



**WORLDVIEW MADE PRACTICAL**  
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**Stir-the-Pot Evangelism**

by Freddy Davis

**The Evangelistic Imperative**

In Matthew 28:18-20, we have a very clear commission from Jesus that most Christians recognize to be an important part of the faith. He said, "... All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

My purpose in mentioning this is not to get into the nuances of what it means to make disciples or of the relative merits of baptizing and teaching. Rather, it is to talk about the struggles Christians face with evangelism itself. As I have gone through my life, I have come across different approaches for conceiving of evangelism, and each of them seems to have a following. As I have considered this, I have divided these approaches into three different categories. The three are:

1. **Confrontation** - Confrontation is an approach where people accost individuals directly to share the gospel using a cold call methodology.
2. **Relationship** - A relationship approach uses longer term personal interactions to open up opportunities to share a gospel presentation.
3. **Faithful Living** - The "faithful living" approach is one where people wait for others to notice their "Christian lifestyle" and come to them to hear the gospel.

**Confrontation**

I recall that when I first came to know Christ, I felt particularly compelled to share my faith – and I tried to do it whenever I could. I read books, took classes and learned about it in every venue possible. I learned that there were different methods for sharing the gospel and tried some of them out until I found one that resonated with me. The only thing left was to go to people and share the message.

For me, this involved just going up to people in a cold call situation and "let-er-rip." Though I typically don't tend to be the kind of person who initiates confrontation, that approach seemed to be pretty much what was expected by those who mentored me. As such, I felt that if I didn't do it that way I was not being a good witness.

**Relationship**

In more recent years, there seems to have been, among many, more of an emphasis on doing evangelism through relationships. Many people in American culture seem to have moved to a mindset that is more averse to confrontation. This has led many Christians to consider ways to share the gospel in a non-confrontational way. A relationship approach seems to be statistically the most effective method. For many years, statistics have shown that more of the people who come to Christ do so as a result of relationships than any other way.

I, personally, prefer using a relational approach than a confrontational one as it is more comfortable for me. This approach, though, does take more discipline. It is necessary to intentionally make more and more relationships and use them to actually share the gospel.

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### **Faithful Living**

There is a third way that I have personally never had much use for, but I hear a lot of people advocating for it. It is not that it is bad in and of itself, but for many people it is a cop-out for not ever having to actually do any evangelism. This method involves living such a good Christian life in front of people that they will come up to you and ask you to witness to them. My problem with this that I have rarely ever seen a situation where this has truly happened. Of course, living an exemplary Christian life is very important. In fact, your witness will be totally ineffective without it. That said, it is typically not much of a witnessing method in and of itself.

### **A Fourth Way**

First let me say that I am not speaking against confrontational or relational evangelism, and certainly do believe that "living a good life" in front of non-believers is an essential part of our testimony. On top of that, what I am proposing is not a "new way" designed to replace the others. Rather, is an additional approach which should be added to a Christian's arsenal. Different situations require different approaches and we should be ready and able to use whichever one is most effective in any given situation.

I will call this fourth evangelism approach Stir-the-Pot evangelism. In one sense, this method combines all of the above and adds an element of intentionality. Stir-the-Pot evangelism is confrontational in that it actively expresses the gospel, but it does so in a personally indirect way. It is relational in that it engages people over a period of time in a relationship setting. It is also passive in that it waits for there to be an opening on a personal level before engaging a direct gospel presentation. But it also actively pushes the gospel into the culture with the in-

ention of creating change through changed lives.

Stir-the-Pot methodologies involve somehow connecting people with groups or activities which expose them to the Christian message over an extended period of time. Using that process, non-Christians are exposed to believers who can influence them.

In order to create a Stir-the-Pot evangelism opportunity, a person must overtly create a venue for expressing the gospel. This can be done by beginning a new group or engaging an existing one with the sole purpose of having people voluntarily join in order to participate. This is done in a way that allows people to feel free and open to ask faith questions. It then takes advantage of those questions to more directly engage people and share the gospel message. There are numerous possibilities for doing this. One can create a Bible study group, a discipleship study group, a book club, a research forum, a Christian activist organization, a Christian fraternal organization, or even a prayer group. The possibilities are unlimited.

### **The Spiritual Nature of Christian Cultural Penetration**

For individual Christians, understanding the "right way" to go about creating change in the culture is, perhaps, the most difficult challenge we face. After all, we are trying to generate a spiritual outcome as we live in a physical environment.

This difficulty exists for a couple of reasons. First of all, since we are material beings and live in a material world, the use of methodologies which are tied to material processes is the most natural. Second, those we are struggling to confront use material processes almost exclusively, and it often seems like the only way to counter their efforts is by confronting power with power. Because of these factors, Stir-the-Pot evangelism efforts tend to

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be more complex than other approaches and demand more commitment, effort and knowledge. It really is more for those who are willing to consider their Christian walk a calling from God (which, honestly, ought to be every believer).

The truth is, human beings are essentially spiritual creatures, not physical. Using an approach which depends on political, social or economic power can only generate outward change. Outward change happens by the application of power and is accomplished from the outside in. People gain positions of power and manipulate the culture using tools of power.

As Christians, though, our goal is to facilitate inner change. If the change we see is not in hearts and minds, what occurs is ultimately meaningless. And in truth, we don't have the power to change hearts and minds. Only God has that ability. As such, our goal must be to promote a change of heart in people, and we must use methods which allow us to serve as God's instruments in that process. Stir-the-Pot evangelism is based on this concept.

To use Stir-the-Pot evangelism we must develop and use methods which cause people to become intertwined with the gospel message. This is different than the more blunt methods which may cause immediate reaction toward the message. The idea is to pull people in and get them engaged.

Stir-the-Pot evangelism is relational, not confrontational. This does not mean we never directly share the gospel message. But it does mean that we hold off sharing directly until the person we wish to share with is genuinely entangled in the message. It also means that even though we are showing a certain amount of restraint related to timing, we must be

totally prepared to confront people with the gospel message when it is the right time, and be able to lead them to a decision.

## Effort in Our Witness

The fact of the matter is that when we take seriously the calling we have from God, we have to direct that calling somewhere. Many people think of a calling from God as being only directed to people who are in professional Christian ministry. Certainly that is one place God calls people. But the vast majority of God's calling is directed to the non-professionals.

It is an unfortunate circumstance that the calling for ministry professionals is so well defined while the calling of other believers is so undefined. That needs to change. Every believer is called by God into ministry, and we need to develop ways for that to be expressed in life.

In my experience, most Christians consider the focus of their Christian faith to be in some kind of ministry within their church. Of course, there is a place for that. But most of the people who don't know Christ are not in the church – they are in the world. As such, the most prominent focus of our ministry should be out in the world. The concept of Stir-the-Pot evangelism is an attempt to help Christians wrap their minds around that idea. There are so many ways we can interject our Christian faith into the culture, but until we actually do it, it will not make an impact.

It is not my business to determine how individual Christians take their faith into the world. It is my business to provide resources and training to help facilitate believers who want to do it. Every believer ought to have some means of intentionally taking their faith into the world. Every believer ought to have a working knowledge of the basics of the Christian

faith. Every believer ought to understand the culture they live in and be competent in their ability to share their faith with people who don't know Christ. When we, as a Christian community, make up our minds that we are going to get serious about carrying out Christ's commission to make disciples of all people, then we will begin to see the fruit of a changed culture – and not a minute before.\

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