

Study Guide for *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*

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This guide has been developed for leading a group study of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. It helps you to think through how to apply the major ideas in the book to your own faith and to the ministry practices of your congregation.

This guide is available for everyone, but it will specifically be used by those who are studying *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists* as part of the five-week online course being conducted through UM Discipleship. Each of the sections of the guide corresponds to one of the five sessions of the course.

Other materials and archived versions of the live course sessions can be found at <http://markteasdale.net/index.php/evangelism-online/>.

Setting Our Expectations Pre-Course Session

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13-16, NIV)

While this Scripture passage is about exorcism, it probably comes close to how many of us feel about evangelism. We fear being put in a situation in which we are way over our heads and our efforts end in disaster. It's good to acknowledge this up front when we study evangelism.

This first section of the study guide is meant for you and your congregation to fill out before you start the course and is related to the introduction and chapter 1 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading those parts of the book, take some time to answer the following questions to help set the concerns, expectations, and learning goals you have for the course.

- Questions for Individual Reflection

What is your worst experience with evangelism (either as an evangelist or being evangelized)? List all the reasons why it was problematic.

List all of the people you would describe as evangelists. What common traits do these people have? What stereotypes do you have of evangelists?

If you could remake the world so it was perfect, what would it look like? What would be different from the way it is now?

What are your current individual practices of evangelism?

Why are you studying evangelism? Is it to meet a requirement, to gain specific skills, for personal growth, to help your congregation or another reason? What do you expect to get out of this class?

- Group Reflection Questions

Share your personal stories of evangelism gone bad with each other. What are the commonalities the stories have with each other?

The New Testament records five commissioning passages between Jesus and the disciples, not just one. These are Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:9-20, Luke 24:36-53, John 20:19-31, and Acts 1:1-11. Break into five groups, with each group looking at one of these passages. Answer three questions in reference to each passage: 1) What commands does Jesus give? 2) What promises does Jesus make? 3) What is the hoped-for outcome of following Jesus's commands? Compare and contrast these answers with the negative examples of evangelism you experienced.

How would you define evangelism? How do you feel about evangelism being defined as a bias for the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ?

We often think about evangelism in terms of our individual responsibility, but our individual evangelistic work is just part of the work carried out by the whole church. What are your current congregational practices of evangelism? Who is responsible for evangelism in your church? Does this connect with the individual practices you listed?

Even in ministries that are not specifically evangelistic, we still provide a witness of Christ through them. How does your congregation offer excellence in its ministry to reflect well on the gospel? How is it more or less impressive than governmental or corporate organizations?

Do the descriptions of modernism and postmodernism sound like they might apply to your congregation or denomination? How so? Put another way, which sounds more natural to how you tend to operate as a congregation?

Would you describe yourself or your congregation as “evangelical?” Can you identify evangelistic activities in your congregation or individual life that come from an evangelical heritage? Do they fit with how you view yourself and/or your congregation?

Do you understand the difference between fundamentalism and a fundamentalist mindset? Are there ways that you or your congregation could be described as having a fundamentalist mindset now? If so, how might that cause problems with evangelism?

Let's Talk about Something Good!

Session 1

Starting Point

- + Theological Reflection
- + Contextual Awareness
- = Creative Practice

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9, NIV)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3, NIV)

God called both the people of Israel and the church to know the core message of their faith and to pass that message along to others. We likewise need to know our starting point of faith and how to articulate it in order to share our faith.

This section is based on the first session of the course in which we discuss chapter 2 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading the chapter and participating in the webinar, gather as a group to answer the following questions.

Name all the negative things you can think of that Christians have done or are accused of now. Given all this, why do you remain a Christian?

1 Peter 3:15 says we should always have an answer for the hope within us. What is the hope God gives you? What is the ultimate purpose you think God has for you? For all of creation?

How do you understand issues of life, death, and suffering? Does God control every situation? Is there any situation which God cannot control? How do you offer hope from God in these situations?

Take all of your answers and gather them together in the boxes below to create a basic story of how God relates to the world:

What Has God Done?	What Is God Doing?	What Will God Do?

Based on what is in your boxes, share your metanarrative (your way of describing how the world works and why it works that way).

