



Openness in Evangelism

Introduction

Rank these scenarios as opportunities for evangelism:

1. Young man visits worship, says he's WELS and wants to transfer
2. Couple (living together) visits worship several times and inquires about Baptism for their infant son
3. Couple (one WELS, one not) are getting married and inquire about your pastor officiating
4. Older man calls congregation and asks if you have a food pantry
5. Minority-race man knocks on door and asks if you have any work he can do to earn money
6. Jewish woman stops by office and asks if she can put a sign on your bulletin board
7. Man calls up, wondering what to say to his dying homosexual partner and asks for your counsel

All of these are real examples. Most of them have resulted in regular visitations to worship, and over half of them have entered BIC classes or actual membership. None of them would have happened without our members/pastor having an open mind.

Ask the following questions of your evangelists:

- Do we consider every interaction as an opportunity to tell people about our hope?
- Do we consider every visitor as a potential “roommate” in heaven?
- How much time is worth spending with anyone who visits our church, for whatever reason?

Ask the following questions of yourself:

- Am I modelling a concern for souls in the way I interact with visitors?
- Am I teaching people to be dismissive, or to be engaging?
- Do people marvel at how busy I am, or how available I am?
- Am I flexible where God allows flexibility, and faithful where God's will reveals only one right way?

Accessibility

- Have several of your members visit your campus and pretend they've never been there before.
 - Is your campus neat, clean and appealing?
 - Can they find their way around? Add signage, contact info, office hours, etc.
- Evaluate the atmosphere of your church before worship.
 - Train people to “read” visitors: some want attention, and some don't.
 - Make sure that your schedule is clear before and after worship so that you can focus on people.

Accessibility

- Have several of your members visit your worship as a first time visitor.
 - How easy it is to follow worship?
 - Consider full worship folder, visitor packet, designated host to help them.
- What about people with special needs?
 - Consider large-print bulletins, children's bulletins, induction loop, worship webcasts.

Final Thoughts

- Openness flows from patience: a willingness to keep inviting despite temporary rejection
- Openness flows from orthodoxy: a zeal to set forth the Word of God plainly, especially Christ crucified
- Openness flows from compassion: a desire to see your congregation from a “foreign” viewpoint
- Openness flows from forgiveness: an eagerness to rejoice with the angels over one sinner who repents