

STAY EVANGELISM

How to reach the people next door



Roger Morgan



The Mathetes Trust

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How To Reach The People
Next Door



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Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'. Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive.

John 7.37-39

‘Go’ evangelism and ‘Stay’ evangelism

In scripture we find two kinds of evangelism. I call these ‘go’ evangelism and ‘stay’ evangelism. This booklet is written for those Christians who are called to be ‘stay’ evangelists.

Stay evangelists are Christians who stay where they are and evangelise amongst their friends, neighbours and colleagues. During the seventeen years that I lived in Cambridge I was very consciously a stay evangelist. I had a normal secular job, lived in a house in the centre of the city, and brought my family up there. I also influenced about 80 people to become Christians. All these people were found in my natural context – they were part of my everyday life.

Then in 1984 God called me to leave Cambridge and sent me somewhere where I didn’t belong and didn’t know anybody. I found myself in Corby living on a large working-class housing estate, feeling very much like an outsider, but knowing that it was my task to go to these people and tell them about Jesus. This is what I call go evangelism – you go from where you belong to another place altogether, simply because God is sending you. Stay evangelists are inevitably focused on their secular responsibilities, and for them evangelism is a spin-off. In Corby, like all go evangelists I was focussed almost entirely on evangelism. I didn’t find it all that easy to make converts, but in six years there I was able to bring another 40 people to Christ.

So in my experience both kinds of evangelism work, though they feel very different.

Go evangelism

In the New Testament we read about many people whom God called to go with the gospel. After the resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples and gave them what has subsequently been called the Great Commission. ‘Go’, Jesus said to them; ‘Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.’ We read about Peter who gave up life in his home town of Capernaum, where he worked as a fisherman, and went with Jesus to all the towns and villages of Israel. And we read about Paul



who gave up his life amongst Jews and went with the gospel to one Gentile city after another.

This is go evangelism. Evangelism is something you do by going. You go from somewhere you belong and go to somewhere you don't belong in order to take the message to people you have never met and to whom God is sending you.

I became a Christian as a result of go evangelism. I was brought up in Bolton in Lancashire but the person who most influenced me to become a Christian was a man called Tony from Eastbourne. Tony had obeyed the command of Jesus to go from Eastbourne to Bolton for a week of evangelism, and I was by no means the only convert from that week. Since then I have led many such weeks myself and made many converts in places that were not my home.

'Stay' evangelism

Some Christians seem to think that go evangelism is the only kind of evangelism. If you are inclined to think like that then I would like you to consider this passage from 1 Peter:

Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

1 Peter 3.1

These unbelieving men were not going to be won to Christ as the result of an evangelistic visit by Peter; they were to be won over by their own wives. These women didn't go anywhere – they stayed exactly where they were. When we reach people who are already part of our every day lives without having to go anywhere, I call this 'stay' evangelism. Stay evangelism can also be discerned in the story of the demon-possessed man in Luke 8. Cured of his problems, the man begged to be allowed to go with Jesus - but Jesus told him to stay, with the words 'return home and tell how much God has done for you'.



Stay evangelism is more effective than go evangelism

Whenever I find myself speaking about evangelism to an audience of Christians I like to tell my story about Tony coming from Eastbourne to Bolton to reach me, and then ask them to think ‘who was the person who most influenced you to become a Christian?’ Then I ask, ‘Was it someone like Tony - someone from another place - or was it someone you knew well, someone from within your own community?’ In other words I am asking whether people were won to Christ through stay evangelism or through go evangelism; and I always find that the vast majority, unlike me, were won by stay evangelism.

This then is how God works. A go evangelist goes to a new place where the gospel of Jesus is previously unknown. The gospel is preached, people respond, a new church is founded, and eventually the evangelist leaves. This church will continue to grow not by go evangelism but by stay evangelism, through the witness of the church members to the people living and working around them. Eventually there will be more in the church who have been reached by stay evangelism than by the initial work of the go evangelist.

Dave's story

After six years in Corby I went to Leicester, where I was immediately impressed by Dave, a keen young Christian who had a secular job as a computer expert with a brewery chain.

Dave approached me, offering himself as a full time go evangelist. I agreed with his priorities and respected his willingness but I was not sure that he was called to this. I suggested that until God spoke more clearly he should stay where he was and live as a stay evangelist.

Dave's job takes him far and wide. Recently he found himself attending a conference in Greece where he met Alexi, a Russian from Moscow, also a computer expert. Dave was reading his Bible in the hotel; Alexi approached him and asked Dave to explain the Bible to him. Dave opened the scriptures and shared the gospel. Alexi became a Christian and now attends a church in Moscow. Dave and I later had the pleasure of baptising him at our church in Leicester. I share this story because I believe this is how God normally works – through the lives of ordinary Christians like Dave who witness to people in the context of their daily secular life.



The Oikos

Oikos is a Greek word meaning household. In the world of Ephesus or Corinth or Philippi to whom Paul's letters are addressed most people lived in households. Households consisted of several families, some of them free, some of them slaves. They were the economic units of the time. The people you belonged to, the people you saw all day were the members of your household or Oikos.

Today the word Oikos can be adopted very usefully to mean that set of people with whom you regularly interact in everyday life. When I lived in Cambridge my Oikos consisted of my students, my colleagues, a lot of university support staff who I knew well, my wife, my children and their friends, people who lived in our street, people I played chess with, people who served in shops or restaurants to which I went frequently, as well as people who went to the same church.

It's a really good exercise to take a piece of paper and make a list of all the people in your Oikos and I suggest that you do this now. List the people with whom you have fairly regular interaction – for example neighbours, work colleagues, connections with schools, people with whom you share social activities. When I lived in Cambridge I reckon that I had at least 500 in my Oikos. Nearly everyone has at least 50. I find that when I ask groups of Christians to write down their Oikos there is usually someone who gets past 100 very quickly. We know far more people than we realise.

