

# Him We Proclaim

## Evangelistic Preaching on Campus

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The New Testament gives us some helpful models for campus-based evangelistic work. It is worth taking a look at how Paul, the urban evangelist par excellence, approaches the challenge of communicating the gospel to the Athenians (Acts 17:16-34). He observes their society in order to build a bridge of communication into their world. Then he can speak of the God who made it and will judge it by His Son, the Risen Lord Jesus. (See John Stott's article on pp 21-30.)

In Ephesus (Acts 19) Paul moved from the synagogue to the Hall of Tyrannus where he entered into dialogue daily for two years. By means of these lunchtime apologetics meetings, Luke records, 'all the residents of Asia heard the Word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks'. We, too, need to think about appropriate strategies for proclaiming the gospel on our different campuses and how best to communicate relevantly in each situation.

### **WHAT ARE THE AIMS OF AN EVANGELISTIC MESSAGE?**

The first aim is to present the gospel in an easy-to-understand way and show how our hearers can find forgiveness and eternal life.

As we speak we will inevitably stimulate questions in our hearers' minds. All good preaching is a 'conversation' so we need to watch and interact with our audience in order to anticipate their questions. Then we must try to answer them.

God willing, people will trust Christ as a result. However, some will not! It is important therefore that a message contains truth that will stimulate people to seek the Lord, that it does not rely on methods, or contain material which will allow potential seekers to dismiss the Christian gospel. This is particularly important when it comes to bringing people to the point of decision for Christ. Let us rather aim to create a stimulating environment which will provoke our listeners, as Paul did the Athenians, to want to hear more.

## HOW DO YOU PREPARE AN EVANGELISTIC TALK?

I suggest there are at least four key ingredients to any talk:

- The Word of God: any talk should include exposition, using suitable Bible passages to show where you (and other Christians) get their ideas from.
- Apologetics: a talk should raise and answer appropriate questions, bringing the word of God to bear on men's minds.
- Bridge-building: a talk needs to tackle the relevant issues and explain the gospel in the light of them.
- Lightness of touch: a talk should include humour, quotations and parables at appropriate moments to allow the audience to relax, to illustrate Scriptural truth etc. But be sensitive, especially in the use of humour, not to undermine the convicting work of the Holy Spirit.

Don't neglect proper preparation time. A talk needs to be well organized, which means:

- it needs to be self-consistent. Don't raise a question without answering it.
- concentrate on one or two key points.

I often use a flow-diagram to keep my thinking disciplined (see worked example on p 34). The more you do this exercise, the easier it becomes to be truly spontaneous in your speaking.

## HOW DO YOU PLAN A SERIES OF EVANGELISTIC TALKS?

Use the following questions to help you think about the overall content of a series:

1. Is there enough saving truth in each talk to enable someone who only hears one of them to come to faith in Christ?
2. Have you tackled the key questions people are asking about Christianity and the world in the course of your series? The questions are of two kinds:
  - Questions raised by the gospel: What about suffering? Is Jesus a myth or an historical figure? Does God exist? What about other religions? Isn't Christianity escapism? etc
  - Questions raised by your culture: eg Isn't Christianity sexist? anti-homosexual? right-wing? These are important bridge building topics and they'll vary from culture to culture.
3. Have you included some exposition in each talk? This teaches non-believers how to handle the Bible. It models a pattern of behaviour for young believers. Choose passages that relate well to students and remember that God's word is powerful! Jürgen Spieß of Germany often expounds passages from John's Gospel and makes copies of the Gospel available on each seat. Nigel Lee of Britain does the same with Luke's Gospel.

4. Is there an element of humour, story, parable or quotation in each talk?
5. Have you planned how you will introduce the Cross into each talk?
6. How will you speak about the need for a personal decision about Jesus?

In order to plan a series of talks I find it useful to use a diagram that gives an overview of what I am trying to achieve (see sample on p 35). I usually prepare the first talk in full and my agenda for the rest of the series. While I don't have standard talks which I use over and over again, I do have 'modules', units of material that I shuffle around to make new talks.

