

Everyday Evangelism

Student's Manual

A tool for creating confidence in
sharing the Christian faith

— *Revised Edition* —

Stephen Abbott



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To Jack Beath-Filby and Alan Avery

They took the risk of sharing ministry with me when I was only a teenager. With their wives Shirley and Kay, they have continued tirelessly and generously to pray for, support and encourage my ministry. My debt to them is immeasurable.



Foreword

Stephen Abbott and I first met when we teamed up together for Christian outreach in two Australian cities. I was impressed with this young Anglican rector, obviously gifted and called in the work of evangelism. Eventually we were able to arrange for Stephen and his family to spend time in the United States for some further study and leading evangelism in a large church.

Over the years we have become close friends and partners in the gospel. Stephen is a member of the Point Group of Leighton Ford Ministries – a select group of evangelism leaders from around the world who help each other to grow in their leadership and evangelistic outreach.

So I am uncommonly pleased to write a foreword and commendation of his book, *Everyday Evangelism*.

Church people today commonly think of evangelism as something that is done by unusual people, in special ways, times and places. In contrast, evangelism in the early church was the responsibility of every believer. It was carried out in many ways in various places and most of the time! As the historian Harnack once said, the gospel in ancient days was carried mostly by ‘informal’ missionaries who gossiped the gospel wherever they were.

It is the strength of this book, as the title implies to see that the most effective evangelism is something that is done by ordinary believers in everyday ways and situations.

I warmly commend *Everyday Evangelism* for three reasons.

- It is **biblical**. While being open to every creative way to share the faith, the author insists that we must be true to the integrity of the model of evangelism set forth in the Bible through our Lord Jesus Christ and his followers.
- It is **practical**. Here there are stories, illustrations, suggestions which the average person can pick up and adapt and find helpful in introducing Christ into everyday situations.
- It is **natural**. The witnessing affirmed here is not forced or stereotyped. It is natural, flowing out of the reality of God in our personalities and daily lives.

I warmly recommend the wide use of *Everyday Evangelism*, believing that it will help to commend the gospel every day in every way.

Leighton Ford
Charlotte,
North Carolina

Contents

<i>Foreword by Leighton Ford</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	viii
<i>Preface to the Revised Edition</i>	ix

CHAPTERS

1. Introducing <i>Everyday Evangelism</i>	I
2. <i>Topic One: You are wired for witness</i>	5
3. <i>Topic Two: Sharing your story</i>	10
4. <i>Topic Three: Getting the facts straight</i>	15
5. <i>Topic Four: Handling tough questions</i>	26

APPENDICES

1. Resources	38
2. My 'Personal Mission Fields'	41
3. My 'Focused Prayer List'	42
4. Introducing Christianity into a conversation	44
5. 'Biblical Jargon Thesaurus'	49
6. Guidelines for sharing your story	51
7. Worksheets for preparing a Christ-centred testimony	56
8. Answers to blanks	59
9. Tear-Out evaluation sheet	61

Acknowledgements

This course found its genesis in a growing personal conviction that most Christians needed an introduction to their privilege and responsibility to share Jesus Christ within their daily spheres of influence. In the process of moving from conviction to a four topic training course a number of wonderful Christian sisters and brothers made a significant contribution. I would like to thank them.

I am indebted to Gene and Mary Beth Henderson, Bill and Syl Katnik, Jim and Dolly Gordan and Carolyn Ihrig. They were members of St Stephen's Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh where this course was first written. These friends provided substantial input to the first draft. My thanks also go to Leighton Ford who first suggested the title, *Everyday Evangelism* in a casual conversation and I am grateful for his personal challenge to keep on leading like Jesus and leading more to Jesus. In turn, the staff members of the Sydney Diocese Anglican Department of Evangelism: John Chapman, Janet Kearsley, David Mansfield, Matthew Pickering and Sheila Spencer have in many and various ways encouraged and stimulated the further development of this material. I wish to make special mention of Ken Churchward who in teaching this course on several occasions has collected and then passed on several useful modifications which have been incorporated. It would be remiss not to acknowledge the first Publisher Evonne Paddison and Graphic Designer Wendy Potts who both embraced this project with great enthusiasm and energy. It is largely due to their efforts that the first product looked so good.

To these I must now add Rena Pritchard (Editor), Andrew Moody (Graphic Designer) who have energetically applied themselves to produce this revised edition.