How does your metanarrative show that God is good and that God is the initiator of good things?

If a person were to accept your metanarrative as the basis for his or her life, what would happen? How would his or her life change on the inside and on the outside? What sort of beliefs would they have? What sort of morals would they have? What sort of activities would they undertake? Who would they relate to and how would they relate to those people?

Describe how your metanarrative influences how you personally live in the following settings:

Personal Life	Church	Community

How do you pay attention to God's nudges in your life to bring you back to your metanarrative of God's goodness? What are some ways you can be more attentive to God's activity?

Knowing your metanarrative and learning to communicate it to others can be difficult. One way to communicate it well is to see how your metanarrative helps you explain your life story. The line exercise from p. 36 in the book can help you with this:

- 1) Draw a line that represents your life. It should include peaks, valleys and plateaus to represent the high, low, and mundane periods of your life.
- 2) Once you have finished your line, label the parts of the line that are most important to you.
- 3) After you have added these first labels, write what you believe God was doing during those same moments. This should be based on your current understanding of what God was doing in your life, not on what you thought God was doing at the time those periods of your life occurred.

Once you have finished, you have an integrated depiction of your personal narrative and your metanarrative. You have explained your life and have also shown how you used your metanarrative about God to make sense of what happened in your life. A secondary result of this activity is that you have shown that you are equipped to serve as an evangelist. All people have peaks, valleys and plateaus. An evangelist's job is not to refute this or try to explain away those instances, but to share how the metanarrative of Jesus Christ to make sense of their own peaks, valleys, and plateaus. This is not something to force on others, but an invitation for others to consider what it would look like to reconsider their own lives through the lens of a Christian metanarrative. This understanding of evangelism helps to overcome the fear many people have of not being prepared or educated enough to evangelize. We do not need the answers. We just need to articulate how the good news of God through Jesus Christ has made sense of our personal stories.

In addition to being able to articulate your personal metanarrative, your congregation needs to be able to work out its larger metanarrative. In most congregations, there will be many different metanarratives people use because their experiences of God's goodness are different. There is nothing wrong with that, but it is important that the people in the congregation share their respective metanarratives with each other so they can understand each other and work together toward a common starting point for the congregation's evangelistic activities. Take time to discuss your different metanarratives with each other. Are there common points of agreement you can use for your congregation?

Does your church have a mission or vision statement? What does it express about who God is and what God wants to accomplish in the world? Could you use the common points of your metanarratives to shape these to be more authentic to what your congregation believes and the good it wants others to experience from God through Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit?

Thinking through Our Stories in Conversation with the Church

Session 2

Starting Point
+ **Theological Reflection**
+ Contextual Awareness
= Creative Practice

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV)

As important as it is for us to articulate our starting points, sharing the story of God's goodness to us and how that goodness orders the universe, it is not enough. Left alone, it can lead us to a personalized version of the Christian faith. In order to keep our starting points faithful to the Christian tradition, we need to reflect on them theologically.

This section is based on the second session of the course in which we discuss chapter 3 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading the chapter and participating in the webinar, gather as a group to answer the following questions.

This chapter includes several technical terms for dealing with theology. Here is a brief glossary of them in case they are new to you.

Affections: Our deep-seated feelings about an idea we encounter.

Apophatic theology: Theology that comes from being quiet and contemplating what the voice of God is telling us. It is often connected to mysticism.

Christology: The study of Jesus Christ.

Divine revelation: The way God reveals information to people about who God is, how God acts, and how we are to respond to God.

Doctrine: Formal teaching of the church about Christian beliefs.

Interpretive matrix: Our personal way of making sense of ideas we encounter, including our affections and our reason.

Kataphatic theology: Theology that comes from using words to write about and speak about God, seeking to understand God better through our reason.

Theology: The study of God and God's actions.

Have you ever thought about why you believe what you believe?

What are the sources you believe are revelations from God?

Of these sources, do you believe there is a primary source that God will always remain consistent with even when speaking through other sources? (For example, if you believe both the Bible and talking with other people are ways God offers us revelation, do you believe that the Bible is God's full revelation and that anything you receive as a revelation from other people will have to align with what is in the Bible?)