### **HOW SHOULD I FOLLOW UP ANY EVANGELISTIC TALK?**

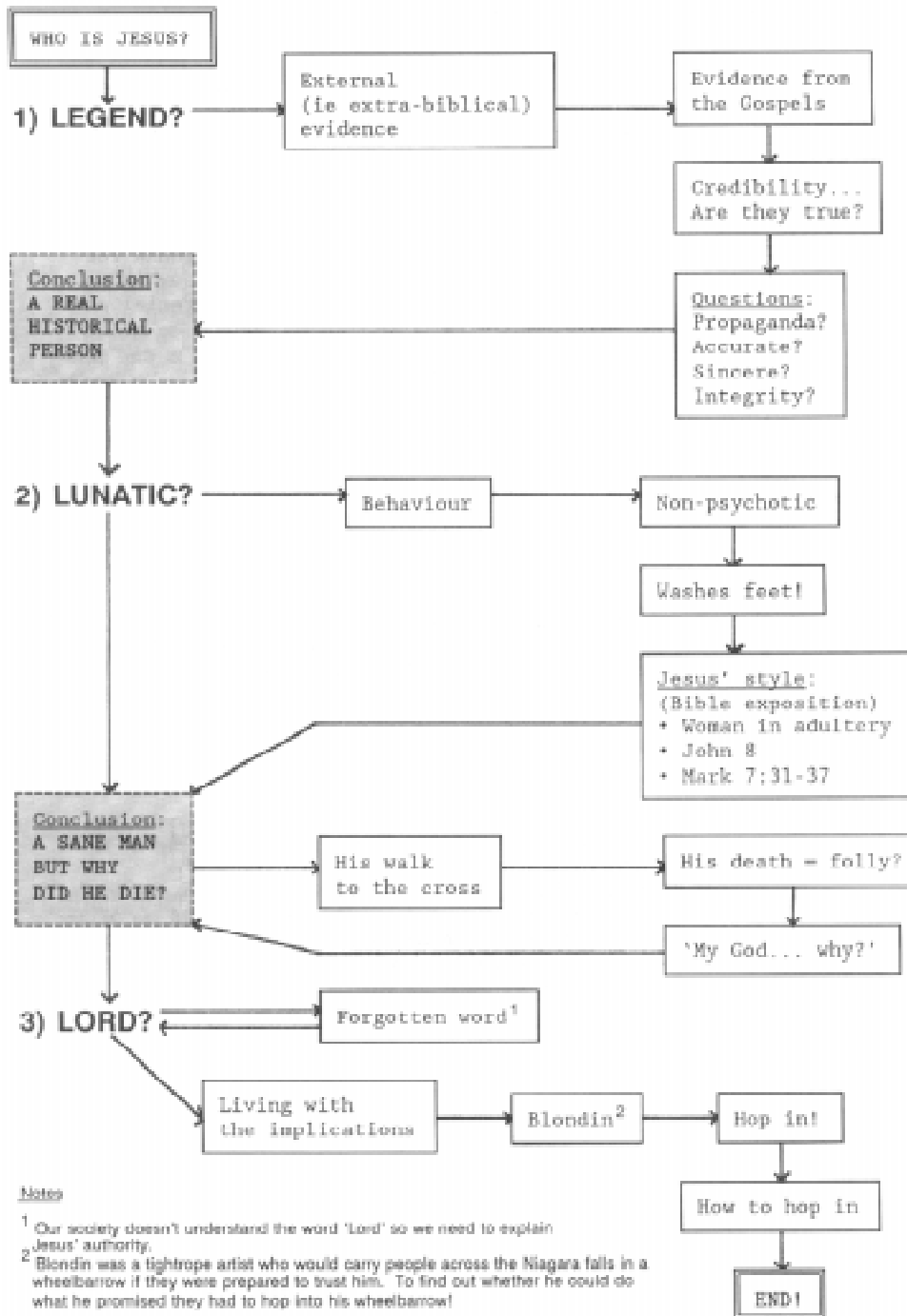
The two main categories of people we need to follow up are:

1. The newly converted. These people need to be linked up with an older Christian for one-to-one help and integrated into a small nurture group. Their older Christian friend should help them in the process of joining the student fellowship on campus and finding a local church.
2. Those who are still seeking. It is important to consider ways of feeding their interest eg through an 'Agnostics Anonymous' or 'Exploring Christianity' evangelistic Bible study group. Make sure that the non-Christians outnumber the Christians and aim for a limited series of, say, six weekly meetings. Once converted they can join a nurture group for new Christians.

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# JESUS - Legend, Lunatic or Lord?

(Outline for a 35-40 minute talk)



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Our society doesn't understand the word 'Lord' so we need to explain Jesus' authority.

<sup>2</sup> Blondin was a tightrope artist who would carry people across the Niagara falls in a wheelbarrow if they were prepared to trust him. To find out whether he could do what he promised they had to hop into his wheelbarrow!

OUTLINE DIAGRAM FOR A SERIES OF FOUR EVANGELISTIC TALKS

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
| <b>TITLE</b>                            | If God's so good why's the world in such a mess?   | Jesus: Legend Lunatic or Lord?   | 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?'                                 | Dead! But not for long!   |
| <b>CENTRAL THEME</b>                    | SUFFERING  | JESUS  | CROSS   | RESURRECTION  |
| <b>RELEVANT PASSAGE</b>                 | Phil 2:6-11  | John 8:1-11<br>Mark 7:31-37  | Mark 15:33-39   | John 20   |
| <b>EXPOSITION</b>                       | Christ became real man and shared <u>all</u> our pain<br><br>=> God understands and identifies | Talk about Jesus' style of dealing with people   | Mark's description 1 Peter 2:23-25<br>Peter's explanation                   | Describe the disciples' experience<br>- body stolen?<br>- hallucination?<br>- ghost?<br>- confidence trick?<br>What does the resurrection mean?<br>Acts 17:30 |
| <b>QUESTIONS ARISING FROM THIS</b>      | Suffering and a God of love<br><br>How do Christians respond to: injustice? disease/famine?    | Are the Gospels credible in 1988?<br><br>Wasn't Jesus just a good man?<br><br>Isn't Christianity anti-women? | Wasn't Jesus' death a failure/tragedy?<br><br>Do all religions lead to God? | Is there life after death?  |
| <b>TOPICAL ISSUES FOR THE SITUATION</b> | Up to you and the situation you are addressing!  |  |   |   |
| <b>STORIES ILLUSTRATIONS QUOTATIONS</b> | This is up to you!   |  |   |   |
| <b>DRIVING IT HOME</b>                  | God became man and died  | He deliberately went to the cross  | Jesus' death on the cross worked!   |   |

Assignment:

Why not complete these outlines for your own situation and develop a talk of your own on a fifth topic eg 'Where do I go from here?', 'Living a New Life'.