When you've listed the people in your Oikos you will be aware that some of these people are Christians and some are not. Probably most are not. The non-Christians in your Oikos are the people you can hope to reach. Go about it in the right way, ask God to use you, and I'm confident that with his help you will reach some of these people. I would go further and say that this is God's plan for your life.



The parable of the Sower

Jesus told this parable in the context of go evangelism, but it applies equally to stay evangelism. Through the parable Jesus is teaching you that the non Christians in your Oikos can be divided into four groups.

The first group are those people in your Oikos who are negative. Every one of us knows people like this. They are not interested in your faith, maybe even hostile, and they probably always will be. We have to face this fact and not allow the negativity of these people to put us off evangelism altogether. God is not expecting us to do the impossible.

Secondly there are some who at first seem extremely positive. But this is only because they are nice people who want to please you. At the same time, they are trying to please everybody else, and this means that when it comes to it they will never take sides and come out firmly for Jesus. These people too have the effect of discouraging us and making us want to give up, feeling that we are no good at it.

Thirdly some will be interested, and you will be able to get them involved in the church to some extent. But time will show that these people will never really put Jesus first. This is usually because they have too many worries or because they put too high a priority on making money. In the end these people too will leave us feeling disappointed and frustrated.

Now we get to the point of the parable of the sower. Jesus said don't let these three kinds of people get you down. There is a fourth kind of person and if you press on with your evangelism you will eventually find some of these. These people will be open to hear your story, and when they realise that you have a genuine faith which works they will want it too.

You will have the joy of seeing these people become real Christians. And then as you get to know their family and friends you will be able to reach others too. Indeed these people will often prove to be much better at evangelism than you are.

So stay evangelism requires persistence. Most people in your Oikos will never become committed Christians, and this is what I've found all my life. But I've also found, as the parable predicts, that a steady stream of people from my Oikos have become Christians; this is what happened for me in Cambridge.



Stay evangelism in Leicester

After Corby came Leicester. I didn't belong to Leicester and went there as a go evangelist. My main task was to bring the friends and neighbours of my church members to Christ. But, of course, I also lived in Leicester. I too had neighbours. My children went to school there. So I had an Oikos, much smaller than in Cambridge where I had a secular job, but an Oikos nevertheless. During the eighteen years we were there, I made friends with lots of people and shared my faith with many of them. As the parable of the sower predicts, most of those people never became committed Christians, but I was able to reach my osteopath and his wife, the father of one of my daughter's friends, my next door neighbour, one of my son's friends and then his mother, sister, brother and finally his father; the man who cut my hair, and the owners of a restaurant and one of their staff. Only twelve people in 18 years - much less than I experienced at Cambridge - but many other people in the Leicester church were bearing fruit amongst the people in their own Oikos at the same time.

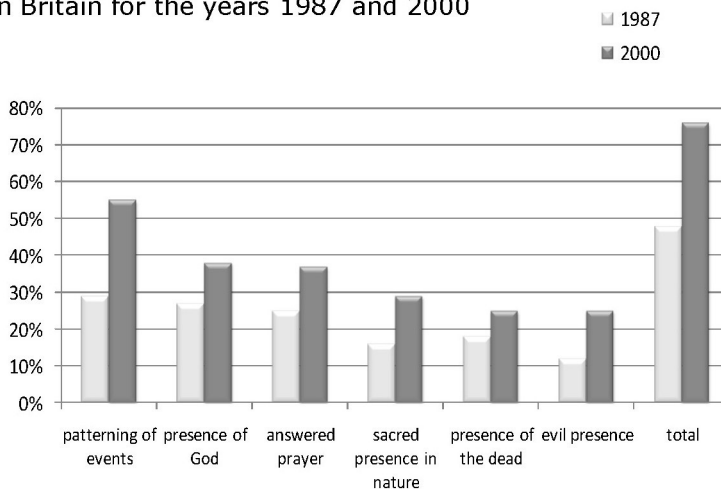
Surveys

We often assume that people are not interested in spiritual matters. But survey after survey shows that there is a rising interest in the spiritual dimension of life, and that although people are often not attracted by the church, they are very willing to talk about God. A BBC poll conducted in 2000 found that over 76% of the population say they have had some kind of spiritual experience, that 41% are aware of the presence of God, and that 37% have experienced answers to prayer. 72% of the population answered the voluntary question about religion in the 2001 census by saying they were Christians. A survey conducted by the public thinktank Theos at Easter 2008 found that 57% of people in the UK believe that Jesus was crucified, buried and raised from the dead.

Researchers conducting these surveys often say that they have been taken aback by people's willingness to talk about Jesus. We know from the parable of the sower that anywhere in the world – and that means in your Oikos – there are a minority of people who will want to become Christians if approached in the right way.



Frequency of report of spiritual experience in Britain for the years 1987 and 2000



Statistics from a poll conducted by MORI in 1987 and repeated by the ORB in 2000 for the BBC's Soul of Britain programme.

Becoming a Labourer

Jesus once said that the harvest was plentiful but the labourers few. What does this mean? It means that the problem for the spread of Christianity lies not in a shortage of people who are waiting to hear the gospel, but in a shortage of people who see themselves as being on duty to share it and demonstrate it. Where Christians are labouring the church is growing, and where they are not the church is in decline. It really is as simple as that. We Christians need confidence that the gospel working in us will bring results. Some of us are called to be go evangelists, but much more important are the thousands of ordinary Christians who gladly accept their responsibility to be stay evangelists amongst the people in their Oikos.

