

Steve Holland. Sunday 10th February 2008.

Success in Evangelism

1. Personal story

- a. At Aston University I shared a flat in my first year with 11 non Christians. Most of my witness involved trying to get them to attend meetings at the CU with limited success. I did have excellent conversations late at night over toast and coffee after a night at the ACE disco (showing my age).
 - i. One Lad I shared with came on mission week at the ASTON Uni. CU and prayed with a friend of mine and made a commitment.
 - ii. I was really pleased success at last but soon I was disappointed.
 - iii. When a very attractive non Christian girl that had not given him a look in suddenly wanted to go out with him he was soon giving up on CU church and the Christianity.
 - iv. I was now in the valley of disappointment where most Christians live out their lives in relation to evangelism.
 - v. We tried it once and soon decided that it was only for the experts and as we were not experts it must not be our gifting.
- b. **That summer** I was invited by some people at George Road Baptist Church to take part in an open air week of evangelism in Birmingham city centre.
 - i. I was trained to do street evangelism. This was by open air campaigners.
 - ii. We were trained to wait till a sketch board presentation was completed and then turn to the

- person standing next to them and ask them what they thought.
- iii. It was 1982 and I was 19 years old and as the first gospel presentation finished I turned to the person next to me who turned out to be a little old lady from Streetly.
 - iv. I asked her as we had been trained to what she thought of the presentation. She said it was very good. I then followed up with various questions moving on to what she thought of Jesus and his death on a cross.
 - v. She said she realized that Jesus had died for her and she wanted to become a Christian. I asked a few more questions (as per training) to make sure she understood what that meant and she did.
 - vi. I asked her if she wanted to pray a prayer of commitment there and then or later at home. She said she wanted to do it now.
 - vii. So on a sunny Saturday in the old bull ring with pigeons flying around and cars driving round the round about above us she made a first time commitment to Christ at the age of about 75.
 - viii. Was it that the sketch board preacher was a superb evangelist? Was it me? I will tell you more of her story later but for now let's concentrate on me and how I felt.
 - ix. I was on a high- I was really keen to go out and do sketch board evangelism and always took every opportunity to speak to people after the preach and still do to this day. I have not had the same response though.
 - x. My expectations had been raised and I was hooked. I had tasted success. Someone who was not a Christian had been saved. Result.

- c. The next year I shared a flat with more non Christians and after my success became very keen to preach at all my new friends about Jesus. This did not make me very popular but they were a captive audience.
- d. Over the next few years as I settled down a bit I started to listen to people a bit more and have conversations rather than preaching at them. Does this mean I was only successful in evangelism early on and have not been since?
- e. I now have some very close friends who are not Christians (most of them Muslims) I spend time with them; we celebrate and grieve with them. We share our lives. We pray for them and see God answer our prayers miraculously. They are not yet Christians. Does this mean I am now a failure after being such a success in the past?
- f. In the last few years I have had the privilege of teaching on the alpha course and preaching gospel messages. We have seen people saved. Is that the success I have been looking for? At Christmas during the Carol service three people made a commitment.

2. What is success in evangelism?

- a. Is that success in evangelism? Most of us have grown up thinking that it is but by that measure most of the time we are failures. Our friends are still not Christians so we might as well give up success is for people who are experts like Steve and Emma. Let's leave it to them. After all I have a different gifting Evangelism is not for me.
- b. How can we find out what success in evangelism is?
- c. I would like to suggest that we have been fooled by the enemy to think that we are not succeeding or able to succeed in evangelism. We have completely misunderstood the nature of evangelism. We see evangelism as an event and we need to understand that evangelism is a process.

3. Jesus in evangelism. The woman at the well

- a. In order to illustrate that Jesus saw success in evangelism as a process not an event I would like to look at a passage in John's Gospel Chapter 4.
- b. I will preach a sermon on this chapter in detail as part of a series of Jesus and Evangelism in a few weeks time.
- c. For now I just want to tell you the story and then pick out some prominent verses.
- d. The story of the woman at the well.
 - i. Jesus has left Jerusalem and was returning through Samaria to Galilee.
 - ii. It is hot; the middle of the day and Jesus sits quietly on his own waiting for his disciples who have gone to fetch some food.
 - iii. A woman approaches on her own and starts to get water out of the deep well.
 - iv. The other women would have come earlier but she comes on her own.
 - v. Jesus ignores the way people should normally behave and asks her for some water.
 - vi. She soon puts him right and tells him off. Samaritans and Jews hated each other. How could he expect her to help him?
 - vii. He says that if she knew who He was, she would ask him for living water and he would give it her.
 - viii. A conversation ensues and more of this in a latter sermon but for now lets look at a bit more of it.
 - ix. The Holy Spirit gives him a word of Knowledge and he tells her that she has had 5 husbands and that she is now living with yet another man who is not her husband. Probably why she was too ashamed to come down to the well with the other women in the cool of the morning.
 - x. The conversation continues and they have a discussion on worship venues but during it she says "I

don't know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we'll get the whole story."

