

Six Effective Evangelistic Styles

Reflective Analysis of Personality Traits Impacting the Sharing of our Faith

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<http://www.zianet.com/maxey/reflx341.htm>

Becoming a Contagious Christian (by Bill Hybels, Mark Mittelberg and Lee Strobel) is a practical book/training course to help equip us who belong to Christ in our ability to help others come to know Him. In their synopsis of the course, the authors make the following statement... "This course is designed to equip believers for effective evangelism by showing them how they can share the Gospel in a natural and powerful way while being the person God made them to be." Did you notice that last phrase? You do not have to *pretend* to be something or someone you are *not* in order to be effective at evangelism. You simply have to *be yourself*. The Father will use you *just as you are!*

The world is filled with all types of people, with all types of spiritual needs, and with all types of problems. To reach them effectively will require all types of workers for the Lord. What may touch the heart of one, might very well turn off another. Those whom others may be able to reach, you just might drive away (and vice versa). The real key to success in evangelism begins with *knowing yourself*, a basic truth too often overlooked in preparation for carrying out the Great Commission of our Savior.

Session two of this course is entitled *Being Yourself and Impacting Others*. It includes an assessment tool (36 questions) to help you *clarify your personal strengths and weaknesses with respect to evangelism*, thus *enabling* you to determine just how best to approach those who don't yet know the Lord Jesus with the Gospel, and *empowering* you with the confidence to *actually do so*. It identifies six very effective, and yet quite distinct, *evangelistic styles*. The assessment tool has been included at the end of this write-up for you to use. Start by completing the assessment tool, then read through the descriptions of each style below. (NOTE – These descriptions are adapted from the original *Becoming a Contagious Christian* course material. You may be a combination of 2-3 of these.) How could you use more effectively how God made you in sharing Christ?

The Direct Style

If you identified to a large degree with the following six statements, you would most likely fall into this category: (1) In conversations, I like to approach topics directly without "beating around the bush." (2) I don't shy away from challenging someone when it seems necessary. (3) I do not have a problem confronting my friends with the truth even if it strains the relationship. (4) I think the world would be a lot better place if people would stop being so sensitive about everything and just speak the truth! (5) A motto that would fit me perfectly is: "Make a difference or a mess, but *do* something." (6) I sometimes get in trouble for lacking gentleness and sensitivity in the way I interact with others.

Does all of this sound like *you*? Can you relate? Then you very likely are the embodiment of the **Direct Style**. Such persons, from a *positive* perspective, are quite confident, bold, assertive and to-the-point. They have a tendency to be rather *confrontational* in their approach to people and situations (which can be either positive or negative depending on attitude and motivation). On the *negative* side, such persons tend to be somewhat "in your face" with regard to matters about which they feel strongly. *They* are right, *you* are wrong, and they are there to confront you and convert you ... whether you like it or not. This would be the preferred style of most disciples who consider themselves to be militant in their efforts to "contend for the faith." The downside of such is that this too frequently devolves into being *contentious* for the faith, which only serves to drive people farther away from Truth. If you've ever had someone knock on your door, only to be asked, when you opened the door to them, "If you died today, would you go to heaven or to hell?", you have encountered those who have adopted the **Direct Style** of evangelism. Frankly, this turns many people off, although, it can be effective when used with love and sensitivity to the Spirit.

On a more positive note, there are indeed times when it is counterproductive to "beat around the bush" with certain persons and situations. Some who don't yet know Christ don't need *subtlety*; it flows off them like water off a duck. They need the proverbial 2x4 right between the eyes in order to "get their attention." Those disciples equipped with this evangelistic style are divinely equipped to reach such persons, as long as they employ healthy doses of wisdom and discretion and love in their confrontation of those in need of turning their lives around. Hybels, Mittelberg and Strobel cite the example of the apostle Peter in Acts 2 as being representative of this style. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter didn't beat around the bush; he got right to the point.

He was direct, blunt and in your face! He told the Jews assembled that day that they had *murdered* their Messiah, and if they wanted to avoid the wrath of God they had better *repent*. *Three thousand* responded. Yes, under the right circumstances, and if employed responsibly, this can be a most effective approach.

The Intellectual Style

This is most likely your style if the following statements describe you: (1) I have a hard time getting out of a bookstore without buying a bunch of new books that will help me to better understand what people are thinking. (2) I tend to be analytical and logical. (3) In conversations, I naturally key in on questions that are holding up a person's understanding or progress. (4) I really enjoy discussions and debates on difficult questions. (5) Often, when listening to teachers or TV commentators, I mentally (or even verbally) argue with their positions and logic. (6) I like to get at the deeper reasons for opinions that people hold.