How do stay evangelists labour? Here is the essential difference between go evangelism and stay evangelism: go evangelists must have confidence

in the power of what they say - that the Spirit's anointing will rest on their words. Stay evangelists do not need to say much. Their primary confidence is in the power of their lives, in the presence of God's Spirit overflowing to whoever they meet. The wives in 1 Peter 3 were to win their husbands without a word. Instead they would win them by the purity and reverence of their lives. This is the key to stay evangelism. It is not what you say that counts. It is the way you live that counts.

Here are some of the most common elements that are part of the lifestyle of all successful stay evangelists.

Friendliness

Have you noticed how British people behave when forced to stand in a queue? Everyone is bored, but nobody speaks. Stay evangelists break the mould, seeing this as yet another opportunity to be friendly; they take the risk and say something to their neighbour. In John chapter 4 we find the story of Jesus meeting a woman at a well in Samaria. If Jesus had followed normal behaviour he would have stayed silent. But he wanted to reach out to her, and so he spoke. 'Give me a drink', he said. This completely natural opener led to a conversation which changed the woman's life.

Finding a way to be friendly is almost invariably the first step in the process which leads to other people becoming Christians. I am not saying that everyone you speak to in a queue or at a well will become a Christian as a result; what I am saying is that whenever someone becomes a Christian it can be traced back to some initial movement of friendship by one Christian or another.

Christian and Fabienne came to Leicester from Belgium. They found it hard to settle in. Then they found they were living next door to Claire. Claire was friendly, interested in Christian and Fabienne, happy to be helpful in any way she could. The Belgian couple were only too pleased to make friends. Then they discovered that Claire was a Christian who went to church. Christian and Fabienne had never been to church but when Claire invited them to an event there they wanted to try it. The church community when they got there was as nothing they had ever experienced. They were very attracted by the openness and caring that so obviously went on there. They had no knowledge of Christianity to this point in their lives but got quickly stuck in, made their enquiries, took Alpha courses and came to a committed faith.

Don't make friends just in order to evangelise. Make friends simply for the sake of making friends. Being friendly is your way to say you care. By communicating that you care, you are really communicating the truth burning in your heart, which is that God cares - so much that he has sent Jesus into the world to die for this person now standing next to you in the queue. Of course, what you actually say to them is not 'God loves you', but whatever comes naturally - your equivalent of 'Give me a drink'. Occasionally you will meet someone who doesn't like it, but most of the time you will find that the other person is delighted to be spoken to and eagerly joins in the conversation. And that in turn will bring blessing to you; as we give, so we receive.

Making friends

In Cambridge I found it was very difficult to get to know the neighbours. I never seemed to bump into any of them in our street. I think this was because there were no front gardens and the back gardens had high walls. So I decided to take the initiative. I knocked on every door in the street and invited them to a drinks party. It was a huge success, and the whole neighbourhood became very friendly and chatty as a result.

In Leicester one person I took the initiative with was my osteopath. I remember lying on his couch in my underpants and a thumping pain in my back. But I could see that lying on this couch was going to be part of my life for the next few weeks - which meant for me that I was on duty as an evangelist. How could I start a conversation? How could I show a genuine interest in him? As Jonathan manipulated my back I tried to think about what life might be like for him. I asked him about his business and how it was going. We quickly became friends and eventually he became a Christian.

I have always found dentists a bit of a challenge! In Corby I decided to have a go, and when the first session was over I invited Campbell to lunch. Of course I might have been turned down (and with other dentists I have been) but Campbell accepted my invitation, and very soon he too was to be found in church. My point is that if you don't try then nothing will ever happen. I suggest you get started with your hairdresser. Hairdressers are specifically *trained* to be friendly...



Slowing down

Many people are far too busy to even become aware of the people around them, never mind make friends with them. Stay evangelists have to learn to live their lives at a slower pace. What I recommend is that you try spending a whole day (or week) stopping for everyone. Stop to introduce yourself to your neighbours, speak to the people who serve you in shops; whoever they are, wherever you come across them, stop and make their day just by being friendly. At the end of the day (or the week), evaluate what has happened. You will find that by going slowly and making time for people you will be happier not less happy, more at peace, more in touch with God. And you will find that all those vital things you were rushing to do still get done.



Making suggestions

If the first step is to be friendly, the second step is to make some kind of proposal by which you can continue the relationship. I don't always do this - sometimes I let the conversation end naturally and hope to run into the person again some time. But if I feel I am clicking with someone, I suggest a next step - maybe that we should meet up again, or perhaps do something together. Making proposals in this way sometimes leads to a rebuff, but much more often it succeeds. Most people are longing for new relationships.



The Good Samaritan

We all know this story. Three people came past the injured man, but only one stopped. The others were too busy. Did they even notice that the man was injured? Stay evangelists try to live like the good Samaritan. The aim always is to notice, always to be willing to stop, and always to take action when action is needed.

Hospitality

The Bible teaches us to be hospitable. Offering hospitality is one of the best ways of making friends. Buy someone a drink. Take a colleague for lunch - or best of all, invite people to your home. But do not invite people to church - not until you have made friends. The invitation to your home says 'I like you and I want to be your friend'. The invitation to church says 'I want to do you good'. Everyone is different, and for some the time will come when you sense that they may be comfortable in church.

Think about the list of non Christians who are part of your Oikos. How many of them would feel comfortable to drop by at your home? How many have ever been to your home? How many have you ever taken for lunch or for a coffee or for a drink? If the answer is very few, then this is definitely something to put right. If you invite 100 people to dinner then 99 will say yes. OK - one will say no, and this is a bit embarrassing. But it hardly bears comparison with what Jesus did for you on the cross...



No strings attached!

