

**“A Strategic Plan Incorporating THINK Method Principles into
the Practice of Evangelism and Mentoring at Texas Tech.”**

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Jesus gave Christians the mandate to share the gospel, to be his witnesses to the world. He also said that his followers would do greater things than he did while he was on earth. If both of these are true then why are so few Christians sharing the gospel and why if they do share it are they being so ineffective?

I believe there are two big reasons for this lack of participation and ineffectiveness. One deals with motivation, and one deals with information. As I seek to develop a strategy to make disciples at Texas Tech I must take both of these into account. You cannot make effective disciples without training them to impact their generation with the gospel. They must be effective witnesses or they will be spiritually sterile.

It has been my experience from working in the ministry for over twenty years that Christians need to be both educated and motivated to become witness for Christ. Many of them are afraid while most are preoccupied with the cares of life. Any evangelism strategy has to begin by seeking to get their attention. They must be awakened to the call of Christ and to the needs of non-Christians.

The “Think Method” is an excellent strategy for training individuals to reach people of this generation for Christ. The information I gained in the class on non-Christians and their belief systems was invaluable. However, I feel that it is lacking in one key area. The area of which I speak is motivation. It is true that many who participate in evangelism are often motivated, but if we are to ever hope to begin to reach

this generation with the gospel we will need to get the attention of the massive amount of sleeping Christians who never engage anyone with the gospel. I believe that it rarely ever crosses their mind that their purpose in life is to be ambassadors for Christ.

I have already begun to implement a strategy for evangelism that incorporates the “Think Method” into my ministry. The ministry that I lead is called Ninethirty, and I will refer to it in this way for the remainder of the paper. On Sunday mornings I preach to 600-800 college students. Of these there are around 300 that are involved in our discipleship program called Challenge which meets on Sunday evenings. These small groups are led by students. The leaders of the Challenge groups, Challenge Leaders, are trained and guided by adult leaders with which they meet weekly in a small group at the adult’s home. The adults are led by my wife and another leader.

Believing that motivation is the place to start, I have begun climatizing the ministry for the “Think Method” through a series of sermons that I began several weeks ago. If people are not motivated they will not see the need for information on how to share the gospel or seek it out. I feel that churches often make the mistake of talking about evangelism once or twice a year from the pulpit believing that will get things going in the right direction. Christians, particularly of this generation, have been bombarded with political correctness, tolerance for all ideas and the notion that all roads lead to God. Many of them silently are not all that convinced that people absolutely have to have a personal relationship with Jesus. They see people doing anything and everything and they appear to be getting along just fine without God. They watch other cultures worshipping on their TVs and cannot help but think that surely God would not turn them away in the end. After all they are so sincere. They rarely hear anything about God on the evening

news and conclude that maybe impacting their world for Christ is not all that urgent or important.

I began the series dealing with why the people around them seemed to be indifferent or antagonistic to the gospel. All of them have experienced these either from a peer, a parent or a professor. In order to deal with this I began with truths about the lost from the Bible. The scriptures tell us that the lost are separated from God, estranged from him. They are dead, but they do not know they are dead. Each one of them is under outside influences (the world and Satan). They are blind to God's truth. They are harassed and helpless, they cannot conceive of life's real purpose, and they are without the Holy Spirit's guidance and comfort. I wanted my hearers to understand the desperate position of the lost around them. I also communicated to them a vital truth about God. He desires a relationship with every non-Christian with which they will come in contact. He wants to restore that relationship and we are to participate with him in the restoration as ambassadors for Christ (2Corinthians5:18-21).

In part two I sought to reveal to them why God's truth is absent from mainstream thought. I began with Judges 17 and showed them that when there is no objective truth, one that everyone agrees upon, everyone does what they think is right for them. I used Geisler's suggestion of Sheryl Crow's song "Everyday is a Winding Road" reading the words to them as an illustration of what things are like today. Many of them knew the song well enough to mouth the words with me. I went on to say that Christians have responded to the culture in four ways. It is easy to feel overwhelmed and because that is true some have developed a subculture where they shut the world out and have very little to do with it. Others attack the culture, condemning it. Some conform to the culture and

just blend in with the lost. What we need to do as ambassadors for Christ is to season the culture. I closed by appealing to them with the thought that this is their moment on history's stage, they must make it count for eternity.

I next talked to them about being ready to share from 1 Peter 3:15-16. I took Dave Geisler's idea of being prepared, eagerly anticipating opportunities to engage their lost friends, like we are told to anticipate the second coming in Matthew 24:44. Even if we are ready and excited to share, there are two problems in communicating the gospel. Christians are afraid, based on George Barna's three anxieties, which I learned in class, and the soil of the hearts of the lost is deficient according to Timothy Downs in his book Finding Common Ground. It was here that I introduced the idea that evangelism is a process and not an event. We must work to prepare the soil of the hearts of the lost to receive the gospel.

