

TARGETING YOUR COMMUNITY FOR EVANGELISM
Purpose Driven Church Conference
Rick Warren

“Jesus called out, ‘Come along with Me and I will show you how to fish for the souls of men.’” Matt. 4:19 (LB)

JESUS’ STRATEGY OF FISHING FOR MEN

Se Matt. 10 & Luke 10

I. KNOW WHAT YOU ARE _____

You must identify who you are trying to reach.

Jesus had a clear evangelistic target:

“I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel.” Matt. 15:24

Paul had a clear evangelistic target:

“I was entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the Gentiles, just as Peter had been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Jews.” Gal 2:7

Jesus gave the disciples a clear evangelistic target:

“Don’t go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel.” Matt. 10:5-6

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HOW TO DEFINE YOUR TARGET

A. DEFINE YOUR TARGET *GEOGRAPHICALLY*

ASK: How many people live in this area?

1. On a map of your area draw 3 circles represent 1, 3 and 5 miles around your church.
2. Figure the number of people who live within the average trip time.
3. Figure at least 50% of that population is unchurched.

B. DEFINE YOUR TARGET *DEMOGRAPHICALLY*

ASK: What kind of people live in this area?

Discover

- Age Breakdown – How many in each age group?
- Marital Breakdown – How many singles/married?
- Income Breakdown – What do they earn?
- Occupational Breakdown – Where do they work? Blue/white collar?

Where To Get Information

1. U. S. Census – Library
2. County/City Planning Department
3. Newspaper offices
4. Chamber of Commerce
5. United Way
6. Builders/realtors/utilities

C. DEFINE YOUR TARGET *CULTURALLY*

ASK: What are their values, interests and fears?

“psychographics”: mindset and lifestyle

Best Source: Personal survey

D. DEFINE YOUR TARGET *SPIRITUALLY*

ASK: What do they already know about the gospel?

Determine their religious background.

Fact: All unchurched are not alike!

Now Personalize Your Target!

Develop a profile of your typical unchurched resident – “Saddleback Sam”

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“SADDLEBACK SAM” - OUR TARGET
THE LIKELY MR. SOUTH ORANGE COUNTY

- He is well educated.
- He thinks he is enjoying life more now than he did five years ago.
- He likes his job.
- He is self-satisfied, even smug, about his station in life.
- He likes where he lives.
- Health and fitness are high priorities for himself and family.
- He'd rather be in a large group than a small one.
- He prefers the casual and informal over the formal
- He is skeptical of “organized” religion
- He is overextended in both time and money.

Who is the target of your church?

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II. LEARN TO _____

“Jesus knew what they were thinking...”

Matt. 9:4, 12:25; Mark 2:8; Luke 5:22, 9:47, 11:17

*“I am sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, **be as wise as serpents** and as harmless as doves.”* Matt. 10:16

“Be wise in the way you act toward those who are not believers...” Col. 4:5 (GN)

The problem: The longer I am a believer, _____ I think like an unbeliever.

“Resistance” is often just poor communication.

How to discover the “mindset” of unbelievers:

If you don't ask the *right questions*, you won't get the *right answers*.

If you don't get the right answers, you won't develop the *right strategy*.

If you don't develop the right strategy, you won't get the *right results*.

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HOW SADDLEBACK BEGAN: A “PERSONAL OPINION POLL”

(Five questions to ask)

1. Are you currently active in a local church?
2. What do you feel is the greatest need in this area?
3. Why do you think most people don't attend church?
4. If you were looking for a church, what kind of things would you look for?
5. What advise would you give me? How can I help you?

THE FOUR GREATEST COMPLAINTS IN OUR AREA

1. Sermons are boring and irrelevant.
2. Members are unfriendly to visitors.
3. Too much emphasis on money.
4. Poor childcare.

Our conclusion: most unchurched people are not atheists.

They're just _____

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SADDLEBACK'S FIRST LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY

March 20, 1980

Hi Neighbor!

AT LAST!

A NEW CHURCH FOR THOSE WHO HAVE GIVEN UPON TRADITIONAL CHURCH SERVICES!

Let's face it... many people aren't active in church these days.

WHY ?

Too often

- the sermons are boring and don't relate to daily living
- many churches seem more interested in your wallet than in you
- members are unfriendly to visitors
- you wonder about the quality of the nursery care for your little ones

Do you think attending church should be enjoyable?

WELL WE'VE GOT GOOD NEWS FOR YOU!

SADDLEBACK VALLEY COMMUNITY CHURCH is a new church designed to meet your needs in the 1980's. We're a group of friendly, happy people who have discovered the joy of the Christian lifestyle.

At Saddleback Valley Community Church you

- meet new friends and get to know your neighbors
- enjoy exciting music with a contemporary flavor
- hear positive, practical messages which uplift you each week
- trust your children to the care of dedicated nursery workers

WHY NOT GET A LIFT INSTEAD OF A LETDOWN THIS SUNDAY?

I invite you to be my special guest at our first public celebration service **EASTER SUNDAY**, April 6, at 11:00 a.m. We are currently meeting in the Laguna Hills High School Theater. If you don't have a church home, give us a try! **DISCOVER THE DIFFERENCE!**

Sincerely,

Rick Warren, Pastor

P.S. If you don't own a Bible, we'd like to give you a free New Testament. Just return the enclosed reply card.

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III. GO WHERE THE FISH _____

Focus on the most receptive audience in your area.

*“If a home or town refuses to welcome you or listen to you, **leave that place** and shake the dust off your feet.”* Matt. 10:14 (NCV)

Jesus told an unbeliever *“You are **not far** from the Kingdom of God.”* Mark 12:34

- Growing churches focus on *reaching* _____
- Non-growing churches focus on *re-enlisting* _____

Who are the most receptive people?

- Those
- Those

IV. CATCH FISH ON _____

Let your target determine your approach

*“When you enter a town and are welcomed, **eat what is set before you.**”* Luke 10:8

Paul’s Evangelism Strategy:

“... To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews... In the same way, when with the Gentiles, I became like a Gentile, in order to win the Gentiles. I have become all things to all men, that I may save some of them by any means possible.” 1 Cor. 9:20-22 (GN)

*“Whatever a person is like, I try to **find common ground** with him so that he will let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him”* 1 Cor. 9:22 (LB)

Jesus Standard Approach:

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V. USE _____

Offer people choices.

“Troutline Fishing”: the more hooks you use, _____

“*I become all things to all men so that I may save some of them by all means possible.*”
1 Cor. 9:22 (GN)

We live in a world full of choices!
TV – Supermarkets – Fast Food – Magazines

“Saturation Evangelism”:

Using every available *means*

To reach every available *person*

At every available *time*.

Why We Usually Fish With Only One Hook

The wrong question: How much will it _____?

The right question: Who will it _____?

FINANCING EVANGELISM IN YOUR CHURCH

1. Money spent on evangelism is never an “expense.”

It is _____

2. Churches never really have “money problems”

They have _____

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3. Why you spend “nickels and dimes” on evangelism, you get

“nickel and dime” _____

4. Hudson Taylor: “God’s word done God’s way will not lack

VI. FISH FOR THE KIND OF FISH _____

Go after those you are most likely to reach.

1 question to determine your target

What kind of people _____?

Facts:

- You can best _____ people that you _____ to!
- You attract what you _____ not what you _____.

Options when your church doesn’t match the community:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

How To Get Started in Targeting Your Own Community

Probe: Learn all you can about your area

Partition: Divide your area into segments

Prioritize: Choose which group to go after first.

Position: Develop a clear image of the type of church you want to be based on who you want to attract!

