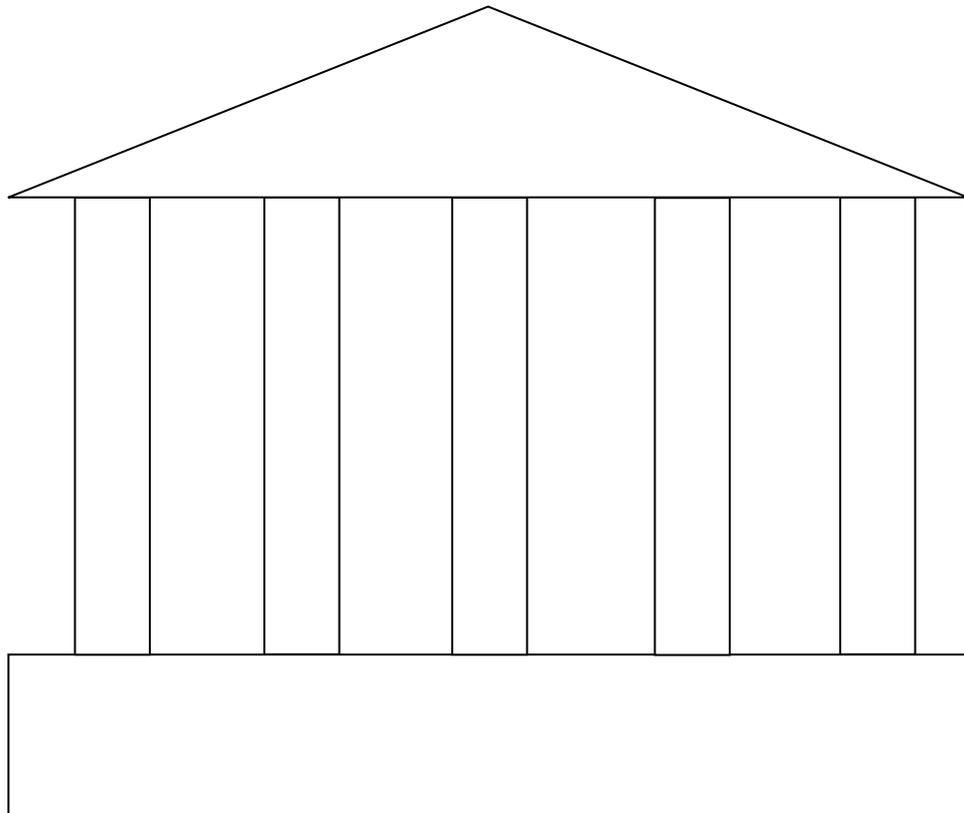


Lesson 2: Principles of Evangelism

Introduction

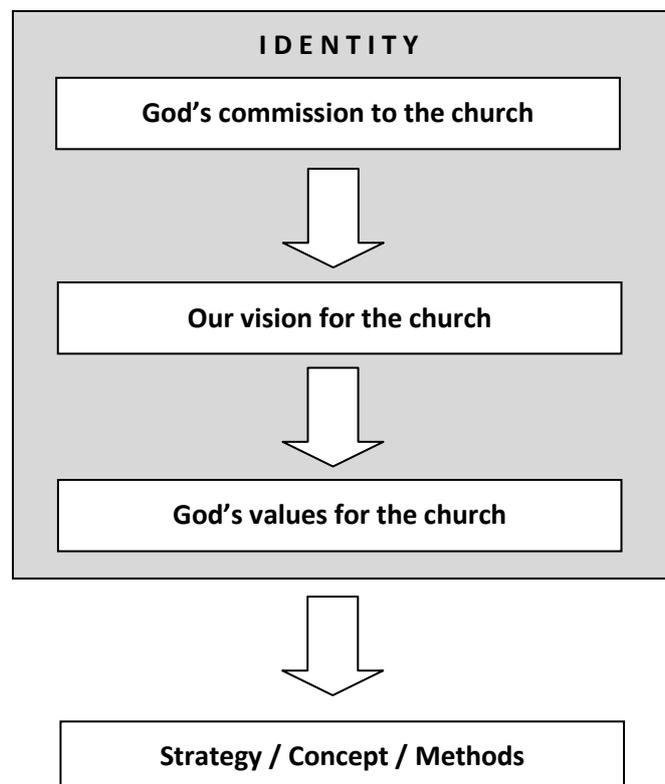
In our last lesson, we discovered that our identity determines, more than anything else, the success of our mission work. Who we *are* is so much more important than what we *do*. Our identity is made up of the commission that God gave to the church, the vision of the church that derives from that commission, and the biblical values of the church that reflect that character of the church. Please write in the temple below the vision and the values that we discovered in the last lesson!



