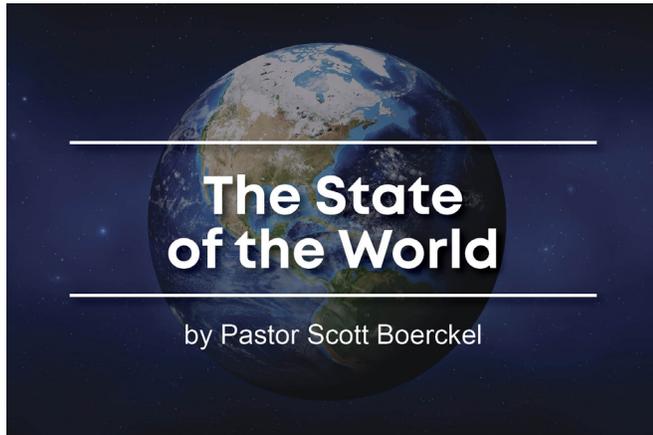




The theme of this OakLeaf is “Making Disciples”, one of East White Oak’s Vital Signs. At East White Oak our “Vital Signs” are key identifiers of the health of our ministries that apply both corporately and personally to our church body.



One way to understand the state of the world as it relates to the Gospel is by statistics.

Now, statistics do not tell us everything, but they can sometimes shed light where we need to see more clearly the great cause in which our Lord has us engaged. So, here are some statistics in round numbers that give us some insights into the state of our world. Keep in mind that some of these numbers vary pretty widely, depending on the source that you use.

7.75 billion / The population on the earth. The median age is 29.7, and the worldwide life expectancy is 68.

3.2 billion / The unreached of the earth. This is defined as the people who have less than 2% of Christians around them. It is 41% of the earth.

2 billion / Have never heard of anything about salvation through Jesus, even in a distorted way.

1.8 billion / Muslims

1.3 billion / Roman Catholics

1.2 billion / Hindus

1.2 billion / Teenagers in the world

900 million / Protestants

550 million / Evangelicals (this is a self label; it is known only to God how many are genuine believers in Jesus)

535 million / Buddhists

500 million / Atheists. This number is a lot lower than it used to be, likely because of political and technological change. In the 1980s, this number was 900 million.

232 million / Animists

171 million / Do not have a single Bible verse in their language

1 million / International students in the US, 62% of which come from the 10/40 window. 80% will never be invited into an American home. 40% of the 220 heads of state of the nations of the world once studied in the US.

17,443 / Ethnic groups

7,418 / Number of ethnic groups that are unreached (42.5% of the total)

400,000 / Foreign missionaries

\$490 million / The amount of money that Americans spend on Halloween costumes . . . for their pets

As we wrap up our missions conference, what plans are you making to “lay aside every weight” to make Christ known? Look over these numbers again. This time, do so in prayer, asking the Lord, “Lord, what will you have me to do?”

Blessings, Pastor Scott

Sources:

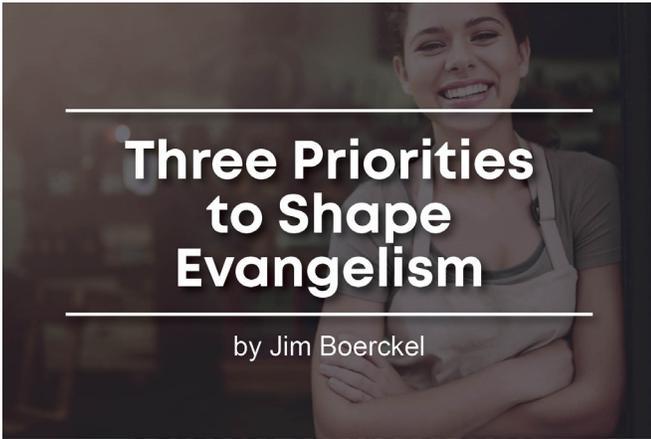
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Three Priorities to Shape Evangelism

by Jim Boerckel

I had a plan a couple of months ago when I entered the most ethnically diverse section of Grand Rapids:

I wanted to impact the multi-national business owners of this area – a very strategic group – for Christ. My plan was simple: I would bring Gospel

literature and DVDs in their language and share my faith with them.

