

**Intro:** There exists in our circles a dreaded word. Like the Forbidden City of ancient China, it is almost felt by some to be the forbidden word, the word of fear and guilt. We do not speak of it, some say quietly. That word is “Evangelism”! (doesn’t that just make you shiver? )

Many people have few positive images of evangelism. The Day America told the Truth included a national survey ranking various professions for honesty/integrity.

TV evangelists were almost at the bottom, below lawyers, politicians, car sales & even prostitutes!

Of 73 only 2 lower: organized crime boss, and drug dealers.

Satan has manufactured a huge scheme of misunderstanding to defeat expansion of Kingdom of God.

Truth is: evangelism, or to put it in our terms, Life On Mission, takes numerous shapes according to your stations, and your style. These are the things I want talk about. Lets talk about your Stations: your places, environments.

**1. God puts me on mission in my own station!** (sounds like a no-brainer right?)

**A.** The push of a Life on Mission is simply to get my stations/or places in life to intersect or flow into each other. If Im a God-follower, I have stations where I’m in connection with God, and I also have stations where I’m in connection with the world that doesn’t recognize God.

For example, there are parties of religious ranks: pot-lucks, providence suppers, fellowship gatherings, church celebrations.

People chatting across coffee cups. The Pharisees has parties of

the religious ranks. They made sure they ate the right food, drank the right drinks, and invited the right people. Pause. Do you think anybody who was not a Pharisee was gonna go and ask if they could be at a Pharisee party?

Then there are parties of other ranks: tail-gate parties. Parties where people might drink the wrong drinks. Parties where the music might not exactly be your choice. Maybe held in a bare basement, with little groups scattered around the room, lots of smoke and lots & lots of alcohol where you really can't converse over the body-vibrating volume of the tunes, cool as they were.

Thing is, these two groups seldom cross paths! How will people be drawn from one to the other if they never mix? Think about it. Which party do you think Jesus would have gone to?

**B.** In Lk5:27-39 we can read about Matthew's party. Now what went through Matt's mind just hours, maybe moments after his wake-up call from God-in-sandals? (There was not lot time between v28 & 29). What might you expect Matthew to think now that he's a follower of Jesus?

"Ho man, I need some training! I can't talk to my friends about this life-changing Son of God! That would be evangelism and everyone knows that's scary stuff!"

or

"I need to meditate, learn do the "religious" things (you know, prayer, fasting, robes, candles)

or

“I better read some books first, maybe get a series of CD’s or podcasts, take a crash-course in the “E” word.!”

Apparently, Matthew didn’t hesitate a moment. He just had a party! His interaction with Jesus intersected his interaction with his other friends. Principle for Life on Mission? *Just start something in your place*, with your friends, and people who could be your friends.

v29 says “Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and “others” were eating with them.” Well that makes sense. Who does a taxman hang with? “Others” is Luke’s word for the people the Pharisees call “tax collectors & sinners” in verse 30. “Sinners” to them were gentiles, low social status people, people who watched the wrong kind of movies, or even people of low occupational status. The fellow at the restaurant who’s too loud. The machinist who lunches on the factory floor, not in the office lounge and repeatedly uses off-color words.

What does Matthew do? Is Matt wringing his hands? What are my options? I could bring my tax buddies to the temple for church. They will probably not be too keen on that yet. I know, I’ll bring my church life to my buddies. *Matthew mixes his stations*. He maybe doesn’t know how to give a gospel presentation. He maybe doesn’t know how explain total depravity or unconditional election. But that doesn’t mean he’s not an evangelist, a life on mission!

He just throws a *party* (his buddies love em) *with a purpose*. Gets on his cell phone to guys at office, then makes sure to have some

of his Christian friends ( in this case, “Christ” himself) there too. Who knows what conversations might take place? Lets mingle with a purpose. And notice in the text that the religious leaders are peering into backyard from outskirts of the tiki-torches. They complain that Matt & Jesus are not at the right party, with the religious crowd (30). They complain that Matt & Jesus not doing the religious things (33). They complain that they are having way too much fun. (33b). God is not against fun.

Some years ago a few of my praise team friends and I would go to the various bars where my guitar teachers band was playing. It wasn't exactly like praise team! But we were trying to be friends, and enjoy guitar music. Mixing our stations.

*Life on Mission starts with doing something you enjoy with someone who you know, who needs to intersect God's love and power.*

**C.** Lets look at some examples that you & I could try.

1) There are a lot of options of course. We could go to a Cubs game and hang a banner off the stands that says “John 3:16”. But irreligious folk will probably think John Somebody is getting a phone call at 3:16. They don't know that lingo. We could put up a big billboard on the side of the highway that says “Hell is Real”. But lets think a minute. As Tim Harlow reminds us in his book of this. How often have you heard of someone saying “Yeah, I saw a banner at a ball game so gave my heart to Jesus.” or “I saw a bumper sticker that said “In case of rapture, this vehicle will be empty.” so I gave my life to Jesus right away because I don't want to be around when there are driverless cars all over the

road.” We don’t hear that, do we? What we hear is “So-and-so invited me over and...” Or, my friend from work did this or that when we were having our first baby and...” See, people aren’t brought to Christ by their enemies. They are brought by their friends. And cold confrontation is never as effective as caring connection. Life on Mission is about relationships. We need to have relationships with people who need God. One beggar to another about where bread can be found.

