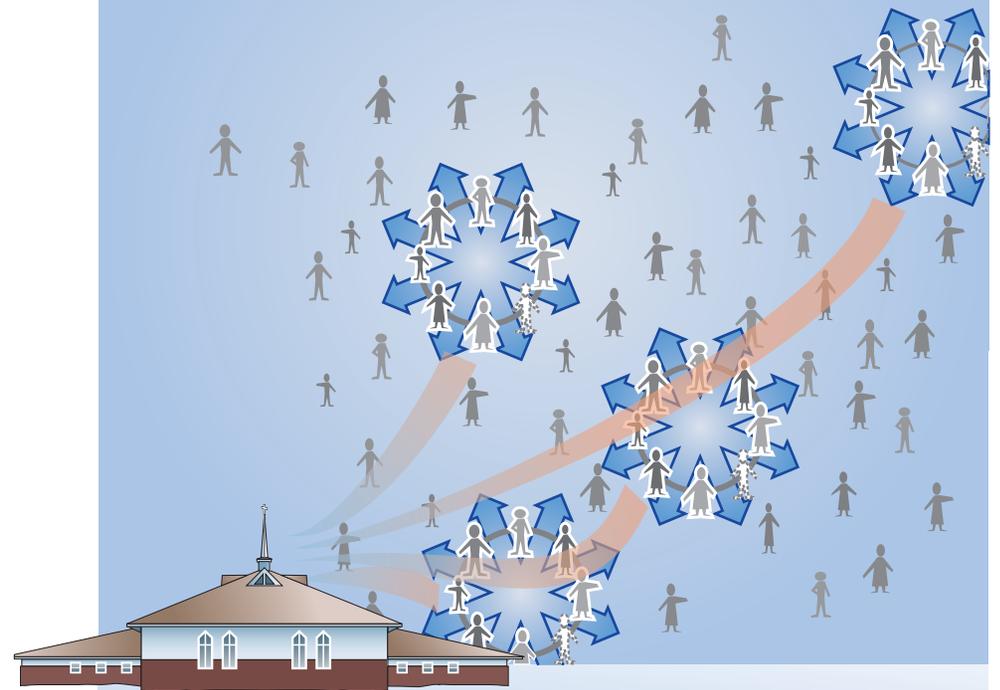


Go!

- *Evangelism that bears fruit*
- *Evangelism for even the non-gifted*
- *Evangelism that makes sense*
- *Evangelism that is workable*



downloadable from

<http://KingdomOutfitters.org>

Copyright©2008 by John Fickett.
Permission is granted for non-commercial uses.

- Hull, Bill. *The Disciple Making Pastor*. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1988.
- Kennedy, D. James. *Evangelism Explosion*. Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970.
- Kreider, Larry. *House to House*. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Little, Paul E. *How to Give Away Your Faith*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 1966.
- Neighbour, Ralph R., Jr. *The Shepherd's Guidebook*. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1992.
- Neighbour, Ralph R., Jr. *Where Do We Go From Here?* Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1990.
- Peace, Richard. *Small Group Evangelism*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 1985
- Peterson, Eugene H. "The Subversive Pastor." *Leadership*. X, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 48-53.
- Pippert, Rebecca Manley. *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World*. Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979.
- Richardson, Rick. *Evangelism Outside the Box*. Downers Grove, Illinois: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000
- Smick, Daniel. *The Seven Dynamics of Evangelism*. Wenham, Massachusetts: Daniel Smick Associates, Inc., undated seminar syllabus, from a seminar held at the West Newbury Congregational Church in 1983.
- Silvoso, Ed. *That None Should Parish*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1994.
- Stewart, Barbara, ed. *Church Leaders Handbook*. South Barrington, Illinois: Willow Creek Community Church: 1991
- Touch Outreach Ministries. *Cell Leader & Intern Seminar*. Syllabus from a regional cell leaders' and interns' seminar; Jim Egli and Randall Neighbour, presenters; Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, May 1995. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1995.
- Touch Outreach Ministries. *Touch Outreach Ministries Basic Training Manual*. A notebook syllabus from a regional cell leaders' and interns' seminar; Jim Egli and Randall Neighbour, presenters; Philadelphia Pennsylvania, October, 1994. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1994.
- Wagner, Peter. *Leading Your Church to Growth*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984.
- Wimber, John with Springer, Kevin. *Power Evangelism*. San Francisco, CA: Harper & Row, 1986.

Evangelism and the purpose of the church

It is very possible to earn a reputation as a successful church without a pursuit of evangelism. It is not hard to find examples of large, thriving churches, which have grown almost entirely from transfers from other churches. It is possible to have committees on top of committees, all producing a huge volume of programs, buildings, events, etc. but producing very few converts.

In the average evangelical church, one convert is made yearly for every *forty-two* church members (and the convert is usually a family member)!

The single greatest cause for the appalling lack of evangelism in the church as a whole may be a concept of the purpose of the church that is flawed at its core.

Competing concepts of church

C. Peter Wagner has popularized two terms¹ useful for characterizing the competing models of what a church is to be.

The modality model

A *modality* is the structure of, for example, a nation or a city. It is a broadly and loosely defined group, of which anyone is welcome to become a part.

It is easy to become a part of this kind of social structure since no one usually needs to apply or meet any particular standards to join. Obligations for keeping membership are few—usually, just being there is enough. Expectations and discipline are low. While cities, for example, encourage their people to participate in civil life, rarely is anyone thrown out because they have failed to do their part to accomplish the stated goals of the modality.

Rather, the modality exists primarily to keep its members happy. Thus, it is maintenance-oriented (so it can continue to serve its people), not mission-oriented (it has no mission outside itself). It is governed primarily by consensus or majority.

Many, perhaps most, American churches are essentially a modality structure.

The sodality model

A *sodality*, as defined by Wagner, is the kind of structure exemplified by a police department, factory, hospital staff, or business office.

Whereas a modality is a broadly and loosely defined group, the most striking difference about a sodality is the *narrowly defined task* which forms the basis for its existence.

No one becomes a part of a sodality just because he or she wants to. There are higher membership standards because of the narrowly defined purpose at the core of the structure. Normally, one must apply to become a member. If one were to simply show up in the offices of the police department announcing that they have recently moved in and have decided to be a part of the police

¹ The following discussion of "modality" and "sodality" is adapted from his discussion of the terms in *Leading Your Church to Growth*, p. 141 ff. Cf., for instance: "Obligations in the sodality are many and the discipline is high. The leaders exercise strict accountability and competence of the members is measured and monitored. The leadership cares much less about the consensus of the opinions of the members than about accomplishing the task for which the organization was established." Peter Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1984), Pg. 144.

department now, they would soon learn some of the significant differences between a modality and a sodality.

Members of a sodality are expected to contribute to the fulfillment of the purpose of the group. If they do not, they may expect discipline. A doctor who begins to feel he would rather water the plants in the hospital than care for the patients will not long be a part of the hospital staff.

Because of the centrality of the task, a sodality is usually governed by strong leaders who keep the organization in close ranks around its purpose. In general, consensus has little relevance to the sodality. If all the fire fighters decided they would rather visit museums instead of fight fires, good leadership would still hold them to the task that molds their identity.

A sodality is not maintenance-oriented (its own well being is not its primary concern) but mission-oriented. All of its activities, investments, allocation of resources, etc. are evaluated by holding them up to the task for which the group exists.

The two models are contrasted, with mnemonic devices to remember which is which, in figure 1.

Where the church fits in.

In my experience, most modern Christians tend to view the church as a modality. As Wagner points out, the role of the sodality is now given to para-church organizations. If you are uninterested in evangelism, no one would suggest that you should still be able to be a member of Campus Crusade. Everyone knows that Campus Crusade exists to accomplish a narrowly defined task.

But it is sometimes thought appropriate that a church should exist primarily for the benefit of its members and ludicrous that members should be expected to contribute significantly to the accomplishment of the task for which the church exists.

In fact, many churchgoers would be hard pressed to articulate a narrowly defined purpose around which the church exists.