I decided to start with a prayer walk around the ethnic shops and restaurants. As I did so, I got “hit in the face” with an (inaudible) voice: “Hey Jim, quick question: You’ve done this often before. What happens?” I responded (also inaudibly): “Well, if the shop owners ONLY know me as that guy who shares his faith – when they see me coming in the next time – they’re suddenly reminded of some shelves in the back room that need to be stocked.” Mid-prayer I realized that there are 3 priorities I needed to focus on:

1. Long-term relationships (which meant a change of approach)
2. A natural bridge building path to get there
3. Engaging other believers with me

I’ve implemented all three actions and I’m excited about the good relationships which have already begun – (and so far, the back rooms seem to be in good shape when I come in!)



Genuine Curiosity in Gospel Conversations

by Matt Kent

Evangelism has never been natural for me.

I really wish it was! It’s not for lack of being convinced that the Gospel is *the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes*, be they atheists, sceptics, or seekers. Nor is it for lack of effort! As a missionary with Cru, our lead foot is sharing Christ with people in both strategic and spontaneous ways. But, when sharing Jesus with a not-yet-believer, I

“Who knows how God will use your simple, genuine curiosity?”

can stumble over words, concepts, and answers that really seem to connect. I can feel intimidated and ineffective and can even wonder, “*Why did I think this was a good idea?!*”

But then I learned something that significantly changed my experiences in evangelism! At some point my perspective shifted *from me leading the conversation* – desperately trying to control and stay a step ahead in the conversation, persuading others with *just* the right answers – to *that person actually leading the conversation*, and me doing the listening and responding.

And it wasn’t some Middle Earth magic, either. Just two little phrases made all the difference.

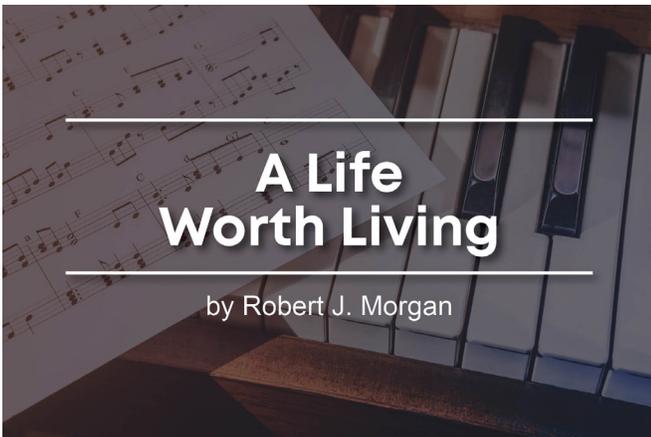
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Genuine Curiosity in Gospel Conversations, continued

Help me understand (e.g. why you view God as distant), and **Tell me more** (e.g. about why your family never went to church). I realize this isn't deep apologetics, but when others think out loud and wonder themselves what's behind their hesitations or resistance to religion or Jesus, a kind of conversational momentum grows. *My genuine curiosity in another can create curiosity on their part in themselves.* "Yeah, why didn't we ever go to church when I was younger?"

Randy Newman's *Questioning Evangelism* was and is a great help to me in fomenting this kind of others-centered conversation about Jesus. And tools such as the *Soularium* card deck give others a unique way to express themselves and their spiritual beliefs.

Help me understand & tell me more. Who knows how God will use your simple, genuine curiosity?



Excerpt From: *Then Sings My Soul, Book 2*, 2004 Thomas Nelson

Several well-known hymns first appeared in Watt's Psalms of David, including "O God Our Help in Ages Past" (from Psalm 90), "Joy to the World!" (Psalm 98), "Jesus Shall Reign Where'er the Sun," (Psalm 72), and "I'll Praise My Maker While I've Breath," Watts' rendition of Psalm 146.