If you respond, "That's *me!*" to these six statements, then you are representative of the **Intellectual Style**. Such men and women have a rather strong tendency to be inquisitive, analytical, logical, and far more focused on what people are *thinking* than how they are *feeling*. Negatively, those within this category are often perceived as cold, aloof, insensitive, impersonal and uncaring. It is not so much that they don't actually experience these various emotions, it is just that they have become adept at suppressing them or relegating them to lesser importance, placing more value upon the *intellect* than the *emotions*. Such a focus can most assuredly prove to be a major *hindrance* to evangelistic efforts among a certain class of people, though, in all fairness, it must be acknowledged that there are indeed those who *appreciate* a more analytical, logical approach to the study and presentation of the inspired Scriptures, with fewer displays of raw emotionalism (what might be termed as "touchy feely"). People are different, that is a fact, which is exactly why the Lord has created diversity even among His servants, so that there is *someone* for *every* kind of seeker.

Not everyone is moved by an appeal to the emotions; indeed, some find it almost offensive, and will virtually flee from such encounters. They *will*, however, sit for hours upon end and engage in a reasoned dialogue with another on the theological intricacies of God's Holy Word. *These* seekers *also* are precious in the sight of God, and He desires *them* to be brought to Jesus as well. It will take a special kind of evangelistic style to reach them, however -- the **Intellectual Style**. Hybels, Mittelberg and Strobel cite the example of the apostle Paul in Acts 17:16ff as being representative of this particular style. While in the city of Athens, Greece, Paul "was *reasoning* in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day with those who happened to be present" [vs. 17]. He engaged the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the Areopagus, and even at times quoted from their own poets and revered writers. Paul knew how to stand toe-to-toe with the best philosophers of his day, and he could hold his own with them; indeed, he even won some to Christ. Not just *anyone* could have reached these people; it required a certain evangelistic style. The same is no less true today. There is, without argument, a *place* for reasoned, reflective, analytical, logical dialogue in evangelism. *Some*, quite literally, will never be reached *without* it. Thus, God equips some disciples with this personality trait, and then opens doors of opportunity for them to witness to those precious souls in need of enlightenment and liberation.

The Testimonial Style

Are the following six statements descriptive of you? (1) I often speak out of my personal background or experience in order to illustrate a point that I am trying to make. (2) I often identify with others by using phrases like, "I used to think that too" or "I once felt the way you do." (3) When I talk around the locker room or the drinking fountain, people really listen. (4) I intentionally share my mistakes and struggles with others when it might assist them in considering solutions that could help them. (5) People seem interested in hearing stories about things that have happened in my life. (6) I am still amazed at how God has worked in my life, and I would like others to know about it.

If, after hearing these characterizations, you exclaim, "That's *me!*", then you most likely are the embodiment of the **Testimonial Style**. Those men and women within this category have a tendency to be good listeners, clear communicators, and rather compelling storytellers. They have the ability to *hold the interest* of those with whom they seek to communicate, whether those people necessarily agree with what they're hearing or not. From a negative perspective, such persons may be characterized by some as "theologically shallow" -- "He tells a good story, but there is no depth." For example, some have this impression of author Max Lucado. He is a *master* storyteller, yet there are some who feel it is all "fluff" and no "substance." The simple reality, however, is that

many seekers are moved by such dynamic *narrative*. For *them*, such a style is exactly what is needed to bring them into a relationship with Christ Jesus. Again, people are *different*, so the Lord has raised up servants with differing evangelistic styles so that *all* may be reached.

The blind man in John 9 is given as an example of this particular style. One day Jesus and His disciples came upon a man blind from birth. "And His disciples asked Him, saying, 'Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he should be born blind?'" [vs. 2]. An interesting question! Jesus doesn't even waste His time debunking it, but merely declares that what is about to occur is to the glory of God. Jesus healed him, and, needless to say, news of the miracle spread rapidly. This man was brought before the religious leaders and they questioned him repeatedly. He stuck to his story, however, and gave testimonial to the divine healing power of this Jesus. The leaders did *not* like what they were hearing, but he definitely had their attention. His testimony was riveting. And yet, at the end of the day he was cast from the synagogue, "for the Jews had already agreed, that if anyone should confess Him to be the Messiah, he should be put out of the synagogue" [vs. 22]. Yes, the Lord Jesus *needs* people with a compelling story to tell in a creative way. Personal testimonies clearly have a place in evangelism, and they can be used to touch the hearts of many seekers, as people can easily *relate* to them.