But does the church have at its core a clearly and narrowly defined purpose? Does it exist for more than itself? Are members to be expected to contribute meaningfully to the accomplishment of the task around which the group is focused? In short, is the church meant to be more of a sodality than a modality? The answer is a strong "Yes!" While there are aspects of a modality that are fitting in a church, the church is biblically conceived much more along the lines of a sodality.

If the distinctives of a sodality are compared to the biblical picture of the church, there is a close fit. Such a point-by-point comparison is left for the appendix.

The church has, at its core, a clearly- and narrowly-defined task: to bring glory to God by *making disciples*.² The way a church is guided, its concept of

² See the paper *Ecclesiology* for a more thorough discussion of the purpose of the church. The ideas of bringing glory to God and making disciples do not always appear together, but that does not mean they are not related. Verses like John 15:8 show the close connection between them, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."

Scripture, unless otherwise noted is taken from the *Holy Bible, New International Version*.

Bibliography

Banks, Robert. *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in their Historical Setting*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980.

Barna, George. *The Frog in the Kettle*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1990.

Barna, George. *User Friendly Churches*. Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1991.

Beckham, Bill, compiler. *Regional Cell Church Conference Materials: The Two-Winged Church Will Fly*. Notebook-syllabus from a regional conference held in Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, 1994. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1994.

Beckham, William A. *The Second Reformation*. Houston, Texas: Touch Publications, Inc., 1995.

Cho, Paul Yonggi. *Successful Home Cell Groups*. Plainfield, New Jersey: Logo International, 1981.

Coleman, Lyman. *Serendipity Small Group Training Manual*. Littleton, Colorado: Serendipity House, 1991.

Coleman, Robert E. *Evangelism in Perspective*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications: 1975.

Coleman, Robert E. *The Master Plan of Evangelism*. Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1964.

Downey, Murray W. *Learning to Care, Daring to Share*. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Christian Publications: 1972.

Faith Community Baptist Church. *Fourth International Conference on the Cell Church*. Bound workshops syllabus from the Fourth International Conference on the Cell Church held in Harrisonburg Virginia, May 22-24, 1995. Singapore: Faith Community Baptist Church, 1995. Available in the U.S.A. from Touch Publications, Inc, Houston, Texas.

Galloway, Dale E. *Lay Pastor Training Manual for Successful Home Group Meetings*. Portland Oregon: New Hope Community Church, undated.

George, Carl F. *Prepare Your Church for the Future*. Tarrytown, New York: Fleming Revell Company, 1991.

Hessegrave, David J. *Planting Churches Cross-Culturally*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980.

Hinkleley, K. C. *Living Proof: A Small Group Video Series Discussion Guide Based on the Book by Jim Petersen*. Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1990.

Horne, Jerry. *Living in the Family: Fellowship in the New Testament*. Atlanta, Georgia: Lamp Press, 1982.

Appendix 2
 Cell Group/Evangelism
FAQ

Q: Why not just let each person evangelize as the Spirit leads them? Why organize church-wide for making disciples?

A: Good question! We want God's work, with God's power! But this is not necessarily incompatible with intentionality, planning, goals, or organization! Let's use the wisdom, discernment and Biblical principles God gives us to actively and intentionally set ourselves about doing God's revealed will! The default pattern in the church is to *organize* for building buildings, church government, compassion ministries etc., but leave the most important work of all (glorifying God by making disciples) up to the "leading" of each individual. In general, this pattern has led to abysmal results. Let's be intentional about organizing our church for the task God has given us, but always leave God room to lead us and to change whatever he likes. If God leads you to follow a different model, with better long-range results, please do so! Please share what you learn with the rest of us.

Q: Do we have to be a cell-type group? Why not a group formed by the ushers, deacons, board members, trustees, worship teams, men's groups, women's groups, etc.?

A: Many small-group dynamics can take place in these settings, but, unfortunately, not the most important ones: the ability to incorporate new people and the ability to multiply. The task-orientation of these groups precludes the needed investment in the many other facets of cell group life.

Note also that groups like these mentioned in the question comprise the leadership and core of the church. If our main task is to be successful, their participation is crucial.

Q: Do we have to multiply? We have such good fellowship!

A: A group that does not multiply experiences natural limitations on growth (e.g., living room size, number of communication lines, etc.). Such a group quickly loses its capacity to incorporate new people. If the group grows large by using a large meeting area etc., it becomes a mini-congregation and loses valuable small group dynamics critical to evangelizing and making disciples. Interestingly, the largest research project ever conducted in the church has come to this conclusion:

After we had processed all 4.2 million survey answers, we calculated which of the 170 variables had the most significant relationship to church growth. It is probably no coincidence that our computer survey selected this variable in the area of "holistic small groups": "Our church consciously promotes the multiplication of small groups through cell division." (Natural Church Development)

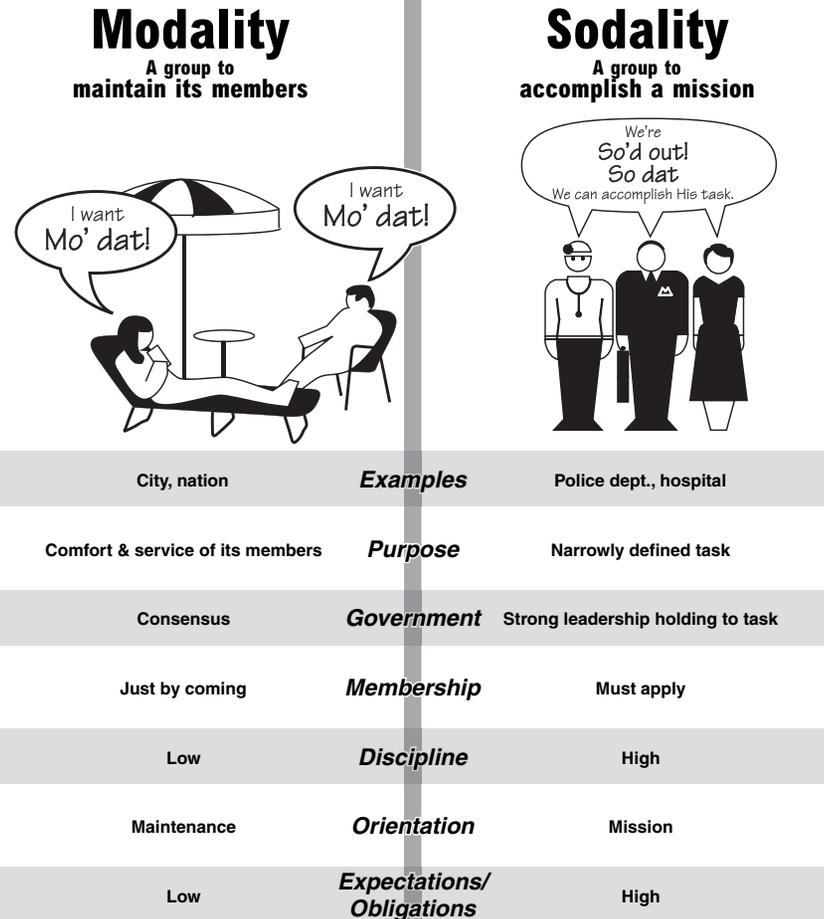
Q: Our group would like to be closed for now. Wouldn't new people coming in ruin the intimate and honest sharing we have now?

A: Usually if an interested unbeliever or a brand-new Christian enters the group, it takes the group to a whole new level of purpose, excitement and real-life sharing. While *concern* about disruption of relationships is common, it is hardly ever experienced. The much more common problem in real life is a failure to bring new people into the group!

Q: I'm busy! Is it reasonable to add this as an entire new layer of activity?

A: The church must be willing to work at streamlining to make room for the most important things. Evangelism and cell-type groups should not be an add-on, but a central organizing principle of the church. Because these groups are the primary setting for pastoral care, accountability, evangelism support, modeling, etc., they must be the "big rocks" we put into our lives before all the other things. Effective work at making disciples (our orders) will necessarily mean competing interests (good though they may be) will not fit into our lives.

Two Competing Models
 With mnemonic devices to distinguish them



Adapted by John Fickett from the discussion in *Leading Your Church to Growth*, by C. Peter Wagner

Figure 1

membership, its discipline, its orientation and its expectations spring from the central purpose given the church by its Lord.