- xi. Jesus replies "I am He, You don't have to wait any longer or look any further."
- xii. The conversation continues and the gospel does not let us in on what is said but when the disciples arrive they are shocked to see him talking to a Samaritan let alone a woman. She goes off to tell the whole town to come and listen to Jesus.
- xiii. Now the passage I want to look at today is what happens next.

It's Harvest Time: John 4 v 31 - 42 (The message)

31 In the meantime, the disciples pressed him, "Rabbi, eat. Aren't you going to eat?" 32 He told them, "I have food to eat you know nothing about."

33 The disciples were puzzled. "Who could have brought him food?"

34-35 Jesus said, "The food that keeps me going is that I do the will of the One who sent me, finishing the work he started. As you look around right now, wouldn't you say that in about four months it will be time to harvest? Well, I'm telling you to open your eyes and take a good look at what's right in front of you. These Samaritan fields are ripe. It's harvest time!

36-38 "The Harvester isn't waiting. He's taking his pay, gathering in this grain that's ripe for eternal life. Now the Sower is arm in arm with the Harvester, triumphant. That's the truth of the saying, 'This one sows, that one harvests.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

39-42 Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I

did. He knows me inside and out!" They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!"

- xiv. Nothing very surprising. Jesus uses ideas of farming and particular sowing seeds to talk about evangelism.
- xv. If success is in an event Jesus should be celebrating success but even as we see many Samaritans coming to faith in Jesus we see Jesus use a strange saying.

'This one sows, that one harvests.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

- xvi. Adrian Holloway uses a football analogy to explain what happens here.
- xvii. Jesus is the messiah - (Gods chosen one)
- xviii. She says " I know when the Messiah comes he will Explain everything"
- xix. Jesus says "its me"
- xx. Imagine England are playing Germany and Gareth Barry passes the ball into Jermaine Jenas on the edge of the six yard box who looks up and sees for some inexplicable reason the German goalie is not there.
- xxi. How difficult is it. He just taps it into the back of the net.
- xxii. England football is never that easy but For Jesus he is in exactly this sort of position.
- xxiii. She says " I know when the Messiah comes he will Explain everything"
- xxiv. Jesus says "its me"

'This one sows, that one harvests.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

xxv. Jesus understood that evangelism was a process. He understood that the woman and the other Samaritans had years of teaching and understanding before Jesus turned up and said he was the messiah.

xxvi. For one they knew that God existed

xxvii. They were looking for a messiah

xxviii. They knew he would put things right.

e. Have you seen how some people celebrate when a goal is scored?

i. They jump about they do somersaults.

ii. Is it just the goal scorer who celebrates?

iii. No the whole team does - they know they have played their part. They enjoy the success because they are part of it.

iv. Jesus was the centre forward who put the ball in the back of the net but he recognized that someone else had set up the shot for him.

4. **Back to my story at the start:** The old woman who made a commitment to Christ in the bull ring in 1982.

a. As I sought to find out what church we could put her in touch with it turns out that she had friends at Streetly Evangelical Church. A small gospel mission a friend of mine from CU came from. Her husband had died and two of her friends had been really kind to her. They had spent time with, her and she had been to a coffee morning or something like it and visited the church and wanted to go and tell them what she had done and ask to go to church with them.

b. I was in the same position as Jesus in the Samaritan village as I turned and asked that woman what she thought of the gospel presentation. An open goal, just tap it in the back of the net. All the work had been done by other members of

the team - her friends. Was the success mine alone or the evangelist preaching? No Jesus knew the answer.

'This one sows, that one harvests.' I sent you to harvest a field you never worked. Without lifting a finger, you have walked in on a field worked long and hard by others."

- i. What is interesting about the story is that it was out of relationship that she came to the point to be ready to make a commitment to Christ and that it was in relationship with her friends that she would learn how to grow as a new convert to Christianity.

c. We do not think of evangelism as process but as event.

- i. We think of it as a cup final when really its more like a league.
- ii. We think it is all about what the centre forward can do - the evangelist.
- iii. We think we have no part to play and are just spectators in the stands buying our season ticket and just praying.
- iv. The truth is it is a team event and Jesus has made us part of the team.
- v. We may be a physio, a grounds man, a goalie or a coach or a defender but we are all on the team.
- vi. When Aston villa wins the FA Cup Jane, Jon High and I will be very pleased and celebrate. If we only ever celebrated when they won the FA cup we might as well give up and support the Blues.
- vii. We celebrate when they win a game and move up the table.
- viii. We are pleased when they do not loose to Chelsea.