How do you interpret those sources of revelation? (These are our hermeneutics that give us a particular theological tradition through which we understand the overall Christian Tradition)

Are there other sources that influence your beliefs about God (e.g., politics, social media, family, work)? These may not define the entire Christian Tradition, but you find them meaningful.

Based on the answers from all of the above, say more about your starting point. What sort of God do you believe in and what are the good things that God invites people to share? How does God invite people to share them? How does that God want people to share the good things with each other?

Now, expand on your answers above and describe your view of God more broadly:

Who is God?

What does God do?

How should we respond to God based on who God is and what God does?

What are some alternative perspectives Christians might have about how they understand the good news, God, and God's activities? Do you see ways you could work alongside of people with these different views to share the good news?

Are there differences about sources of revelation and views of God in your own congregation? If so, how can you hear, respect, and work with each other toward sharing your common desire for people to experience God's goodness?

Listening Before Speaking Session 3

Starting Point
+ Theological Reflection
+ **Contextual Awareness**
= Creative Practice

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23, NIV)

After receiving the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. (Acts 21:40 - 22:2, NIV)

St. Paul was aware of who he was and who he was speaking to when he evangelized. He could speak in Greek to the people of Athens about the relationship of God to their culture and could speak in Aramaic to the Jews in Jerusalem about the relationship between Jesus and Jewish beliefs. He listened first to how they spoke so he could respond in a meaningful way to them.

As meaningful as our ability to articulate our starting points in a way that is faithful to the Christian tradition may be to us, it will fall flat when we share it if we don’t first listen to the people we want to share it with. Once we hear them well, we can share our message in a way that is authentic to ourselves and the Christian Tradition and in a way that is meaningful to them.

This section is based on the third session of the course in which we discuss chapter 4 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading the chapter and participating in the webinar, gather as a group to answer the following questions.

How well do you listen to yourself? What strengths and weaknesses do you have as an individual? What hopes and fears relating to God and eternity?

Does your congregation have ways to listen intentionally to the context around it? If so, how?

What is the group of people that defines the culture in which you will evangelize? Think of some of the most common practices and items used by that group. What are the core values you can infer about the culture based on those practices and items? (It can help to look at where the group spends most of its time, energy and money.)

What are the major social structures the people you want to evangelize must interact with? How frequently must they interact with them? How specialized are the structures? Are there hurdles or difficulties for the group you are evangelizing in working with these structures? Are there ways you or a congregation could help facilitate that interaction?

As we listen to our context (culture, society) around us, we also need to be certain we keep listening to our starting point and Christian Tradition so our beliefs don't become defined by the context. Has your congregation ever taken time to be quarantined away from the culture and society in order to be clear about its beliefs, identity and values?

Does your congregation foster an alternative set of values for relating to the culture and social structures around it? What might strengthen it in doing this?

Crouch suggests that at times all of us will condemn, critique, copy, or consume cultural practices or artifacts. Name something from the culture that you would react to in each of these four ways. Now repeat the process for your congregation.

If you could have any impact on your culture or society as a congregation, what would it be? What sort of culture would you need to create in order to have this change? How could you cultivate the space, time, people and resources to create this alternative culture?

How does your congregation move individuals into a deeper set of relationships with God and with others so they can share your vision of a transformed culture and society through Jesus Christ?

Embodying the Good News Session 4

Starting Point
+ Theological Reflection
+ Contextual Awareness
= **Creative Practice**

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. (Genesis 1:31-2:1, NIV)

God was amazingly creative in bringing forth the universe, and “all their vast array” pleased God as “very good.” The practice of evangelism should be no different. We are given the ability to engage in a wide variety of activities through which to embody the good news of God and invite others to share in it. As such, we should not limit these practices, especially to just a few stereotypes of what evangelism is supposed to be or to a stock set of best practices.

This section is based on the fourth session of the course in which we discuss chapter 5 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading the chapter and participating in the webinar, gather as a group to answer the following questions.