The Interpersonal Style

How do you personally relate to the following? --- (1) I am a "people person" who places a high value on friendship. (2) People have commented about my ability for developing deep friendships. (3) I would rather delve into personal life issues than abstract theoretical ideas. (4) I prefer discussing a person's life before getting into the details of their beliefs and opinions. (5) I enjoy long talks with friends, and it doesn't matter much where we are or where we're going. (6) People generally consider me to be an interactive, sensitive and caring kind of person.

Does this all sound like *you*? If so, then you are the embodiment of the **Interpersonal Style**. You have a tendency to be warm, compassionate, conversational, friendship-oriented, and focused upon people and their needs. Frankly, it is hard to see too many significant negatives associated with being a good friend to others and seeking to be involved in their lives, with the possible exception that some might perceive your interest and concern as *meddling*. Many are proponents of what is known as "Friendship Evangelism," which simply suggests that a very effective way to share one's faith with others is to do so from a foundation of a growing interpersonal relationship.

Hybels, Mittelberg and Strobel cite the example of the apostle Matthew (Levi) in Luke 5:29 as being a fitting representative of this particular style. After having been called to leave his tax booth and follow Jesus (at which time "he got up and left everything and followed Him"), "Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them." This devoted follower wanted to share his newfound faith in the Messiah with as many people as he possibly could, so he hosted a large party for the Lord at his home, inviting all his friends and loved ones to come. *Friendship* evangelism is the methodology of those with the *Interpersonal Style*. When they find something wonderful, they immediately want to *share* it with all those with whom they have a close relationship.

The Invitational Style

(1) I enjoy adding or including new people in activities I am involved in. (2) To be honest, I often watch for situations in which someone "better qualified" can explain concepts to my friends. (3) It is not unusual for me to attend special events or concerts and bring along a car full of friends. (4) I tend to watch for worthwhile events to which to bring people, such as enriching seminars, retreats, classes, or church services. (5) I am always looking for a good match between the needs and interests of my friends and various books, classes, and programs that they would enjoy or benefit from. (6) A highlight of my week is when I can take a guest along with me to a helpful learning event, including church.

Is this a good description of who and what *you* are? Then it is probably safe to state that you are very likely part of the group possessing the **Invitational Style**. This is very similar to the previous style, as it is most definitely *people-oriented*, however the emphasis is somewhat more upon those with whom you *don't* yet have a close, intimate relationship than with those you *do*. It is focusing upon bringing *new* people into your circle of intimacy. Those who possess this style are hospitable, inviting, persuasive, enthusiastic. They have what some have termed a "bubbly" personality. They almost always seem to be "up," and people enjoy being around them; indeed, they seem to be irresistibly *drawn* to them.

The Samaritan woman whom Jesus encountered at Jacob's well just outside of the village of Sychar (John 4) is given as a good example of this style. Although Jews did not normally relate well to Samaritans [vs. 9], and it was not considered fitting for a woman to converse with a man in an unsupervised setting [vs. 27], yet these two struck up a rather intimate conversation. When she realized that the One to whom she was speaking was someone quite special, she "went back into the village and said to the people, 'Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?' So they came out of the town and made their way toward Him" [vs. 28-30]. Later we are informed, "Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in Him because of the woman's testimony" [vs. 39]. We may not all be equipped to "close the deal" evangelistically, but most can at least *invite* others to "Come, and see!" Andrew did this for Peter [John 1:41-42], and so did Philip for Nathanael [John 1:46] and then later for the inquiring Greeks [John 12:20-22].

The Serving Style

This is most likely your dominant style if the following statements best describe you: (1) I see needs in people's lives that others often overlook. (2) I find fulfillment in helping others, often in behind-the-scenes ways. (3) I would rather show love through actions than through words. (4) I have found that my quiet demonstrations of love and care sometimes help people open up and become more receptive to what I think. (5) I think the world would be a better place if people would talk less and take more action on behalf of their friends and neighbors. (6) I tend to be more practical and action-oriented than philosophical and idea-oriented.

If you have responded, "That's *me!*" to these six statements, then you are representative of the **Serving Style**. Such people have a tendency to be others-centered, patient, willing to work behind the scenes, and typically demonstrate love through their actions, rather than through mere words alone. Again, it is hard to find many *negatives* with respect to people who simply want to *love one another*, and who seek to do so in a quiet, unassuming manner.

The biblical example given by Hybels, Mittelberg and Strobel is that of Tabitha (Dorcas) in Acts 9:36-42. This woman lived in Joppa, and "was always doing good and helping the poor." One of her talents was making clothing for the poor, a gift for which she was well-beloved in that area. Following her death there was much grieving among the widows, to whom she had apparently been a great blessing. The apostle Peter was summoned and he raised her from the dead. "This became known all over Joppa, and many people believed in the Lord." Not only the miracle of her restoration to life, but the grace of her service while living, had touched many people's lives. Tabitha was truly the embodiment of the *Serving Style* of evangelism, and she was most effective in her ministry. Not all evangelism has to be showy or dramatic. Sometimes just simple acts of loving charity will do more to reach the lost than just about anything else. After all, as the saying goes, "people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care!" Tabitha cared -- so she served -- and she won souls to Christ Jesus.