The theme of this hymn reflects Isaac's great interest in the afterlife. One of his most popular books was *The World to Come*, in which he vividly described the Bible's teaching about heaven, hell, and eternity. He wrote, "Death to a good man is but passing through...one little dusky room of his Father's house into another that is fair and large, lightsome and glorious, and divinely entertaining."

Then he added this personal note: "Oh, may the rays and splendors of my heavenly apartment shoot far downward and gild the dark entry with such a cheerful beam as to banish every fear when I shall be called to pass through."

"God can make use of me to save a soul, and that will be worth living for."

It was as he wished. As he lay on his deathbed for three weeks in November of 1748, at age seventy-four, his friends gathered around. Mustering his strength, he exclaimed, "If God should raise me up again, I may finish some more of my papers, or God can make use of me to save a soul, and that will be worth living for. If God has no more service for me to do, through grace I am ready; it is a great mercy to me that I have no manner of fear or dread of death..."

Isaac Watt was buried in London's Bunhill Fields, and this epitaph, prepared by himself, was placed at his tomb:

*Isaac Watt, D.D., pastor of a church of Christ in London...
After fifty years of feeble labours in the gospel,
Interrupted by four years of tiresome sickness, was at last
dismissed to his rest...*

2 Corinthians 5:8: Absent from the body, and present with the Lord.

Colossians 3:4: When Christ, who is my life, shall appear, then shall I also appear with Him in Glory.



The Message the World Needs to Hear

by RD, Missionary to a Closed Country

This is the message...that people all across this writhing world need most to hear and believe.

It's not the first time (nor, barring the Lord's return, will it be the last) that upheaval, chaos, unrest and almost debilitating uncertainty appear to be the dominant international themes. The case can probably be made that this is actually the normal state of this world's affairs... though it does tend to flare up from time to time.

The Psalmist (possibly David), once made a similar observation... ***"Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?"*** he wondered (Ps. 2:1). But while posing this question, his perspective was grounded on a greater and grander truth. He saw – correctly –

that over all the raging, chaos, and upheaval among all the nations, sat One ***"in the heavens"*** who essentially guffaws in ***"derision"*** at these earthly powers and all their best-laid plans (vs. 4). He has installed His own King and none of His purposes or plans will go awry (vss. 6-9). The real story and the good news is that the Father is in the process of giving ***"the nations"*** and ***"the ends of the earth"*** to His Son, the King, as His ***"heritage"*** and ***"possession"*** (vs. 8). In light of this, the ***"wise"*** course of action is to ***"serve the LORD with fear*** (reverence)," ***"rejoice"*** and ***"take refuge in Him"*** (vss. 10-12). That's remarkable advice... Godly fear with deep joy while trusting fully in God's King – what a combination! The alternative is to face the King's ***"rod of iron"*** and ***"wrath"*** (Ps. 2:9,12).

There's no better message for this world in its current state. This is, in essence, the message of the Gospel. God rules over all; He has established His Son Jesus as King through His coming to earth as a baby, living a perfect, sinless life as a man, dying a substitutionary and sacrificial death, rising again as Savior and Conqueror of sin, evil, Satan and death and ascending to His rightful throne at the right hand of the Father. It remains ours, as the Psalmist points out, to trust in Him fully with holy fear and unspeakable joy. Those who do this can, with David, confidently say, ***"He only is my rock and my salvation, my fortress; I shall not be shaken"*** Ps. 62:6.

This is the message – both the truth and the balm – that people all across this writhing world need most to hear and believe. **Please continue to pray for this message to be heralded across the earth – especially in times and places like these.**



The Gospel is Life Itself

by Jim Simmons

For years I lived under a false perception of what it means to "share the gospel with others."