- ix. Let us realize that Evangelism is a process and that we can all take our part in seeing people's lives change as we do our part in the team.

5. Evangelism as a process

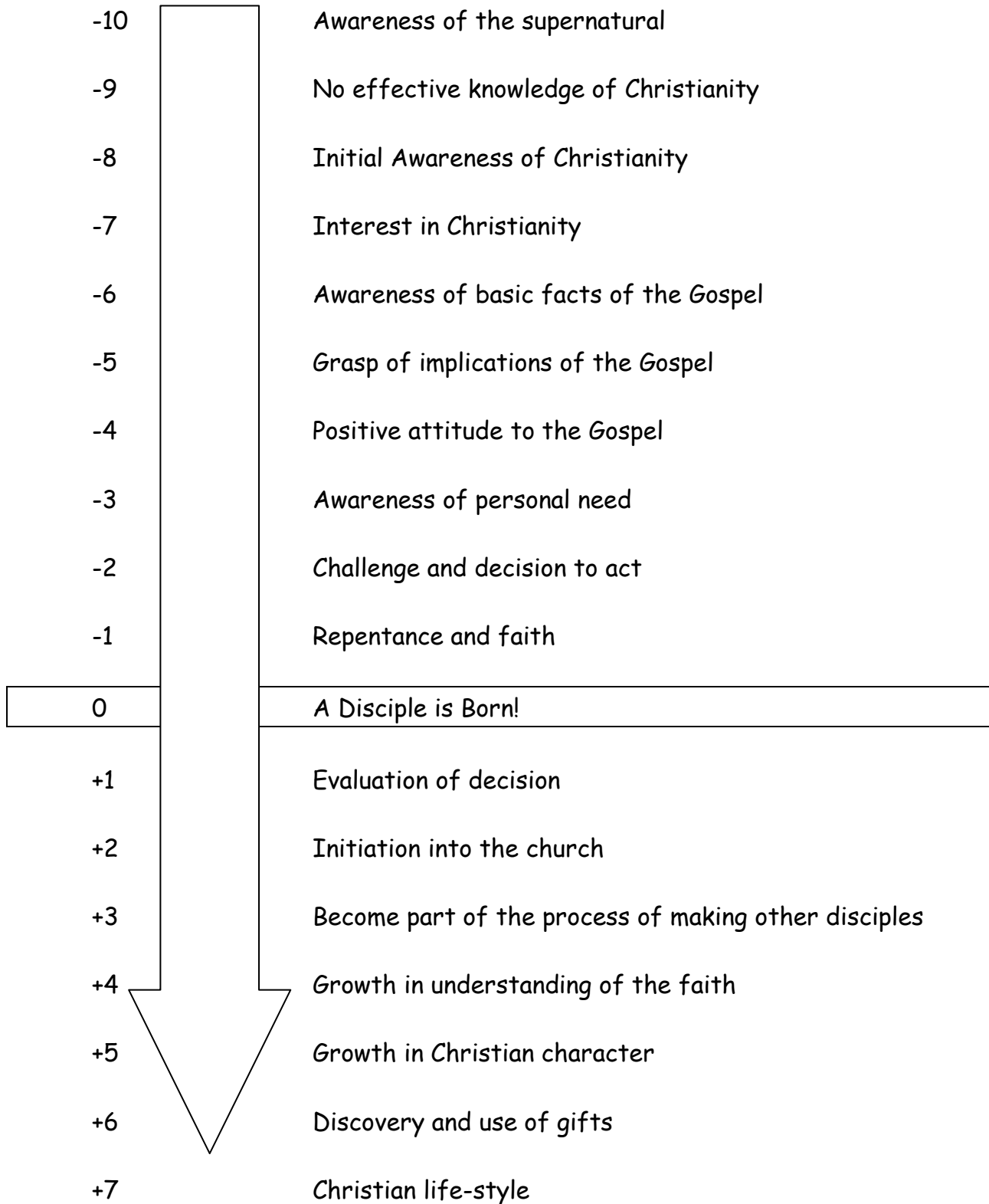
- a. We need to understand that evangelism is a process not an event
 - b. In 1975 James Engle came up with a useful scale to illustrate this.
 - i. Others have produced variations on it and put the language, more simply. I would like to come up with a version that suits this church and tie it in to what we do. At its heart though the Engle scale has several important biblical principles. I will come back to it again but for the moment lets point out some.
 1. The scale starts with someone who does not even know the God exists.
 2. It continues to salvation
 3. It continues after salvation as we grow as disciples.
 4. We are all somewhere on the list.
 5. God is at work to move us along the list
 6. We can have a part in various ways.
 7. What we can do may depend on where people are on the list
 8. Relationship is important at all stages.
- Success is seen whenever someone moves forward on the list.

