



SHARING JESUS — NOT AN ADDED EXTRA

Andy Frost

IT'S EASY TO GET BUSY WITH URGENT ACTIVITIES AND LOSE FOCUS ON OUR MOST IMPORTANT CALLING. ANDY FROST, DIRECTOR OF SHARE JESUS INTERNATIONAL, OFFERS ADVICE ON HOW TO AVOID THIS COMMON PITFALL.

It has become known as the Eisenhower Matrix after the President's speech in which he explained, 'I have two kinds of problems: the urgent and the important. The urgent {problems} are not important, and the important are never urgent.'

It seems that most of our churches believe that sharing Jesus is important, but have a massive to-do-list of urgent things; these range from planning weekly worship to raising money and from updating the church website to finalising the coffee rota. So, evangelism can often get side-lined as important but not urgent. Sharing Jesus can become a yearly event when the drawbridge is lowered, and we host a community fun day or start an Alpha course, rather than exercising the driving force behind all that we do. Still, I believe we need to be reminded of the urgency of sharing the Gospel and here are three myths that I think will help us do that!

MYTH 1: OUR CHURCH HAS A DIFFERENT FOCUS

I regularly come across churches that have a specific focus. For example, a church focused on caring for the needs of the community that is wary of being seen as proselytising, or a church focused on personal discipleship that is known for its Biblical teaching.

I love the fact that each church has a unique flavour brought about by its calling, its leadership, its members and its specific context. However, as we celebrate the different focus that each church has, we need to be

reminded that evangelism is integral to everything else. If we truly love people in our community and want to serve their needs, then Jesus is the only answer to their spiritual searching. If we truly want to be good at discipleship, then well-disciplined people will go on to make disciples as they live out and share their faith.

MYTH 2: OUR CHURCH HAS PROFESSIONALS

I remember preaching at one church about the role each of us has in sharing our faith. After the meeting, a very cross lady complained to me that this was not her role as she was not 'an evangelist'.

Although this kind of reaction might be rare, I think there is sometimes an undercurrent of belief that evangelism is best left to the professionals. In part, I think this is because we have not made the distinction between evangelists (those with a specific call to bring people to Christ) and evangelism (the generic call for all of us to share Jesus). To enable our congregations to share their faith better, we need to encourage them to be like Jesus and tool them up with the language to share Jesus well. Too often we have failed to model how each of us will share our faith differently. We don't all need to have the humour of J John, the confidence of Joyce Meyer or the statesmanship of Billy Graham. Instead, we need each member of the congregation to discover how to share their story well.

By regularly creating space to share people's experiences of sharing Jesus, we model different approaches and take the fear out of evangelism as it more naturally becomes who we are.



Our inspiration is Jesus. Whoever came to him, whenever and wherever the location, he shared grace and truth.



MYTH 3: OUR CHURCH HAS TO GROW

There is a danger that we live compartmentalised lives, where our faith activities are separate from other aspects of our lives – our work and our social lives. This is exacerbated by the fact that more people than ever either work in one area but attend church in another, or commute several miles to a Sunday congregation. Sometimes we can live under the idea that sharing Jesus has to build our local church. Therefore, if the people we encounter during the week live too far away, then we have a great excuse to do nothing. Or if we can't see how the young person on the bus could ever fit into our church that has no youth work, then we don't have to share Christ.

Instead, we need a bigger vision of the Church. We need to help our congregations discover that we may be a God-incident in someone else's faith story. Joining the Church is essential but joining our church is not.

Let's make the important urgent. Let's make faith-sharing central to all we do. Let's equip our congregations better. And let's capture a bigger vision of church than merely our Sunday mornings. Our inspiration is Jesus. Whoever came to him, whenever and wherever the

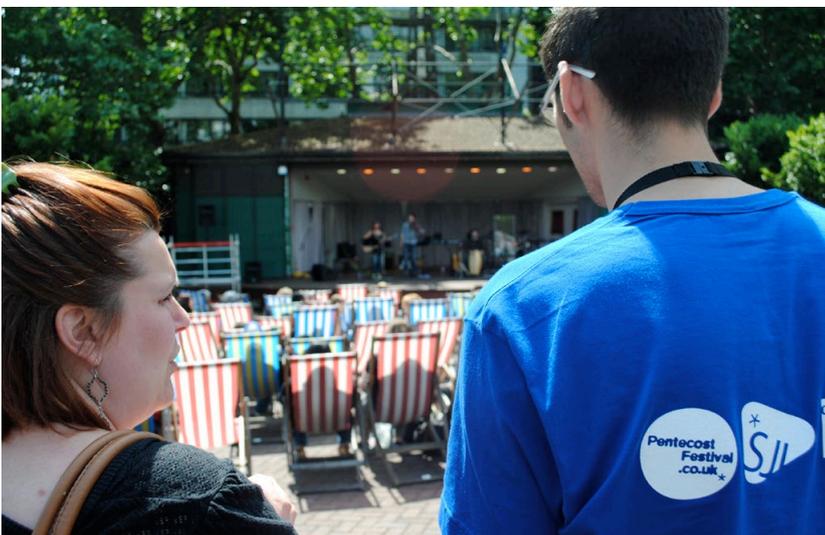
location, he shared grace and truth – from the religious elite through to the social outcast. Even the interruptions were opportunities. Let's do likewise...

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Note from the editor: Thanks to the Evangelical Alliance for permission to use this article, which was originally published at: greatcommission.co.uk – an online evangelism hub bringing you stories that inspire, resources to equip, articles that encourage, and prayer tools to empower.



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QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION / GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What focus or activities take priority in our church?
2. What could our church do to prioritise evangelism?
3. What stops us from sharing our faith in our personal lives?
4. Who could we share our story with?
5. Do we welcome unexpected conversations about our faith? How could we turn 'interruptions' into 'opportunities'?