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**TARGETING YOUR COMMUNITY
PERSONAL APPLICATION WORK SHEET**

1. Describe the kind of people who already attend your church.
2. Describe the kind of people who live in your community:
3. Describe the type of person you are:
4. Based on the above information, what should be the *primary* target of your church?
5. What do you feel are the most common excuses people in your area give for not attending church?

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In Matthew 4:19 Jesus told His disciples *“Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.”* I don’t think Jesus chose the analogy of fishing by accident when He’s talking about evangelism. I think He intentionally chose it. One, He was talking to fishermen, and two, fishing is a universally understood concept and three, there are a lot of parallels that apply to effective evangelism.

The reality is, most churches particularly in western culture get bigger by attracting other Christians. This is not legitimate growth. Church growth is not adding Christians from other churches. That’s swelling. That’s not growth. It’s really just reshuffling the deck. Today, instead of being fishers of men we’re just keepers of the aquarium, swapping fish back and forth. The statistic I’m most encouraged and pleased with at Saddleback is that 76% of our members were saved – found Christ – and were baptized at Saddleback church. Seventy-six percent! In the last five years over 5000 adults have been baptized here at Saddleback church. We are in our sixth year of adding a 1000 – that’s 6000 in six years.

What is the secret of reaching the unchurched? ... lost people like that? I believe the secret is to follow the example of Jesus Christ in fishing for men. I believe that Jesus Christ not only gave us the message that we are to share but I also believe He gave us the method in which we are to share it.

In this session I want us to look at six principles of evangelism or six ways of fishing for men that Jesus gave His disciples when He sent them out. In Matthew 10 and in Luke 10 when He sent out the disciples to evangelize He gave them some very specific principles that I apply to our lives today. If a principle is biblical it is transcultural. It will work in any culture. Let’s look at how to fish for men like Jesus did.

1. YOU MUST KNOW WHAT YOU’RE FISHING FOR.

You must clearly identify who you’re trying to reach. If you ask the typical church member, “Who is your church trying to reach?” what would they say? “Everybody. We want to reach everybody.” The fact is, no church can reach everybody and can appeal to everybody. It takes all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people. There’s more than one way to grow a church. I can show you churches doing the exact opposite thing and they’re both growing. It takes as many different styles of outreach as there are styles of people in the world. God loves variety so it takes all kinds of different methods and approaches to reach the people He has created in the world.

But no church can reach everybody. You’re just kidding yourself. You’d be like a radio station trying to appeal to everybody. Can you imagine a station that one minute would play a country western song, the next minute an easy listening song, the next minute a heavy metal song, the next minute a rock and roll, the next minute a gospel, the next minute a rap and the next minute a reggae. What kind of audience with that radio station have? None. They’d just make everybody mad.

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The kind of fish you want to catch will determine everything you have in your evangelism strategy. The bait, the equipment, your timing, your hooks. And just like bass requires different approaches than reaching catfish, people require different evangelistic approaches. It helps to know what you're fishing for. Are you going after teenagers? Are you going after young couples? Are you trying to reach single adults? Are you trying to reach senior adults? Are you trying to reach new immigrants who are just learning English? Intellectuals? Farmers? Military people? Rednecks? What are you trying to reach? You'd better figure out your target and know what you're fishing for.

What I'm telling you right now is not some new marketing term. Evangelistic targeting is as old as the New Testament. Jesus did it. Paul did it. Peter did it. First Jesus defined His target in Luke 15:24. He said, *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of Israel."* Isn't that interesting? Jesus said, *"I wasn't sent to the Gentiles. I was sent to the lost sheep of Israel."* He defined His target.

Paul defined his evangelistic target. He said, *"I was entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the gentiles just as Peter has been given the task of preaching the gospel to the Jews."* Galatians 2:7.

When Jesus sent the disciples out, He even gave them an evangelistic target. He said, *"Don't go among the gentiles or among any of the towns of Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel."*

Why did He do this? Jesus targeted individuals and groups of people not to be exclusive but to be effective. He will give each of us different targets so that the whole job gets done. But your church is not responsible for trying to bring every target to Christ. God will give us different targets. Have you ever thought about the fact why are there four gospels in the Bible? As you know about eighty percent of Mark is in Matthew and a lot of stories are told three and four times. They're in all four gospels. Why do we need four gospels? I'll tell you why. The four gospels were written to different targets. Matthew was written to the target of the Hebrews of the Jews. So he's showing Jesus as the Messiah that the Jews had wished for. Mark on the other hand was written to the Gentiles. So they had different targets. That's why we have different gospels.

The problem today is that most of us have as our target for evangelism the way Charlie Brown targeted. He would shoot an arrow into the fence and then go over and draw a circle around it. Lucy asked him, "Why do you do that?" and he said, "That way I never miss."

A lot of us do that. We reach people. "What's your target?" *They were* – the ones we reached.

How do you define your target? Four ways to define your target.

First, you need to define your target geographically. You need to ask the question, "How many people live in this area?" Get a map of your area and draw a circle around it with about five miles distance and figure out the number of people who live in it. Figure out at least fifty percent of that population is unchurched, if you're in America. Sixty to seventy percent in many states. That number is your fishing pond. People who are within walking or driving distance of your church.

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Second, you need to define your target demographically. You need to ask, “What kind of people live in the area?” You want to discover things like how many are in each age group, how many singles are there, how many married couples, what do they earn? Where do they work? Are they blue collar or white collar?

There are lots of places you can get this information. I’ve listed some sources. But here’s the point. You as a church leader need to become an expert on your community. I believe pastors should know more about their city than anybody else. Before I came to Saddleback I had memorized most of the major streets in the Saddleback valley before I even got here. I had read all about this place. I had done three months of research. I met with county supervisors. I talked to intelligent people and realtors and bank people, just trying to figure out what kind of people live here. I did extensive research. I even wrote to every pastor in this area before I moved here asking them a series of questions about what they already knew about it. I filled a full notebook just learning.

Three, you need to define your target culturally. Ask, “What are their values and their interests and their fears?” One of the reasons why some churches don’t grow as they do is they have what I call people blindness. They aren’t sensitive to cultural and social differences among people. Are all white people alike? No. Are all black people alike? No. Are all Hispanics alike? No. Are all Koreans alike? No. The fact is, God loves variety and you can’t lump everybody into one group. There are many different kinds of groupings that go beyond racial, go beyond age, go beyond economics that you need to be aware of.

You need to find out their values, their interests and their fears. Where do you get that information? You can read magazines, you can look at advertisements – advertisements around your area play on the interests and the fears and the values of people. But the best way to do it is a personal survey. Talk to people. I know this is a surprising thing... but just talk to unbelievers. Find out what they’re really like. See your community as it really is.

Then you need to define your target spiritually. You need to ask yourself, “What do the people in my community already know about the gospel?” It’s vital that you determine their religious background if they have any.

New York University discovered that in America, ninety percent of all Americans had some kind of religious background. Maybe they went to catechism as a child or Sunday School as a kid. They haven’t been to church in 30-40 years, they aren’t a believer, but they have some kind of a religious background. Here on the West Coast the number one background is Catholic. California was founded by Mexico, which was a Catholic country. Hispanic influence. The first buildings in California were Catholic missions. We have great evangelistic prospects because they believe in the Bible, they believe in God, they believe in the trinity. You already have some ground to start with, with people like this.

Often I hear people say, “Our target is just like Saddleback. We’re going after the unchurched” Saying, “I’m going to reach the unchurched,” is like saying, “I’m going to reach people.” There are a million different kinds of unchurched people. Are you talking about unchurched young urban professionals in South Orange County? Are you talking about unchurched retirees in Palm

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Springs? Are you talking about unchurched Asian foreign exchange students at Stanford? Are you talking about unchurched inner city folk? Staying you're unchurched is like saying you're lost. Are there a lot of different kinds of lost people? Yes, there certainly are.