Finally to my wife, Sue and our three children Leanne, Simon and Kellie, who have had to make sacrifices so that I could produce and teach this course, I say thank you. I am very glad that you are my family and friends.

Preface to the Revised Edition

It has been almost 10 years since the first edition of *Everyday Evangelism* was published. In this time it has been through several reprints, but until now we have not had the resources to make changes. Acorn Press has taken on the task of publishing this revised edition and I am very grateful to them for this. Among the several changes I have made are constructive suggestions from some of the thousands of participants and trainers who have made use of the material. Not every suggestion could be incorporated – some reflected individual preferences while others were impractical. I have used the author's prerogative not to use those with which I did not agree.

For those familiar with the earlier edition the following changes have been incorporated:

- The shape of the training manual is the most obvious change, adopting more regular sizing to assist with bookshelf storage. The spiral binder is retained for ease of use.
- The number of blanks to be filled in by participants during the teaching of the course has been reduced, retaining those that especially reinforce the central ideas. Some sections of the material are now left for personal reading and reflection rather than worked through during the course of a seminar series. This has the advantage of providing more time for small and large group discussion.
- The internal layout has changed slightly to make it more user-friendly for those small groups who wish to do the course over 8 weeks. Therefore headings for each session have changed from Week I to Topic I and each of the four topics are now divided into Part A and Part B etc.
- Some material not considered essential and several time consuming exercises have been eliminated to allow more time for other existing group exercises.
- An appendix has been added to provide all the answers to the blanks in order of their occurrence. This means the training manual can now be used for individual study and will also allow any seminar participants who miss a week, to keep up through self-study at home prior to the next seminar.
- The major theological addition is a brief Bible Study on 'The Holy Spirit and Evangelism' in Topic 4. Its omission in the first edition was a huge oversight. I hope its inclusion will bring greater Trinitarian balance to the theological foundations of *Everyday Evangelism*, reinforcing to Christians that their engagement in daily witnessing is a divine partnership.

Some people will appreciate the changes that have been made and others will consider them too radical or not radical enough. However, it is my prayer that this material will, in its new format, continue to be used by God to equip the saints for the privilege and joy of intentionally sharing their faith in Christ within the daily cut and thrust of their lives. I am still absolutely convinced about two things:

1. That Christian leaders have the fundamental responsibility of equipping the saints for ministry so that believers are mature in Christ. Lifestyle witnessing training is an essential element of this ministry since mature disciples share the gospel in deed and word.
2. That Christians, not our church programs and events, are the most fundamental entry point for those outside of a relationship with Christ. Without this sort of training our programs and events will struggle to reach their target audience, unconverted people.

Let us all pray that God will be merciful to people and use this training to bring hundreds and thousands of people to faith and to build his church to his glory and praise.

Steve Abbott

Introducing Everyday Evangelism



Introduction

It is Sunday morning and Phil and Carol Logan with their two children leave home for church. The neighbours have observed this ritual for some time now and have also watched and listened to this family the other six days of the week. They have begun to make conclusions about the authenticity of their Christian faith and about the nature of the God they follow. The sad thing is that the Logan family are unaware that they are witnessing to their faith and projecting an image of Jesus Christ to their neighbours. They do not realise that witnessing is really their responsibility. As they see it they are Sunday School teachers, not evangelists. Variations on this scenario are played out week after week across this planet. Why? I suggest it is largely because churches have neither taught their people that they are witnesses, nor equipped them in the 'how to's' of evangelism.

Everyday Evangelism

The following four-topic course was developed out of an increasing conviction that most Christians feel inadequate and fearful when it comes to sharing their faith in Christ. Some have become 'gun-shy' because they have been pushed to do door-to-door evangelism that never excited them and was not an approach with which they were particularly comfortable. Others are convinced that evangelism is only the responsibility of the professional clergy or specially gifted Christians; they serve the Lord in other ways. Still others, not wanting to be identified with the phoney, pushy, stereotypical evangelist, remain silent about their loyalty to Christ Jesus. Maybe you can identify with one or other of these opinions and therefore to this point in time have never attended an intensive course on evangelism. In fact, you may have deliberately avoided such a course. However, it may also be true to say that you live with some guilt because you do not witness to the Risen Lord, and if you do, you do not feel you do it all that well.