People often ask me 'what do you do if you befriend people, but then these people do not become Christians? This often happens. I made three great friendships in Leicester, with Sarah, with Chris and with Liz. All three have been to my church and like it there but none of them have become Christians. Should I drop them? No, not at all! These people are my friends. I hope they always will be. I would say that making lots of friends is all part of the fun. Because I am a stay evangelist I feel compelled to make new friends all the time. But as to whether they become Christians I feel I should leave that to the Lord and just relax about it.

Evangelism classical style

'How would you like your hair cut, sir?' a barber once asked the Macedonian king Archelaus. 'In silence!', snapped the king.



Conversations

Being friendly, being hospitable, will of course involve you in conversation. These conversations are extremely important. People will be drawn to you or repelled from you because of what you say.

When I'm doing go evangelism I mostly talk about God. That is what people expect me to talk about and it's what I'm there for. But when I'm doing stay evangelism, talking to a neighbour in the street or to a guest over dinner I never bring up the subject of God until the other person does or until the other person gives me clear opening to speak.

So what do I talk about? It's simple – I talk about the other person. That is I ask questions which allow me to get to know the other person. I start with facts. Where do you live? Have you lived there long? What kind of work do you do? Obvious things which I have to ask if I am genuinely interested in the other person. Gradually by asking questions I build up a picture of this person and as I do I try to make connections. You were brought up in Lancashire – so was I. You're keen on cricket – I love cricket. Whoever you are talking to, it's usually easy to find something in common.



Facts, opinions and feelings

At the beginning of a conversation I like to stick to facts, but as a relationship develops I have learned to move the conversation on and ask the other person for their opinion about something. We have been talking about cricket – I ask for his opinion on some cricketing matter. When someone gives an opinion I listen carefully and try to show by my response

that I understand how his thinking goes. Then I feel free to give my opinion on the same subject – I find it's ok to disagree as long as I disagree respectfully. As you discuss with people you are learning to understand them and they you.

So I start with facts and move on to opinions. Then when the time is right I have learned to move on to feelings. We have been talking about cricket. I have learned that he was once a very good player. I want to know how he feels about not playing any more. So I ask 'Do you miss playing?' As he shares his feelings my role is to listen and try to understand how he feels.

So how does God ever get into the conversation?

I remember meeting someone on a train. I took the initiative – 'Do you do this journey every day?' He was pleased to talk. I learned a lot about him, heard his opinions on many subjects and how he felt about his life. An hour and a half later the train was coming into my station – time to go. 'I've really enjoyed meeting you' he said, 'but I've been doing all the talking. What makes you tick?' I had one minute in which to tell him about Jesus and what he means to me.



I find that this is the usual pattern; I meet a new person and we begin to talk. I am genuinely interested in this other person. I learn facts, I hear opinions and I identify with feelings. I find that most people are really pleased that I am making space for them to talk.

Sooner or later (sometimes much later!), I find that this person becomes genuinely interested in me. They want to know about me, hear what I think, and learn how I feel about life. Then, and only then, is when I get my opportunity to talk about my faith in Jesus. Once the subject has come up, I can very naturally find out what they think about faith. They learnt that I am a Christian, so I can ask 'Do you have a faith?'. They discover that

I go to church, so I can ask 'Have you ever been a churchgoer yourself?'. At this point, if I find that they are comfortable with the subject, I can go on, and soon find that I am sharing my testimony, answering their questions and opening up the gospel. Of course, many conversations don't get this far, but sometimes they do, and then I need to be ready.

Two American businessmen

Keith and Alan were businessmen with important, high pressure jobs. But they were also Christians, and anxious to live in a way that reflected Jesus to others. They decided to spend a day going more slowly and trying to be more aware of people.

Keith went to work that day and parked his car at his workplace. As he left the car park, he 'noticed' the attendant. 'Lord Jesus', he prayed, 'what do I say to a man I have ignored for 3 years?' The man's name was on his uniform. 'Good morning, Charlie', Keith said. 'Good morning, Mr Miller' - so Charlie knew his name. 'Charlie, do you have a family?'. Charlie pulled out a picture of his six children. A friendship began that day between Keith and Charlie, and later that year Keith was able to visit one of those children in hospital. Keith found to his amazement that his office had lots of Charlies, people he had never really taken in before.

Alan went to work by train. Late as usual, he ran down the station steps, turned the corner and bumped into a small boy carrying a jigsaw. The pieces went everywhere, and Alan saw that he had a choice. Watching his train pull away from the platform, Alan helped the boy pick up the pieces. When they had finished the boy looked at Alan. 'Mr,' he said, 'are you Jesus?'. Alan realised that for five minutes, perhaps for the first time in his life, he had indeed been Jesus.



Stories from *A Second Touch*, Keith Miller, World Books 1967

It's often said that no one on their deathbed wishes that they'd spent more time at the office...

Sacrifice

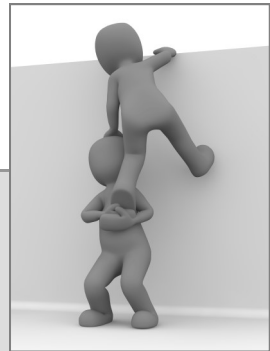
When we moved from Leicester we could not sell our home and we decided to let it out. My next door neighbour who is not a Christian approached me. 'Tenants are not usually good gardeners – would you like me to take on your garden for you when you let the house?' I was touched that he was keeping his eyes open for my needs and willing to do something about it. He is not a Christian yet, but if he ever becomes one he will make a very good stay evangelist!

Jesus died because he was willing to meet my needs at his expense. Your job as a Christian is to reflect this in the way that you live. Usually it is just a matter of keeping your eyes open. If you do you will find that all kinds of human needs come into view. The neighbours have small children – offer to baby-sit. Someone at work is having a bad day – be a listening ear. You are driving and someone wants to get out of a side turning – let them in.

