we share the gospel with people, accepting Christ is often an individual experience. Sometimes it may be a family or group decision. Either way, it also involves joining other believers who are part of the local community of Christian faith. Para-church and individual outreach that is not part of a local faith community must take special care to connect the new believer to a church. Because God is relational in nature—Father, Son and Holy Ghost—

becoming a believer restores the image of God in a person. It involves the renewal of the individual as a member of a community and insures their proper growth in Christ.

This lesson is **important** because it emphasizes that all witnessing efforts should be relational in nature. They should focus on making new believers a part of the community of faith, the church.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that since God is relational by nature, his people should be also. The church is most effective when everyone is involved in witnessing, disciple-making, and influencing the world.

Review Questions

1. Why should accepting Christ be understood as relational in context? [Pause 5 seconds].
 - A. If you answered, “Because humans are created in the image of God and accepting Christ restores that image and the relationship with him,” you are correct.
2. In this lesson, what is the main point to be made about witnessing methods? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “We should ask whether our methods lead to believers’ becoming a part of a local community of faith,” you are right.
3. What are the three Christ-like roles that the church fulfills here on earth? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, “The priestly, prophetic, and kingly roles,” you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to consider some of the methods that you have learned about in this course. Do these approaches promote a relationship with a local church? If not, how could you adjust them in some way to do so? Reflect on some of the other approaches you have used in the past to reach out to those who don’t know Jesus. Do they promote a relationship with a local church or faith community? If not, how could you change the approach to help incorporate new believers into such a community in the future?