Many factors contributed to this false perception, and the net effect was that I held back from really meeting people where they were and pouring into them the genuine transforming love of God that we all so desperately need. If you reread that last sentence, it's quite striking that anything could have such an effect on me that I would hold back from "pouring - genuine - love of God - so desperately needed."

Last week, I took a bijaj (local transportation in Tanzania) back from town, and the young man driving asked me about the income gap between typical US workers and typical Tanzanian workers. We enjoyed a good conversation, and by the time we arrived, he turned off his bijaj for 10 more minutes of discussion regarding character in the marketplace and the need for God to transform each of our hearts at the core. I don't know where this will go for that young man, but the free flow of gospel conversation within me now stands in stark contrast to my struggle in those early years of Christian life.

continued on page 5

The Gospel is Life Itself, continued

The difference is not primarily related to more knowledge or skill in communicating (things I stressed over in the early years). To be sure, time spent reading in science, culture, and philosophy helped level the playing field of ideas regarding the basis and evidence for truth, and time spent learning to ask better questions helped make conversation more genuine. However, the real freedom to initiate conversations and relationships with people who don't know Christ came from the real transformation of my own life in the intervening years.

Part of my false perception included a tendency to focus on that single event when a person accepts Jesus Christ as their Savior. Our need for His salvation is very

“The gospel is the one great permanent circumstance in which we live.”
Milton Vincent, A Gospel Primer for Christians

real, yet being made alive in Christ is only the beginning. The gospel is more than the moment of being brought from death to life. The gospel is life itself. The more areas of our lives that have been transformed and the deeper that transformation, the more natural initiating conversations and relationships becomes.



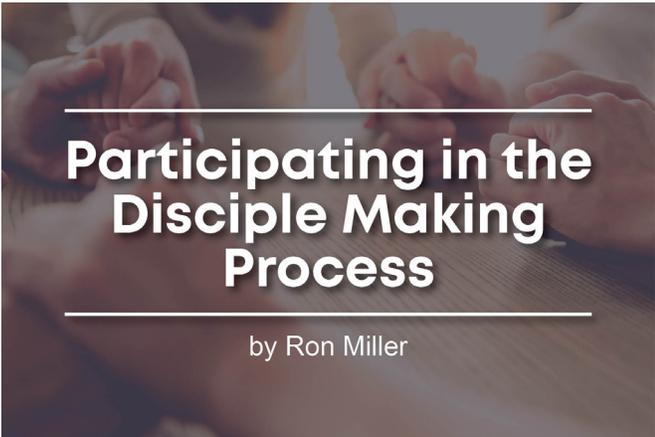
Having a love for the lost doesn't come naturally to our flawed hearts...

It, like our salvation, is only by the grace of God. However, it IS possible to intentionally ask God to help us nurture that same love and compassion that He has extended to us through His Son Jesus.

When we moved from Morton to Bloomington early in 2014, we became immersed in the neighborhood, rather than coming and going from it. In the brokenness that we faced, I found I was growing in a new awareness of God's amazing grace in my OWN life and His extravagant love, mercy, and kindness to us. I was struck by Matthew 22:34-40 as it related to evangelism and discipleship. The great commandment, Jesus said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind... You shall love your neighbor as yourself." I was convicted. What

kind of neighbor was I going to be in fulfilling God's command and following God's heart for the lost in my world? I prayed about this, because I wanted to be seen first and foremost as a "good neighbor." I even tried to avoid telling my new neighbors my "occupation." After all, people get a little weird when they find out you're a pastor. God answered my prayer. He nurtured His love in my heart (and still continues to do so), and allowed us to build many relationships as friends without that dominating "pastor" stereotype. I hope the following insights will help you also nurture, encourage, and cultivate a love for and with the lost in your sphere of influence.