Please write down in your own words what significance this identity has for our mission.

God's commission to the church, the vision of the church, and its values are inseparable. The church's vision is derived from its commission and the commission cannot be fulfilled unless the members, as a group and as individuals, live out biblical values.

When biblical vision and values are clear, we are better able to determine how we can reach people for Jesus. Sometimes we attempt to make plans for strategies, concepts, and methods without having laid this important foundation. The fact is that if we do not know our own identity, our strategies, concepts, and methods will not bear fruit. In short, our outreach practices must grow out of God's commission and biblical values.



How can we reach people with the gospel in this day and age? Jesus himself is our best example. In His efforts to reach people with the love of God He worked with a concept. Ellen White explains it this way:

Quote #1

“The great Teacher laid plans for His work. Study these plans.” *(Evangelism, p. 53)*

Jesus' efforts to reach out to people with the message of salvation were not purposeless, haphazard actions. When we study the methods Jesus used we see that He followed definite principles in His work. Let's discover these principles!



Which principles come to your mind when you consider how Jesus reached out to the people?

Principles and Methods

Different cultures and situations require different methods. However, the principles behind those methods remain the same for every culture we might find ourselves in because the human heart is the same everywhere. Everyone wants to be loved, accepted, and esteemed. The problem, sin and all of its consequences, is the same everywhere. Likewise, God's solution is the same irrespective of all cultural differences, namely salvation through Jesus Christ. When we look at how Jesus himself reached people with the gospel, we discover that the principles he followed are universally valid. In the lessons of module 3 we will uncover these principles step by step.

Mission and agriculture

We can discover one important principle by simply looking at how Jesus taught. For example, he repeatedly associated mission to agriculture. Many of His parables paint a picture of the seed (God's word) being sown in the hearts of the people. As Jesus spoke with the woman at Jacobs well and led her to believe, she ran into the city and told everyone about Jesus. The disciples came back and were surprised that Jesus had even spoken to a Samaritan woman. Where Jesus saw a large harvest they saw only a desert. What was Jesus' answer to them?



John 4:35-38: _____

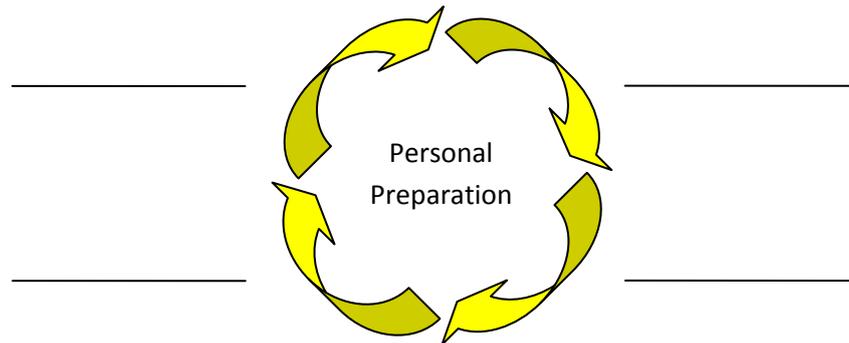
Paul knew this comparison and used it himself to describe his own mission work. Read the following text.



