

I am the director of Campus Outreach here in DC which means in part that evangelism is my job. I love evangelism. I have thought about it a lot, done it some, and watched a few people do it really well. And what I've learned is that evangelism is both a matter of *obedience* and a matter of *wisdom*. Listen to Colossians 4:5-6 : "Walk in wisdom towards 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." These next two sessions will basically be considering these two verses. I love Proverbs 11:30 = "The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and whoever captures souls is *wise*." Good evangelists are *wise*.

What I want to focus on first is a trend I see among wise evangelists. **Wise evangelists position themselves for impact. Wise evangelists don't *just* value proclamation, they value positioning.** In my experience, a wise evangelist doesn't *just* think "how many people can I share the gospel with this year" but *also* thinks "how many people would trust me enough to call me when God starts to work in their life and they want answers?" It's a useful question to ask yourself: are there any non-Xians that really trust me? (Trust Inventory) My guess is that for *most* of you, you really trusted the person who led you to Jesus. Maybe it was a parent, or close friend. It wasn't just that their message was compelling, but their manner of life.

So. Let's think about some practical ways we can position yourself as a trusted spiritual influence in another's life. I'd like to encourage you to think about positioning yourself in two ways: **spatially** and **relationally**.

So first, **spatially**. The obvious principle is that to evangelize people effectively you have to be physically approximate to them! Impact (both positive & negative) comes with **familiarity**.

Positioning is all about becoming more familiar to non-Christians. So what should you do to position yourself **spatially**? Here are some suggestions. And they all start with H.

### 1. Hospitality

I think of hospitality as generously sharing your resources (home, time) to create warm and familial contexts for conversation and friendship. Hospitality is really important in the Bible. Read Romans 12, 1 Timothy 3, or 1 Peter 4. Hospitality is something we extend to both other members and to non-Christians. I love having Donna and Kyle Burke live under me. They've decided that tuesday nights are open tables. Howard students and friends of their's are welcome to come every Tuesday for Spaghetti and Meatballs. I love hearing the roars of laughter every Tuesday night down below us. Donna told me that one guy brought his laundry over on Tuesday. THAT is hospitality! Hospitality is an evangelistic force to be reckoned with. It's so effective because it shows off the warmth and love of Christ. And it builds trust. And with trust often comes more influence. You can do this in your home. You can do it a work by sharing your lunch break or coffee breaks. So many people eat lunch by themselves! Give yourself to hospitality. And keep going. Do it consistently over a long period of time.

### 2. Hobbies

If you want to get around more non-Christians, do things non-Christians do. Join a gym. Join a book club. Join a running group for moms in your neighborhood. Join your neighborhood council. Hobbies are good! They are good for us AND they are great for meeting non-Christians. To parents, this is one blessing of kids. Things like soccer teams, ballet classes, swim team, debate team get you in close proximity with other parents. Two of the most fruitful evangelistic relationships in my wife's life right now are Capitol Hill moms who have their daughters in weekly ballet classes with my 4 year old Emma. Every thursday night, they see

each other. And Steph intentionally stays after to spend time with these women and to let the girls play together. Hobbies are helpful because they make possible that every-week familiarity.

### 3. Habits

But maybe you don't have time or money for another hobby. What about doing normal life habits with some gospel intentionality? Bobby Jamieson shared the other night with the elders how he has decided to just go to the same restaurant on Barracks Row when he has lunch appointments. He has built a great relationship with a waiter there and has gotten to share the gospel with him. There is familiarity there because of repeated interactions. I've been seeing Simo for 7 years now. Simo cuts my hair and he is a Muslim from Morocco. We are legitimate friends now. And as our relationship has grown I've gotten to talk about Christ often with him. Go to the same grocery store and see the same clerk. I think about Donald at Whole Foods. When I go I make sure to stand in his line, even if it is longer, to just say hey again. I've seen moms go to the same parks at the same times weekly to meet the same people. These kind of habits position me to be a spiritual influence someday in their life.

Position yourself by practicing hospitality, picking up some hobbies, and doing personal and family habits with intentionality.