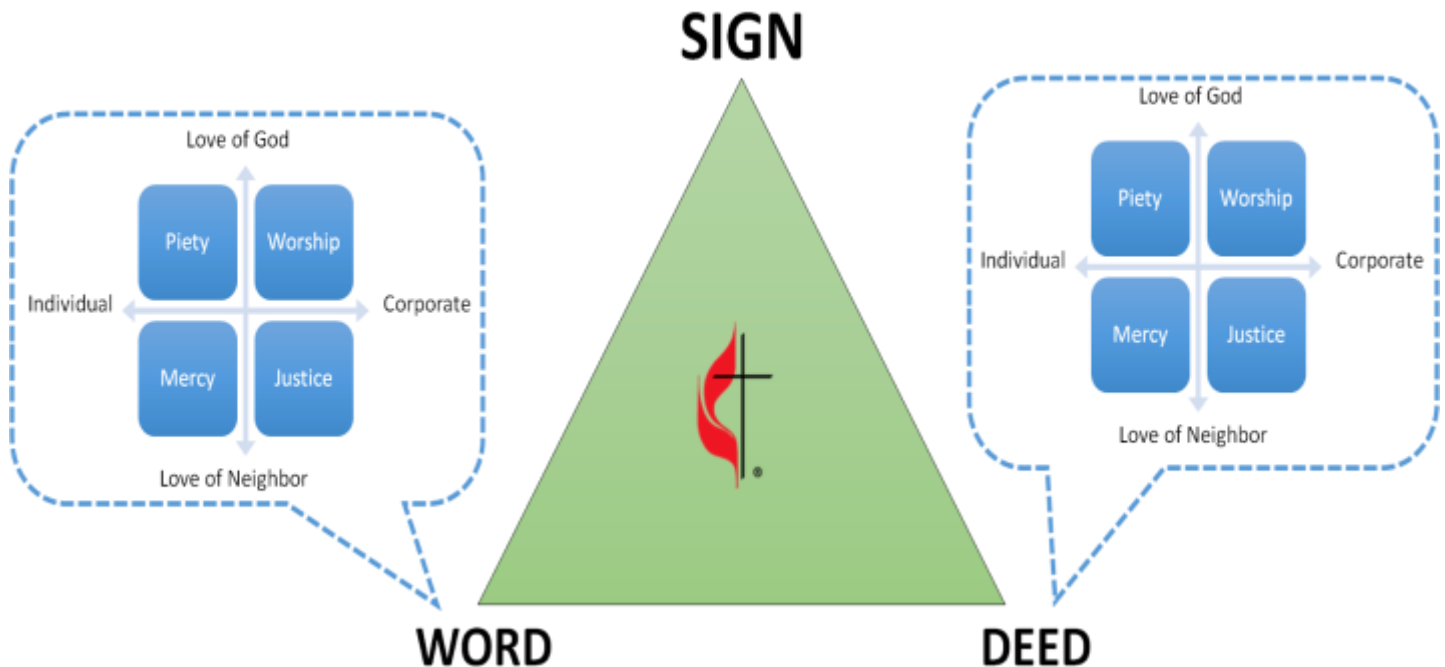
Evangelism literature and teachers often present “best practices” for practicing evangelism well. What are some of those “best practices” that you have heard of? Which have you always assumed just had to be part of practicing evangelism?

Look back at your starting point and at your theological reflection. Based on these, which of those best practices flow naturally from what you believe as an individual? As a congregation? What practices do not fit with your beliefs (even if you are trying to do them now)? What new practices might you add that flow naturally from those beliefs?

How does your congregation make room for word, deed and sign? Think about Jesus when he fed the 5,000 or when he healed people. He spoke words of truth to guide them to the Kingdom of God, he acted with compassion to meet people's needs, and he made room for God to act in a supernatural way. Are there ways that your congregation does all three of these? If so, do these various activities have a way to connect with each other so that people outside the church could be touched in all three ways?

Likewise, do your congregation's practices inhabit all four of the quadrants of the Wesleyan approach to living our faith? This allows the people in your congregation to grow in faith in a more well-rounded way as well as to provide a more holistic initiation into the Christian faith for those who accept your invitation into the congregation.

Next, assess your existing activities. Chart your current holiday activities on the diagram below to see where your congregation is focusing its efforts. Are those efforts balanced between word and deed, as well as among the quadrants within word and deed? Do all the practices, regardless of what they are explicitly see themselves as signs of God's goodness pointing people to transformation through Christ?