1. Corinthians 3:6-9: _____

The Cycle of Evangelism

The people understood the association with agriculture well. They knew that a farmer first prepared the ground, planted the seed, and then cared for the plant. These were all necessary steps before a harvest could be expected. After the harvest, the farmer always kept some of the seed to plant the next season. These four stages also apply to our mission. Please fill in the four stages of evangelism (planting, cultivating, harvesting, preserving) in the diagram below. Begin with the top right side:



We can learn a lot from the Bible's analogy of agriculture and mission work. These teachings are fundamental and indispensable to successful mission work. Let's take a closer look at these principles.

Lesson #1 **God has established firm laws for the work of evangelism.**

There are natural laws which God has placed in nature, when understood and followed they provide the farmer with a rich harvest. If he does not follow them then his harvest will be disappointing. When it comes to winning souls for Jesus, there are also laws and principles, which when they are observed and followed bring people to the point that they must decide whether or not they will follow Jesus.

Lesson #2 **Evangelism is not an event; it is a constant process.**

Many church members see evangelisation as an outreach event or a series of meetings. But just like the farmer constantly working through the cycle of planting, cultivating, harvesting, and preserving, true mission work is a continual process. It is a lifestyle, for both the church as a group and its individual members.

Lesson #3 **Those who want to harvest must sow and cultivate.**

A farmer would never leave his fields to themselves and expect to have a rich harvest. But, some churches do exactly that. They hold large evangelistic meetings without having built personal relationships with the people, preparing them for God's word. They depend on large advertising campaigns to bring the people to the meeting and then when no one comes they complain in frustration that public evangelism does not work today. In reality they have disregarded the principles of sowing and harvesting and are trying to harvest where they have not sown.

If we want to see people become followers of Jesus, we must first sow the word of

God. Then we have to cultivate our relationship with them and support them in their spiritual growth. The main focus must be on preparing people.

Lesson #4 We can expect a rich harvest after we have sown and cultivated.

A farmer that sows the seed wants to experience a harvest. But many think today, "All we have to do is to sow the seed and God will take care of the harvest. In heaven we will see what our work has brought forth." Of course God takes care of the harvest. The conversion of a soul is always the work of the Holy Spirit. However, the Holy Spirit wants to use us to bring in the harvest. It is true that we will experience some surprises when we get to heaven and God shows us the outworking of our simple and weak attempts at soul winning. But God wants us to see the results of our work *now* – people who have given their hearts to Him. He doesn't want us to have to wait until heaven to see if our work has brought forth any fruit. Jesus says: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you." (John 15:16) When we follow God's principles we can expect that people will make the decision to follow Christ.

Lesson #5 Preserving the harvest is important to staying alive

In Bible times a farmer had to keep a portion of the harvest as seed for the next season. If we make an analogy with evangelism, we see that our job is not just to bring people into the church but to make sure that they stay in the church by helping them to grow in faith and by cultivating relationships with them that encourage them to go out and tell others about Jesus. The lessons about discipleship groups cover this important topic in detail.

Lesson #6 Your own personal preparation is central to every success in evangelism.

A farmer has to prepare well for his work if he is going to be successful. In evangelism, personal preparation is indispensable. In the end, we can only lead people to Jesus if we ourselves are enthusiastic about Him. The best methods cannot work when we ourselves are not filled with the Holy Spirit. We covered this foundation in modules 1 and 2 in great detail.

Lesson #7 We have to understand where people are in their spiritual lives.

A farmer has different methods of sowing, cultivating, harvesting, and preserving. A young plant that has just sprung up out of the soil needs a different kind of handling than one that is just about to be harvested. It is the same with people. We have to know where the people are in their spiritual lives in order to know how we should relate to them. The four stages of evangelism are also very practical for defining where people are in their spiritual growth. Every person moves through these four stages as he gets to know and lives with Jesus.

- There are people that still need to have the seed sown in their hearts. An example of this is the city of Decapolis, where they told Jesus to go away and He sent the healed man back to them to tell them what He had done for him. (Mark 5:1-20)
- Then there are people who already have an interest in God and the Bible but still haven't made a commitment to follow Christ. They still need some time.

