

Making your small groups models of evangelism by Steve Gladen

Pastor, what would you guess is the most difficult of the five purposes for most of those in your church?

If you guessed evangelism, you'd be right. Although people acknowledge its importance, whenever I ask people to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, they consistently state that they have the most difficult time trying to live out the purpose of evangelism. Even pastors themselves feel this way. In fact, for most Christians, the longer we are believers, the less in touch we are with non-believers. Since evangelism doesn't come naturally for most of us, we often ignore it completely.

We must conquer this fear. Evangelism needs to be a priority for us and for our small groups because, of the five purposes, it's the only one we can do on earth that we can't do in heaven. If we don't obey God's command on this side of heaven, it will be too late.

We need to encourage small groups in our churches to offer practical evangelism opportunities. By working together to share their faith, the entire process of evangelism will be less scary for your church members. Here are some ideas to get them started.

- Ask group members to share how they heard and came to accept the Good News that Jesus died on the cross for their sins. You may have some seekers in your group but that's all the better. It's great for them to hear people's personal stories. After all, these stories will undoubtedly involve the retelling of the Gospel, and will remind the group of the power of the invitation.
- Read and discuss biblical passages that show Christ caring for or reaching out to the lost. Luke 5:27-32 is a good example. Then have group members share the first name of a person they hope would come to know Christ. In the 90 seconds it takes to go around the group and state that name, you'll have a top 10 list of people the group can pray for. Then the group needs to be sure to pray for that person on the list every time they meet.
- Give group members time to practice sharing their testimony with each other. Commit an entire evening to this. Or set aside time each week for one person to share a five-minute testimony so they can get practice sharing how Christ has changed his or her life.
- Invite seekers to a party. This can be a dinner party, Super Bowl party, backyard barbecue, or a picnic. Make sure everyone understands this isn't a commitment or even an invitation to join the group. It's a party. However, it's an opportunity for small group members to spend time with people who are not yet believers in Christ. Make sure you invite some (or all) of the people on that top 10 prayer list.
- Along those lines, encourage group members to invite someone home for dinner. This might be an unbelieving couple from their neighborhood or someone from the kids' soccer team. Ask the group to pray for that evening.
- Invite non-believers to special Christmas or Easter events at your church. Non-believers are more receptive to an invitation at Christmas and Easter than any other time of the year.
- Adopt one of the world's 3,000 unreached people groups through Wycliffe Bible Translators. Your group's job will be to pray that the people group you adopted will hear and accept the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What group can't take this simple crawl step to just pray for an unreached people group?

2007 Purpose Driven Small Group Conference

Saddleback will be hosting the first-ever, Purpose Driven Small Group Conference on Feb. 20 to 22, 2007, at the Saddleback campus in Lake Forest, Calif. For further info, visit the [2007 Purpose Driven Small Group Conference](#) Web site.

- Spend some time as a group learning about evangelism. Many small group studies are available. One of my favorites is called [Share Jesus Without Fear](#) (published by LifeWay Christian Resources).

Our enemy the Devil likes to make us think that evangelism is mission impossible – a big humongous task that no one can do. But the bottom line is this: If your small groups are helping the lost to become found by praying, by sharing their testimonies, by inviting non-believers to a meal, they are fulfilling the purpose of evangelism. It's really that simple.

Availability is the key. If our church members become available, God will use them. If they're willing to love people, doors will open. If they can simply tell their own stories, lives can be changed. And there's nothing more exciting than watching someone come to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

This article has been adapted from Steve Gladen and Lance Witt's CD series, [Don't Lead Alone](#). To further build evangelism and God's other purposes into your church's small groups, don't miss the [2007 Purpose Driven Small Groups Conference](#) at Saddleback Church, Feb. 20-22.

Recommended resources

- [Building Healthy Small Groups](#)
- [Don't Lead Alone](#)
- [250 Big Ideas for Purpose Driven Small Groups](#)
- [Hosting Life Together Kit](#)



Steve Gladen has been on staff at Saddleback Church since 1998 and currently oversees 2,500 adult small groups at Saddleback. He has co-written several books including: [250 Big Ideas for Small Groups](#), [Building Healthy Small Groups in Your Church](#), and [Don't Lead Alone](#).

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