The fact is all the unchurched are not alike. That's why when people say, "We're building a church to go after seekers, you've got to determine what kind of seekers there are and different kinds of seekers require a different kind of response. That's why there is no single way to build a seeker service.

Once you've collected all this information on your area, you want to summarize it and you want to personalize your target and develop a profile of your typical unchurched resident. At Saddleback, we call this guy Saddleback Sam. This is the typical unchurched person in this part of South Orange County. We've got this from information from statistics, from studying, from research, from going door to door.

First he thinks he's enjoying life now more than he did five years ago.

He's self satisfied, even smug, about his station in life.

He's well educated. This congressional district is the second most educated district in America. When I first started preaching here I tried to be very profound. I'm not. I'm not profound. I am simple. I have discovered that the simpler I get the more God blesses it. God has not called me to feed intellectual giraffes but sheep. So I try to make it real simple. Now simple isn't shallow. It's not simplistic. It's just understandable. Einstein said, "You don't really understand something unless you can say it in a simple way." All your wisdom in the world is worthless if you can't explain it in a simple way.

Here's this guy like this. How would you try to reach this guy?

Health and fitness are a high priority for him and his family.

He prefers the casual and the informal over the formal. As you can see I don't dress up very fancy. I wear what doesn't itch. I wear very casual clothes because that puts the unchurched at ease. I've discovered that white-collar workers like to dress down to come to church and blue collar workers like to dress up to come to church. The people in my church wear a suit all week and they're saying, "Sunday and I have to wear another suit? I'm tired of wearing a suit!" You need to fit your particular culture.

He'd rather be in a large group instead of a small one. Why? Because in a large group he can hide. Nobody puts him on the spot. He can come in, get his feet wet, set back there in the back row, watch for three or four weeks. It's a safe place. Nobody's going to call on him. Nobody's going to make him stand up and say his name, speak in tongues. He can see if you're ok and leave if he doesn't like it.

He is skeptical of organized religion. How many of you have heard that one? We say, "Come to Saddleback. We're disorganized religion!"

He's overextended in time and money. Do you know anybody like that?

Let's say you were me, Rick Warren, and in 1980, God sends you here just like He sent me as a 26-year old kid to start a church to reach that guy there. What would you do? What kind of church would you build to reach that kind of person right there?

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Let me give you some options.

How about if when he goes into the grocery store, we go put a track under the window of his car that says, “Come to church or go to hell.” How many of you think that one’s going to work?

How about this: this guy commutes into LA everyday. He’s got an hour commute at least. He comes home at night, shuts his door, locks it. His home’s his castle. He sets down to Monday night football and a TV dinner. He’s relaxed. Let’s send a total stranger to his door, knock on his door, interrupt his meal and his Monday night football game and say, “Come to church with a bunch of people you’ve never met.” How many of you think that one’s going to work?

How many of you think this guy is going to listen to Christian radio? Not a chance.

How many of you think he’s going to watch Christian TV? I hope he doesn’t! I don’t want him to think that is the real thing. A lot of kooky stuff on television! I don’t want him seeing that, getting inoculated.

The only way we’re going to reach this guy is somebody who lives next door to him, who’s just like him, is going to go and say, “You’ve got to come try this Saddleback church. It’s like nothing you would believe. You don’t have to dress up to go to it. They use contemporary music. You can actually understand the pastor. It’s fun. You actually relax. It’s a good thing.” Somebody’s going to get close to him and invite him to church.

You’ve got to know who your target is. The more defined your target is the easier it is to reach him.

Some say, “I don’t have time to do all this research.” That’s like saying, “I’m going to go out and take pictures. I’m a professional photographer and I’m going to take pictures. I don’t have time to focus, just take pictures.” That’s like being a hunter and taking your buddy out on the ridge with a couple of shotguns. You fire in the air and sure hope you hit something.

It helps to target. The clearer your target is evangelistically for your church, the easier it is to reach them.

What’s the target of your church? I suggest you go back. Do a survey in your area summarize the typical resident – Saddleback Sam and his lovely wife Sally and their two kids. In your city ... You need Atlanta Al or Bakersfield Bob or Phoenix Phil. You need to have a target for your city that you’re trying to reach.

Once you’ve learned to know what you’re fishing for, then

2. YOU NEED TO LEARN TO THINK LIKE A FISH.

That’s the second step. Learn to think like a fish. You must understand their habits and preferences and feeding patterns because certain kinds of fish like smooth still water and other

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ones like rushing rivers. Certain kinds of fish are bottom crawlers and others like to hide under rocks. You need to know the kind of people God has called you to reach. If you're going to reach unbelievers, you must understand how they think.

Often the Bible says, "*Jesus knew what they were thinking.*" No wonder He was so effective. You would be too if you knew what they were thinking. You'd know exactly what to say before they even say anything.

In Matthew 10:16 Jesus says "*I'm sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore be as wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*" That's the second principle, learning to think like a fish. Be wise as serpents and harmless as doves. He's saying be strategic in our thinking.

Often the church only fulfills the second part of that. We're usually as harmless as a dove. But we're not as wise as serpents. Colossians 4:5 Paul says, "*Be wise in the way that you act toward those who are not believers.*" Are you strategic and are you wise?

Here's the problem. The longer I am a believer, the less I think like unbelievers. I've been to seminary; I think like a pastor. That's two generations removed from reality. You have to learn to think like a fish.

A missionary can go to a country and pray all he/she wants and teach all he/she wants and plan all he/she wants, but if he/she doesn't learn the language it's not going to get through. I don't care how spiritual the missionary is. I don't care how dedicated the missionary is. I don't care how much the missionary prays. If the missionary doesn't learn the language of the people they're trying to reach, it isn't going to happen.

You have to learn the language of the 21st century. You have to learn the language of unbelievers. They don't talk in religious terms. They don't use the language of Zion. So you have to use the terms they use. Today, when somebody's having a problem they use psychological terms – I'm all stressed out, I'm at the end of my rope, I'm about to pop, I'm going under for the last time, I'm barely hanging on, I'm stressed to the limit. They don't say, "I'm experiencing total moral depravity."

The truth is that is their problem. Their problem is total moral depravity but they don't know the term. So you have to learn the language of the 21st century if you want to reach people. You've got to learn to think like a fish. And then you've got to learn to reach them.

Resistance, I've discovered, is often just poor communication. I hear people all the time saying, "People are closed to the gospel." No, they're not. They're closed to the way you're sharing it. You need to stop saying people are closed to the gospel and start saying, "How can I get on their wavelength?"

If you've got a CB radio and you're on channel 5 and they're on channel 13, I don't care how good a preacher you are, it's not going to get through. It could be the absolute truth of God to change lives but if you're not on their channel, it's not going to get through. All my life growing up I heard, "You can't reach the affluent." That's about all we're reaching because that's all

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who can afford to live in this area. I found it wasn't that the wealthy were resistant, it's just that we didn't understand them. Their lives are as messed up as everybody else's.

How do you discover the mindset of unbelievers? Here's the key: talk to them. If you don't ask the right questions, you won't get the right answers. If you don't get the right answers, you won't develop the right strategy. And if you don't develop the right strategy you won't get the right results.

When I started Saddleback church... I was a seminary student in Texas and I put up a map of the world and said, "Lord, I'll go anywhere in the world if You let me spend my entire life in one location." I didn't care where God put me, I just wanted to spend my entire life in one place. I really thought I was going to be a missionary.