Evangelism, since it is the first of the two sequential phases of discipleship³ is at the center (together with the rest of the disciple-making process) of the

Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, International Bible Society. Used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

³ See the discussion in the paper *Ecclesiology*.

church's existence. If the church relegates making disciples (and so evangelism) to the category of "one of our programs," it has grievously missed its calling.

In shape for the task: trim and focused

The starting point: The conception of "church"

Effectiveness in evangelism begins with the concept of what a church is meant to be. The church is meant by its maker to *accomplish something*. It is to make disciples. Like an athlete with her eye on the goal, a church, in order to be effective in evangelism must be trim and focused. The acid test of the activities and allocation of resources is just this: does it contribute to the purpose of making and becoming disciples? Aspects of the church that do not contribute to this great goal of discipling (either in the short or long range) must be trimmed away. The good must not be allowed to become the enemy of the best. The church's activities must be focused, clearly contributing to its purpose.

The natural tendency of a sodality to metamorphose into a modality

Many large denominations began as clear-cut, purposeful sodalities, but have slowly evolved into sprawling modalities. There are many natural reasons for a steady tendency toward modality.

Among the influences toward modality are: the "quest for respectability,"⁴ the demand for more service to members, second generation leadership who do not refuse competing demands as effectively as the original founders, newer waves of members who do not see the vision as clearly or perhaps were not attracted to the vision/task (in the beginning, that was about all that could attract!). Old members may resent new ones who have not paid the price. Personal relationships may become strained. Lots of good ideas are added to the original task/vision. It becomes broad and difficult to define; members are not sure for what they stand.

If we acknowledge that the church is to be a trim and focused sodality-like organization for the accomplishing of disciple making, and *if* we can see that sodalities tend to slowly but steadily relax into modalities, then we must be vigilant and actively exert a steady pressure from the other side. Figure 2 lists some of the continual influences that must be exerted on a church to keep it focused on its purpose. We can maintain the balanced center position only if we constantly pull in the direction away from the magnet of the "church as usual" model.

Ownership of the task

For the church to be centered around its purpose and be focused on its task, the individuals of the church must have ownership in the purpose of the church. They must view themselves as contributing members of a sodality-like group and have high expectations of themselves with regard to the central vision of the organization. Several metaphors will illustrate.

Agents of the king, subversives

We have a defined task: our goal is not just to *be* a church, but to accomplish the *task* of the church. Our job is to become fit servants, both fruitful and faithful, of a king this world does not know of, and to introduce others to his kingdom, giving them a start along the same path. We are *agents of the king*. We

Orientation

Modality: Maintenance of organization; Sodality: Mission to accomplish

1. Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
2. John 15:8 This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.
3. 2 Cor. 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:
4. 1 Cor. 3:12 If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, 13 his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work.

Government

Modality: Consensus; Sodality: Strong leadership to hold to task.

1. Jesus
2. Church Leaders
1. Luke 6:46 "Why do you call me, 'Lord, Lord,' and do not do what I say?"
2. Church Leaders
1. Acts 16:4 As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by the apostles and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.
2. 2 Cor. 13:2 I already gave you a warning when I was with you the second time. I now repeat it while absent: On my return I will not spare those who sinned earlier or any of the others,
3. Hebr. 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.
4. 1 Pet. 5:1 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder... Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedily for money, but eager to serve;

Expectations/Obligations

Modality: Low; Sodality: High

1. 1 Cor. 9:24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. 27 No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.
2. Gal. 6:8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.
3. 2 Tim. 2:3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus.
4. James 1:12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

⁴Wagner, *Leading Your Church to Growth*, p 156.

Sodality-like Characteristics of the Church in Scripture

Purpose

Modality: Comfort, service of its members; Sodality: Narrowly defined task.

1. Matt. 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.
2. Matt. 28:19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
3. 1 Pet. 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

Membership

Modality: Just by coming; Sodality: Must apply/high standards

1. Matt. 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.”
2. Luke 14:26 If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters —yes, even his own life —he cannot be my disciple.
3. Mark 10:28 Peter said to him, “We have left everything to follow you!”
4. Luke 9:59 He said to another man, “Follow me.” But the man replied, “Lord, first let me go and bury my father.” 60 Jesus said to him, “Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.” 61 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.” 62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
5. Luke 9:61 Still another said, “I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say good-by to my family.” 62 Jesus replied, “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.”
6. Luke 14:33 In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple. 34 “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? 35 It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Discipline

Modality: Low; Sodality: High

1. Acts 5:9 Peter said to her, “How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.” 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.
2. 1 Cor. 5:5 Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord.
3. Titus 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him.

Needed: A Pull to One Side To Keep Things Centered

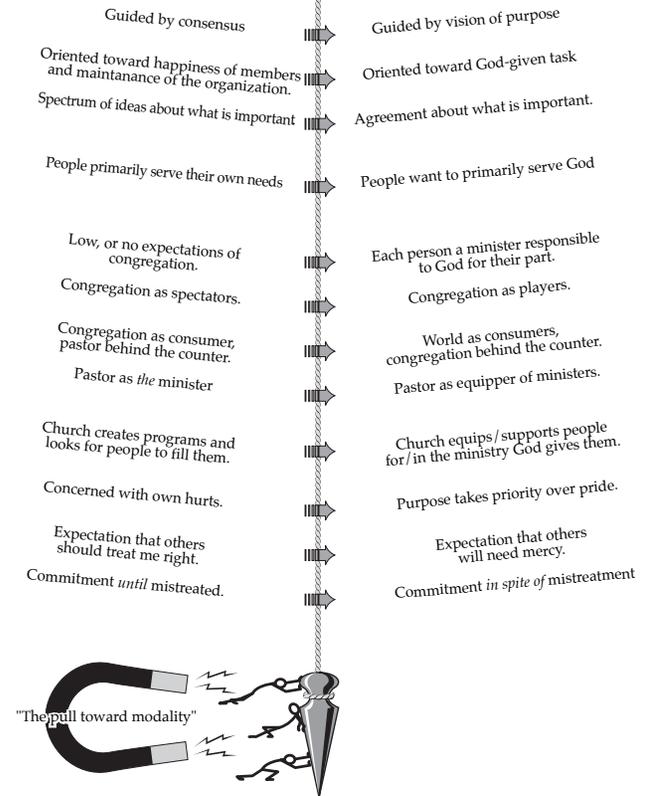


Figure 2

work for him, bringing others under his rule and reign. Our primary loyalty is not to ourselves, or even to this world, but to our sovereign. Whatever our “cover” (banker, housewife, welder, etc.), our real job is to represent the king and carry forward his plans and purposes.

In a sense we are *subversives* (to borrow a term from Eugene Peterson⁵). We are helping people, one by one, out of their present loyalties into the service of a new king. The kingdom spreads from heart to heart. We are called to be salt and light. Our weapons are not guns and tanks, but truth and love.

Though we are trying to be as forthright as possible, we are not generally recognized for what we are: People either pat us on the head, muttering “isn’t that nice” or, glancing our direction, snicker behind their hands. We are not

⁵ The term, and some of the ideas that inspired the next several paragraphs are from the excellent article: Eugene H. Peterson, “The Subversive Pastor,” *Leadership*. X, no. 2 (Spring 1989), 48-53.

surprised: we live with our feet in a world they don't see and obey a Lord they think is a fairy tale. To them we are wandering aimlessly, behaving erratically, falling out of step with the only world they know. We see that the world in which they are working so hard to build a home has already been marked "condemned" and begun to be dismantled."

We work to overthrow and "undermine the kingdom of self" and establish beachheads of the Kingdom of God. "When we say 'kingdom of God,' no one gets apprehensive as if we had just announced (which we thought we had) that a powerful army is poised on the border, ready to invade."⁸

People do not recognize who we really are: we know that the American way of life (and that of this entire world) is doomed, at this moment passing away, and "another kingdom is right now being formed in secret to take its place."⁹

The incredible things are what Christians everywhere say they believe, yet often live as if they were not true. There is a vast difference between conceiving oneself primarily as an agent of the king, on the one hand, and participating in a once-a-week evangelism program on the other (though they are certainly not incompatible).