2) What might be more effective? We could throw a Matthew Party: where we invite more than just our church friends. Where there can be low key contact between religious & irreligious people. Use a holiday for an excuse! Don’t have a Christmas party with just people from church!

- \* How about golf outings to strategically, & simply deepen friendships with unchurched people you already know or would like to know?

- \* How about a fishing trip where some of you are believers, and some are non-believers. I’m not suggesting that you get you non-believing friends out in the middle of the lake and launch into an explanation of the Gospel where he can't get away. Just fish, and be friends. That’s where it starts.

- \* How about baptism or profession of faith parties, where somewhere in the party you stand up and thank attenders, explain why this occasion is significant to you (your joy in God’s love, how you came to this point in spiritual life, etc.) It can sparks lot thinking & conversation!

\* How about everyday things: meals with a colleague, watching playoffs. Watch the Saints play on ESPN, and don't play "Oh When the Saints Come Marching In" in the background. How about running with a neighbor who likes running? Inviting the mom down the block to take her kids to the park with you and your kids. The List is as endless as the things you & your friends both do. Like Matthew, you don't need a make over, or meditation exercise. Just need to mix your stations.

If I'm a life on mission, I need stations/places in life that intersect with unbelieving friends! Not just unbelieving people, but unbelieving friends.

## **2. God sends me on mission with my own Style:**

Another misconception Satan uses to keep the church in the closet is the preconceived notions of how you have to *be* to do Life on Mission.

Granted, there are different gifts. We don't all have the same ones. And evangelism is a gift God gives. But know this: all the spiritual gifts are virtues to which every Christian aspires. So don't tell yourself you're not a Life on Mission. Or you're not an evangelist. (I asked permission to share this) A friend told me the other day that she was delivering Meals on Wheels when one little ol' gal, Georgia, who has become special to her and who is ailing, started talking about how long the doctors said she had to live. Here's a Christian whose life is intersecting with people in other stations. Her comments in the group of us talking were about how she could bring up assurance of salvation, and share her hope

with this lady. I'm like, "Whoa, what a cool evangelistic opportunity!" And she said, "Oh, I'm no evangelist." To which I replied, "Oh but you are! You certainly are." It's that simple folks. She's doing it. That's life on mission right there!

So, since the Holy Spirit knows what he's doing when he uniquely gifted and shaped you, use your own style to reach out to others, that is, to be a Life on Mission. The early Christian Church was filled with different kinds of people all of whom made impact in their own ways.

A simple approach to making connections in a Life on Mission is what I'll call the Experiential approach. Any and every one here can make connections with friends with this style. Remember, relationship comes first. Friendship first. And then, when you "Share" or talk about your faith, you simply tell what you've experienced.

The Blind man of John 9 after he was healed by Jesus is a good example of the experiential approach.: "Look, all I can tell you is I was blind, and now see." What has Jesus done for you? Share it. In the Old Testament, the Assyrian general Naaman's slave girl told him: "There's a prophet in Israel who can heal your leprosy." Cut to the final chapter; Naaman becomes a God-follower.

The Samaritan woman in John 4 who talks with Jesus at a water well. She went home and told her neighbors: "Come see man who told me all about myself".

So you see? When we mix our stations and come into contact with people who need God we simply share our experience of

God. An answered prayer is a great place to start. What have you experienced of God? Keep a list. Share that.

**Conclusion:** Jesus had a reputation among the Pharisees of his day.

Matthew 11:18-19 says, “they said of him, “He’s a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.”

You don’t get a reputation with some kind of pattern. So Jesus pattern was to seek out lost people, to hang out with them. To eat with them. It’s not difficult is it? You can have lunch with people and be a friend! You can work out at a gym and befriend people who don’t know God. Seriously. It’s not about making people projects. It’s not about getting them to change their clothing style or hair. That’s what a lot of people think about Christians: that they are out to condemn people for doing and thinking the wrong things. Barna Research Group found that 87% of people outside the church between the ages of 18 and 35 think the church is judgmental. How have they gotten this idea? Perhaps for too long church people have used the combat approach to mission. Jesus didn’t use the combat approach primarily did he. Jesus weapon of choice was the hand of friendship. Not the hand of accusation, or the hand of judgment. Think of the woman caught in the act of adultery in John 8. Where did Jesus start with her? “I don’t condemn you. Go and leave your life of sin.”

And listen friends, to love people and be their friends is a legitimate goal in itself whether or not they every become a follower of Christ. Of course we want them to enter into God’s Kingdom, his love, his power

Connect: Friendship First  
Luke5:27-39

over sins, his eternal friendship. But our acts of love are our imitation of God too, and they bring him honor and please his heart. We live life on mission to obey the 2 greatest commandments: Love Dad, and take care of his kids. Not if they straighten up. Not if they never break rules. Not if they look and smell just like us. Just love God, and love your neighbor too.