While I was in seminary, I decided to do a study on my own of the 100 largest churches in the United States. I researched what they were and I personally wrote to every one of those pastors. Got back a packet of information, some questions I asked them. I began to study. I discovered this that God uses all kinds of churches. But I looked for the common denominator. One of the common denominators to every growing healthy church was this: the pastor had been there for a long time. Ten, fifteen, twenty, longer years. I said, "God, I'll go anywhere. Just let me stay in one place."

I got out a map of the world, circled every major city outside of the south. I was going to a Southern Baptist Seminary, all my friends were going to go to Baptist churches in the south. I thought I'd go where nobody else was going. I circled Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, Chicago, Albuquerque, Denver, Phoenix. I finally narrowed it down to four areas on the West Coast. Seattle, San Francisco, San Diego and Orange County. Then in the summer of 1979, I spent three months in a university library studying the census statistics, the demographics on those four areas. I discovered that the Saddleback Valley, this area that we're in is the fastest growing area in the fastest growing county in the United States between 1970 and 1980. This was '79.

I thought, where people are moving in they're going to need new churches. So I wrote a letter to a man by the name of Herman Wooten, the director of Baptist churches in Orange County. I didn't know this guy and he didn't know me. I said, "Dear Mr. Wooten, I'm not asking you for support or for you to sponsor me. I figure you know the area. What do you think about me coming to start a church in southern Orange County?" Interestingly enough, somehow he'd heard my name and that I was interested in starting a church. He wrote me a letter that said, "Dear Mr. Warren, I've heard you're thinking about starting a new church. Have you ever considered coming to the Saddleback Valley?"

Our letters crossed in the mail. I thought something's going on here! The day after I'd mailed mine (I knew he hadn't got it yet) I got his.

In October 79 I flew out here with my wife and spent ten days. We went up on a hill. We prayed over the area. God gave us a burden for this area and we said, "We're going to invest the rest of our lives in the Saddleback Valley."

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So we moved here. I'd just been here a few days and I realized that some of the top Bible teaching churches in the nation were within driving distance. Very well known pastors. Guys like Chuck Swindoll, John MacArthur, Chuck Smith. There were big churches right here within driving distance. The Vineyard, the Crystal Cathedral. There were many. David Hawking, Tim Timmons... lots of churches.

I figured that any Christian worth his salt was already going to one of these churches. So I said I was going to design a church to go after people who wouldn't be caught dead in one of these churches. Go for a different target, a different group. I said I was going to go out after the flat out pagan who on Sunday was sitting in his backyard by his Jacuzzi with his newspaper and Budweiser watching the ballgame. Nice guy, he just needs the Lord.

We arrived in January and I said we're going to start a church on Easter Sunday, which was twelve weeks away. So for twelve weeks I walked door to door. I took a little clipboard, knocked on the door and I took a survey of that area. I didn't try to convert them, I didn't try to witness to them, I didn't invite them to my church. I just took a survey. I wrote all that information down and I summarized it in a one page thing saying this is the kind of church we're going to be to meet the needs of the people. The Bible study that I'd started had grown to about fifteen people and we hand addressed and hand stamped 15,000 letters. We mailed them out ten days in advance of the Easter service. On Easter Sunday, 205 people showed up for the first service of this church. I guarantee you there weren't more than five believers in the whole church. We had hit our target. Why? Because of the letter I wrote, based on what I had discovered.

What had I discovered? As I took the survey here are the questions I asked:

Are you currently active in a local church? If they said yes, I said, "Great! Keep going there." and I politely excused myself and went to the next home because honestly, I'm not interested in the pinion of Christians. Jesus said, "I didn't come for the well. It's the sick who need a doctor." So we have never tried to get Christians to leave other churches. In fact, in our membership class we tell them real plainly, "If you're a Christian coming from another church, you're welcome here if you want to serve but you need to understand this church wasn't designed for you. It was designed to reach people who have no religious background or who haven't been in church for years."

The second question I would ask if they said no, I don't attend church. I'd say, "Great, you're the kind of person I want to talk to." I'd ask, "What do you feel is the greatest need in this area?" and I'd just listen and I wrote things down. Then I'd ask, "Why do you think most people don't attend church?" I could have asked, "Why don't you go to church?" but in the 1980's they'd say, "It's none of your business. That's an offensive question." So I'd say, "Why do you think most people don't attend church?" That's psychologically less threatening. Nine times out of ten they're going to give you their reason anyway.

Then I'd say, "If you were looking for a church, what kind of things would you look for even though you don't go?" I discovered real quickly that what the average church was offering was not what the average person was looking for. I didn't have one person say, "I'm looking for

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good organ music!” Not one! A few other things I could share that they weren’t looking for, too.

Finally I would ask, “What advice would you give to me? How can I help you?” This is the question you must ask your community. How can I help you? Study the Bible and see how many times Jesus said, “*What do you want me to do for you?*” That’s the position of the church. We exist to serve the world. They don’t exist to serve us. I remember one time seeing a church with a big banner along the freeway that said, “Come help us grow.” They were in a building program. That’s the last thing in the world you want to say to an unbeliever – “You come help us. Give us your time, give us your money, give us your energy, give us your effort. You help us do our thing.” They should have put up a sign that said, “How can we help you?” Jesus said, “*I came to serve not to be served.*”

The result of that: the four greatest complaints in our area:

1. Sermons are boring and irrelevant to my life. I had been preaching in evangelism for ten years and had over ten years of sermons stockpiled. I could have coasted for a couple of years just on reruns. But when I looked at those and said, “Would this make sense to an unbeliever?” I ended up throwing out every message I’d done in the previous ten years except two. I started over and I designed a whole new style of preaching and teaching which we have a seminar on now. It wasn’t going to communicate to Saddleback Sam.

2. They said members are unfriendly to visitors.

3. There’s too much emphasis on money. I don’t mind talking at all about money to believers. But let’s don’t get the cart before the horse. The most important thing an unbeliever needs to hear is not, “You need to tithe.” It’s “You need salvation.” I don’t have a problem talking about money to believers. Two years ago, we raised thirty million dollars on a single day – 2½ million in cash! – the largest offering of a church in history at that time. But to an unbeliever I need to talk to him about the things that matter to him first, not that he needs to be giving. All he thinks when he watches TV is “Give, give, give. We’re going off the air if you don’t give.” (Good!)

4. They said poor childcare, we worry about the childcare our children get. If you want to reach young couples you’ve got to have a first class nursery and childcare and Sunday School program.

Notice that not one of those four things, not one of them was a theological problem. I didn’t have a single person say, “I don’t believe in God.” Not once in twelve weeks going door to door. Most of them said, “I like God, I like Jesus, I just don’t like the church. And if I found the church that met my needs and was relevant and thought was not a waste of my time that would really help me, I’d probably go.”

Our conclusion was that most unchurched people were not atheists. They’re just turned off and too busy.

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I don't know what the needs are in your community. That's why you need to take your own survey. In fact, we're getting ready this next year in 2000 to go and do this survey again in the Saddleback Valley to update it twenty years later. You need to not just take my conclusion. You need to survey your own community. This survey that I just gave you has been used by at least 10,000 other churches around the world. I know one denomination, Christian Missionary Alliance, has used this and used the letter that went with it to start 104 churches on one day.