Co-op not department store

Many people conceive of their role in the church like a customer in a department store—they scan the goods for what they would like to take home, put some money down and leave, glad (if they think of it) that there are competent staff to make the whole experience possible.

A better picture is the co-op store. The store exists by dint of the hard work of its members. There is a direct relation between what individuals put into the store and what is available to be taken from it. Everyone has an assigned task that contributes to the whole.

In the church, each individual must contribute to the cooperative task. He must look past what he would like for himself today and consider his part in the larger process.

Consumer, provider,

One woman searching for words that would capture the progress of her spiritual life said, "I used to be just a 'consumer' of God."

I imagine she meant she viewed God as "for" her—God existed to take care of her and serve her. When she came to church it was as one coming up to the counter where she expected the pastor to take down "God's stuff" off the shelves and serve it up to her so that she could take home what she liked.

She needed to make the transition from viewing herself primarily as consumer of "God's stuff" to distributor of the same. The transition she needed to make was coming around the counter, going from someone waiting to be served to someone behind the counter taking the life of God in Jesus Christ and "serving" it to the people of the world.

The perspective in passages like "The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (1 John 2:17); "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you" (John 6:27).

⁷ Peterson, "The Subversive Pastor," p. 49.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Born to Multiply
Growth Goals

Goal	Each family invites one new family every four months to their small group. This will result in 300 invitations per 100 member families (not counting invitations from new families)	If one out of six of those invited (50 families per 100 member families) respond and become a part of a small group, the number of people growing in the Lord will be half again as large by the end of the year.
Challenge	Each family invites one new family every two months to their small group. This will result in 600 invitations per 100 member families (not counting invitations from new families)	If one out of six of those invited (100 families per 100 member families) respond and become a part of a small group, the Lord's team of kingdom workers will be twice as large by the end of the year.
Sacrifice	Each family invites one new family every six weeks to their small group. This will result in 867 invitations per 100 member families (not counting invitations from new families)	If one out of six of those invited (145 families per 100 member families) respond and become a part of a small group, the disciples-in-the-making will be about two and a half times as large by the end of the year.

Prayer Cover Goals

Goal	Each individual will pray several times weekly for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small group pastors Other church leadership At least one other family in a the small group Opportunity to invite a new family every 6 mo. Families he or she has invited or will invite
Challenge	Each individual will pray daily for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small group pastors & meetings Other church leadership Leadership being raised up One missionary contact At least two other families at their small group. Opportunity to invite a new family every 2 mo. Families he or she has invited or will invite
Sacrifice	Each individual will pray daily and fast weekly (for a day or a meal) for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The small group pastors & meetings Other church leadership Leadership being raised up One missionary contact At least two other families at their small group Opportunity to invite a new family every 6wks. Families he or she has invited or will invite

Figure 5

dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith; I have deeds.' Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do" (James 2:17-18).

The TMWL catalyzes prayer in other settings as well. They form part of the agenda at periodic half nights of prayer. Within the group, a group "Blessing List"³⁰ can be created by inviting each group member to contribute one to three names from their TMWLs. Group members regularly spend time (when no visitors are present) praying for needs from each other's TMWL's.

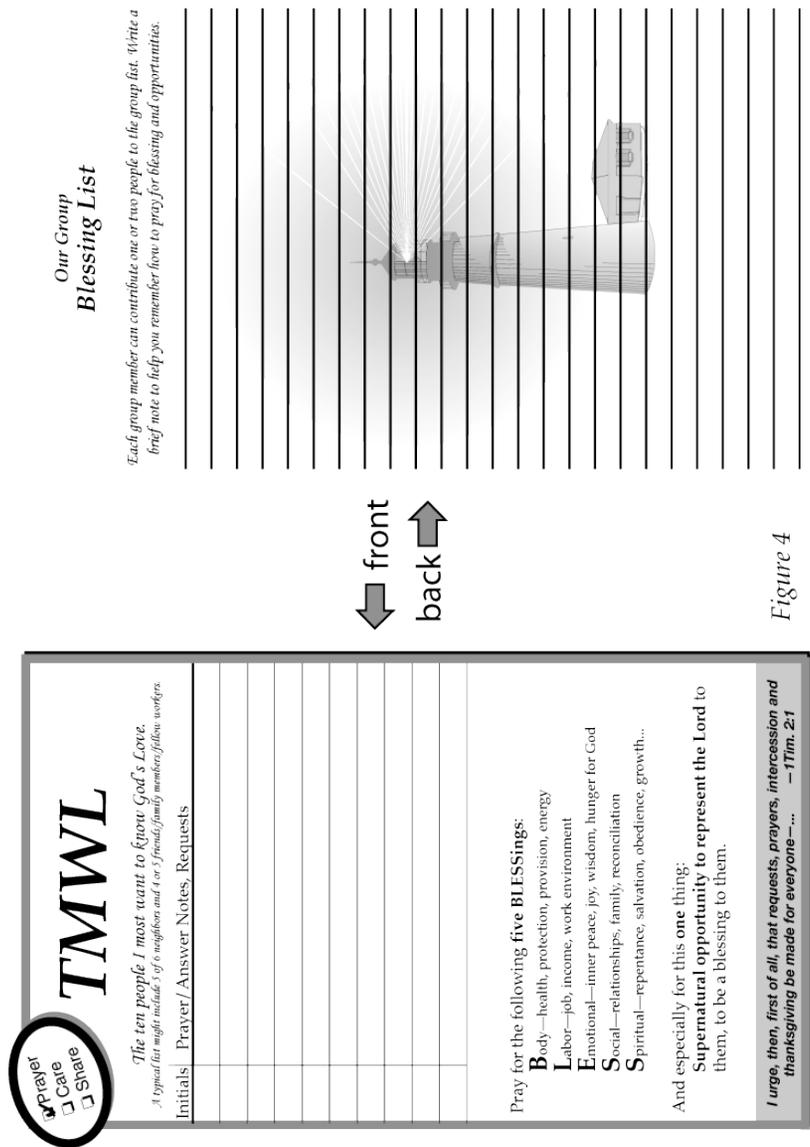


Figure 4

³⁰ A name used by Touch Ministries. Touch makes a pre-printed "Blessing List" which can be used in the group setting to record individuals to pray for.

Channels, not receptacles

Similarly, it is helpful for believers to consider themselves channels, not just receptacles. Each believer has the opportunity to be the conduit through which the good news of life in Jesus may pass to another.

Principles and priorities

In obedience to the Lord's character and commands, certain principles and priorities must be identified before a pattern for evangelism can be described. Evangelism must then be designed *around* these principles.

Communication, not just dispensing a message

We operate in a very different setting than did the New Testament evangelists or even the evangelists of a couple of generations ago.

In much evangelism in the New Testament (for instance the evangelism in Acts 2:22-41) the evangelist was speaking to groups who had clear, developed concepts of God, sin, forgiveness, righteousness, revelation, fulfillment of prophecy, etc.—they even had messianic expectations! In other words, when the evangelist approached them, she had available for her use a huge reservoir of words, concepts, metaphors, symbols, cultural experiences, etc., that she held in common with them.

This is definitely not so today. Because ideas about God, judgment, Heaven, Hell, salvation, eternal life, creation, etc., are less and less drawn from a common cultural pot, communication can easily go awry.

Imagine a modern professional, vaguely New Age in his orientation, having molded his own "spiritual awareness" from scraps collected from college buddies, comments of TV personalities, Star Wars, and what he reads in the popular press. Assume that to him "God" means the river of consciousness that each one of us gets down to if we delve deeply enough into our spiritual, primordial selves. He is not sure if death brings simple annihilation or whether it just restarts the cycle *à la* the very up-to-date idea of Hindu soul-recycling. He views the ideas of Heaven and Hell as childish anachronisms typified by medieval engravings and Disney movies ("Imagine someone actually believing that if you went up in a space ship far enough, you would really find pearly gates, people in celestial bathrobes sweeping stardust, and playing elevator music on harps!").

Now imagine what goes through his mind when someone knocks on his door and says "Suppose that you were to die tonight and stand before God and He were to say to you, 'Why should I let you into my heaven?' What would you say?"¹⁰ In the conversation that followed, each party might presumptuously think they are being heard and understood, but in reality very little communication is likely to take place until one or the other of the parties makes a serious effort to choose as the starting point of her conversation the present "cultural location" of the other person.

