

Some at the 2019 Athens Conference asked for additional copies of the handout *Ways to Live and Speak as a Witness for Christ*. Two of our OPC ministers contributed to this practical guide. Go here for a copy.



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Ways to Live and Speak as a Witness for Christ

The Task of the Church

The Lord Jesus promised his church that through her regular life and ministry, many will be saved. The local church is neither incidental nor detrimental to the work of evangelism, but rather a necessary agent in the spread of the good news. But how does the local church exercise her role in evangelism? She does so, quite simply, by being the church that Jesus designed her to be. The Lord gave specific responsibilities to the church: to maintain the apostolic teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42). That sounds very much like the regular ministry of the Word, sacrament, and prayer. The Lord also called his church to live together in a particular way, characterized by love, fellowship, worship, and care for others (Acts 2:44-46). As they did this, the Lord added to their number each day those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

We need local churches that function as the Lord directed, because Jesus designed the church with the gospel in mind (see [the book by J. Mack Stiles] *Evangelism*, p. 64). He uses such congregations to spread the gospel and gather the lost. We also need local congregations that have a zeal for evangelism and a love for the lost. We need local congregations filled with people who love the gospel and love the lost in such a way that they will invite them to church and warmly welcome visitors.

Do we believe that the church uniquely carries the message of salvation that people need to hear? Then we should invite and welcome people into our local congregations, trusting that God will work through the church he designed and called. We need congregations filled with people who

understand that the local church “is the chosen and best method of evangelism” (Stiles, *Evangelism*, p.60).

The Character of Church Life

The Pastor, along with elders and deacons, has a particular responsibility for evangelism. His role is unique in the life of the church, and that distinction is essential. Members are not called to preach or even to do the work of an evangelist, yet they are still called to participate in the evangelistic endeavors of the church. When the people of a local congregation faithfully participate in the life of the church, and when the church lives as Christ commanded, the expectation is that typically the Lord will grow and build his church in that location.

Five Commitments Get Our Attention

1. Committed to Corporate Worship—Worship is the first priority for the believer, and public, corporate worship is the first priority for the local church. The priority of corporate worship provides the primary motivation for evangelism. The Lord seeks worshippers, and worshippers are gathered through the ministry of evangelism.

2. Committed to Word and Sacrament—God communicates [his] grace through the preaching of the Word and the administration of the sacraments. When the Spirit works through these tools, the saving power of God is at work.

3. Committed to Prayer—Many Christians think they lack the gifts for active involvement in evangelism. Let me suggest that one important opportunity for active involvement in evangelistic ministry is simply to pray to the Lord of the harvest to grant a bountiful harvest—for a great harvest in general, but also for specific people by name. That is a task simple enough for any believer, and yet a task with great promise of results.

4. Committed to Fellowship (or Hospitality) and Mercy—The church should be characterized by love for one another, but also by love for neighbors. Outsiders should be overwhelmed by the kindness and compassion that exists within the church, but they should also be shocked by the kindness and compassion from believers to those outside the church. Christians should be the best neighbors, the best coworkers, the best relatives—those who go out of their way to elevate the interest of others above their own interests.

5. Committed to Testimony—The Lord calls certain men as pastors, with a special responsibility to preach and teach. Yet we should be careful to recognize the responsibility of every believer to know and even articulate the gospel. Believers who live in obedience to God’s law stand out. Sometimes our obedience frustrates unbelievers, but often our obedience leads to questions (1 Peter 3:15). Ultimately, the answer to those questions has roots in the gospel—an answer that we must be ready to give.

How should we live and speak?

We aim for faithfulness and God will supply the open doors and timely opportunities.

Personal Preparation

- By the ministry of the Spirit of God, we are made children of God and belong to his family—the church. Local church membership is ordinary, expected, and vital. Being under the care of your elders and participating in the worship and witness of your church is the soil from which growth in personal witness comes.
- Pray for your pastor and his ministries of prayer, leading worship, preaching, teaching, and outreach.
- Pray for your elders and deacons.
- Memorize a handful of Bible verses like Psalm 100:3; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; John 1:1-2, 14; 1 John 4:10; Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Acts 17:30-31; and 1 John 5:11-12. *These verses remind us: we have good news to tell!*
- Reflect on God's love to you through others. Learning to testify of Christ to others often comes by watching others. How has God used others to speak of a verse? Give a point of counsel or teaching? Take your first steps in being a witness by following what others have done.
- To testify of Christ means remembering various ways he has been your help, deliverer, protector, guide, and restorer. Writing about a specific time, place, circumstance—how the Lord is good and faithful—prepares us to share it with others.
- Pray for opportunities. Pray for situations. Pray for courage. Pray for God's enabling help of the Holy Spirit.

Sharing Faith in Marriage

- Share what you're learning with your spouse. Listen to your spouse's words of answered prayer—maybe his or her own a testimony of God's goodness. Putting into practice how our God and his gospel is at work in your relationship will help foster testifying of Christ to others.
- Around your family devotions or in times of Bible reading with your spouse, take time to communicate about God's faithfulness in your lives.
- Conflict resolution presents an opportunity to glorify God. Put into practice love for Christ and his Word by the way you handle anger, for example; or how you deal with a worrisome matter, or how ill-speech or laziness has crippled your walk with the Lord. Focus on the Lord's forgiveness and his renewing hope.
- Timely, apt words go a long way. Practice encouraging words to each other regarding the Lord's guiding hand of control or his many promises in the midst of uncertainty.
- Worship and pray together. Reading aloud together helps to hear the truth, perhaps in fresh ways.