Saddleback's first letter: "At last a new church for those who have given up on traditional church services. Let's face it, many people aren't active in church these days. [That's called a positioning statement. Who am I going after? People who have given up on traditional churches.] Why? [I just listed the four reasons people said they weren't coming.] Sermons are boring, churches seem more interested in your wallet than you, members are unfriendly to visitors, worry about the quality of nursery care for your little ones. If you think attending church should be enjoyable, we've got good news for you. Saddleback is a new church designed to meet your needs in the 1980's. We're a group of friendly happy people who have discovered the joy of the Christian lifestyle. At Saddleback you [then I just listened the antidote to the four biggest complains that people gave] meet new friends and get to know your neighbors, enjoy exciting music with a contemporary flavor, hear positive and practical messages which uplift you each week, trust your children to the care of dedicated nursery workers. Why not get a lift instead of a letdown this Sunday? You're invited to our first service. If you don't own a Bible we'll give you a free New Testament. Just return the enclosed card."

We sent that out ten days before our first service on Easter. Actually, the week before Easter I said we're going to do a trial run service. I'm going to take the fifteen of you down to Laguna Hills high school and we're going to practice. I said, "I'm going to preach like there are 150 people here (which was our goal) and we're going to work it all out so next week when people show up on Ester it looks like we know what we're doing." So we had a dress rehearsal the week before our first service. The only problem was, some people got that letter early and came a week early. We had 60 people at the trial run service and five accepted Christ. It was a great idea it just didn't work. If you're going to have a trial run, don't tell anybody.

You need to study your own area. You need to know what you're fishing for and learn to think like a fish.

3. GO WHERE THE FISH ARE BITING.

Know what you're fishing for. Learn to think like a fish and then go where the fish are biting. It's a waste of time to fish in a spot where fish aren't biting. Wise fishermen move on. They know that fish eat at different times of the day in different places. What I'm saying here is you need to focus on the most receptive people in your area.

This again is not some principle of marketing. It's a basic New Testament principle. Jesus told it in the parable of the sower. When you sow seed, some of it falls on rocky ground, some on stony ground, some on hard ground, some on good soil. Wouldn't it be great if you knew what the good soil was and sowed all your seed there? Why waste seed, time, effort, energy and money? It's God's job to prepare the soil. It's our job to sow the seed. You don't do the soil

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preparation. God uses all kinds of sovereign things like divorce, crises, death, economic problems, out of work, new baby, new job to prepare the soil. But God uses you to sow.

The fact is receptivity to the Gospel varies widely at different times of people's lives. Sometimes people are very open to the gospel and sometimes they're very closed. And receptivity doesn't last forever.

Jesus knew this so He said go to the people who will listen. In sending the disciples out on evangelism, Mark 10:14, He said, *"If a home or town refuses to welcome you or listen to you [in other words they're unreceptive] leave that place and shake the dust off your feet."* That is a very significant statement. Jesus said, leave the unresponsive place. There are far more people ready to receive Christ in the world than we're ready to share it. We've just got to get with the right people and catch the waves while they're there. And when that wave ends, you catch the next wave. You're constantly saying, "God, who are You preparing right now for me to talk to?"

He's saying, don't hang around unresponsive people. There are plenty eager to be saved. He's saying you don't pick green fruit. If the fruit is ripe, you don't have to yank it. It comes off easy. I did 120 plus evangelistic crusades, kind of like Harvest crusades, before I started Saddleback church. Sometimes I'd go into the city and the pastor would take me to the hardest nut case in town who the last five evangelists have tried to win to Christ. You walk in and he's got this gun with notches in it like, "Ok, who's coming next?" I'm thinking "Why are we wasting time on some guy who's had five chances to receive Christ when there's somebody probably right next door who's probably in the middle of a crisis and will accept Christ the moment we talk to them about Him.

Paul's strategy was to go through open doors and don't waste time banging on doors that are closed. Go where the fish are biting. People are receptive to different degrees. Mark 12:34 Jesus told one unbeliever, *"You're not far from the kingdom of God."* There are some who are real far and some who are not too far. You go after the not too far people first.

Have you ever heard this? "Pastor, I think before we go after any new people we ought to go back and round up all the old people who've left the church." Guaranteed strategy for church decline! It takes ten times more energy to reclaim somebody who's gotten upset and cantankerous and mad than go out and win somebody new. God has called you to feed sheep not corral goats.

Again, that's all some of you needed to hear.

Growing churches focus on reaching receptive people. No growing church focuses on re-enlisting inactive people. Who are the most receptive people in your community? How do you know who's ready to be reached? People who are experiencing change. For good or for bad. When people are going through changes, it makes them more open to the gospel. Good changes or bad changes. People in transition and those under tension.

First, when people are going through transition they're more open. A new job, a new home, a new baby, a new graduation, a new marriage. It could be a good change. A new promotion... something new. Then those under tension – physical tension, emotional tension, financial

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tension, relational tension. When people are going through change they're more open to the gospel.

This is why I believe the next couple of years we're going to see some kind of national revival in America. Two things are happening. One, it isn't going to get much worse. We've got kids killing kids in high school! People have tried everything and they've come to the end of their rope and they realize they individualism and selfishness and free sex ends up in broken dreams, broken hearts and sexually transmitted diseases. They're coming to the end of "What else can we try? We've tried it all?"

The second thing is technology is producing enormous changes in our society. Just thing what the Internet and digitalization and globalization are doing to our country. And people are getting uprooted. They can only handle so much change. And that's going to make them receptive to the gospel.

4. CATCH FISH ON THEIR TERMS.

Let your target determine your approach and this is the heart of Saddleback's purpose driven strategy. Start where people are, not where we want them to be.

My father passed away this year. My dad was a pastor for fifty years. He was also the best fisherman I ever met in my life. When we were kids, he would take my sister and brother and me fishing and if there was one fish in the lake my dad would catch it. We kids never caught anything but my dad always caught. I often would look at him and think, "Does God just like him better?" He could catch fish where nobody else is catching them. I couldn't figure it out.

Then one day I discovered his secret. My dad thought like a fish. He understood fish. He went to where they were biting and he caught them on their terms.

My dad would do anything to catch a fish. He would drive five miles off the road, climb over brush, through rocks, wade in mud in order to get that hook and that bait right in front of the fish. My dad could look at a lake and read the lake. He'd know exactly where the fish would be in that lake, knowing their patterns. He'd know exactly the time of day that kind of fish would be most likely to eat. He knew the kind of bait they would like. He knew exactly how far to drop the bait into the water for that kind of fish. He made it easy for the fish to get caught. He would catch fish on their terms. He would go to where the fish were and he would go to any lengths.

Me, on the other hand, that's not what I did. I fished where it was convenient for me. I find the biggest shade tree and then I sit down in my easy chair, prop back with my coke and Pringles and I turn on my little boom box and I toss the hook out, like "Take it or leave it!" And guess what? They left it!

What kind of fishermen are you? Do you put up a sign that says, "Here's our church. If you want to come show up at our time and our place and wear our clothes and sing our songs." Or are you going to go where the fish are? Out where you might have to get in the mud and it's uncomfortable and it's dirty and stinky. You have to stand in the sun or freeze at night in order

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to catch that fish. We have this take it or leave it attitude about fishing and that's the way a lot of churches have it.

Luke 10:8 Jesus said, *"When you enter a town and are welcomed eat what is set before you."* This is another principle He's giving to the guys He sent out to do evangelism. What's He talking about here? He's given more than dietary advice. There's a principle here: Adapt to your local customs and culture as long as it doesn't violate the Bible.

I was a short-term missionary to Japan. When I moved to Japan I had to learn to eat Japanese food. There were a lot of things about Japanese food I didn't like. I wasn't accustomed to eating that kind of food. But while I was there I ate what was set before me not because I loved the food but because I loved the Japanese. The fact is, I've learned to love it and it's now one of my favorite foods. But I am the one who must be willing to adapt, not them.