Concluding Thought

Not to *belabor* the point, but it should be rather obvious by now that *we are all different*. There are different types of seeking souls, and there are different types of soul-winners. Each is unique; each is precious; each is of immense value in the eternal scheme of things. Each evangelistic style has its obvious strengths, and each has its advantages, just as each has its inherent weaknesses and its challenges. God has blessed each of us with *differing* abilities, but His expectation is the same -- win the lost to Jesus. Based upon our individual abilities, He places before us *open doors of opportunity*. It is then up to *us* to take every *advantage* of them to His glory and to the benefit of those around us. "He who is wise wins souls!" [Prov. 11:30]. We certainly don't have to be *alike* in our evangelistic approaches, nor should we suggest one disciple is inferior or superior to another simply because of his individual style or ability. *Regardless* of our style, may we each prove "wise" in the eyes of our Father! May we all, according to our ability, style and opportunity, become skilled "fishers of men".

"And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament;
and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever."
(Daniel 12:3)

Evangelism Styles Questionnaire

Scoring Totals:

3-Very much 2-Somewhat 1-Very Little 0-Not at all (Based on your overall tendencies/preferences)

- 1. In conversations, I like to approach topics directly, without much small talk or beating around the bush.
- 2. I have a hard time getting out of bookstores or libraries without getting a bunch of books that will help me better understand issues being debated in society.
- 3. I often tell stories about my personal experiences in order to illustrate a point I am trying to make.
- 4. I am a "people person" who places a high value on friendship.
- 5. I enjoy including or adding new people to activities I am involved in.
- 6. I see needs in people's lives that others often overlook.
- 7. I do not shy away from putting a person on the spot when it seems necessary.
- 8. I tend to be analytical.
- 9. I often identify with others by using phrases like "I used to think that too" or "I once felt the way you do."
- 10. Other people have commented about my ability for developing new friendships.
- 11. To be honest, even if I knew the answers, I am more comfortable having someone "better qualified" explain Christianity to my friends.
- 12. I find fulfillment in helping others often in behind-the-scenes ways.
- 13. I do not have a problem confronting my friends with the truth even if it risks hurting the relationship.
- 14. In conversations, I naturally focus on the questions that are holding up a person's spiritual progress.
- 15. When I tell people of how I came to Christ, I have found that they have been interested in hearing it.
- 16. I would rather delve into personal life issues than abstract theological ideas.
- 17. If I knew of a high quality outreach event that my friends would enjoy, I would make a big effort to bring them.
- 18. I prefer to show love through my actions more than my words.
- 19. I believe that real love often means telling someone the truth, even when it hurts.
- 20. I enjoy discussions and debates on difficult questions.
- 21. I intentionally share my mistakes with others when it will help them relate to the solutions I have found.
- 22. I prefer getting involved in discussions concerning a person's life before dealing with the details of their beliefs.
- 23. I tend to watch for spiritually strategic events to bring people to (such as Christian concerts, outreach events, seeker services).
- 24. When people are spiritually closed, I have found that my quiet demonstrations of Christian love sometimes make them more receptive.
- 25. A motto that would fit me is: "Make a difference or a mess, but do something."
- 26. I often get frustrated with people when they use weak arguments or poor logic.
- 27. People seem interested in hearing stories about things that have happened in my life.
- 28. I enjoy long talks with friends.
- 29. I am always looking for a match between the needs and interests of my friends and the various events, books, etc., that they would enjoy or benefit from.
- 30. I feel more comfortable physically assisting a person in the name of Christ than getting involved in religious discussions.
- 31. I sometimes get in trouble for lacking gentleness and sensitivity in the way I interact with others.
- 32. I like to get at the underlying reasons for opinions that people hold.
- 33. I am still amazed at how God brought me to faith in Him and I am motivated to tell people about it.
- 34. People generally consider me to be an interactive, sensitive, and caring kind of person.
- 35. A highlight of my week would be to take a guest with me to an appropriate church event.
- 36. I tend to be more practical and action-oriented than philosophical and idea-oriented.

Direct	#1	#7	#13	#19	#25	#31
Intellectual	#2	#8	#14	#20	#26	#32
Testimonial	#3	#9	#15	#21	#27	#33
Interpersonal	#4	#10	#16	#22	#28	#34
Invitational	#5	#11	#17	#23	#29	#35
Serving	#6	#12	#18	#24	#30	#36