It is our hope that this course will go a long way towards liberating you from your fears and guilt while releasing you to embrace the wonderful privilege and responsibility of being a witness everyday for Christ. Ephesians 4:11-12 teaches that it is the responsibility of those with Word ministry gifts 'to prepare God's people for works of service so the body of Christ may be built up ...'. Therefore, we see this material as a resource that prepares Christians to pass on their faith in the Lord Jesus with greater competence. Evangelism is not an optional extra to faith, like a radio in a car, rather it is an essential aspect of who we are in Christ and therefore of our obedience to the Lord. Continuing the car analogy, evangelism is the battery or engine, something without which a car is unable to function as it was designed to do. At the risk of overstatement, we would suggest that evangelism is to Christians what transportation is to cars. It is our conviction that Jesus taught that there

was no following him without fishing with him (Mark 1:16-20).

Evangelism Described

But what do we mean by 'evangelism'? For the sake of clarity we want to declare our basic agreement with the Lausanne Covenant's three-fold statement regarding evangelism:

1. The **nature** of evangelism is the communication of the good news.
2. The **purpose** of evangelism is to give individuals and groups a valid opportunity to accept Jesus Christ.
3. The **goal** of evangelism is the persuading of men and women to accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, and serve him in the fellowship of his church.

Course Presuppositions

Traditionally evangelism is presented as something the church **does** through **programs** and **events**. A number of the presuppositions built in to this traditional approach to evangelism are challenged in *Everyday Evangelism*:

1. Evangelism is a **'being'** word before it is a **'doing'** word. Our Lord himself declares that disciples **are** the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world' (Matthew 5:13-16) and Peter states that Christians **'are** a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation ... that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light' (1 Peter 2:9). The actual activity of witnessing flows out of who we are in Christ.
2. Evangelism needs to be understood as primarily proceeding out of natural **daily relationships, not church conducted programs**. A program emphasis tends to specialise the evangelistic endeavour and removes it from each disciple's arena of everyday personal contacts where it really belongs.
3. A person's coming to faith should be perceived as predominantly a **process not an event**. Most Christians came to believe over a period of time and through the testimony of more than one person or one particular message. There will for many be a single day or event to which they trace their commitment to Christ but prior to that occasion there was a spiritual journey through which God kept adding links to a chain which ultimately tied them to Christ.

It will be helpful for you to note these three presuppositions carefully as you begin this course.

Theological Foundations

There are three theological truths which provide a foundation for the approach which *Everyday Evangelism* advances in its objective to equip Christians to obey the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-21.

1. God's sovereignty

Evangelism is God's work and while Christians are fellow workers with God, we recognise no one comes to faith except by the sovereign operation of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:5-9; John 3:5-8).

2. *Biblical integrity*

Evangelism must be carried out so that neither the gospel message nor its morality is compromised. There is only one gospel, Christ and him crucified. We are not at liberty to change this truth nor to contradict its ethical principles by the techniques we use in communicating it (1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 2 Corinthians 4:2).

3. *Human creativity*

Evangelism can be done in as many imaginative and relevant ways as possible using a variety of styles, so long as the first two principles are not contravened. God created us with imaginations and with unique personalities. He expects us to employ them creatively in order to reach our fields of influence with the gospel (Mark 2:1-12; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23).

These theological principles are mentioned in order of priority. However, because of our Western culture's propensity to be pragmatic and stress the last of these three, we will need to be very careful to ensure the first two are the filters for the ideas that flow from our creativity. We would all do well to remember the old adage:

*Methods are many, Principles are few,
Methods always change, Principles never do.*

Course Outline

The course is divided into four sessions that can be summarised as follows:

‘Topic 1: Wired for witness’ – to realise that God has ‘wired’ each of us to be witnesses wherever we may be, but using our own style.

‘Topic 2: Sharing your story’ – to learn some skills so that we can naturally express our faith by sharing what God has done in our lives.

‘Topic 3: Getting the facts straight’ – to know how to explain the basic essentials of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

‘Topic 4: Handling tough questions’ – to understand the basic skills and resources for answering objections to and tough questions about the Christian faith.

A Final Word

The overall goal of this course is to release as a mighty army of witnesses into the world, the 90-95% of Christians within each local church who do not have ‘the gift of the evangelist’ (Ephesians 4:11). This will bring great joy to the Father and result in his glory as people from all walks of life find themselves surrendering their lives to Christ Jesus his Son. The famous English preacher John Wesley wrote:

Give me 100 men who fear nothing but God, and who hate nothing but sin, and who know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified, and I will shake the world.