We ask the world to adapt to us and then act arrogant if they won't. Jesus said we go to serve. Eat what is set before you. Are you willing to adapt and do the uncomfortable to reach the unchurched?

I know what some of you are thinking. To some people the phrase, "adapting to culture" sounds like theological liberalism – so that you're selling out, you're compromising, you're a chameleon, you're a cop out, you're a hypocrite, you're watering down the gospel, you're caving into culture. It sounds like liberalism.

That is not a new fear. It is as old as Acts 15, the Jerusalem conference. The church began growing among the Jews and then it began to spread among the gentiles and then there became a big issue. Does a gentile have to become a Jew in order to become a Christian? So they held the big conference in Acts 15 in Jerusalem. The question was "Do you have to adopt all the Jewish customs like kosher eating and things like that in order to become a Christian. The answer that came back from the Apostles was a resounding, No! Thank God for that council. Because of that, Christianity spread around the globe to every culture and every crevice of the world. It didn't stay as a little sect of Judaism.

We've got a bunch of Judaizers in the church today who are more interested in purity than in people. Jesus died for people. He said tares and wheat will grow up together. Don't worry about the tares. Jesus will pull them out at the end. You're not to be a tare picker. You're not to purify the church. That's not your job. That's the Holy Spirit's job. Let the tares and the wheat grow together because you want to reach the wheat and harvest it.

Paul's evangelistic strategy was adapt to the situation that God puts you in. 1 Corinthians 9:20-22 he says, *"To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. In the same way with the Gentiles. I became like a Gentile to win the Gentiles. I have become all things to all men that I may save some of them by any means possible."*

Notice he says, "When I'm with one group of people of people I become like them – when I'm with Jews I become like a Jew. When I'm with Gentiles I become like a Gentile. When I'm in Corinth, I become like a Corinthian." Today he'd say, "When I'm in California, I become like a

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Californian to reach Californians. When I'm in Texas, I become like a Texan to reach Texans. When I'm in the urban center, I become like the urban center to reach the urban center."

People say, "He's being a chameleon." No, he's being strategic. The message must never change. It is *"the faith once delivered for the saints."* We don't have a right to change it. But the methods have to change for every target. So you need to know who your target is so you can develop the methods to go after that target. You reach farmers in a different way than you reach doctors. You reach young rappers in a different way than you reach students. Executives in another way. Just different ways. Like that great theologian Sly Stone said, "Different strokes for different folks." That's a principle right here out of Matthew. You go and eat what is set before you.

I have noticed when I go fishing that fish don't automatically jump into my boat. When I'm on land they don't just flop up and say, "Catch me! Catch me!" If I'm going to catch fish, I have to go to their environment to get them, to reach them. My environment – air – is very different than their environment – water. But they're not going to come to my environment. I've got to go to theirs to reach them. And I've got to put that bait right in front of their nose. You have to make intentional contact with them.

Here's the point. You don't expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are.

Paul said, *"Whatever a person is like, I try to find common ground with him so he'll let me tell him about Christ and let Christ save him."* That's being strategic. Catch fish on their terms.

What was Jesus' standard approach to evangelism? I once read through the gospels to find out how did Jesus win people? Did He use the Four Spiritual Laws? The Roman road? What was His tool?

His standard approach was this. He didn't have one. Jesus' standard approach was, start where people are. So when He's with farmers He talks about sowing seed. When He's with fishermen, He talks about catching fish. When He's with the woman at the well, He talks about living water. He starts where people are.

To be effective you have to be flexible. None of the evangelism strategies that Saddleback is using were pre-planned. None of them. None of the innovations we're doing in this church were pre-planned. I didn't get my staff together one day and say, "What kind of off the wall thing can we think up that will get us on the cover of *Christianity Today*?" Every single thing that we're doing different from a traditional viewpoint was simply the response to the situation we found ourselves in. Even the thing about when we mailed out the letter – direct mail – I knew nothing about direct mail. Nothing. I just found out that in this community there were a bunch of gated communities where I couldn't get in to visit if I wanted to. I couldn't get behind the gates. But I could send a letter in. So I said, "We'll try that. If that doesn't work, we'll try something else." We're not committed to any method, we're committed to the purposes of God.

On the next page is Saddleback's evangelism strategy. We say the needs of unbelievers determine our evangelism program. Jesus said in Mark 2:17 *"It's not the healthy who need a doctor but the sick. I haven't come to call the righteous but sinners."* So if there's a problem

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with divorce in our area, we'll have a Divorce Recovery workshop. If there's a problem with drug and alcohol abuse, we'll have a Celebrate Recovery program. If people are having problems with weight loss or child rearing or whatever, we're going to build a program based on what their needs are in order to reach them. We focus on those felt needs.

Jesus often said to an unbeliever, "*What do you want Me to do?*" People often say, "Don't do this felt need stuff. That's copping out." Jesus did. Every person Jesus dealt with, He started with their felt need. Every one of them. And He never made people feel guilty that they came to Him because their back was hurting. Like, "You should be coming for that! You should be coming because I'm sovereign God." They said, "I've got a hurt back... I've got an issue of blood ... I've got a neighbor who's demon possessed..." whatever. They came because there was something hurting in their heart or they had a question. He scratched where people itched, at their moment of felt need.

I believe that anybody can be won to Christ if you discover the key to his heart. And the key to his heart are his felt needs, his hurts and his interests. Nobody ever becomes a Christian until first he recognizes a need. Every man is an island and you establish a beachhead in his life by meeting a felt need. Before you can share the good news, you have to get their attention.

I drive up and down the freeways of southern California and people passing me all the time and I pray constantly, "God, how do I get these people to slow down long enough just to get them to listen?" The good news is only good news if it gets there in time.

In the past this was no problem. The church was the biggest building in the community, the pastor was the most prominent and usually the most educated person in the community. He was the pastor or parson, which means person, of the community. The church program was the social calendar of society.

None of that is true any more. Today the church buildings are dwarfed by skyscrapers. You can have a church building by a freeway and 100,000 people pass it very day and they don't even know it's there. In terms of status, pastors are low on the status totem pole compared to celebrities, movie stars, athletes. On television, pastors are almost always portrayed as a crook, a wimp or a pervert. For most of us in ministry it's "guilty until proven innocent." It's not so much people saying, "Is the Bible true?" They want to know "Are you credible?" They want to know that before they'll even listen. And then the church competes with anything and everything on the social calendar and community.

This is why churches are not in competition with other churches. Every church in this valley could be running 5000 people and we wouldn't be reaching everybody. It's like two ants arguing over who's going to eat the elephant. I once counted all the chairs in every church in our community and discovered, if we fill every church in south Orange County, we'd only be reaching five percent of the population. We pray for the growth of every church. No church can reach everybody. Not everybody's going to like me. Not everybody's going to like you. We pray "Just find a church!" We're all on the same team.

We're a Baptist church. We baptize by immersion. One time before we had our building, I called up another church and asked, "Could we use your baptism pool?" The pastor said, "I'm

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sorry but the deacons of this church have a policy that we never loan our building to churches in competition with us.” I wanted to say, “Buddy, *brother!* The competition is not other churches. The competition is not even other denominations. The competition is the world, the flesh and the devil.” The fact is, they’re not in your church, they’re not in my church on Sunday. They’re out in recreation – wrecking creation! Don’t worry about any other church in your area. Worry about television. Worry about recreation and entertainment. That’s your competition.

The secret of success is simply meeting needs. That old statement that Schuller used to make, “Find a need and fill it.” Your church will never grow beyond its capacity to meet needs.