- Preach the Gospel to yourself daily. As we do this regularly, we will be overcome by the scandalous grace God has for us and what it means to be one of His children.
- Pray daily, asking God to give you a heart for the lost (Romans 10:1).
- Prepare daily for the opportunities God will give you to show His love for the lost in both deeds and words. See people as those made in the image of God. See them as interesting, with a story to share. Make allowances for God to break into your day so that you can be a blessing to those whose paths you cross regularly.
- Prioritize, every day, that you will be filled with the Holy Spirit and exhibit the fruit of the Spirit everywhere you go.
- Plan to live this out, alongside others, for encouragement, support, and the beauty of having different gifts, interests, and skills, etc. After all, this is God's design.
- Ponder these passages in God's Word; ask the Spirit of God to do His holy work in your heart and life (Matt. 9:35-38; Luke 6:31-36; 10:25-37; 15:1-2; 19:10; Romans 5:6, 8, 10; 12:9-21; 2 Cor. 5:14-21; Col. 4:2-6; 1 Tim. 2:1; Titus 3:4-8; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Peter 2:17; John 3:16-17; 4: 8-9, 19; Jude 1:20-23).



Participating in the Disciple Making Process

by Ron Miller

Too often we think of disciple-making as evangelism.

It is that, but it is necessarily much more. Christ made it clear in the Great Commission that disciple-making includes “teaching them to observe all I have commanded you.”

One of the core strategic focuses of the East White Oak mission team is training national leaders and teachers. Developing church leaders is a strategic need and the key to strengthening the Church. Training church leadership is an urgent priority, probably one of the most important spiritual issues throughout the world. Even the lack of biblical understanding in the US church is concerning. The availability of Bibles, Bible studies, teaching, and many study aids has not seemed to help this lack of biblical literacy. The great disconnect is whether most people read with the intent to understand and apply the Word to their lives, or simply to add to their list of accomplishments. It is important to reach the lost and unengaged people and churches around the world. They need teaching and help in understanding and applying the Word. The Holy Spirit is the one who ultimately does the instruction, but new believers need help to make the Word relevant to their lives. God may be calling some of you to help with this need.

My first experience in Zimbabwe was with Pastor Jeff and Pastor Walt in 2008. We taught at pastor conferences and trainings hosted by Jabulani Mudenda. It was an eye opening and life changing trip. Prior to

this I had been on many mission trips, but most were work trips. I had very little direct contact or impact on the nationals. There is nothing wrong with work trips. I recommend you take the opportunity to do that if you have the chance! But to spend time teaching and training, then sitting down to fellowship and discussing scripture afterwards, was totally different. The opportunity to connect personally and spiritually, plus to build relationships with brothers in Christ, to challenge and be challenged in the word, was very enjoyable and challenging.

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus does not merely say, “teach them all I have commanded you.” He says, “teach them to observe (to keep, to do, to obey, to apply in their life) all I have commanded you.” In other words, do not just fill their heads with information. But teach them in such a way that their lives are utterly transformed. Romans 12:2 says, “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will test and approve what God’s will is.” We do not just practice sin control, but we are changed from the inside out. We strive to live our lives glorifying God and worthy of our calling as sons and daughters.

Leadership training is a priority, because when leaders are transformed, their teaching is transformational. Those that teach are commanded not only to teach but to teach in a way that reproduces teachers. This is important. New churches among the peoples of the world do not just need to be well taught. They need indigenous teachers that come from being well taught. These teachers, without depending on missionaries, can teach true biblical text. Then they are able to show that true meaning to others with compelling explanation and convicting application in their own life context and culture. There is a way to teach the Bible that keeps people perpetually dependent on the teacher. And there is a way to study and teach the Bible that turns them into self-replenishing teachers. Folks can teach without foreign dependence. Too many missionary teachings in the past have kept the students dependent on the missionary. They need to take ownership and work through the text themselves.

So, we ask ourselves: Are we observing all that Jesus has commanded us? And are we willing to share with others what God has taught us? This is the “Great Commission” – to help not only lead folks to Christ, but to go much further with them. We seek to disciple them to fall in love with the Savior and live a life glorifying Him and building His Kingdom, not our own.



