

A METHOD: THE 4 SPIRITUAL LAWS

CRU

LAW 1: God loves you & offers a wonderful plan for your life.

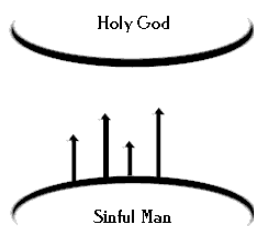
- **God's Love:** "God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16, NIV).
- **God's Plan:** "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" Jesus
- Why is it that most people are not experiencing that abundant life?

Because... Law 2: Man is sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he cannot know and experience God's love and plan for his life.

Man is Sinful: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Man was created to have fellowship with God; but, because of his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Man Is Separated: "The wages of sin is death" [spiritual separation from God] (Romans 6:23).



This diagram illustrates that God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that man is continually trying to reach God and the abundant life through his own efforts, such as a good life, philosophy, or religion -but he inevitably fails.

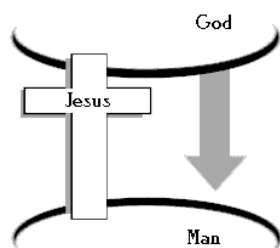
The third law explains the only way to bridge this gulf...

Law 3: Jesus Christ is God's only provision for man's sin. Through Him you can know and experience God's love and plan for your life.

He Died In Our Place: "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8).

He Rose from the Dead: "Christ died for our sins... He was buried... He was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures... He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred..." (1Cor.15:3-6).

He Is the Only Way to God: "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me'" (John 14:6).



This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.

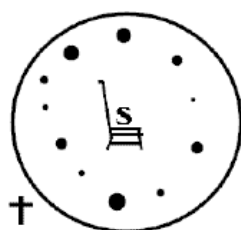
But is not enough just to know these three laws...

Law 4: We must individually receive Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; then we can know and experience God's love and plan for our lives.

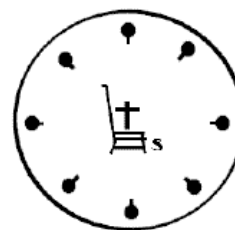
- **We Must Receive Christ:** "As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12).
- **We Receive Christ Through Faith:** "By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as result of works that no one should boast" (Ephesians 2:8,9).
- **When We Receive Christ, We Experience a New Birth:** (Read John 3:1-8.)
- **We Receive Christ Through Personal Invitation:** "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any one hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" (Revelation 3:20).

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of the will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives: Circles



Self-Directed Life
 S: Self is on the throne
 Christ is outside the life
 Interests are directed by self, often resulting in discord and frustration



Christ-Directed Life
 Christ is in the life and on the throne
 Self is yielding to Christ
 Interests are directed by Christ, resulting in harmony with God's plan

ASK: Which circle best represents your life?

ASK: Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

The following explains how you can receive Christ:

You Can Receive Christ Right Now by Faith Through Prayer (Prayer is talking with God)

- God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:
 - **Lord Jesus, I need You. Thank You for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be.**
 - Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? If it does, I invite you to pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

INVEST & INVITE

At Greenhouse, we believe we need to be ready with the ability to give a concise evangelistic presentation. However, another approach to evangelism is to invite people to the christian community for fellowship activities and for worship. This method of evangelism is the more 'common one'. Please read the following two articles by Jonathan Dodson.

2 Big Reasons Evangelism Isn't Working

Jonathan Dodson

One in five Americans don't believe in a deity. Less than half of the population attends religious services on a regular basis. People simply find our evangelism unbelievable. Why? While a person's **response** to Christ is ultimately a matter that rests in God's sovereign hands, something we have no control over, a person's **hearing** of the gospel is a matter we do have control over and responsibility for.

1. "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season" (2 Timothy 4:2).
2. "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person" (Colossians 4:5–6).
3. "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ" (Romans 10:17).

The first reason our evangelism isn't believable is because it isn't done in grace for each person.

Paul isn't just saying evangelism is our responsibility; he's telling us to do it "in person." Unfortunately, a lot of evangelism is an out of body experience, as if there aren't two persons in a conversation. It's excarnate, out of the flesh, not incarnate — in the flesh.

I'm reminded of the more passive Christian who looks to get Jesus off his chest at work and into a conversation. "Check!" Or the time in college when I pretended to share the gospel with a friend in Barnes & Noble so others would overhear it! Alternatively, an active evangelist might troll blogs and start conversations to defeat arguments, while losing people in the process. "Aha!" The comment section on a blog is the new street corner.

These approaches are foolish because they treat people like **projects to be completed**, not **persons to be loved**. Have you ever been on the other end of an evangelistic project? Perhaps from a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon at your door. Or a pushy pluralist at work? You don't feel loved; you feel used, like a pressure sale.

Paul says "**know how you ought to answer each person.**" This means that **most of your gospel explanations will be different, not canned**. It also implies a listening evangelism. How can we know how to respond to each person, if we don't know each person?

When Francis Schaeffer was asked how he would spend an hour with a non-Christian, he said: "I would listen for fifty-five minutes, and then, in the last five minutes I would have something to say."

A second reason people find our evangelism unbelievable is because it is foolish.

Paul isn't just telling us evangelism is personal; he's telling us to do it with wisdom. Wisdom possesses more than knowledge; it expresses knowledge through understanding. It considers life circumstances and applies knowledge with skill. Another word for this is love.