A Witness before an Unbelieving Spouse

- Your example of your life in Christ is number one. Provide an example of trusting God's promises by living your Christian faith before your spouse honestly. Be candid about weaknesses and faults, recognizing these as areas where Christian growth is needed.
- Always be ready to speak words of hope, forgiveness, and renewal you are finding in the Lord Jesus.
- Take the Lord's design of your marriage as the opportunity to submit to God, to trust him. He ultimately is the One before whom you are living and serving; and therefore, before him you are showing by the way you live that God is good and kind. In the Lord's wisdom, he will

work all things together for your good and his glory.

- As you are able, you will find various ways to engage with your church and thereby receive encouragement.

Nurturing Children in the Gospel: Parenting

- Love your wife. Love your husband. As a single parent, lean on the Lord; involve believers of your church in the lives of your children.
- Model godly hunger and thirsting for God in corporate worship.
- In the Presbyterian perspective, God has established, graciously, a redemptive relationship with believers and their children. Our children must be born again. Walk with them in nurture and teaching—seeking God’s work of conviction of sin, repentance, and faithful living in Christ Jesus. Pray with thanksgiving.
- Sing songs to your children rehearsing God’s truth, reliability, faithfulness, mercy, presence, and love.
- Pray with each of your children.
- Review the sermon and lessons from the Lord’s Day.
- Read together the Word. Discuss together the Word.
- Pick up missionary biographies—read and discuss. Godly role models can open doors for learning.
- Questions can initiate teaching and sharing—“what do you think?” “why do you suppose...?”
- Pick up a children’s catechism—use it, review it, memorize it, make use of ques & ansgames.
- Ask forgiveness of your child when you have done something which has brought hurt and hardship.
- Lean on your church elders for wisdom and practical advice (e.g. applications of parental responsibilities in mental and physical nurture, masculinity and femininity, methods of discipline, day-school education, matters relative to choosing a spouse for marriage, and vocational calling).
- Together with your children, practice hospitality. Involve them with you and your church in age-appropriate ministry; serve others.
- Speak regularly of the content of the Gospel—Trinity, Creation, Sin, Christ, Faith, Repentance, etc.

Friends and Neighbors: Start with Prayer

- Chart the days of the week for prayer for specific people—Monday Missions, Wednesday Work, Friday Friends. Cultivate prayer for specific ones in your extended family, and those at work and school, and those on a team or at a club, and those in the neighborhood. Note answers to prayer.
- Provide ways for children to contribute outreach ideas for your family to share together.

Family Outreach: Practical Nitty-Gritty

- Plan to involve the family’s various talents in outreach. Get suggestions from your church on projects that might be helped by your family’s involvement. Maybe ask another family to blend with yours for outreach.
- Tailor the family’s involvement to accommodate various ages of family members, keeping an appropriate balance between your family’s specific circumstances (i.e. safety and negative influences) and the need to share with others. Strive toward an experience that has some measurable results and whereby all can feel a sense of blessing, help, contribution and

fulfillment.

- Read the Bible or gospel literature to the elderly.
- Pay a friendship visit to a shut-in.
- Do grocery shopping for a shut-in.
- Write a letter of encouragement to a bereaved, grieving or discouraged family.
- Visit someone who is sick. Visit someone with a disability.
- Give a gift card to a financially struggling family.
- Bake a loaf of bread and drop off to express kindness.
- Prepare sandwiches for distribution to those in need. Take a turn to serve a meal at a rescue mission.
- Offer a food basket regularly to one or more families in need.
- Do grass-mowing, leaf-raking or other yard work for an elderly person.
- Provide once-a-week child care for a single parent.
- Distribute gospel literature home to home, as a door-step visit. Plan to go back and visit again.
- Sing or play musical instruments at a nursing home or retirement center.
- Give a few hours of service to families needing assistance in child care, home remodeling, financial management.
- Give new or used clothing to persons in need or donate such items to an appropriate distribution center.
- Host for your neighbors an outreach video course like *Christianity Explored*.
- Distribute invitations to worship.
- Invite younger family members to share toys with children of needy families.
- Use the family car to transport individuals to worship.
- Invite friends to church socials.
- Invite one or more of your children's friends to worship and a meal in your home. Provide transportation.
- Brainstorm with your family specific ways to express practical help for those in need.
- Serving others provides illustrations for lessons and discussions in the gospel. Plan for these discussions.

Singles and Outreach

- Adopt a family in your church. Plan to serve alongside that family in prayer and outreach.
- Open particular doors of opportunity for your church—organize a support group, a social, a picnic, or another form of hospitality.

The paragraphs on the first page are found in a pamphlet, *Evangelism in the Local Church*, authored by John S. Shaw (available from the Orthodox Presbyterian Church). The bullet points come from other outreach resources, especially an out-of-print book, *Families Reaching Families*.