Once you have a sense for what sorts of new or modified practices you want to undertake in order to develop a more evangelistically holistic set of ministries at your congregation, you will likely need to change what you are already doing. Fill out the Immunity X-Ray to determine what commitments might keep you from changing. Do this for both yourself and your congregation.

What commitment do we have that requires change in how we practice our ministry in order to carry out evangelism?	What are we doing or not doing that resists making that change to our ministry?	What existing commitment do we have that we worry will not be fulfilled if we change how we do ministry?	What is our big assumption of what will happen if we change how we do ministry to make room for evangelism?

Based on your immunity x-ray, if you have current practices you need to stop or new practices you might want to try (either individually or as a congregation), what are some modest goals you could set for making those changes?

As you look at possible new practices, consider whether your practices:

- make room for God to be involved directly in evangelism through acts of power
- allow for the evangelist to be formed in the faith
- allow for evangelists and those they evangelize to meet without a sense of coercion and with an openness to hearing each other
- involve ways that both individuals and the congregation as a whole can participate
- make use of creative and immersive ways to tell the story of the Christian faith
- recognize the connections between evangelism and hospitality, reconciliation and/or stewardship

Evangelism for the Holidays

Session 5

Starting Point
+ Theological Reflection
+ Contextual Awareness
= Creative Practice

David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel.” (1 Samuel 17:45, NIV)

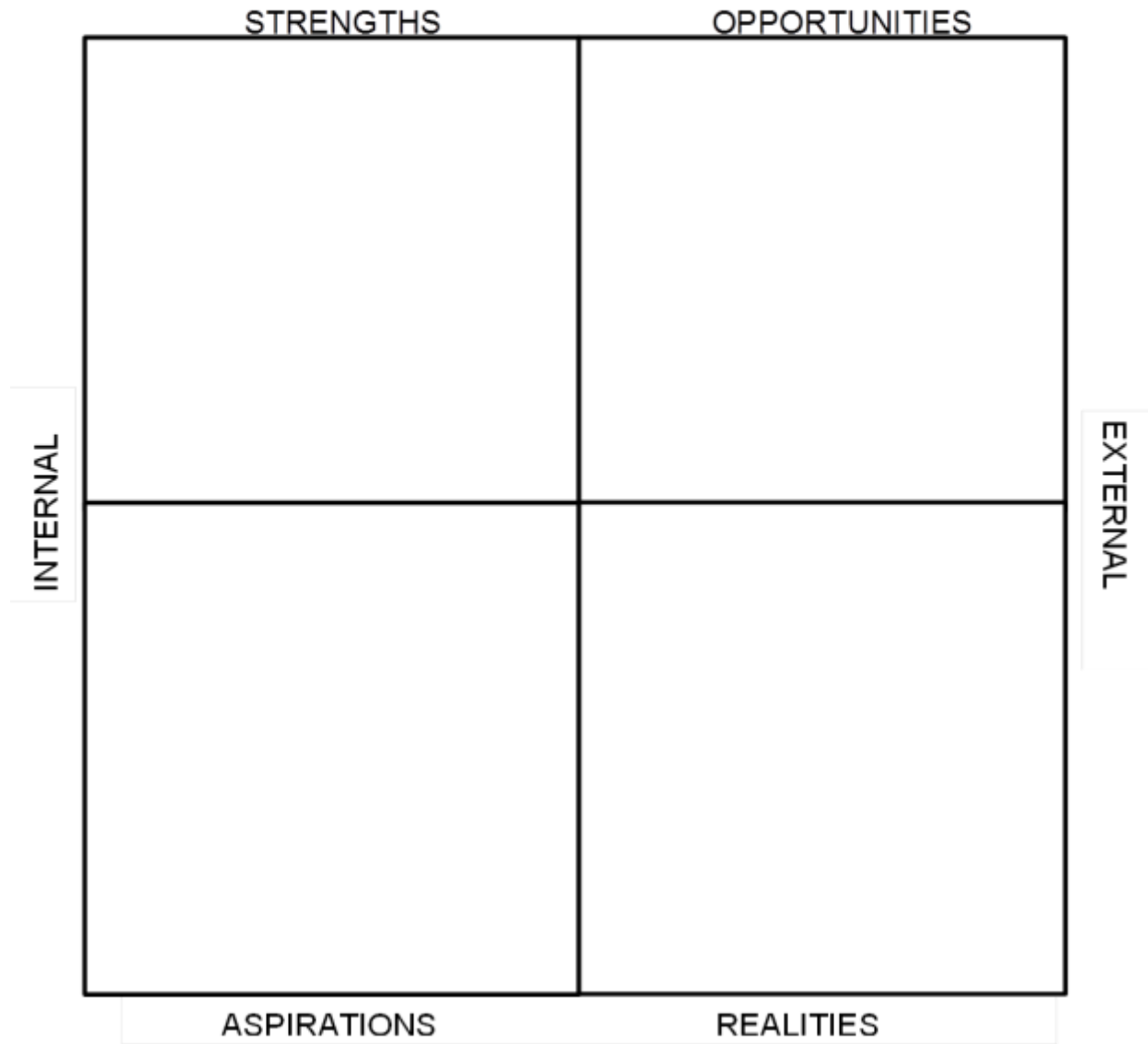
When considering evangelism, we often feel like David: facing down a very difficult and powerful foe. We are not armed like the great saints or large churches, but we are still called to go evangelize. David reminds us that we have enough. We go in the name of the LORD, and if we have reflected on the good that the LORD has done, we will be well equipped to face whatever struggle confronts us.