Results: Growing in Christ Survey

The theme of the September 2021 Oak Leaf was “Growing in Christ”, one of East White Oak’s Vital Signs. Our Vital Signs are three important indicators of spiritual health. Growing in Christ is a category of qualities which will be evident in the life of a maturing disciple. Simply put, it’s becoming more like Jesus.

There were 35 of you who completed last month’s survey. The survey results are not presented as a standard by which to measure your own spiritual vitality, but rather a simple snapshot summarizing some of what’s true about the discipleship journeys of your brothers and sisters in Christ. The results from this last survey reveal the unique ways in which we are Growing in Christ. Be encouraged that this survey is helping our church leaders consider ways that we might better fulfill our focus of being a community of people who are seeking to be worshipers, maturing in Christ!

Survey Results

Those Growing in Christ have a relationship with Christ.

Here are three highlighted results from the survey which focus on one’s relationship with Christ:

22 out of 35 people said “When making choices, I FREQUENTLY seek Christ’s guidance first.” – When faced with a decision it’s a wonderful thing for God’s people to pause and pray. The Spirit of Christ is good to guide us into truth (John 16:13).

23 out of 35 people said “I ALWAYS remain confident of God’s love and provision during difficult times.” – Jesus knew that his betrayal and death were at hand, yet he had no doubt of his Father’s love for him (John 17:26). God demonstrated his love for us in the crucifixion of Jesus (Rom. 5:8).

34 out of 35 people said “I ALWAYS believe the Bible is God’s Word and provides His instructions for life.” – Jesus referred to the Scriptures as authoritative and true when responding to a variety of circumstances. Paul said that the scriptures, “equip us for every good work.” (2 Tim. 3:17)

Those Growing in Christ are submitted to Christ.

Here are three highlighted results from the survey which focus on one’s submission to Christ:

11 out of 35 people said “My actions OCCASIONALLY demonstrate a desire to build God’s kingdom rather than my own.” – Jesus spent his life building God’s kingdom (John 5:19) and his promise to those who follow him is that they will do greater kingdom building works than he (John 14:12).

10 out of 35 people said “Peace, contentment, and joy only OCCASIONALLY characterize my life rather than worry and anxiety.” – It’s understandable that the disciples were frightened by Jesus’ words about leaving them. Their encouragement can be ours. Jesus told them that their hearts need not be troubled. He was giving them his peace. (John 14:27)

26 out of 35 people said “I FREQUENTLY replace impure or inappropriate thoughts with God’s truth.” – Our obedience to Christ begins in our minds. It was Paul who encouraged the Corinthians to take every thought captive to obey Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5)

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Verse of the Month

MEMORIZE SCRIPTURE IN 2021

November 2021

Acts 1:8 “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (ESV)

One reason that Jesus has saved you is so that you might be a witness to others of His great love. Do you find it hard to share your faith? Ask the Holy Spirit to empower and help you! Who knows where that will take you?

EastWhiteOak.church/biblememory

Results: Growing In Christ Survey, continued

Those Growing in Christ are involved in service to Christ.

Here are three highlighted results from the survey which focus on one's service to Christ:

8 out of 35 people said “I understand my spiritual gifts and, I ALWAYS use those gifts to serve others.” – Jesus did not come to be served but to serve (Matt. 20:28). As followers of Christ, we have the great privilege of having received a gift to be used in serving others (1 Peter 4:10).

5 out of 35 people said “I ALWAYS act as if other's needs are as important as my own.” – Paul said that the sinless Son of God our

Savior made himself nothing (Phil. 2:7). May we have the mind of Christ and consider others as more significant than ourselves (Phil. 2:3).

16 out of 35 people said “I ALWAYS expect God to use me every day in His kingdom work.” – You may not think of yourself as a wonderful work of art, but you are. For what purpose? We have been created in Christ Jesus for good works (Eph. 2:10).

One way that you might pray for our church is that we would all be Growing in Christ.

See complete survey results online!
<https://eastwhiteoak.church/oak-leaf-november-2021>