**Position yourself relationally.** That is don't just try to be physically in the same place as non-Christians, try to have regularly positive interactions with those you come in contact with. Seek to build trust. 6 ways (of many) I do this:

#### 1. Get interested in the things they are interested in

I am a parent of two girls. And I want to have significant conversations with my girls about God and the gospel and eternity. Those things really matter to me. And they kind of matter to my girls. But you know what really matters to my girls? Princesses, Frosty the Snowman, hide and seek, doggies, and the color pink. Here's what I am learning. If I get interested in what they are interested in now, later, when they can understand more, they will probably get interested in what I am interested in. Getting interested is one way we love people. Another way to say it — as a general rule I like to *invest then invite*, and not the other way around. You can always invite someone to come to Church with you. But I have not personally been that successful. As a general rule, I like to go to their stuff before I ask them to come to my stuff. I try to be interested in their stuff before expecting them to be interested in my stuff.

In the past year I have gotten interested in electronic music, Luther Vandross, Moroccan food, the Cleveland Browns and Armenian politics. Why? Well because Will, a non-Christian student at GW loves electronic music. Donald, at Whole Foods is always signing Luther Vandross. Simo, the guy who cuts my hair, loves talking about growing up in Morocco. David, the exterminator who comes to my house to help us get rid of the mice problem in our house, loves the Browns. Alex, the Georgetown student who's family is Armenian and is passionate helping his people. I got interested in those things so that I could talk about those things. I got interested in those things out of love. I got interested in their things so that maybe someday they might be interested in my things.

#### 2. Plant the flag early

Plant the flag early. Wisdom in evangelism is **not** looking for the right time to tell someone you're a Christian. The time to do **that** is early and often. It's the most important thing about us and the best news in the universe after all! No, wisdom is what you do with their response. We need to tell people we are Christians. Early on in your interactions at work, at the grocery

store, at the gym, plant the Christian flag early. Sometimes you will get to share the whole gospel. Great! That is the goal. But most of the times in my experience the big win in those first interactions is just clearly identifying as a Christian. Eric Beach shared with me recently that a co-worker asked him what he does in his free time. He said... "Church!" That's all he said. He planted the flag. But later that co-worker started asking some questions about church, and it led to good gospel conversations. Say you're a Christian as soon as it would be normal to do so.

### 3. Smile

I'm not talking here about faking a smile. Do you genuinely smile when you see someone you care about? Smiles go a long way. This isn't just human psychology stuff. Listen to Proverbs 15:13 - "A glad heart makes a cheerful face" or Proverbs 15:30 - "A cheerful look brings joy to the heart." Do you want your presence to be positive in a non-Christian's life? Smile!

### 4. Honest commendation

Here is a principle to stand out in your relationships. Look for ways to honestly and sincerely commend non-Christians. Now... some of you might hear this and mean I am talking about flattery. Not at all. When I read the Bible I see a red light on flattery. Don't go there. It's not good for you or for them. I see a yellow light on criticism. Sometimes it is good to criticize, but we should be slow to criticize. But I see a green light on encouragement. What I am talking about is looking for ways to point out to people the evidences that they have been made to reflect God's image. I remember having lunch with Mark Dever recently and we were out a restaurant where there were some moms with kids at the table next to us. He went out of his way and just said — thank you for your work as a mom. I'm a Pastor and parent myself and see all the ways mothers are a blessing to their children. That was all. That's a wise evangelist. That's not the gospel. But that is positioning yourself for impact. Because here is my experience. The people I criticize the most don't call me when they are down. The people I honestly commend do. Look for ways to commend people made in the image of God for the praiseworthy things about them.

### 5. Merge your worlds

This one might be the most important of all of them. We will probably hit on it some of the rest of the day. Merge your worlds. Think through how you can merge your Christian world with your non-Christian world. Think creatively about if there any ways your friends could become friends with their friends. This really matters. Think about your own faith. Your faith is reinforced and strengthened every Sunday when you come together with other Christians. Isolation is never good for a Christian. That's because when I get together with 1000 other Christians I am reminded not just of the truth of the gospel but of the plausibility and relevancy of the gospel to my life. Let's think about this in evangelism. If somebody comes up and tells you... a UFO landed in my backyard! Who in here would believe that guy? Maybe 1 or 2. It's implausible. But if 25 people kept telling you that a UFO landed in your backyard. Would you believe them? Maybe? Now, our gospel is far more rational than a UFO landing in a yard. But to a non-Christian it's not that different. We believe a dead guy rose from the dead! See, when your friends become their friends, they see that more people than just you believe this stuff. They see the warmth and the love of the Christian community. They see the relevancy and beauty of Christianity. So try to Merge Your Worlds.

Wise evangelists should seek to position ourselves spatially and relationally in the lives of non-Christians. Let's pray.