The traditional Christian holidays, especially Christmas and Easter, are times when we are even more prepared than we might think. These are times people outside the church are especially open to receiving an invitation to attend a church event and to hear the Christian story. This is why it is so important that we are ready with thoughtful strategies for reaching out to people, inviting them to hear the message and enter our communities, and following up with them during these seasons.

This section is based on the fifth session of the course in which we discuss chapter 6 of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. After reading the chapter and participating in the webinar, gather as a group to answer the following questions.

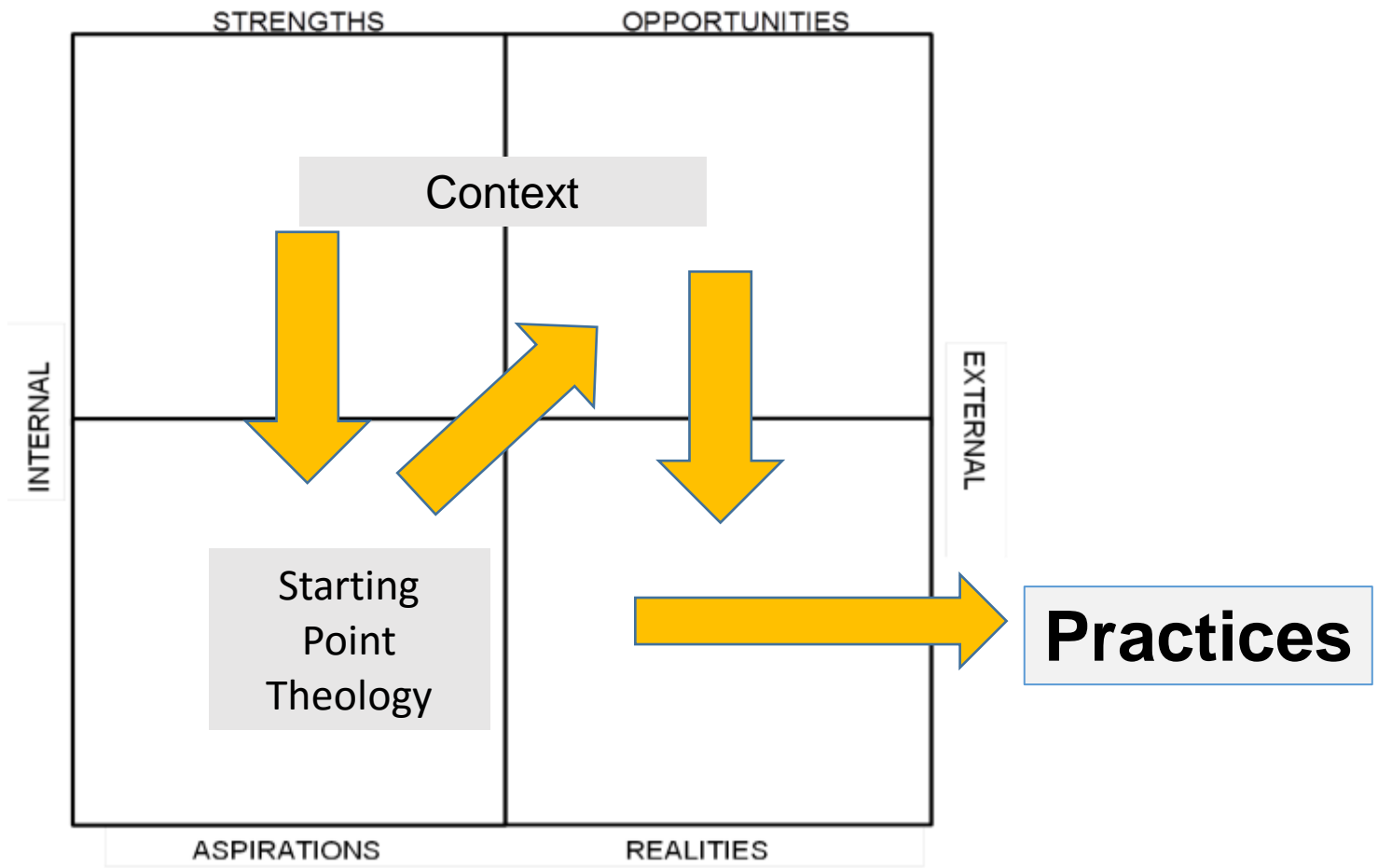
To develop the strategy, fill out the SOAR model on the next page. Following the model will be more specific questions to help you fill out each part of the model.