The relevance of this point is rapidly increasing in our culture. One has only to consult secular newspaper accounts of revivals in the days of D. L. Moody or Billy Sunday to be struck with how much more broad was the reservoir of

¹⁰ D. James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, 1970), p. 21. This is not to imply that Kennedy's book is useless. It has offered much to the body of Christ but needs to be balanced by material that gives more attention to issues such as process and relationship.

religious words, concepts and symbols shared across the culture.

For communication to exist, careful attention must be paid not only to what we want to say, but also by what means the other person can hear it. An unintelligible message delivered loudly to thousands over a public address system is still an unintelligible message.

Effective, selfless evangelism steers away from avenues of communication that may be the most comfortable for the speaker in favor of those that most readily carry the message to the listener.

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (1 Cor. 9:19-23).

There are plenty of "windows" of communication that do bridge the gap between Christian and non-Christian: "...all people have built-in receptors to the gospel: guilt, desires for love and significance, and fear of death."¹¹

The gospel itself may be a stumbling block to many, and we have no business changing it to make it "easier." But we must do all in our power to eliminate as much as possible all the stumbling blocks on the way to the gospel. Is it reasonable, helpful or spiritual to expect unbelievers to become fluent in Elizabethan English, circa 1611 before they can hear the gospel? To develop an appreciation for a genre of music they never listen to, on instruments they are not familiar with, before they can enjoy one of our "evangelistic" meetings? Should they carry a dictionary so they can understand the special uses we give to words and the special words we use for ordinary things ("convicted," in the "religious" sense, as an example of the first; "souls" for "people" as an example of the second)?

True, these examples are extreme and it is just as possible to degrade the gospel by exaggerated attempts to be "way cool." But there are any number of ways that evangelism is commonly presented that start out with one strike against the unchurched: To associate it primarily with church, to associate it primarily with "old time revival" ethos (very attractive to many *Christians*), perhaps even to associate it strongly with dressing up; all of these introduce unnecessary thresholds the unchurched must cross over before they even get to the gospel. Evangelism, after all, is an attempt to reach people *unlike us*. Our goal should be to present the truth we have in the most winsome, clear, and persuasive way—from their perspective—that fully honors the truth of the message.

A process, not just a contact point

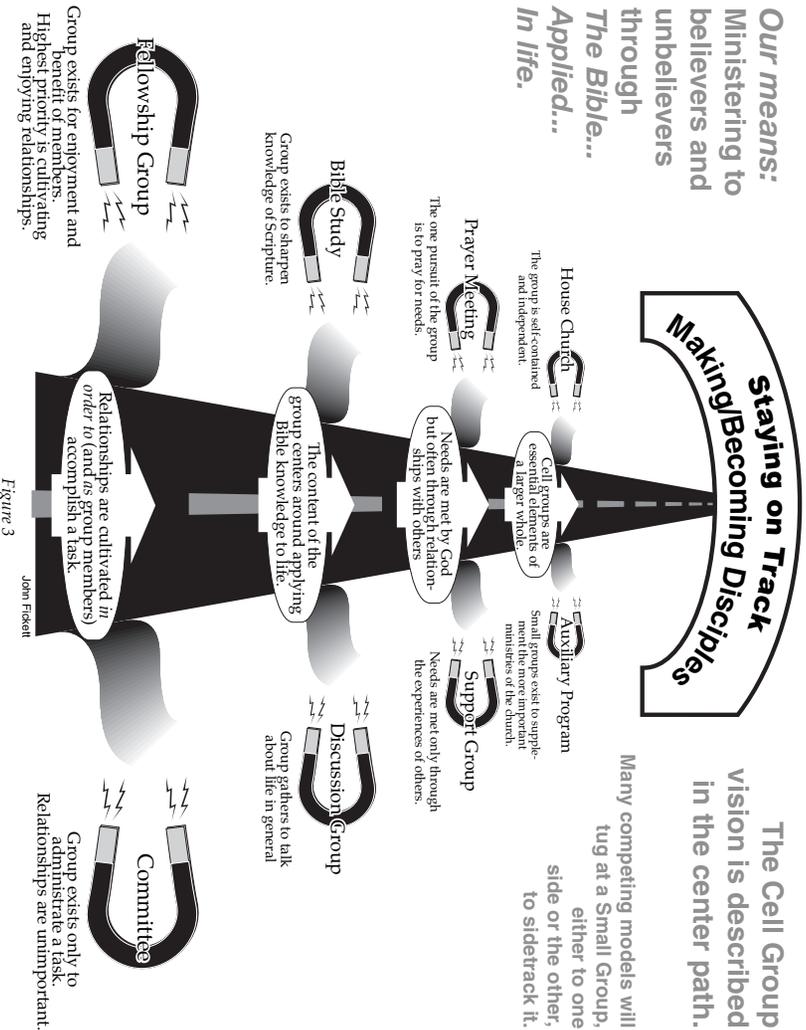
"One shot" evangelism

One typical picture of evangelism is the "evangelism program" where

¹¹ K. C. Hinkleley, *Living Proof: A Small Group Video Series Discussion Guide Based on the Book by Jim Petersen*, (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress, 1990), p. 93..

The Cell Group vision is described in the center path.

Many competing models will tug at a Small Group, either to one side or the other, to sidetrack it.



Each TMWL has printed on the back (see figure 4) a group list to be prayed about by the whole cell group. Especially as a special event approaches, group members can pray for an openness to the invitations that will be made. Group members can always be committed to praying these people through the stages of coming to the Lord and praying for supernatural opportunities to represent Jesus to them. A proportion of the people in the church will commit themselves to pray daily for supernatural opportunities to have a kingdom contact with someone on their TMWL.

People in a group may commit to one of three levels of goals relative to their TMWL (see figure 5). The goals cover prayer first of all, but also invitations, etc. Goals, if they are prayerfully made, if God is given permanent editing rights, and if they are pursued in real dependence upon God are compatible with faith. "In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is

relationships cultivated *in order to* and *as* they work together to accomplish a defined task. Interestingly, relationships are more effectively cultivated by working together on a worthwhile task, than by simply pursuing fellowship for its own sake. Groups that wait until the “fellowship is right” will never get there. Groups that work hard together for the kingdom will discover they are becoming the best of friends.

Groups are not a Bible study, existing only to sharpen the knowledge of scripture, neither are they only discussion groups offering nothing more than the “pooled ignorance” of the participants. Rather, the group focuses on scripture applied to life in the disciple-making process. Not just training for increased knowledge, but gathering together to help each other prepare for another week’s foray into battle.

Groups are not just a prayer meeting, calling on God to meet needs. Neither are they only a support group where needs are met only through the experiences of others. Rather, the group is a setting where caring people, taking responsibility for building others up, can share the resources of God as they depend on him and cultivate an openness to the work of the Holy Spirit through them. This whole process is bathed in prayer.

A group is not a house church, self-contained and independent. Neither are groups just another program tacked on to the many already existing. Rather they are the essential elements that fit together—like cells in a human body—to make a larger whole. Cell groups are not something the church sponsors, they are what the cell church is. A weekly larger gathering not only provides opportunity for corporate celebration and worship, and of the word, but also means for “realignment”—the refocusing of many elements of church life on one goal. All of these distinctives of a cell group are illustrated in figure 3.

Centering the evangelistic focus of the church in cell groups is not incompatible with larger corporate evangelistic events. These can usually be made complementary in a very effective way, with the groups providing the context of relationship and personal follow-up.

Groups themselves pursue evangelistic events. Groups can go on prayer walks in twos and threes in the hosts’ neighborhood, praying for the families by name. Neighbors could even be asked if they have needs for which they would like the group to pray. An ice cream party or block party could be held at one of the host’s homes. Neighboring families could be invited to a “field day” for the kids. A group could take pizza or barbecue to a new neighbor of one of the group members. An effective Easter outreach has been done by some cell churches by using the Campus Crusade Jesus film in homes.

One cell group church has had remarkable results by specifying every other cell group meeting as an evangelistic one. The alternate weeks are focused on edification and training.