I tried being friendly with my neighbour George. This was easy, because George is just as friendly as I am - but I found that my attempts to witness did not impress him. Then it turned out that his son was struggling at school. I decided to sacrifice some time and offered some coaching. The coaching made a big difference both to Alistair's maths and to my relationship with George, who was much more impressed by what I did than he had been by what I said. He became much more open about his feelings, and in the end he became a regular visitor to our guest evenings at church.

The power of neighbourliness

I heard this story from a clergyman who became the vicar of a rural parish. After he moved there the church began to grow. New people joined, and some of them became Christians. He then realised that all of the new people lived close to one another. Further investigation revealed that all the new people had started to come to church because of one family. He tried to discover how this worked and came to the conclusion that all the family were doing was being extremely good neighbours. They had got to know their neighbours, been hospitable to them and made themselves available to help at every opportunity. This key family had never tried to push their Christianity on anyone; but the neighbours, observing that the family went to church, thought one by one that they would try it too.



Wholeheartedness

Paul wrote a letter to the Christians at Colossae. Towards the end of the letter he decided to say something to slaves – that is, to people who worked in households as owned slaves. How could Paul help them to begin to work out their new faith on a day to day basis? He gave them a single principle – ‘be wholehearted in your work.’ A wholehearted approach to life communicates our belief in a God who is real and who cares about the way we live. It also communicates without words the fact that the chief aim of our lives is to please God.



When you are a go evangelist, people only see you when you are on show. When you are a stay evangelist people see everything about you. They will only believe in your Christianity if they can see that everything you do is of one piece. The way to get this across is to always be wholehearted. Let wholeheartedness show in the way you do your job, raise your children, treat your husband or your wife, even the way you look after your garden. Let people see someone who puts all they have got into everything they do. You don't need to say anything – people will see the way that you are and get the message.

A couple of years ago I was called for Jury service. At first this seemed like a major irritation but God showed me that it was an opportunity – an opportunity to be wholehearted for the sake of being wholehearted. I really enjoyed it and really did my best to concentrate on the evidence and make my contribution to the jury. I got my reward at the end when one of the other jurors said to me, ‘The thing about you Roger, is that you are all heart.’ It was not difficult to take my opportunity and tell him why.

Integrity

People love to say of Christians that they are hypocrites - and we sometimes are! A stay evangelist cannot afford to be a hypocrite - everything about us must show that we have integrity. This means living by the principles which Jesus laid down. Here are some tough questions drawn

from the Sermon on the Mount for any would-be stay evangelist:

- Have you learned to forgive?
- Have you learned to promote others and not yourself?
- Have you learned to aim for peace with all people?
- Are you always honest?
- Have you learned to keep your temper?
- Is your speech under control?
- Are you being faithful in your marriage?
- Do you remain sober?
- Do you live simply?
- Are you free from anxiety?
- Do you avoid making judgements of others?
- Are you regular in prayer and in church?
- Do you always keep your word?
- Do you handle disappointment or misfortune with faith?



Remember if you don't do these things other people will notice. But if you do live this way then other people are likely to take your faith seriously.

The people in our Oikos are watching us. My neighbour Aidan, not yet a Christian, has become very much part of our church community and knows the men of his own age very well. He told me that he does not respect their integrity. 'The reason I do not become a Christian,' he said, 'is because I have read the Sermon on the Mount and I do not wish to live by it – it's too hard for me. But I meet a lot of Christians who do not live by it either.' I reflected that until our church changes the way it lives it will not convince Aidan.

Offer to pray for people!

If you are a friendly person who cares for others, and if you show yourself to be wholehearted and consistent in the way that you live, you will find that people will often come to you with their problems. People often came to Jesus with problems, and he seems always to have been able to deal with those problems by prayer. Jesus said that this was his Father's way of witnessing to his Son's identity. So when people come to me with problems, I first listen and sympathise, but then if I can't give practical help I

ask if they have a faith. If they say they do, I offer to pray with them that God will meet the needs they have. I have prayed for friends to be healed, for people to find things they have lost, for success in business, for people to become pregnant, for people to find a partner, for evil powers to be bound. Many (not all) of these prayers have been immediately answered.

Caroline's story

Caroline was our next door neighbour. She was unable to get her son into the school which she felt was essential for his needs. She needed someone to talk to, and she chose us. We listened, and realised that the solution to this need was out of Caroline's control - but would she like us to pray? We showed her 1 Peter 5.7, which tells us to cast all our anxieties on God. Caroline said, 'A bit like putting the problem in his in tray!'. 'Yes,' we said, 'exactly like that.' We prayed. The next day her son was given a place at the school. The following Sunday the family was to be found in our church.

Being ready to tell your story

So to summarise: If we are friendly towards people, if in our conversations we show a genuine interest in them, if we practise hospitality, if we are wholehearted in the way we approach life, if we make sacrifices for others, if we show integrity, then the non-Christians in our Oikos are going to be attracted to us and they are going to want to find out what makes us tick. Once they start to be interested in us, we get our opportunity to share honestly about ourselves and in time this will lead to an opportunity to speak about our faith.

The opportunity to witness about our faith may come soon after a relationship starts, but sometimes it takes time. The first opportunity is always the crucial one. In practice we will not make the most of these opportunities unless we are ready for them. If someone asks me 'Why do you go to church?', or 'Why do you believe?', or 'Why did you give up your job in Cambridge and get ordained?', I need to be prepared with an answer.

I used not to be ready, and so when the chance to share my faith came I would miss it, or at best make a mess of it. So I decided that I would write out my story carefully and so be in a position to share it with anyone who was interested enough to ask. I recommend that you do the same.

I modelled my story on the testimony given by Paul to King Agrippa and set out in Acts 26. I saw that Paul's testimony has three parts. The middle section gives a blow-by-blow account of how he became a Christian. The first part tells us what his life was like before he became a Christian, and the final part what he was like after he became a Christian. A big change had occurred - before meeting Jesus he was a zealous opponent of the gospel; afterwards he became a zealous advocate for the gospel.

