

### Foie Gras vs. Faithful Evangelism

By Steven Lee, pastor of small groups and community outreach

Not long ago we conducted an evangelism survey of the congregation. It became abundantly clear that we want to be better witnesses of Christ. We want to lead others to Jesus; we want friends and neighbors to discover the joy and life that is found in Christ; we want prodigal children to know the forgiveness found only at the Cross; we want lost people to be saved; we want more baptisms to take place on Sunday morning; we want to celebrate God's transforming work in people around us.

Yet, if I had to guess, most people in the pews would say that they are not "gifted at evangelism." It doesn't come easily or naturally. It's awkward, if we do it at all. It takes hard work and intentionality, and we don't do it nearly enough.

#### Foie Gras Evangelism

I was recently teaching in the Joint Heirs Adult Community group and mentioned our need to move away from foie gras evangelism. Foie gras is a delicacy in French cuisine where the liver of a duck or goose has been specially fattened by force-feeding the animal with a feeding tube. Grain is poured down the throat until the duck or goose consumes an unnatural amount of food, causing their liver to become abnormally enlarged. Christians tend to think that evangelism and outreach is like the process of foie gras. We just pour the gospel down the throat of some unsuspecting stranger, hoping the person doesn't choke and that somehow it takes hold of his or her heart.

In his book *Get Real*, author and professor John S. Leonard says, "As Christians, we know we should share our faith with others. However, we don't do it until we feel horribly guilty—then we force ourselves upon some poor, unsuspecting soul." That's not the culture we want to cultivate here at the Church or in our lives personally.

#### Intentional, Deliberate & Faithful Evangelism

Instead, I'd like to see intentional, deliberate and faithful evangelism. Because we know God's Word is powerful to transform lives (Acts 12:24; 13:49; 19:20) and that God uses means to accomplish his purposes, we can be confident as we engage the lost and share the good news.

There is a myth out there that evangelism happens naturally if we love Jesus enough, without any effort or intentionality. It is true that evangelism begins with loving Jesus and desiring for him to be known and loved by others; we too often miss the intentionality needed to grow and get better at this area in our lives. Do you fast, memorize and read the Bible just naturally because you love Jesus? Probably not. We make plans. We wake up early, we go to bed earlier, we prioritize it in our time, schedule and prayers. Why do we think evangelism is any different? Evangelism is a spiritual discipline that requires intentional and deliberate practice. Few things happen naturally. Leonard dispels the objection that we're not "gifted" in evangelism when he writes:

"Do you ever wonder if you have a talent that you're not using? Maybe you have a gift for music or can paint or write, but because you never work at developing that talent, the potential of these gifts go undiscovered and unused. This is equally true when it comes to sharing our faith. Most Christians don't know if they're evangelists because they haven't done it enough or worked at developing that gift to see if they have any potential."

My guess is that there are many more people who are capable of becoming effective evangelists. It will require intentional relationships with those who don't know Jesus. It will require making time with unbelievers a priority, and it will require deliberate planning. It will also require believing that when Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," he meant it and didn't get it switched around. If the harvest is ripe, it's our job to faithfully engage the lost and share the good news and leave the results up to God.

Here are a few more practical suggestions to help you get started:

1. Pray. Ask God to magnify Christ. Ask for compassion for the lost and a desire to make engaging those who don't know Jesus a priority.
2. Find opportunities to be in the community (e.g. book club or discussion at the public library, sports league, community volunteer, interacting with neighbors, befriending local business owners).
3. Open your home (e.g. host a party, invite neighbors to dinner, learn about co-workers).
4. Get comfortable sharing about your faith in a non-scripted way.

If you want to grow in sharing your faith, join me and the Evangelism Committee at our upcoming evangelism training—Everyday Evangelism: Lessons & Stories from College Church Folks—starting today at 11 a.m. in the Commons for seven weeks. For more information, email [outreach@college-church.org](mailto:outreach@college-church.org).