Ten Most Wanted List

Prayer is essential to evangelism. Intentionality is indispensable. One way to facilitate these two things is through a Ten Most Wanted List—TMWL.²⁹ Each person in the church can prayerfully create a list of the ten people he most wants to come to know the Lord’s love, to whom he most wants to represent Jesus, and for whom is the most willing to pray for diligently.

volunteers spend one night a week doing cold-call door knocking to tell people the good news of Jesus. Another is a large evangelistic public meeting where thousands of people gather to hear the gospel and be offered an opportunity to respond.

Both of these models have been used greatly by the Lord. But as valuable as they are, they are misleading as models of evangelism. Evangelism is a process of cultivating and sowing that will, Lord willing, lead to and include reaping. The two events mentioned are really reaping events rather than evangelistic events. In general, for a person to respond to “one shot” evangelism (e.g., cold call or meeting evangelism) they must have already been involved in a process—my experience suggests at least fifteen to twenty-five positive contacts with the message and/or model of Christianity. No one would seek to double the country’s wheat production by only doubling the reaping activity, yet the church sometimes applies this logic to evangelism.

We would hardly approach strangers with a one-shot attempt to get them to buy a certain house or marry a certain person of our choosing. Yet we approach them with a one-shot attempt to get them to follow Jesus—in infinitely more momentous decision.

It may be objected that in evangelism, we play more the role of catalyst, bringing influence greater than ourselves into the life of the other person making a one-shot encounter sufficient. True, as heralds of the gospel we work in concert with the Holy Spirit and with the scripture. Even so, as our culture diversifies and the common ground we share with others diminishes, the need for a *process* of evangelism increases (as evidenced by the ineffectiveness of the one-shot approach to the New Age professional, above).

The reality of the progression

In general, people who come to the Lord have progressed through fairly predictable stages. These are articulated differently by different experts in the field of evangelism, but the stages delineated by Jim Peterson serve as a good example of evangelism as progression:¹²

1. Going his or her own way
2. Aware of messenger
3. Has positive attitude toward messenger
4. Aware of difference in messenger
5. First aware of Bible’s relevance to life
6. Has positive attitude toward the Bible
7. Aware of basics of the gospel
8. Understands meaning and implications of gospel
9. Has positive attitude toward gospel
10. Recognizes personal need
11. Decides to act
12. Repents and believes.

Evangelism is more effective if it is tailor-made to the individual’s pilgrimage. A very different approach is best for a person at stage eight, than the one at stage one. Jim Peterson writes, “Evangelism is a process of guiding someone, in the power of God, to make mini-decisions on the way to choosing for or against Jesus Christ. Our tasks in that process are to cultivate (prepare the emotional soil), sow (plant the seed in the mind), harvest (pick the crop, e.g. see the fruit

²⁹ Inspired by Jim Petersen in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 22 ff.

¹² Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 25.

Viewing evangelism narrowly as a one-shot event can be detrimental to progress in real evangelism for both the evangelist and the evangelized. On the evangelist's side, it causes the evangelists first of all to pursue reaping activities only, leading to imbalance and ineffectiveness in the investment of the church's energies. Secondly, it gives rise to false expectations, causing many to be disappointed that their evangelistic efforts have not led to immediate conversions—not realizing that perseverance in their efforts might have led to salvation for another. On the side of the evangelized, it is easy for the "quick conversion" experience of the evangelized to lead only to antibodies against the real faith-life in Jesus. Having "tried the religious thing" without any concept of following Jesus, they can later confidently assert, "that didn't work."

Modeling, not just cognitive transfer

It has often been said that Christianity is more caught than taught. Much of the discipline making process, in all of its stages, is closely associated with modeling.

Demonstrating the product: let me evaluate the real thing

Jesus invites the world's examination of the lives—corporate and individual—of Christians. He gives the unbeliever the right to judge the identity of the believer by whether a demonstration of love is visible: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:35). By unity and fellowship with God, believers demonstrate that Jesus is the one sent by God and that he represents God's love: "My prayer is...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me....May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me" (John 17:20-23). The demonstration of goodness in the face of adversity will lead unbelievers to recognize the glorious greatness of God: "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pet. 2:12).

By watching Christians, the unbeliever is able to "see the product" before he "buys." One of the strongest evangelistic tools given to the church is the church—the church in action: Christians being the body of Christ, caring for one another, experiencing the power of God in their lives, taking part in ministry.

*"New Testament fellowship does not stop with itself, but causes us to look away from ourselves to the world outside our circle, and to vote to one another the loyalty that it will take to storm and conquer the world for Christ. The perfect unity between the Father and the Son is to be manifested in the personal relationships of believers, so that the world, seeing that unity in love, might believe. We will convince the unbelieving world by the very quality of our own fellowship, and all men will know that we are disciples of Christ, and that he is sent from God. Let us all cooperate to fulfill our Lord's prayer in John 17:20-23, and by the quality of our mutual love, fellowship and unity, compel unbelievers in our own age to exclaim, not in sarcasm but in wonder, 'See how these Christians love one another.'"*¹⁴

¹⁴ Jerry Horner, *Living in the Family: Fellowship in the New Testament* (Atlanta, Georgia: 10

¹³ Cf. the chart on page 27 of Hinckley, *Living Proof*.

religious jargon, incomprehensible traditions seemingly designed to intimidate the visitor, long droning prayers, etc.) in the way if there are unbelievers present.

The cell group's place in supporting those evangelizing

This part of the cell's function is the most important for fruitful evangelism. Nearly all sincere believers want to evangelize. Few, however, are actually able to see fruit. We (at least those not particularly gifted in evangelism) need friendly accountability, support, a pattern to follow and modeling.

- **Accountability:** I have often heard individuals say, "I want to reach out, but I know I wouldn't do it without you [group members] holding my feet to the fire." A friendly inquiry, e.g., "how'd your conversation go with the guy you carpool with?" is just the thing to keep us investing in such activities.
- **Support:** People new to influencing others toward the Lord are often intimidated at the thought. The cell group provides others to walk along beside. Encouraging words are exchanged. Vision for how God can work through regular people like us is held up regularly.
- **A pattern:** In the group people are walked through the Ten-Most-Wanted List and learn how to pray regularly through it. Group members spontaneously share their experiences building relationships with others. The group (by itself or with other groups) plans informal social events to which outsiders will be invited. Preparation for and follow-up to the event is carefully planned and prayed through.
- **Modeling:** The group member gets to watch others and benefit from others' experiences. Often *teaching* on reaching out to others is not put into practice until an example can be seen. Group members exchange ideas and experiences. Each group member learns something about powerful prayer from other members.

The cell group's distinctives

Every group is kept on course by a group pastor and an intern group pastor who share the responsibilities of keeping the group on track with its purpose.

Multiplication is, from the beginning, a primary goal for each group. Socially-like, cell groups don't just exist for the benefit of those in the group; the group exists for disciple making. In this disciple making process, two things are accomplished in the context of the same meetings: Christian participants are helped in the never-ending process of *becoming* disciples, and at the same time, they are helped to *make* disciples by bringing unbelievers to the Lord. Groups refer regularly to their goal of multiplying and avoid degenerating into a fellowship-only group, with no focus outside the group.

Groups grow to twelve to fifteen adults and then multiply. Each time a group grows for celebration, a victory in the kingdom of God. Each group represents another beachhead for the Lord, another light in the darkness. Groups and group members do not always default to ideal courses of action when left unattended. To keep a group on course with its disciple-making goal, good leadership must steadily guide it away from the attractions of competing models of what a group should be.

Groups are not just an evangelism committee, existing only to accomplish a purpose, with no relationships. Neither are they merely a fellowship group with good relationships but no purpose outside themselves. Rather, they enjoy

setting where they also have a modeling, demonstrating, evangelistic impact. Secondly, the number of meetings is reduced so that people, having gained the vision of being agents of the king, have the time to pursue meaningful relationships with some of their unbelieving friends.