So I thought, what is the biggest change that resulted from my own encounter with Jesus? It was this: before I met Jesus I believed in God, but I had no experience of God. After I met Jesus, God became active in my life in all sorts of ways. So I set out to write this down on paper, as follows:

Writing out a testimony

1. I allowed one minute to describe what life was like for me as someone who believed in God but did not experience him.
2. I allowed one minute to describe the events leading up to the day I became a Christian, and what happened on that day.
3. I allowed one minute to describe how God has been active in my life since then.

Once I had written out my story I was ready, and ever since then I have been sharing it whenever people I meet give me the opportunity.

When I lived in Corby I joined the Corby chess club and played in matches in the Northampton league. I was glad to get to know my team mates and we would often travel together to matches. The conversation was largely about chess. I tried my best to take a genuine interest in their games and not just talk about my own. But one evening one of the team asked me 'Why is someone like you a vicar in Corby?' He had become interested in me and this was my opportunity. I shared my testimony, which took me about 3 minutes. At the end I said, as I always do, 'Does that make sense to you?'. He was full of questions, and we arranged to meet and talk. It was not long before he was attending our church.



People from Christian homes

This structure which I have suggested for a testimony does not always work for people who were born in Christian homes and caught their faith from their parents. If that is you, try using the following structure for your story:

1. Allow one minute to describe your childhood and how you learned your faith from your parents.
2. Allow one minute to describe an event in adult life when you had a powerful encounter with God.
3. Allow one minute to describe what being a Christian means to you now.

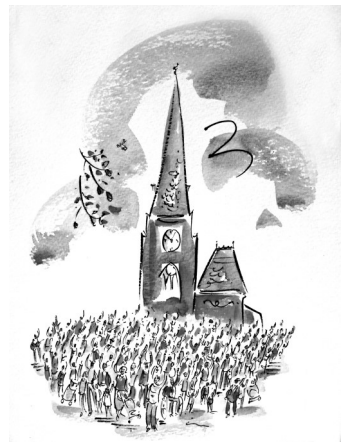
I once heard Billy Graham, the great American evangelist, speak about two people who had worked together for years. One of them – let's call him John – became a Christian at one of Billy's meetings. He went to work the next day and told his friend Tom all about it. 'How splendid' said Tom, 'now we are not only partners at work but brothers in the Lord.' 'What,' said John 'you are a Christian?' 'Yes' said Tom, 'for many years'.

John was very angry. 'For years I have worked with you and admired the way you live. You are the main reason why I have not sought after God. I figured that if someone could live as well as you do without God then God wasn't necessary. Why didn't you tell me?' Tom realised that he had had many opportunities to share his faith with John but he had never done so.

The Church

Stay evangelists are not supposed to operate by themselves; they need the church.

You have made the beginning of a good friendship with someone in your Oikos. They have been asking you questions; you have had opportunities to give testimony to the difference that knowing Jesus has made to your life. And you can see that your friend is not being hostile; he or she is interested.



Your next thought should be to involve the church. By which I mean not the building, or the vicar or the institution, but the other believers who are part of your life and with whom you have regular fellowship. Jesus said that people will know that we are Christians by our love for each other. So take your friend somewhere they can see this love.

Before I give you some ideas about how I can't emphasize too much how important it is not to try to involve people in churchy things until you have reached a point of genuine friendship with them.

With that proviso I'd like to tell you how to involve people from your Oikos with your church.

Getting it wrong

Years ago, when I was working in Cambridge, I had a colleague called Mike. Mike and I had a good working relationship but I had not made any effort to make friends with him. I did invite him to things at my church but he never accepted the invitations. It wasn't surprising really – people accept invitations from friends, people they feel they trust because they know them.



Mike and I had the same boss. I didn't like my boss and as it turned out neither did Mike. One day we were told by the boss that Mike was leaving to take a job in another university on the south coast. I assumed that Mike had got a promotion. Mike left and I guess I thought I would never see him again.

Some years after that my wife and I spent a holiday week in a hotel in Majorca. As it happened staying in the same hotel were Mike and his wife. We asked them to join us for coffee and tried to make friends with them. (You ask me why I hadn't done this before in Cambridge and I am without excuse!) In Majorca we learned the truth about Mike's relationship with our former boss. I'd had a hard time with him but for Mike it had been much worse and much more unfair. Mike had been forced out of the department and had been glad to find a job anywhere. But it had been bad for his family and they had never recovered properly from it. We listened carefully to their story and were able to sympathise. After an hour of listening and talking about Cambridge and their family they turned the subject to us and what we were doing. The last hour of the evening consisted of a serious and open conversation about the Christian faith. How I wish I had had this conversation years before in Cambridge!

Hospitality again

Introduce the friends in your Oikos to your Christian friends by practising hospitality.

One idea that doesn't usually work is for home groups or cell groups to do this together. I have known cell groups which have organised socials with the idea that each member of the cell group will invite somebody. In practice the guests all feel got at by this kind of event. It's much better to do something more natural. Say you are a couple who have made friends with another couple from across the road and that this other couple have shown themselves interested in your faith. Then invite them to dinner and at the same time invite one other couple from the church who you are pretty sure they will get on with.



Sports and clubs

Our church in Corby booked a sports centre for weekly volleyball. There was a core of church members who went, but the whole church knew about it and knew they could invite any non-Christian with an interest in volleyball. In Leicester we played regular football on the park. Also in Leicester we ran a club for mothers with small children and clubs for teenagers. All a church needs is a group of people who enjoy the activity and will be regular and then this club becomes an evangelistic resource for the whole church.