The Dynamics of New Birth			
- The Modified Engel Scale			
Level	Description	God Is	Man's Task
+4	Part of Team Leadership		Support
+3	Continuing growth in character, lifestyle and service		
+2	Functioning member of local Church	Empowering	
+1	Holy Spirit and baptism	Transforming	Encouragement
0	Repentance and faith		
-1	Challenged to respond personally	Converting	
-2	Grasp the implications of the gospel		Power
-3	Aware of personal need		
-4	Aware of the basic facts of the gospel	Convicting	
-5	Experience of Christian love		Proclamation
-6	Interested in Jesus		
-7	Aware of Jesus	Guiding	
-8	Wondering if God can be known		Preparation
-9	Vague awareness and belief in God		
-10	God framework	Revealing	
-11	Experience of emptiness		Presence
-12	No God framework	Confirming	Prayer

The Spiritual Decision-Making Process *(What's Gone Wrong With The Harvest, James Engle)*

GOD'S ROLE	CHRISTIAN'S ROLE		NON-CHRISTIAN'S RESPONSE
General Revelation		- 8	Awareness of Supreme Being but No Effective Knowledge of Gospel
Conviction ↓	Proclamation ↓	- 7	Initial Awareness of Gospel
		- 6	Awareness of Fundamentals of Gospel
		- 5	Grasp of Implications of Gospel
		- 4	Positive Attitude Toward Gospel
		- 3	Personal Problem Recognition
		- 2	DECISION TO ACT
	Persuasion	- 1	Repentance and Faith in God
REGENERATION			NEW CREATURE
Sanctification ↓	Follow-Up	+ 1	Post-Decision Evaluation
	Cultivation ↓	+ 2	Incorporation into Church Body
		+ 3	Conceptual and Behavioral Growth
		+ 4	Communion with God
		+ 5	Stewardship
		•	Reproduction
		•	Internally (spiritual gifts, etc.)
•	Externally (witness, social action, etc.)		

Engle Scale of Evangelism



- +8 Stewardship of resources
- +9 Prayer
- +10 Openness to others/Effective sharing of faith and life

6. So what are the implications of this and what we do now. We are successful when:

a. Alpha

- i. Someone agrees to come to the Alpha course with us
- ii. Someone comes back to a second week on the alpha course
- iii. Someone agrees to come to the Holy Spirit weekend.

b. Socials

- i. A friend agrees to come to a social event where other Christians are present.
- ii. We attend the event and make people feel welcomed.
- iii. Someone leaves the social wanting to come to another event.
- iv. They notice something attractive about the people but can't quite put their finger on it.

c. Personal friendships

- i. We have a personal friend who is not a Christian
- ii. We spend more time with them to build the relationship.
- iii. They start to share their life and we share ours.
- iv. We talk openly about what each of us believes.
- v. They agree to let us pray for them.
- vi. God answers our prayer.
- vii. They meet some of our other Christian friends and get to know them to.
- viii. We invite them to a Gospel service or alpha and they seem interested but do not attend.
- ix. We continue being their friend and sharing our lives with them
- x. They come to church on day and we help them feel at home explaining what is going on. - They like it and want to come again

d. Discipleship

- i. Our friend has become a Christian and start to meet with us to pray and read the bible.
 - ii. We talk with them about baptism and they ask us about our experience of baptism.
 - iii. We help them plan the baptism and attend it with them and their family.
 - iv. We see them become church members and continue in relationship with them.
- e. Note - you might think that success is only in the later part of my list but success is in the process. Whenever a friend of ours moves forward on the scale it is success.

7. Our part in Evangelism

Luke 24 v 46 - 49 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. 48You are witnesses of these things. 49I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

- a. We are all sent to be witnesses
 - b. Not a calling to a special few
 - c. It is a team event - we do it
 - d. Jesus expects us to sign up to do it -to take our part in the team.
 - e. We witness to others of what we have experienced in Jesus.
 - f. We need the equipping of the Holy Spirit.
8. So Success in Evangelism is in the process not the event.
- a. We can all have success as we sign up to the team and engage in the process.

Ministry - Play the CD song - Amazing god track 4 - closer to you.

Need people to respond if

- Realize that we do not yet know Christ Jesus as our savior.
- We have given up on being involved in evangelism due to lack of success.
 - Realise God does want us to engage in the process of seeing disciples made.
 - Want to recommit to getting involved in the process
 - I would like to recommission you in the name of Jesus.
- We need the Holy Spirit for this task.
 - If you are dry and need more of the Holy Spirit.
 - You have never been filled with the Holy Spirit.
 - You want God to give you gifts for the task.
 - Healing
 - Prophecy
 - Etc
- Feel a failure as a Christian
 - Want God to open your eyes to see yourself as God sees you.