Love is inefficient. It slows down long enough to understand people and their objections to the gospel. Love recognizes people are complex, and meets them in their need: suffering, despair, indifference, cynicism, confusion. We should look to surface these objections in people's lives. I was recently having lunch with an educated professional who had a lot of questions. After about thirty minutes he said, "Enough about me. You're asking me questions. I should ask you questions." I responded by saying, "I want to hear your questions, but I also want to know you so that I can respond to your questions with wisdom." He told me some very personal things after that, and it shed a lot of light on his objections to Christianity. It made my comments much more informed, and he felt much more loved, declaring at the end, "I wish every lunch was like this. Let's keep doing this. I have a lot more questions."

Rehearsing a memorized fact, "Jesus died on the cross for your sins," isn't walking in wisdom. Many people don't know what we mean when we say "Jesus," "sin," or "cross." While much of America still has cultural memory of these things, they are often misunderstood and confused with "moral teacher," "be good," and "irrelevant suffering." We have to slow down long enough to explore what they mean, and why they have trouble with these words and concepts. Often they are tied to some kind of pain.

We need to explain these important truths (and more), not simply assert them. When we discerningly separate cultural misunderstanding from a true understanding of the gospel, we move forward in wisdom. But getting to that point typically doesn't happen overnight.

We need to see **evangelism as a long-term endeavor**. Stop checking the list and defeating others. Be incarnate, not excarnate, in your evangelism. Slow down and practice listening and love. Most conversions are not the result of a single, point-in-time conversation, but the culmination of a personal process that includes doubt, reflection, gospel witness, love, and the work of the Holy Spirit.

And remember, don't put pressure on yourself; conversion is in God's hands. We just get to share the incomparable news of Jesus. In sum, how you communicate the gospel matters.

3 Ways Evangelism Can Be More Believable

Jonathan Dodson

Amount of Time x Depth of Relationship x Unbelievers

In evangelistic seminars, people are often asked to answer a question that goes something like, “How can I get eternal life?” We might scoff at the question, assuming it too unrealistic to come from our unbelieving neighbors, but I actually know someone who was asked this very question. But instead of telling the person how to get eternal life, he avoided it by asking a question in return. He had the evangelistic ball all teed up, and didn’t even answer the question!

You’ll probably think of him as an evangelistic failure, especially after I tell you what he did next. Instead of inviting the seeker to repent and believe in the gospel — to have faith — this so-called evangelist told him he needed to do good works (serve the poor) before getting eternal life! Now he’s a failure not only by evangelistic standards but also by Reformed standards. I’ll tell you his name. This so-called evangelist was Jesus Christ.

In Luke 18:18–30, a young wealthy man comes to Jesus inquiring, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” It’s a softball question, just sitting up there, and Jesus whiffs it completely. He doesn’t even answer the question! He would have flunked the evangelism class. What was he thinking? A lot could be said about this exchange, but let me just point out three things.

Question the Mind

When evangelizing, all too often we are looking to give answers — to deliver the doctrine, win the argument, check the box. But Jesus responds with a question, something he does quite often. Why? Because he’s not seeking converts; he’s engaging hearts. All too often our evangelism reduces people to projects.

- Not saying anything about Jesus earns a ✓-
- Saying Jesus’s name in conversation earns a ✓
- Mentioning what Jesus did (on the cross, for your sins) earns a ✓+
- Giving a “whole gospel presentation” earns a ★

We are caught in a performance act and the listener is our spectator. Evangelism is easily reduced to a gospel infomercial. We do the talking; you do the listening, and then we’ll give you an opportunity to respond. I shudder to think how often I’ve just looked to get Jesus off my chest, clearing my evangelistic conscience. Not Jesus, though. He listens and responds to the rich, young professional: “Why do you call me good?” (Luke 18:19). He doesn’t just inform the head; he questions the mind. Notice Jesus dignifies the man’s vocabulary choice. The fact that the man said “good teacher” would have slipped by most of us. But Jesus is paying attention and he asks, “Why do you call me good? Only God is good.” Commentators suggest several options for Jesus’s remark: 1) Jesus is denying his own goodness, which doesn’t comport with the rest of Luke’s Gospel. 2) Jesus is pointing away to Yahweh’s goodness and making no commentary on himself. It is the regular confession of the Psalms, “Give thanks to the Lord for He is good.” 3) Perhaps Christ is identifying with Yahweh’s goodness. But let’s keep reading to find out what Jesus is doing.

Aim for the Heart

Jesus tells the young man, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me” (Luke 18:22). Instead of telling him the gospel, Jesus tells him to sell literally “as much as he has” and give it to the poor. That’s everything. Why? Why would Jesus, when asked how to inherit eternal life, tell someone to go do good works?

Because he’s aiming for the heart. We frequently aim for the head. Jesus asks questions, because he wants to draw him out, understand him, and he sees the man’s deepest desire is to do something. Doing is valuable to keepers-of-commandments. Perhaps this is why he called Jesus “good.” The rich do-gooder holds keeping the law as a high virtue.

“What must I do?”

After hearing Jesus’s instruction to sell all he has, we are told he was sad, “very sad.” Tim Keller has said that wherever our emotions are out of control, there’s our idol. So while Jesus does dignify the man, he devastates him by telling him to sell everything and follow him. The thing the rich man clung to, and couldn’t let go of, was his wealth. He’s blinded by it, worked hard for it, and deep down believes he deserves it. Idolatry obscures Glory.

Now, why did Jesus tell him to do good works? Because two gods can’t share the same shelf. One has to win. Give up one to get the other. We have to let go of the earthly treasure to receive the heavenly treasure. The gospel requires an exchange of worship, a reordering of our loves, if we are to enter the kingdom.

So how should this affect our evangelism? Do you know what your neighbor loves, fears, hopes, dreams about? What is the thing your unbelieving friends pine for most?