What are the needs of the unchurched in your area? I don’t know. You’ve got to survey to find out. Are there any universal needs? Yes there are. The universal needs of the unchurched are primarily emotional and relational. I’ve been around the world and we have many different cultures and many different needs but there’s some universal needs. Everybody needs love. Everybody needs acceptance. Everybody wants meaning in their life. Everybody needs purpose. Everybody needs forgiveness. Everybody needs self-esteem. Everybody needs to know that their life matters. Everybody needs to know how to have their past forgiven, a purpose for living and a home in heaven. Those are universal needs.

Jesus never lacked an audience because He dealt with these major themes that I just mentioned.

You can use anything as a felt need to reach people. I know of a church here in Orange County that went out years ago door to door and found out that the biggest need in their area was young couples needing to potty train their children. So they had a potty training seminar. They brought in a Christian doctor, a Christian psychologist and a pastor. They talked about how to build a family, how to train their kids to use the toilet and then how to build a Christian home. They had over 500 couples show up for that potty training seminar. Many of them kept coming to the church after that. I teased them later and said, “I’ll bet your theme verse is Proverbs 22:6 *‘Train up a child in the way he should go...’*” The needs of unbelievers determine our programs.

The hang-ups of unbelievers determine our strategy. For instance, if people have a hang-up about financial appeals we tell visitors in our seeker service “Don’t give. Only the members give.” If people have a hang-up about denominational labels we chose a generic name. We’re a Baptist church but didn’t put “Baptist” in the name. That’s not a theological compromise; that’s an evangelistic strategy. Did I get criticized? What do you think? I decided a long time ago that I was more interested in impressing the unchurched of this area than theological seminary professors.

Luke 16:8 *“The people of this world are more shrewd in their dealings with their own kind than the people of light.”* That means that the average McDonald’s owner knows more about human behavior than the average pastor. The culture of unbelievers determines our style. We’re in laid back southern California and we have a laid back, relaxed informal style. The church is full of boomers and busters so we use contemporary music.

Let me say this: regardless of the style you choose for evangelism you’re going to be criticized. No matter what style you use. Traditional, contemporary, off the chart, avant-garde, you’re going to be criticized. So the wrong style is the one you choose just because you like it. The

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right style is what's the most effective for this area? If I were in another city, I wouldn't be doing a lot of the style we're doing here at Saddleback. I would be adaptive. You are a cross-cultural missionary in America. You must find your culture that you're reaching and adapt to them.

The key question is, Who are you trying to impress?

5. USE MORE THAN ONE HOOK.

You want to offer people options and choices. We call this trout line fishing. The more hooks you use, the more fish you're going to catch. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 9:22 "*I become all things to all men so I may save some of them by all means possible.*" He's saying, I offer all kinds of choices.

We live in a world full of choices. There used to be one kind of coke – Coke. Now we've got coke, diet coke, caffeine free coke, diet caffeine free coke, cherry coke, diet cherry coke, diet caffeine free cherry coke, clear coke, tasteless coke, coke without fizz. How many kinds of coke do you need? I walked into a Sav-On drug store the other day to buy some Triametic cough syrup. Kay, my wife, said to get some. Do you know how many kinds of Triametic cough syrups there are? Over twenty. Triametic cough syrup and burp, Triaminic cough syrup and hiccup, Triametic cough syrup with little fuzzies up your nose... it's ridiculous! I went over to the aisle to buy some soap. How many kinds of soap do you need? There's probably forty varieties of soap. I went to buy a toothbrush. I counted eight-two different kinds of toothbrushes. Do I really need that many choices? On television, there used to be three channels – ABC, CBS, NBC. Now with satellite you can get over two hundred channels. I can go home now and turn on my TV and get about eighty channels. And they're talking about five hundred channels. The more channels there are, the less there is to watch! We live in this world of multiple choices. The Levi Corporation offers 70,000 different varieties of shapes, sizes and colors of their products. Customizations!

Then in the church, in a multiple-choice world, we offer two options – take it or leave it! And we wonder why they're leaving it.

Growing churches practice what I call saturation evangelism. They're using every available means to reach every available person at every available time because one of the ways will eventually break through. At Saddleback we have over 150 different lay ministries – 150 different hooks in the water.

Why do churches usually only fish with one hook? Because they ask the wrong questions. The wrong question is "How much will it cost?" The right question is, "Who will it reach?"

I've discovered that most churches are driven by faith in the early years and driven by finance in the later years. Let me make some statements – four things that we've learned about financing evangelism since we're talking about the purpose of evangelism and reaching the community in this session.

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1. Money spent on evangelism is never an expense; it is an investment. The people you reach by the money you spend will more than pay it back. When we started Saddleback church, we went nearly \$6000 in debt before we had our first service. We had fifteen people. We put it up on our credit cards. We charged our credit cards to start this church. We bought a bunch of nursery equipment. We rented a high school. We printed a mass mail out and then paid for the postage to mail it to 15,000 people. We bought equipment, a word processor. Why? Because we believed that the people we would reach would more than repay it back.

If I spent \$500 on an ad this week that reaches two families for Christ, within six months their tithe will repay for that. It's an investment not an expense.

2. Churches never really have money problems. They have idea or vision problems. Money flows to God-given, Holy Spirit inspired vision and dreams. People do not give to need, they give to vision. If need motivated people to give, all the Christian colleges in the world would have all the money they want because they all need it. Every church would have all the money they want because churches need it. People do not give to need, they give to vision. It captures their imagination.

3. When you spend nickels and dimes on evangelism you get nickel and dime results. You spend a little and you're going to get a little back. You must make the investment.

Remember the story in Matthew 17 where Jesus tells Peter to go down to the shoreline and catch a fish. He says there will be a coin in the mouth of the fish and to take that coin and go pay taxes. Why did He do that? Was Jesus just showing off? That's pretty spectacular, you've got to admit! There will be a coin in the mouth of the fish, get it and pay taxes." Why did He do that?

The principle! The coins are always in the mouths of the fish. You focus on fishing and God will pay your bills. You make evangelism a priority in your church, your budget is going to be the least of your problems.

If you're not reaching anybody and no lives are being changed, no wonder! There's no vision and nobody wants to give to anything like that. You focus on fishing and God will pay your bills.

4. Hudson Taylor said, "God's work done God's way will not lack God's support."

6. FISH FOR THE KIND OF FISH YOU CAN BEST REACH.

Remember when He sent them out. He said, "You're going to go to the lost sheep of Israel," because that's what they were. They were Israelites, Jews. You go after those you are most likely to reach.

This again, is not some marketing principle. It's basic New Testament strategy. Andrew brought his brother to Christ because that's who he knew. Matthew held a party for tax

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collectors because that's what he was. The woman at the well brought the whole village. She knew everybody! In the literal sense!

Your church is best suited to reaching a certain group of people. It's easier for your church to reach some people than it is others. That's why we need all kinds of churches to reach all kinds of people to get the job done. Different preferences. In my family there are five of us. We can't even get the five of us to agree on a music style. If we can't get one family to agree on it, how can you expect to get everybody in one city to agree on it?

How do you determine who your church can best reach? Here's the question to determine your target: What kind of people already attend our church? When a visitor walks into a church service at your church they have a question that they ask. It's not "Do they believe in God here?" The question is, "Is there anybody here like me?" I ask this and you do too. We walk into a group and ask, "Is there anybody here like me." It is not a theological question. It is a sociological question. The truth is, young parents walk into the church building and the first thing they think, "Is there any other young couples here with babies?" They'll look around. An elderly couple walks in and thinks, "Is there any other retirees in here? Grey hair? Going bald?" Military guy walks in and thinks, "Is there anybody here with a military crewcut?" Japanese walks in and thinks, "Is there anybody who speaks Japanese in here?"