In a cell group church, the cells are the primary entry point (the point where the unbeliever/new believer adds community involvement to relationships with individual believers). As cell meetings rotate from house to house, church members have the opportunity to invite their non-Christian friends to a meeting in their own house. They could invite in a way something like: "Hey Bob, you remember Steve and Tracy Witt who you met at that barbecue at my house? Every week Toni and I, the Witts and two other couples meet together to discuss the Bible and encourage one another. I'm always glad to be a part of it, and I'd love it if you could come check it out!"

Bob has just received a non-threatening (comparatively) invitation to come watch Christianity in action, see lives in the process of transformation, and be exposed to the Word of God. He already knows a good proportion of those who will be in attendance and he already feels comfortable in the host's home.

In the cell group meeting he may encounter the surprising power of God, as someone in a sensitive way prays for the healing or provision of another. He may join in on the plans to help a group member pour the foundation for a new garage on the coming weekend. He will expand the circle of Christians (and *kinds* of Christians) he knows. He will witness different styles of Christian families.

For the new, or non-believer, assimilation into the community of believers through the cell group is ideal since committed relationships and opportunity for meaningful service (the two elements often identified as the crucial parts of assimilation) are already in place at the outset. In addition, the new believer is already involved in modeling/values transfer, friendly accountability, prayer, Bible study/application, pastoral care, etc. Even one-on-one or one-on-few discipleship training is best done as an ancillary activity to the small group, making the addition to the weekly schedule less than it would be in a completely separate set of relationships.

The cell group's place in the evangelistic process

Invitation to the cell group is *not* the primary evangelistic act in the life of the unbeliever. In most cases, group members have already invested heavily in three other ways in the life of the unbeliever. First, they will have prayed diligently for that person. Not only are they praying for their own friends but regularly pray for the contacts of the other group members (see below). Secondly, they will have worked sincerely to build a relationship with the other person. Thirdly, they would have sought to involve the person with other group members in informal, non-threatening settings (e.g., a picnic, watching the superbowl, eating together, making homemade ice cream, playing wally-ball). Ed Silvano has captured the process in a pithy motto: "Prayer. Care. Share."

The invitation to the group is often the fourth stage. Group members make the invitation of friends and acquaintances a high priority. Meetings are always open and guests are always more than welcome. Group leaders are prepared to be flexible and can lead a meeting differently depending on what needs are present.

The cell group meetings are a powerful presentation of the work of God in the lives of individuals, yet without having unnecessary cultural barriers (lots of

It is often in the lives of Christians that God first becomes visible to the seeker. There is a relevant comment attributed to Henrietta Mears: "I first began to love my teacher—then my teacher's God." Even if the truth is not first perceived by means of the model, it had better be backed up by the model: "speech without demonstration will not convince anyone for long."¹⁵ Jesus' admonition is timeless:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:14-16).

All one has to do is look up phrases like "one another" and "each other" in a concordance to discover that there is a great deal of the Christian life that can only happen among Christians *together*. This can only be modeled by the community.

Part of the Christian invitation should be: "Come and see what this looks like in the lives of real people." It may be considerably less threatening to some to start by saying, "Come observe Christians," rather than to begin with "Do you want to be one?"

Demonstrating the process: show me how

Every parent and teacher knows that modeling is more influential than instruction. Particularly if we are learning to *do* or to *be* and not just to *know*, modeling is irreplaceable. A seeker is many steps ahead if he has seen how repentance, humility, dependence upon God, commitment, etc. look in the lives of people he knows. Without these things, "counting the cost" may be meaningless.

Modeling: more than facts and theory

In western technological society, it is all too easy to reduce conversion to a cognitive transfer. In the extreme case, we download certain information to the person, query him about his evaluation of that information, and, having received his mental assent to the appropriate propositions, pronounce him a Christian.

Instead, Christianity is first of all a relationship with God—the call of Jesus is "follow me." The changes conversion is to initiate—the life of obedience, the view of a world with God at the center, a new set of values and priorities, love and commitment to God, love and commitment toward others, etc.—go much further than mere information. They are facilitated most of all by model.¹⁶ "Religious affections" are not generally the result of textbook reading.

For this reason we value our relationships even more and live our own lives with a sense of awe, realizing that *people are likely to become Christians similar to those they become Christians around*.

The whole process of discipleship as seen in the model of Jesus is one that capitalizes on modeling for a mentor/apprentice approach. The stages of

Lamp Press, 1982), p.107.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ This is not to say that these changes are not the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, given the work of the Holy Spirit in an individual's life, modeling is a much more effective context than that of knowledge exchange only.

discipleship, as elucidated by Robert Coleman, for instance, illustrate the necessity of modeling: Association, Impartation, Demonstration, Delegation, Supervision, Reproduction.¹⁷

Relationship, not just contact

After a poor apprehension of the church's purpose, the most significant factor in the lack of evangelism in the modern church may be in the area of relationships.

There are good reasons why relationships, Christian to non-Christian, and Christian-to-Christian are crucial to the success of evangelism.

With unbelievers

The crucial surface area: where Christians and non-Christians come together.

Most people who are converted are brought to the Lord in the context of relationship. This is usually true even for large reaping events. The vast majority of those who make commitments at large public meetings were present at those meetings, and sensitized to the gospel, because of significant relationships with believers. The same can be said for those who respond to cold-call evangelism.

In the security and trust of a caring relationship, a much greater openness to new things is found. Nearly all the benefits of modeling listed above are found primarily in the context of significant relationships. Rebecca Fikkert puts the priority of relationship in perspective:

"I am not saying there is no place for contact evangelism. But I am saying that by far the most effective, the most costly and even perhaps the most biblical kind of evangelism is found in the person or group who look at the people around them, those with whom their own life naturally intersects and then begin to cultivate friendships and to love them. When churches start to reach out to their neighborhoods through small groups, the impact can be overwhelming."¹⁸

This narrows our attention to what may be the most critical of weak links in evangelism in evangelical churches: *Christians have very few significant relationships with non-Christians.* We must actively, purposefully cultivate relationships with unbelievers and un-churched. It is essential that we expand the area of interface between individual Christians and individual non-Christians. This "surface area" is the membrane across which the good news of Jesus is able to pass. This is fully compatible with holiness and separation from the world:

While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" "On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt. 9:10-13).

¹⁷ Robert Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1964). These are the chapter headings, which make an apt summary of the book.
¹⁸ Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker & into the World* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1979), p. 174.

The Cell Group Church (an implementation of evangelism)

In practical terms, what sort of a program can capitalize on the necessary elements of evangelism listed above? If a working model of evangelism could be set up that recognized the importance of real communication in the context of modeling relationships, giving God room to work and at the same time recognizing the ministry of every believer, what would it look like? There are many good answers, each with relative strengths and weaknesses, each specially suited to some settings more than others. One of the best, and in terms of sheer numbers of conversions per member in contemporary churches, possibly the very best, is the cell group church.

The value of cell groups

The cell group church does not *have* an evangelistic program it is an evangelistic program—or at least a discipleship program from which evangelism is inseparable. A cell group church is a sodality-like structure, a "lean mean military machine"²⁸ wielding spiritual weapons for the kingdom to the glory of God.

- Is evangelism a process? Cell groups are ideal for making long-term relationships between Christians and seekers.
- Is evangelism communication without the introduction of needless barriers or unnecessary cultural thresholds that have to be crossed to get to the gospel? What better context than friendly groups of people meeting informally in someone's home?
- Does evangelism depend on modeling? Is there a better setting than a small group where people are in regular contact with each other and becoming familiar with the day-to-day details of the each other's lives? Are relationships crucial to evangelism? What church setting offers a better setting for meaningful, committed, modeling relationships than a cell group?
- Is evangelism the work of every believer in dependence upon God? Which cultivates the ministry of every believer better, evangelism conceived of as a large public event, evangelism conceived of as a (threatening!) door-knocking program for the courageous, or evangelism pursued as a process that takes place along the lines of existing relationships and in the context of Christian community?

A cell group church (not a church with small groups) identifies the cell as the primary setting for pastoral care, building up of believers by one another, significant committed relationships, the use of spiritual gifts, the hammering out of application of the Word in real life, prayer, assimilation of new believers, etc.