Nicodemus, who came to Jesus with his questions, is an example of a person in this stage. Jesus answered his questions but he didn't push him to make a decision at that time because He knew that he wasn't ready. (John 3:1-21)

- There are others whose faith has grown so much that they are ripe for the harvest. The disciples who Jesus called to leave everything and follow him are a good example of people in this stage. Also the people who listened to Peter's sermon at Pentecost belong in this category. (Acts 2:37,38)
- And then there are those who have been baptised and need to be integrated into the church. This was Jesus' commission to Peter when he said to him, "Feed my lambs". (John 21:15)

The people who we come in contact with all fall into one of these four stages. If we want to win souls for Christ, we must be able to discern where people are in their spiritual development so that we can help them move on to the next step.



Methods and Programme

A church that wants to grow needs to have methods and programs defined to sow, cultivate, harvest, and preserve. For each stage we need different methods to awaken people's interest so that we can help them to move on to the next step. These programs and methods need to be linked to the needs of the people, so that spiritual impulses are awakened and the seed of God's word can be planted, take root, and grow strong.

After the seed has been sown, the spiritual interest must be cultivated. Here we have fewer methods because growth in this stage happens only as God's word is closely studied and applied. As individuals come to the point of decision for Jesus and then for baptism, they intensify their interest in God's word and make these important decisions based on it.

The following table provides an overview of the methods and programmes that can be used.

How can we sow, cultivate, harvest, and preserve?	Sowing	Cultivating	Harvesting	Preserving
	Friendship Small groups Marriage and family seminars Cooking schools Social help Open house Neighbourhood Festivals Health seminars All Power Seminar Forgiveness Seminar Door Cards Surveys Children and Youth programs Literature and Media Door to Door ...	Friendship Small groups Personal Bible Studies Evangelistic meetings Special Church services Literature and Media ...	Friendship Small groups Personal Bible Studies Evangelistic meetings ...	Friendship Small groups Personal Bible Studies Discipleship groups Training Small groups Church service Evangelisation Give Responsibility ...

This table clearly shows the special importance of friendship evangelisation, small groups, and personal bible studies. It all boils down to this: when church members pray and work for their friends' salvation by caring for them, inviting them to small groups, and giving them personal bible studies the church will grow. If the members do not do all of this the church will not and cannot grow.

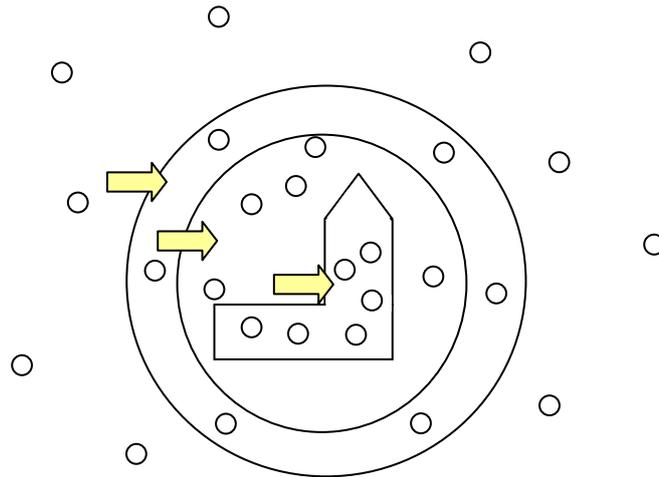
In her writings, Ellen White made clear the importance and meaning of personal evangelism.

Quote #2

“One soul is of infinite value; for Calvary speaks its worth. One soul, won to the truth, will be instrumental in winning others, and there will be an ever-increasing result of blessing and salvation. Your work may accomplish more real good than the more extensive meetings, if they lack in personal effort. When both are combined, with the blessing of God, a more perfect and thorough work may be wrought; but if we can have but one part done, let it be the individual labor of opening the Scriptures in households, making personal appeals, and talking familiarly with the members of the family, not about things of little importance, but of the great

themes of redemption. Let them see that your heart is burdened for the salvation of souls." (*Christian Service*, p. 121)

Personal evangelism through friendship, small groups, and personal Bible studies is the foundation for every mission strategy. Personal evangelism can stand-alone. Whereas public evangelism without personal evangelism will usually not bring good results. Ideally, both will work hand in hand but if only one can be done it is better to concentrate on personal evangelism. The following diagram shows this in relationship.