I followed this with Paul's method of soil preparation found in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. He served them, sacrificed his freedoms for them, and he identified with them where he could. We are not to compromise the truth of the gospel, but we must find common ground on which to build a relationship that God can ride on into their hearts.

The following week I spoke more of a motivational message. I began by asking them if they believed if it matters how they related to the people in their lives. I used a clip from "Schindler's List" where Schindler is fleeing Germany and he meets with all the Jews he had rescued from the Nazis. They are there to tell him thank you for what he had done. As they gave him a ring, he was overcome with grief. The ring had inscribed in it from the Torah, "he who saves a life, saves the world entire." When he read it he realized what he could have done. He said, "I could have done more." Eleven hundred

Jews were saved because of him and over six thousand are alive today because of Schindler. He did what he could. My question to the students was, are you doing what you can to save your lost friends? Who have you had a part in helping come to Christ? You can not impact everyone, but you can impact someone. Do you care enough to get trained to share the gospel? I did this to set up the introduction of the “Think Method” the following week.

To introduce the “Think Method” I encouraged them to become intentional about sharing the gospel with those in their lives and those they come in contact. They need to have a strategy to impact them. To the “T” that stands for trusting the Holy Spirit I added two points. We must first trust the Holy Spirit, asking him to open our hearts to the lost around us. Our hearts need to be focused on eternal things rather than the temporal. We require insight into their lives to see what it is they need to come to faith. We need eyes that see the divine opportunities around us and the courage to make the most of them. Second, we need to trust the Holy Spirit to open the hearts of our lost friends through prayer. We need him to open their minds to the legitimacy of the gospel. We must call on the Holy Spirit to rearrange their thinking and give them a clear understanding of it. Finally, we must ask him to give them the courage to leave their current worldview and believe in Jesus.

The next week I finished “T” by revealing to them our dependence on the Holy Spirit. We are not alone in witnessing to the world about Christ. In fact most of us are just ordinary people that God takes pleasure in using to reveal his truth to a lost and dying world. We desperately need the Holy Spirit to empower us to speak in a way that has impact. Like Paul in Colossians 4:2-4, we need to speak clearly, fearlessly

and effectively. We not only must articulate the truths of the gospel winsomely, but have an obligation to live holy, attractive lives. We must ask the Holy Spirit to empower us to be “wise in the way we act” according to Paul in Colossians 4:5. We particularly need to be wise toward “outsiders,” those outside the faith. The lost in our lives are watching us. They are listening to our conversations. Our actions and attitudes are the only reference points they have on the authenticity of what we say we believe. They do not comprehend spiritual things, so what we say and do either authenticates the value of our faith or it invalidates it. I closed by encouraging them to “shine on.” (Philippians 2:14-16a)

I plan on teaching the students the remainder of the “Think Method,” H-K, primarily through a training seminar. These last four points require a lot more focus on the part of the learner than can be generally accomplished in a large group setting such as a preaching event. I will be inviting everyone in the ministry with a special invitation going to those in the Challenge ministry.

The concepts of, hearing the discrepancies, illuminating the discrepancies, navigating around barriers, and keeping the door open are so novel that a forum is required where people will have time to digest the material and where they can feel free to ask questions. Most Christians are not accustomed to thinking this seriously about spiritual things let alone evangelism. They are most familiar with approaches that require simple memorization of a “one size fits all” outline. Although it is well organized and has a clear acrostic for remembering it, the “Think Method” is extremely challenging to grasp and a little scary to think of applying with one's friends. Learning to hear and illuminate the discrepancies in people's thoughts or beliefs as well as figuring out how to

navigate around them on you feet are skills that will take time and effort for the average student to perfect.

I liked Geisler's "Colombo" approach to defining a person who digs for information by asking questions. I will be using clips from Colombo to introduce the concept and reinforce it in an entertaining way. Videos capture the attention of college students and get around their defense mechanisms. I may even wear a trench coat when I teach this part.

I believe that after the seminar, a small group setting is ideal for grasping and applying the entire concept. The Challenge leaders will be able to reinforce the "Think Method", answering the student's questions as they seek to better understand it and as they apply it in their world. The group will provide them with an opportunity to discuss it as well as the needed accountability. The students will be encouraged to go with a partner from their group to visit their lost friends and to go out weekly on campus seeking to talk with students using the Religious and Spiritual Perspective Questionnaire. I will also be taking students on campus to talk to students.

At a later date I plan on teaching a follow-up seminar on apologetics based on the book we read for class, Defending the Faith: Twelve Points that Show Christianity is True by Norm Geisler. This book is a tremendous source of apologetic material. It is basic, easy to follow and to the point. I have found it a valuable resource.

I have found this class extremely helpful to me in my ministry. The material taught in class, the books we read and the papers we were asked to write have all stretched me intellectually and contributed in a positive way to my development as a

minister to college students. Everything was very practical and applicable to my situation.