This consolidation of the functions of the church has two effects helpful to evangelism. First, in the cell group church these operations are taking place in a

²⁷ Jim Petersen, quoted in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 56
²⁸ A phrase used by Lawrence Khong of Faith Community Baptist Church, Hong Kong, and, undoubtedly, others.

nothing less than the miraculous. If God is not in it, it will fail. If he is allowed to work, no limit can be imposed by human frailty to what can be accomplished. This is the one great over-arching truth that must appear over every discussion of plans and programs or of theories and methods of evangelism.

Because God is God and we're not, prayer is absolutely crucial: "Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor in vain" (Ps. 127:1). To neglect prayer is to come to the work of God with human weakness instead of God's strength. We must pray faithfully. We must pray corporately, in small groups, and individually. Effective evangelism is virtually non-existent where prayer is anything less than a major priority.

We are, whether we acknowledge it or not, absolutely dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit. It is his work to draw the heart toward God. He is the one able to give us the words to say, to enable the life we live that will bring others to Jesus.

For any individual, the single determining factor, in the last analysis, is his dependent relationship with Jesus. Jesus states the case in almost embarrassingly simple terms: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Every believer, not just professionals

While not every believer is spiritually gifted as a specialist in evangelism, every believer has her part in the church's purpose of evangelism. Paul could say "But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us" (2 Cor. 4:7). This statement is equally applicable to all believers. Few of those who would want to evade the responsibility to evangelize would contend the assertion that they are "jars of clay." And all alike are carriers of "this treasure"—which from the context is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (verse 6).

This treasure, the life of Jesus, is what every believer offers the world. In the verses quoted earlier, Christians are depicted as those who "shine like stars in the universe as [they] hold out the word of life" (Philippians 2:15-16).

Every Christian is responsible. The metaphors offered above as church models illustrate this well: Instead of the pastor standing behind the counter of God's store serving up "God's stuff" to the church people, we are all "coming around the counter" to serve up "God's stuff" to the lost world. This is inherent in our perception of the church as a sodality-like organization, where every member unhesitatingly assumes he will be expected to contribute to the central task for which the group exists.

•••

Jesus' method of making disciples was not just cognitive (knowledge-related), but involved teaching by modeling in the context of relationship. These aspects imply process, not just a one-point contact. Relationships both enable and require careful communication that is other-centered, not self-centered. All of these elements must be "owned" by average believers—not just the professionals or the specially gifted (whose role in the body may include training the church at large in their area of giftedness).

Effective communication, process, modeling, and community are complimentary, inter-related facets of evangelism. In the words of Jim Peterson "These three influences—our lives [modeling], the band of kindred spirits of

The church not only neglects this ultra-important point on occasion, it sometimes unwittingly works against it. It is not hard to find dedicated Christians who spend three or four evenings at the church each week. For some of these meetings they spend time at home in preparation or follow-up. They are, in addition, part of committed relationships with other believers and available for help or counsel. Where is space in the schedule of such a person (especially if they also prioritize family responsibilities as they should) for significant relationships with unbelievers? The church, having established the values of the kingdom, should purposefully minimize activities *for the sake of evangelism!*

A good model is so-called "oikos" evangelism,¹⁹ labeled with the Greek word for household. In this model, the believer, from the start of her relationship with Jesus, takes evangelistic responsibility for those with whom she has natural relationship. "Household" in this setting is defined as all of those within one's sphere of influence—family, job-related contacts, friends, etc. These are the people with whom bridges of communication already exist. Joe Aldrich reminds us that:

Frequently the unsaved are viewed as enemies rather than victims of the Enemy. Spirituality is viewed as separation from the unsaved. The new Christian is told he has "nothing in common" with his unsaved associates. Quite frankly, I have a lot in common with them: a mortgage, car payments, kids who misbehave, a lawn to mow, a car to wash, a less-than-perfect marriage, a few too many pounds around my waist, and an interest in sports, hobbies, and other activities they enjoy. It is well to remember that Jesus was called "a friend of sinners."²⁰

The benefit of the oikos model is the focus it gives and the value it places on relationships as the pathways for evangelism's progress. In my personal experience, most Christians, whether or not they are familiar with terms like "oikos evangelism," or "network evangelism," can nevertheless articulate the relationships that were significant in bringing them to commitment to the Lord.

Community: a setting for evangelism.

It is in community that Christians can be seen being what Christians *are*: Members of a larger body, each necessary to the full expression of the larger group. It is in community that evangelism's facets of relationship, modeling and process are maximized. God may be especially visible in the relationships of Christians: "No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us" (1 John 4:12).

In Acts, people were awed not only by the Christian message, but by Christians:

The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade. No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil

¹⁹Espoused, for instance, in materials published by Touch Outreach Ministries (See Bibliography).

²⁰ Joe Aldrich, in his book *Life-Style Evangelism*, quoted in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 33.

Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved. (Acts 2:45-47)

The normal pattern is for the individual's evangelistic efforts to be a complementary part of the communities. Jim Peterson writes,

The Biblical pattern is for the individual's witness to be carried on within us. This is what you too can become. There's hope. "It's possible to discount or explain away an isolated individual, but it's impossible to refute the corporate testimony."²¹

Often the first attraction for Christianity is a community one. Christians' love and concern for each other draws the attention even of some who are not open yet to the message. This principle, abused by cults, has its proper place in Christian evangelism. "People are almost too vulnerable to community; if they feel loved, they will tend to believe anything."²²

If we are to be faithful to the great commission, the new believer must immediately be involved in an equipping track, training him to be a fruitful and faithful follower of Jesus. This will only happen effectively in the context of the body—where all the different parts of the body are present for the building up of one another. Without the context of community, with its relationships of trust and respect, its built-in, informal accountability, its modeling and its love and support, a new Christian's progress past conversion is tenuous at best.

With believers

So we can show the truth undiminished

Seminar leaders have said²³ "There are two main reasons some individuals do not come to the Lord: It may be because they do not know a Christian, or it may be because they do!"

Perhaps the most visible and distinctive attribute of Christians is the quality of their relationships with one another. Maintaining these relationships in a way that honors the Lord is crucial to the evangelistic impact. Sheldon Vanauken has aptly summarized:

The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians—when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."²⁴

The quality of the gospel we have is displayed in the relationships we have with one another. "Evangelism is a way of living beautifully and then opening

²¹ Quoted in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 60.

²² Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker*, p. 167.

²³ I have heard both Ralph Neighbour and Lawrence Khong of Touch ministries make this attention-getting assertion. No doubt others have said similar things before.

²⁴ Sheldon Vanauken, *A Severe Mercy*, quoted in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 42.

Relationships with one another can make or break our ability to effectively present an untarnished gospel to the world. "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (Philippians 2:14-15).

So we can work together

Relationships within the body are not only important for faithful display of the work of God. Those same relationships must be carefully cultivated for the sake of simply being able to work together for the kingdom. It does not surprise God that his children run into frustrations with each other that threaten their ability to work together as a team. Rather, he anticipates and averts the difficulty. What sort of advice does he offer to his "chosen people, holy and dearly loved," those who "clothe [themselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience"? "Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another" If "bear with" were translated colloquially as "put up with," it might communicate the urgency with which community relationships must be attended to for the sake of the work that community is called to.

Here the sodality model is helpful. We must be firmly committed to "put up" with one another—and we will need to sometimes—for the sake of our work together for the kingdom. It is all too apparent that if we allow our energies to be diverted into contending with one another, our ability to "contend for the kingdom"²⁶ will be effectively neutralized.

I have personally, during the pursuit of street evangelism, frequently run into people who argue against Christianity primarily on the basis of reports or experiences of mistreatment of Christians by Christians. For effective evangelism, believers must be committed to work together—not until there is difficulty, but in spite of the difficulty that will arise.

The work of God, not just of man

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power (1 Cor. 2:1-5).

God is God, and we are not! What evangelism hopes to accomplish requires

²⁵ Joe Aldrich, quoted in Hinckley, *Living Proof*, p. 42.

²⁶ Contending for the gospel, on the one hand, and contending with one another, on the other, are two activities in competition for the same resources and tend to be mutually exclusive. This is apparent, implicitly or explicitly, in several contexts within the book of Philippians. Cf., for instance, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel" (1:27, especially in light of the following context of unity and single purpose), and "I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel" (Philippians 4:2-3).