Explanation

- The members of the church are represented by the small circles in the church.
- In the first big circle the small circles represent people who regularly get personal bible studies or attend a small group.
- The second big circle represents people who have contact with the church but are not receiving personal bible studies. These are people who are acquainted with the church through friendship, seminars, etc.
- The small circles outside of the larger circles represent people who have not had any contact with the church at all.

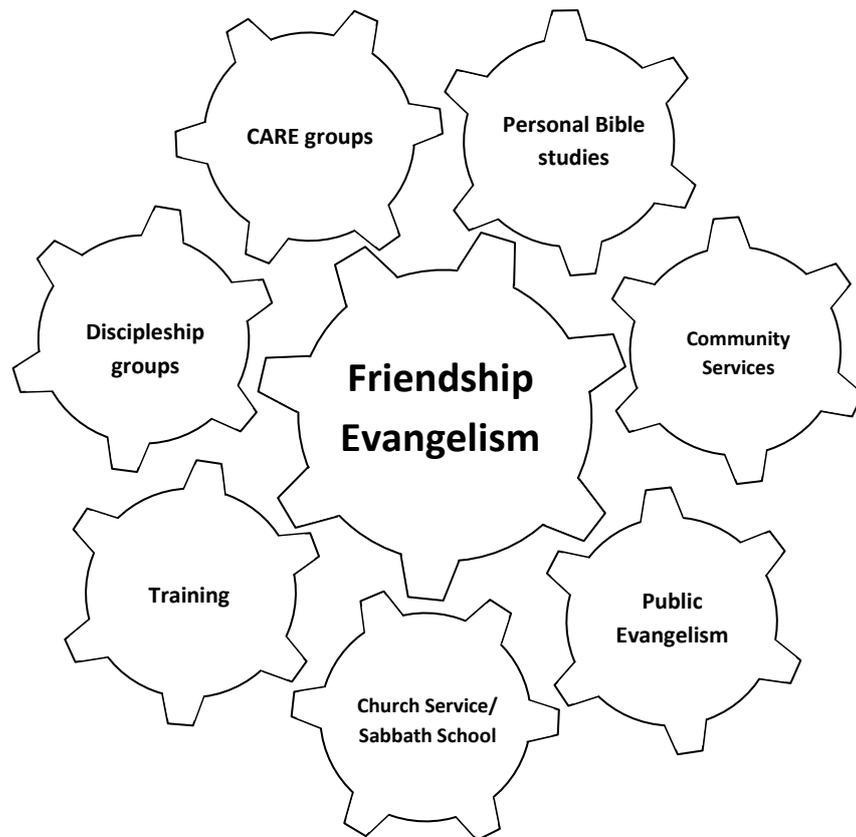
Evangelism starts by bringing as many people as possible into the circles (i.e., to get in personal contact with them in many different ways.) The next step is to invite them to join a small group and/or have personal Bible studies. A church where the members do that will grow. Vice versa, a church where this is not the case will not grow.

The various methods and programs are not independent from one another. It is important that the individual elements are brought together in a harmonic overall plan. Ellen White describes this very clearly in the books *Evangelism*, *Christian Service*, and *Gospel Workers*.

Ellen White's suggestions for this integrated mission concept are shown in the next diagram.

This mission concept looks like a lot of work; In reality it is a way to effectively work for Jesus without burning out and neglecting your family. The whole plan can begin with a small group of people who have decided to accept God's commission as their vision and are driven by God's values for the church.

**Integrated
mission
concept**



This mission concept applies the principles that Jesus showed us for successful evangelisation. In Module 3 we will take a thorough look at these individual elements. Look forward to exciting discoveries!