Imagine what an impact Christian churches could make on the communities within which they minister if a majority of their members intentionally reached out to the lost by living and speaking the ‘graces’ of the good news. It is our prayer that this

course will make a small, but not insignificant, contribution to making this a reality within your church. Those of us who have the responsibility for ministry oversight of the local church would do well to follow the example of Paul in the service of the Lord:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Colossians 1:28-29

Note: *If you are working through this Student's Manual as private study, we recommend you tear out Appendix Eight, 'Answers to Blanks' as this will make it easier for you as you progress through the material.*

Topic 1: You Are 'Wired' for Witness



Purpose

The purpose of this session is to understand that God has 'wired' us to be witnesses wherever we may be, using our own uniqueness and style.

Section A

Introduction

Everyone, Christian and non-Christian, has an image of what an 'evangelist' is like.

- I. What *words* would an unchurched person use to describe an evangelist?

2. Quickly do the following exercises:
 - a. Write down the name of one person who strongly influenced you to become a Christian.

 - b. What word best describes this significant person in your life? What was this person like for you?

The contrast between the stereotypical evangelist and the real 'flesh and blood' person who influenced you is usually perfectly obvious. The 'evangelist' we are terrified of being identified with is the exception rather than the rule. Satan has sold us this lie about evangelists, with the result that some of us have failed to share our faith in Christ for fear of being branded one of those **Bible bashers**.

This exercise also draws our attention to the fact that there is no particular type of person or style of evangelism that can be said to be typical.

Being an evangelist for Christ involves being

God wired us individually

Christians need to remember that

Read Psalm 139:13-16

Effective evangelism is carried out by people of
 styles, personalities, sensitivities and abilities. Indeed, the kind of
 people who best spread the faith are the kind of people we already are
 when we have a heart.

God wired us to be obedient

The Bible – God’s Word – presents evangelism as a
 word before it is a **doing** word (Matthew 5:13-16; I Peter 2:9).

Following Jesus’ metaphor, we could say there is no the
 Lord without **fishing with** the Lord (Mark 1:14-20).

Read Colossians 4:2-6

1. Communicating with God: Pray for ‘gifted’ evangelists vv. 2-4

- a. Evangelism is God’s business and hence our first privilege
 and responsibility is to (vv. 2-3).
- b. Pray specifically for (vv. 3-4):
 - open for the Word (Philippians 1:13).
 - the preacher to be in communicating
 Christ.

2. Communicating with people: Sharing our faith vv. 5-6

- a. We are to conduct ourselves while
 making the most of our opportunities (v. 5).
- b. Effective witnessing also includes being ready to speak the
 gospel (v. 6):
 -
 -
 -

These three components suggest **sensitive yet substantial speech**,
 which awakens in others an **appetite** for the things of Christ.

3. A final word

It should be clear from these verses that while there may be many
 different styles of evangelism, it is **every** believer’s **privilege** to
 engage in it.

Section B

God wired us to be different

There are any number of which can be used in evangelism.

The following examples from the New Testament are not or, but are representative of some styles¹ that are still valid today. They are also not mutually exclusive and depending on circumstances two or even three approaches could be combined.

I. Confrontational

See **Acts 2:1-39**. Peter in Jerusalem stood up and confronted the Jewish pilgrims and their religious leaders with the claims of the recently crucified Christ. Such people have the qualities of **courage** and **confidence**.

2. Intellectual

See **Acts 17:16-31**. Paul is found giving an **apology** (a defence) for the gospel of Christ in which he **intelligently** moves from the known to the unknown. There are many useful resources to help us develop this style if it matches our gifts and personal abilities. (See Appendix One: 'Resources' pages 38-40.)

3. Instructional

See **John 4:39-42** and **Acts 13:42-44**. Both Jesus and Paul provide examples of investing time in one place (or with one group of people) in order to **teach** them the gospel. The *Christianity Explained* manual and the *Introducing God* course (see Appendix One: 'Resources' pages 38-40.) are modern approaches which use this style by providing a series of weekly studies and discussions on the essentials of the Christian faith.

4. Testimonial

See **John 9:1-34** (especially verses 8-11; 13-17; 24-33). The man born blind tells his **own story** of his encounter with Jesus with persistence and courage. In Acts 26 Paul recounts his personal conversion story in such a way as to challenge Agrippa and the rest of the trial audience with the claims of Christ. This method is especially powerful where obvious **life changes** have taken root in the life of the teller. Every Christian has an authentic and unique story to share of God's **grace** in his or her life.