SOAR MODEL



Remember, the SOAR Model flows like this with the equation:

SOAR MODEL



First, start with the context inside your congregation (the upper left quadrant). What existing activities do you have set up already for the upcoming holiday? In addition to that, are there any particular gifts the congregation has (e.g., its facilities, its children’s program, its choir, its location)? List all of these.

In your equation, this relates to the part of contextual awareness that involves the church as a community.

Second, move to your aspirations (the bottom left). This is the vision of what you want to do and relates to your starting point as explained with your theological reflection.

Restate your starting point, with an explanation for why you believe what you believe theologically.

Look up the Bible passage that is related to the next major holiday at which it is likely you will see a large number of people who do not usually attend church (e.g., Luke 2 for Christmas or Matthew 28 for Easter). What new meanings do you find in that passage has in the light of of your starting point and theology?

Based on this insight, what transformation would you like to see happen in the lives of those who participate in your holiday activities?

Third, having clearly laid out your aspirations for people to be transformed, move to the opportunities you have to participate with God in making these transformations happen (the upper right). This involves the part of contextual awareness that requires listening to the culture and society around you.

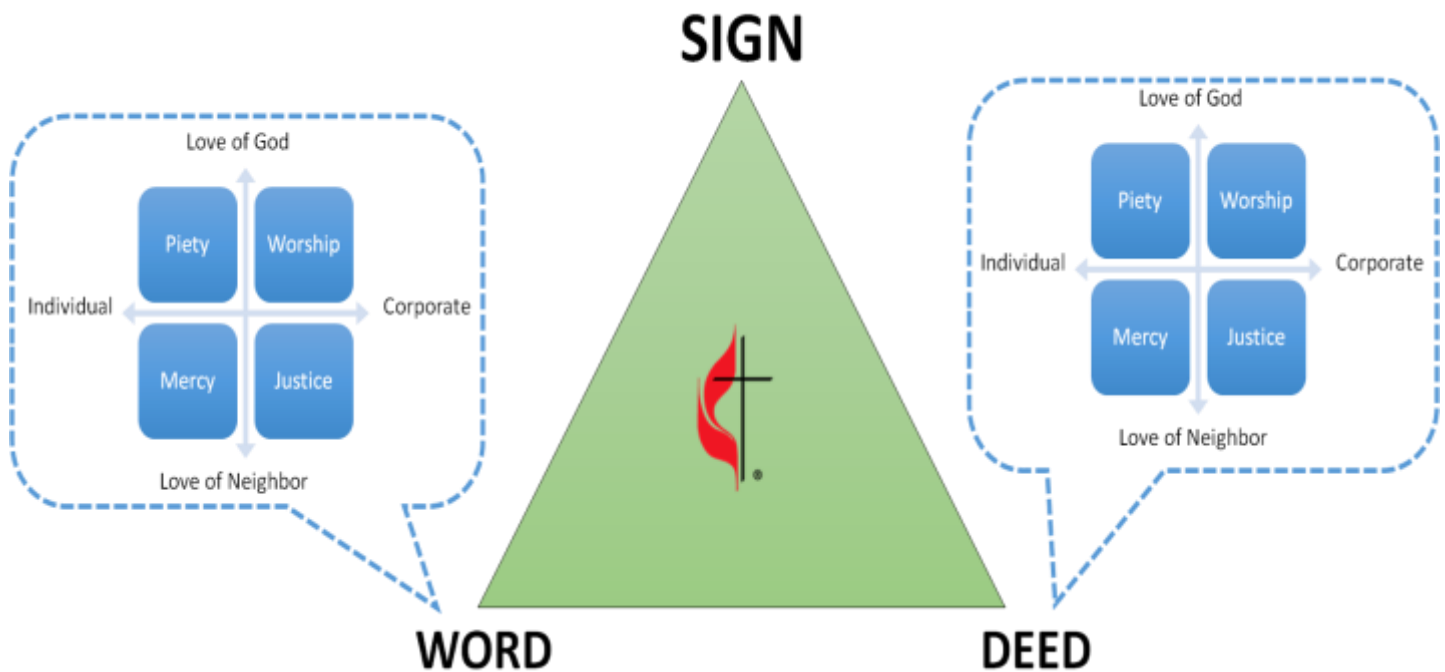
What do you know about the people that you want to reach with this transformation? What are ways that would be meaningful for you to make use of your current holiday activities and other strengths in order to share that transformation with them?

Remember, this move toward transformation does not have to be huge. It can be taken in steps, with the holiday activities being just one small step toward a larger transformation. Also, the holiday activities don't have to do everything for the transformation. Think in terms of follow up activities and invitations your congregation can have in place to continue helping people move toward transformation after the holidays.

As you begin to get a picture of the ways your holiday activities can move people toward transformation in a way that is authentic to your starting point and meaningful to their context, assess your existing activities. This moves you to the final quadrant, realities (bottom right).