You can invite people to this kind of club simply as a means of making friends with them. If someone likes playing football they will accept an invitation to play football and you don't even have to say that it is church based. They will find themselves involved with a group of people who play with integrity and love each other, and this will show. But resist all temptation to open the football game with a prayer or end it with a sermon!

'Questions' events


This was our name in Leicester for the kind of event all churches should run. We ran them every two months and hundreds of non-Christians came.

Each event was based around a felt need that is shared by Christians and non-Christians alike. How to deal with stress, how to make relationships work, fulfilling your potential, coping with difficult people, making the most of time – these were a few of the titles we chose.

When people came they were given a meal, followed by some entertainment, a talk, and then an opportunity to discuss and ask questions. The talk was not a sermon but an attempt to open up the subject for both Christians and non-Christians.

The Questions events became a major part of our church life. Most of the people in our church accepted their responsibility to be stay evangelists and did their best to make friends with the people in their Oikos. When an event came along they would each think about who to invite – who would benefit from exposure to this topic. The invitations were given and lots of people came. A spin-off of each event was that sometimes as many as twenty people from among our guests would make a decision to take an Alpha course. We didn't push Alpha courses at the Questions events, but we did mention them in the notices.

I'm going. Would you like to come with me?

<h1>TIME</h1>	
<p>BORED? BUSY? AIMLESS? RUSHED OFF YOUR FEET?</p> <p>How to make the best use of your time</p>	
<p>Wednesday 21st and Thursday 22nd May Holy Trinity Church</p>	
<p>Speaker: Roger Morgan</p>	

This is the form of invitation which we recommend for Questions events or clubs, or indeed for any church-based evangelistic event. The invitation says 'These things are for people like you and people like me – so why don't we both go?'

Sundays

These days most people will find what goes on in the church on Sundays to be very strange indeed. So don't invite them. If you do they won't come anyway.

But there are still a lot of people around who can take church. They used to go – it's just that they have lost the habit. If I know this, and I have confidence in what goes on in my church on Sunday, then I will invite someone. I just say 'Why don't you try coming to church with me on Sunday? I think you may find it's a lot better than you were used to.'

In Leicester I was able to lead a lot of people to Christ who originally came to church in this way, invited there by other church members.



One of these days

This is another trick I learned about inviting people. It often happens that I know that if I invite someone they will probably come up with an excuse. This means that they are not sure if they want to, and saying no is easier. If I feel this may well happen, then I use the expression 'one of these days.' For example 'one of these days you must come to church with me, and then you can see what church is really like.' If they say 'I'd love to' then you can fix a date. If they just shrug then you can say the same thing again in a month or so. One day they will go for it.

In Corby we made friends with Ian and Lin, who were wonderfully hospitable to us. Ian would ask questions about our faith but I was unsure whether he really wanted to take it anywhere for himself. So after he had asked another of his questions and we had discussed things a bit I would say 'one of these days, Ian, you and I will have to spend an evening looking at the Bible together to see if what I am saying about Jesus is true. For a couple of years Ian didn't take up my offer, but then one day he said 'all right, we will' - and we did. On that first evening I remember how it dawned on Ian that Jesus really had been raised from the dead and that therefore he, Ian, would have to take this seriously. Ian now serves as church warden in a village near Corby.

Very familiar people

All of us have people in our Oikos whom we know extremely well, but to whom we have never spoken about our faith. They know we are Christians but we have never talked about it properly. Members of our families are often in this category.

The only thing to be done here is to be very, very direct. Plan your moment and bring the subject up. Take your dad out to dinner and say, 'You know I am a Christian, and I know you are not. Can we talk about it? I'd love to hear your point of view and to tell you what has been happening to me. Would that be OK with you?'



Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. I've never known it to do any harm, and I did have the pleasure of leading one member of my family to Christ as a result.

Courses

It's not so long ago that most people in this country who became Christians became Christians at special evangelistic events. The stay evangelist would invite people to hear Billy Graham or some other go evangelist who was visiting town. The visiting evangelist would preach and appeal and many people would become Christians. In many countries this is still the best way of doing evangelism, and it still works for some people in our culture.

Evangelistic events work best for people who have a lot of background – people who already believe in God, who have probably been to church services before, and are familiar with the Bible. Increasingly in this country these things are not the case for the majority of people. If people are to become Christians now, they need much more time to think it out and ask their questions.

So the very well-known Alpha course came into being, along with various alternatives such as Emmaus or Essence. Now the stay evangelists invite people to Alpha or perhaps to an event which is set up to introduce

people to Alpha. All such courses last for several weeks, which allows people to take in the message gradually before coming to a decision. Discussion is included, which encourages participants to ask questions. And perhaps most important of all, these courses create a community of Christians and non-Christians, which is the ideal environment for evangelism.

All churches should run courses of this kind. In our church in Leicester we started a new one every month.



Missions

It's a good idea for a church to run a mission week from time to time. The stay evangelists can invite their friends to the various events planned and run by a visiting team of go evangelists.

The mission will include some bigger meetings where the visiting team will speak and invite the audience to make a commitment to Christ. Others may decide to take an Alpha course (or similar), which should follow soon after the mission week.

But the main emphasis of the mission should be on home based meetings. The stay evangelist will open up his or her own home and invite all the people in their Oikos to it. If the mission has been well publicised people are likely to want to come. A typical home meeting will have the stay evangelists as hosts, two members of the visiting team and a roomful of guests. After refreshments one of the visiting team will give testimony and the rest of the meeting is for discussion. At the end an opportunity is given for people to become Christians or to join the coming Alpha course.

You will find that many more people are willing to come to your home, especially if they have been there before, than will come to a meeting at church.