They're all looking around. If they find somebody like themselves, they're more likely to stay. If they don't find anybody like themselves, they might, but it's not likely. That's a fact of life.

What is the likelihood of a church full of retirees in reaching teenagers? Not very likely. What is the likelihood of a church full of military personnel in reaching peace activists? Not very likely. What is the likelihood of a Vietnamese church in reaching Hispanics? Possible, but not very likely. What is the likelihood of a church full of factory workers reaching an executive? Possible, but not very likely.

God made you to be you. He didn't want you to be anybody else. He made you to be you because there's people in this world that only you can reach. The people I'll never be able to reach, you can reach. The people I reach, you can't reach. We're all in it together. We need each other and we don't need to try to make everybody alike. We need to enjoy and love and celebrate our diversity. I look out on Sunday morning and see Baskin-Robbins 31 flavors. That's good. A good thing.

You say who are we most likely to reach? People like we've already got. Some of you are going, "Oh, no! I paid good money to hear *this!* I'm discouraged!"

One other question for pastors and those who are church leaders. "What kind of person am I? What is my cultural background as a pastor, as a church leader?" God has uniquely prepared you to reach certain people. Your background, your temperament, your experiences are not an accident, God wants you to be you. You need to ask, "What kind of people do I naturally relate to?" Do some self-analysis.

Here are the facts:

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You can best reach people that you can relate to. The easiest people for you to reach are those most like you. Your greatest contribution will occur when you match your target.

And two, you attract what you are not what you want. I know a guy who said, "I'm going to start a baby buster service to reach Gen X. The problem was he was sixty years old. Military, good old-boy background. His church lasted about three weeks. He didn't match.

When I started Saddleback I was 26 years old. We only had one elderly couple in the church but they acted younger than me. We reached almost no middle age and older people when I was still in my 20's. It wasn't until we added staff that was older than me that we began to reach middle-aged couples. Now that I am 45 I'm having to add staff younger than me to reach a generation that doesn't relate to me. There's nothing wrong with that. It's the truth.

I remember many years ago, I was interim pastor of a small church of 35-45 people. Everybody in the church was a trucker. They would drive their 18-wheelers to church. Beautiful rigs. You need to understand something: I am a mechanic idiot. I couldn't fix a carburetor if I had to. I am in awe of people who repair cars. I do not have a mechanical bone in my body. I preached in that church and those people loved me, the little preacher boy. I loved them and they loved me. But we both knew I didn't fit. The best thing in the world was to let them get somebody to pastor who had grease on his arms, a couple of tattoos, and knew how to rebuild stuff and had a CB in his bedroom. That's who needed to be pastor in that church because those people are people Jesus died for.

The one exception of this is if you have the missionary gift. The missionary gift is the ability to minister cross culturally. I have met some people who were born in the country who could minister in the inner city but it's pretty rare. And I have met some people who have grown up in an urban environment who can minister in the country but it's pretty rare. It's the ability to deal with people of a different background. That's a gift, the missionary gift.

Explosive growth occurs when the kind of person the pastor is matches the kind of people that are in the church and that matches the kind of people that are in the community. When those three things line up you can have explosive growth. If any of those are out of kilter, growth is possible but it's much more difficult. Many times I've seen pastors, who didn't match their church or didn't match their community having a hard time ministering. It's like they're batting their head against the wall. They just need to move. There's no sin in that.

Saddleback has exploded because I was made for this location. I fit here. This is me. There are a hundred other cities in America where I could never grow a church. I just wouldn't fit. So you need to find out what God made you to be and be where God made you to be and enjoy that. Celebrate it!

Saddleback has started thirty daughter churches. One guy came and started a church in Irvine. He had started a church in Atlanta and grew the church to 200 so I knew he know how to grow a church. He came out here and started a church. After about six months the thing was still dead in the water. I asked him, "What's going on?" He said, "I don't fit here. This area of Irvine is filled with middle aged couples with teenagers and they're at their peak earning years and I just don't relate to that." I said, "Who do you think you could best relate to?" I already knew.

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People like him. He said, “Young couples just starting out in their first home or single adults just starting out.” I said, “You don’t need to be in Irvine. You need to be in Huntington Beach.” So we killed the church in Irvine, moved him over two cities, stated one in Huntington Beach and within two years it was running 300. Right guy, wrong place.

I have a friend who pastors in Long Beech. He came and said, “I don’t fit my church. I have several advanced degrees and I tend to speak with an educated vocabulary. But the people in my church are mostly high school grads.” He was a black guy. I said, “Where are the professional Blacks in that area of Long Beach?” He said, “They’re about three miles up the road.” I said, “Resign your church. Go up there and start one.” He left that church, moved to a new area and started. And within two years, he was running 300. Right guy, wrong place.

You just need to know what God made you to be and be that. If you don’t fit, it’s not a sin to move. But if God’s called you to ministry and He has – He’s called us all to serve Him – then that means there are people in this world that only you can reach. And it is your job to find out where they are and go after them.

What do you do when your church does not match your community? You’ve only got three options. Sometimes communities change and you’ve got a church that doesn’t match any more. It’s older, it’s younger, a different language, whatever. You’ve got three options:

1. Build on your strengths. That is, just keep doing what you’re doing but just try to do it better. Don’t try to be something you’re not. If you’re a McDonalds, you don’t try to become a Taco Bell. You just try to flip better hamburgers. Have some promotions or something. There are probably some pockets of people out there just like you. The growth may be limited but they need the Lord. So you just try to build on your strengths.

2. Second alternative when your church doesn’t match the community is to reinvent the congregation. That is where you intentionally change the makeup of your church to match the new target. In other words, you were traditional reaching a certain age group now you’re going to be more contemporary to reach this other age group. You turn everything upside down. Do a reevaluation. You reinvent your church.

I do not advise this! If you do this, be prepared for war. You will be maligned. You will be attacked. You will be criticized. You will be called the antichrist. Blood will be spilt and it will be yours. You may be martyred! To take a church that has been going one direction and say, “No, we’re not doing that anymore,” is like cutting the feet right from underneath you. Don’t even attempt it unless God says give your life. I would not attempt this in a church over 100 unless God had really burdened me and said this has to be done here. The bigger the church is, the more difficult it is to change cultures.

On the other hand, if you have a church of 50 people or less, this is a viable option. One of the advantages of the small church is you can have a couple of families leave and a couple of new families come in and you’ve changed the whole make-up of the church. It’s easy to reinvent a small church. But you must be willing to let people leave the church for the greater good of the kingdom. If you think you’re going to hold on to everybody, forget it. It isn’t going to happen.

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I do know some people who have done that. But they are heroes in my book.

3. The third thing is to start new congregations with new groups. I highly recommend this one. You can do it one of two ways:

One, add a new service. Don't kill your old service. Just start a new one to reach a new group. It's putting another hook in the water.

Or sponsor another church. How do you know when you're physically mature? You have the ability to reproduce. How do you know when you're spiritually mature as a church? You start having baby churches. There are many older churches that need to not necessarily change themselves because those people still like "The Old Rugged Cross" but they're not going to reach anybody singing it. The truth is they're not. Because those people who are singing it are dying off. But they're going to have to start new churches with new styles. I highly recommend that.

In conclusion, here's how to get started in targeting your own community for evangelism:

Probe. Learn all you can about your area.

Partition it. Divide your area into segments.

Prioritize. Choose which group you're going to go after first.

Position. Develop a clear image of the type of church you want to be based on who you want to attract.

We've covered the biggest circle of all, the Community and we've covered the purpose of Evangelism. In the next session we're going to talk about how to move them into the Crowd.

[end of tape]