It is important to take stock of what you actually have now so you have a sense for how you may need to change it.

On the diagram below, chart those activities to see where your congregation is focusing its efforts. Are those efforts balanced between word and deed, as well as among the quadrants within word and deed? Do all the practices, regardless of what they are explicitly see themselves as signs of God's goodness pointing people to transformation through Christ?



Having assessed your existing activities in light of what your gifts are, what you aspire to do, what your context is, you are ready to determine what changes you need to make. What activities do you need to stop, continue as is, continue with modifications, or start in order to move people through each smaller transformation to the big transformation you want them to experience in the goodness of God?

As you work out this new practice of holiday activities that include a fully developed evangelistic strategy behind it, keep in mind the practical questions of implementation:

Who will be responsible for seeing that the message of the good news stays consistent through these different activities? Who will be certain that the activities remain meaningful to the people you are inviting?

How will you invite people in a contextually meaningful way to participate in your activities (e.g., come to your special worship services or volunteer at your service event)?

How will you specifically invite people who participate in your activities to receive the good news? How will you follow up with them if they do receive it?

How will you assess your activities to see if they worked toward the transformation that was their goal? How will you modify them to do better next time?

Some parting questions to reflect on how far you have come in this course:

What are the riches your congregation has to share with others already? How might you bring them out for people to see them and better know the gospel from them?

Have you ever felt you did not deserve to be an evangelist? Have you changed your mind about that now? Why?

Have you ever felt ashamed or guilty in reference to evangelism? Do you still feel that way? Why?

Who might you choose as a new example of the kind of evangelist you could aspire to become? How can your evangelism role model fit with others' role models to develop a whole congregational approach to evangelism, with each presenting the good news in a way that builds on and supports each other while inviting the people being evangelized more deeply into the Christian faith?