5. Relational

See **Mark 5:18-20**. Legion having been personally transformed by Jesus desires to go with him, but the Lord sends him back to his own

¹ Some of the styles listed were adapted from a sermon entitled 'Styles of Evangelism' given by Bill Hybels at Willow Creek Community Church, Illinois, USA.

family and community to tell his story. Here is a wonderful example of someone evangelising within the context of established **relationships**. It is interesting also to note that Paul in I Corinthians 9:19-23 expresses his own commitment to **build bridges of relationship** in order to communicate the gospel to the various cultural and religious groups he encounters (compare I Corinthians 10:31-11.1).

6. Invitational

See **John 4:28-30**. The woman at the well, having been engaged in a combination of 'relational' and 'confrontational' styles of evangelism with Jesus, then proceeds to invite her townspeople to **'come and see'** Jesus so they could hear him for themselves. Of course an **authentic** lifestyle provides tremendous support to our personal invitations to others. This gives substance to the claim that Jesus can make a positive difference to a person's life. Paul was convinced that in the context of a **clear message** and **orderly worship** unbelievers could fall down and glorify God declaring 'God is really among you' (I Corinthians 14:20-25). Inviting our family and friends to church becomes a very real option where these things are consistently done.

7. Service

See **Acts 9:36**. Dorcas is an example of a godly woman whose quality of life, **generosity and service** to the needy, testified to the gospel and apparently impressed itself on a whole community. In Titus 2:9-10 slaves are encouraged to **serve** their masters well, so that their witness 'will make the teaching about God our Saviour **attractive**'. Again in I Peter 3:1-6 the Lord teaches that it is possible that an unbelieving husband could be won to Christ without a word being uttered by a godly, serving wife who lived her life for Christ (compare I Peter 2:11-12). Jesus uses the salt and light pictures in Matthew 5:13-16 to teach how **good deeds** can lead people to acknowledge God.

8. Communal

See **Acts 2:42-47**; **I Thessalonians 1:7-8**. Christian communities can, by the very quality of their **life and love** for one another, become a vital and effective means of communicating Christ to the watchful observers in society. Jesus in John 13:35 declared: 'By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you **love one another**'.

9. Hospitality

See **Luke 5:29-32**. Levi (Matthew), on turning to Christ Jesus, quickly **opens his home** so that his social outcast and ignorant friends can also come to know Jesus as Lord. Christians need to be **creatively** thinking about how they can use their homes and resources for the gospel. A hospitality ministry can be very effective evangelism as it provides a **relaxed** and reasonably **non-threatening environment**.

God wired us to reach people

We all need to become more in seeking to develop relationships thoughtfully with our existing unchurched contacts, with the desire of introducing them to Jesus.

Turn to Appendix Two: 'My Personal Mission Fields', page 41

It is important that we pray regularly for these people, but it is helpful to concentrate on three people or households at a time. An effective method for beginning this process is to examine prayerfully our own 'Personal Mission Fields' and establish our own personal 'Focused Prayer List'.

Turn to Appendix Three: 'My Focused Prayer List', page 42

If we do not and do not to build relationships with unbelievers, opportunities to share Jesus with others are not likely to happen in the course of our lives.

Conclusion

Every Christian needs to know that the Lord calls them to the **privilege and responsibility** of evangelism. Jesus has 'wired' us to be **exactly** the sort of evangelists (witnesses) that particular lost people need. We need to **pray**, be progressing in **godliness**, identify our **styles**, and begin to reach out **deliberately and intentionally** to those God brings within the scope of our lives.

We can take great encouragement from Jesus' words to the first disciples, 'The harvest *is* plentiful ...' (Luke 10:2).

Recommendation

Read at least one book on evangelism a year. Four books that would be an excellent place to begin are:

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------------|
| John Chapman | <i>Know and Tell the Gospel</i> |
| Leighton Ford | <i>The Power of Story</i> |
| Paul E. Little | <i>How to Give away your Faith</i> |
| Rebecca Manley Pippert | <i>Out of the Salt Shaker</i> |

Home Assignment

- Prayerfully complete 'My Personal Mission Fields' and 'My Focused Prayer List' found on pages 41 and 42.
- Begin praying for the people on your 'Focused Prayer List'.
- Reread this topic along with the appendices.