The power of words

At the beginning, the only evangelist was Jesus, who came from heaven to earth to bring the message of God's love to the human race. This message came in both words and deeds. People were reached both by the power of what he said and by the power of how he lived. Today the church needs both these kinds of power.

Let's go back to 1 Peter 3 where the wives win their husbands entirely without a word. But although the wives didn't say much, *somebody* must have said something; somebody must have spoken to these men - someone else from the church she belonged to, or some visiting go evangelist. No-one ever becomes a Christian unless they first hear the gospel - the Good News of what God has done through Jesus. The words of the gospel have power in themselves.

In our culture we need stay evangelists who will listen to people and love them and probably say very little. We need stay evangelists who are ready with their testimony whenever people ask questions. We need stay evangelists who will invite their interested friends to whatever the church is providing. But we still need the gospel to be preached or explained by somebody; on an Alpha course, by the visiting team at a mission week, at church services, or wherever. Otherwise no one is ever going to become a Christian.

Are you too called to share the gospel?

I am indebted to a man called Ed Reis who taught me how to share the gospel with people. I started to do that whenever I had the opportunity. I shared the message of what Jesus had done on the cross and what Jesus still does for people today. I offered people the opportunity to become Christians. I prayed for people to receive the Holy Spirit. And I began to see people come to faith.



All go evangelists are called to share the gospel. We know from experience that the gospel has power. If we share the gospel, then God is always at work – as we speak to people, God speaks to people. And always as we share the gospel we find that some are reached. This is how the kingdom grows; and we know that this is our part in kingdom growth.

Stay evangelists are not always good gospel sharers. And they do not always have that faith in the power of the gospel which is essential for go evangelists. For stay evangelists the way they live is much more important than what they say. But I have known stay evangelists who are very effective gospel sharers. I mentioned Dave who was approached by his Russian friend in a Greek hotel. Dave knew how to share the gospel. He did it and he made a very significant convert as a result.

So I want to encourage you to think that you too could be a gospel sharer. Yes - your primary focus must be your secular responsibilities. Yes - your primary witness is your lifestyle. But when the opportunity comes, be ready to tell the story of Jesus - and expect to be surprised by the results!

In Cambridge it was part of my job to teach probability theory. Students came to see me in pairs. One pair came each week from Jesus College; they were bright and industrious, and I enjoyed the sessions. I worked hard trying to teach them to the best of my ability. I lived near Jesus College, and after one of the sessions, one of them helped me carry some equipment to my home. As we walked along, he opened the conversation. 'They tell me you are a Christian,' he said. 'Yes,' I said, 'how about you?'. 'No,' he said, 'I am not, but I have been thinking about it a lot.' 'Would you know how to become a Christian if you wanted to?' 'No,' he said, 'but could you explain?' So I gave him an outline of the gospel:

- A for *Admit* that you need something more.
- B for *Believe* and trust in Jesus.
- C for *Consider* what being a Christian will mean in practice.
- D for *Do*; offer up your life and receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Our walk across Cambridge lasted for about 10 minutes. Later that evening he prayed a prayer which I had given him in the company of his friends back at the college.

Why had he chosen to speak to me? Not just because I am a Christian; there are many Christians in Cambridge. I think he spoke to me because of the way I had taught him probability.

The power of a changed life

As we have seen, gospel sharing - the power of words - is not the whole story. Our lives too are intended to have an impact. But for this to happen, we must first of all be full of the Holy Spirit; the love of Christ must flow into us if it is to flow out of us.

Let anyone who is thirsty come to me, and let the one who believes in me drink. As the scripture has said, 'Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water'. Now he said this about the Spirit, which believers in him were to receive. John 7.37-39

Everyone has their own story of how they came to be filled with the Spirit. This was mine:



One day, when I was 27, I read the 13th chapter of 1 Corinthians and God spoke to me. It was an overwhelming experience. 1 Corinthians 13 is about love, and it says that love is the greatest of all the Holy Spirit's gifts. As I read this chapter that day, I realised that I did not have love. I was seeing people as objects to be manipulated, not as precious children of God to be loved.

For three days I was devastated at the discovery I had made about myself. I thought I was a Christian, but actually I was a fraud. I had no love except for the love I had for myself. Then as it happened I went to hear Richard Wurmbrand speak at Great St Mary's Church in Cambridge.

Richard spoke about Jesus and how Jesus had humbled himself. Jesus had chosen to go down - down from heaven, down to earth, down to the cross, down to hell as he suffered for us. I saw then what my problem was. I was aiming up - wanting always to climb in life, always in competition with others. That night I repented of my self-centredness and my ambition, and I asked the Holy Spirit to come in and change me. It became as if he was inside me looking out, filling my heart with compassion for all the people I meet. I began to experience the power of a changed life.

Keep on being filled

That initial experience of the Holy Spirit did make all the difference, but it was not sufficient in itself. I need to keep on being filled by the Spirit of God, or that selfish me will rise up again and affect every one of my relationships. For me this means the daily disciplines of Bible reading and prayer, and the weekly disciplines of cell group fellowship and church. I doubt if anyone can be an effective stay evangelist without these.



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Stay Evangelism encourages ordinary Christians to develop a transparent and friendly lifestyle which makes it possible to share their faith unthreateningly and in a servant-hearted way with others.

Canon Roger Morgan has many years' experience in evangelism. During his time as a university lecturer Roger built up a ministry amongst students and townspeople. Roger then spent 25 years in parish ministry in Corby and Leicester, where he saw many people find a faith in Christ. He has also worked with Through Faith Missions and as a mission specialist with ReSource. Roger is Director of the Mathetes Trust.



Roger is the author of a number of other resources, including:

Decision: An explanation of what is involved in becoming a Christian

Beautiful Lives: Sharing our faith with friends and neighbours

The God Who is There: A Discipleship course for small groups

These and other resource materials are available from our website.



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