

Cultivating *Christ-First* Generations

Apologetics + Evangelism + Discipleship

Dear Pastor and or Christian Leader,

The purpose of this letter is to introduce myself (David Geisler) and our ministry, Norm Geisler International Ministries, in order to explore some common ground in which we might be able to work together for His Glory.

Most of us have been trained in various forms of evangelism but might not be familiar with the “Art of Conversational Pre-Evangelism.” Perhaps you have never even heard of the term, “pre-evangelism.” Simply put, there is a certain set of skills and sensitivity that, when possessed by a Christian, will effectively lower our lost friends’ intellectual, cultural, and emotional barriers to the Gospel. In many instances, BEFORE our lost friends can even “hear the Gospel,” these barriers must be overcome. Conversational Pre-Evangelism is a proven technique and methodology that does just that and also *creates greater openness among our non-Christian friends to actually hear the gospel.*

Think about this: How can we proclaim the Good News to someone who:

- *does not believe he/she is a sinner (morality is relative) and therefore sees no need for a Savior?*
- *is very happy with himself/herself and really not interested in good news?*
- *believes that he or she can measure up?*
- *believes that all the ways eventually lead to one true God?*
- *believes that he or she is God?*

The world is full of people who ascribe to one or more of those beliefs and reaching them might seem next to impossible to some believers. Not only do we, as believers, need His touch and the presence of the Holy Spirit, but we also must be wise in how we reach out to others (Col. 4:5). For those who might be shy, or unable to adequately and properly express their faith, and/or the love of the Lord, this training also relaxes and equips the believer to be as effective as possible.

So, how did this pre-Evangelism concept and training first get started?

In 1994 in the US, CRU (Formerly Campus Crusade for Christ) saw a need to approach graduate students in a different way when it became obvious that a simple gospel tract approach did not work so well with those who were indifferent or skeptical towards Christianity. *I (David) was hired to help develop this new approach that integrated some apologetic content. What I discovered after five years with CRU was that it wasn’t just graduate students that were skeptical.* In fact, a new generation of doubters and non-believers had risen who needed special attention to their objections and sensitivities. *In 2000, God gave me a burden to start my own ministry to teach Christians this new art form called Conversational Pre-Evangelism, which creates many more open doors for evangelism.* In 2009 this training material was published in a book by Harvest House called *Conversational Evangelism: How To Listen and Speak So You May Be Heard.* In 2014 an updated

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version was published that included both a pre-evangelism and evangelism model that includes apologetic content. It has now been translated into Spanish, Chinese, Indonesian, Korean, Slovakian, and German.

What is Pre-Evangelism?

Witnessing used to involve laying out the truth and guiding a person to understand and accept it. But the awareness of basic Christian principles has changed and so have the needs of “pre-believers.” **If evangelism is planting seeds of the gospel, pre-evangelism is tilling the soil of their mind and heart, preparing them to at least be willing to listen to the Truth in partnership with the Holy Spirit (Mark 4:8).** It raises curiosity in the mind of the hearers so that they become interested. *This Conversational Pre-Evangelism methodology involves asking thought provoking questions that surface uncertainty, minimizes their defensiveness, and yet creates a sense of curiosity to hear more about Jesus or at least continue the conversation. It also involves uncovering hidden barriers and then building a strategy for creating open doors to share the gospel.*

Greater opportunities for direct evangelism are created by learning and adhering to a pre-evangelism paradigm containing four parts and the four different roles we play that lead to direct opportunities for evangelism.

The **four parts** to Conversational Pre-Evangelism are: **Hearing, Illuminating, Uncovering, and Building.**

The corresponding **four different roles we serve** are:

1. **The role of a Musician:** listening carefully and also hearing the gaps in their beliefs e.g. (Morality is a personal preference)
2. **The role of an Artist:** painting a picture for others by asking thought provoking questions that help people to see themselves in a more true light.
3. **The role of an Archaeologist:** digging beneath the surface to uncover their real barriers to the Gospel.
4. **The role of a Builder:** finding common ground, building a bridge and looking for opportunities to move from pre-evangelism to direct evangelism.

Once interest has been created, just like the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4, it can lead more easily lead to direct evangelism.

How can I learn more?

For the past 25 years we have been conducting C. E. Seminars in different parts of the globe. For seven years we trained Christian ministries, seminary students, and church and lay leaders all over Asia in this art called *Conversational Pre-Evangelism*. In July, 2011, we moved our ministry headquarters from Singapore back to the United States in order to expand the vision. With a passion for people, we share an engaging, conversational approach to integrating apologetics and evangelism and address:

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- Why we don't have a greater heart to reach those around us.
- What makes old models of witnessing ineffective in today's culture.
- Why evangelism must start with relational pre-evangelism.
- How to ask questions, listen attentively, and understand what someone believes.
- How to engage others pre-evangelistically and keep their interest.
- Ways to identify the real barriers to belief in order to build a bridge to the Truth.

Please prayerfully consider how Norm Geisler International Ministries might impact your church in order to impact your city to advanced God's kingdom.

In Him,
|
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What International Christian Leaders Have Said About This Training:

"I believe that every church would benefit by integrating the concepts of Conversational Pre-Evangelism into their existing evangelistic programs and strategies!"

- **Josh McDowell**

"Truth is best communicated in the realm of interpersonal relationships. And the best conduit for establishing relationships is the fine art of soul-searching conversation. As such, conversational evangelism and apologetics are vital tools for communicating the Gospel in a non-threatening, pre-evangelistic manner. This fresh pre-evangelism model by Dr. David Geisler is excellent. It is seeker-sensitive, Word-centered and purpose-driven. It is designed to win a hearing from a conversation with pre-believers, much like what Jesus did when He engaged in conversational evangelism with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well (John 4)."

- **Rev. Edmund Chan, International Discipleship leader and author of "*Built To Last*" and "*A Certain Kind*."**

What Church Leaders Have Said About This Training:

Wow! So much feedback from our staff and members. Our church and community will be blessed for years to come because you are obedient to the Holy Spirit. You set the benchmark high for us in future equipping nights.

- **Tim Young, Adult Pastor, Houston's First Baptist Church**

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“This art of questioning has now become the bedrock of how we train our people to be salt in light for God in challenging environments from the Pentagon to the White House. Countless lives have been challenged and changed by the method I learned from David....I can't thank him enough for his impact on my life and church.”

Marty Baker, Senior Pastor, Burke Community Church, Burke, VA

"Your training is refreshing in its format and content. I have not found anything published [aside from individual books on evangelism] that comes close to dealing with the legitimate barriers that most people have BEFORE they can give the Gospel a hearing."

- **Erin Kerr, Former Evangelism Pastor, Saddleback Church, San Clemente, Ca.**

What Others Have Said About Our Conversational Evangelism Book

“Yes! That was my reaction when introduced to this book! It admirably teaches all of us how to build bridges to unbelievers in such a way that (1) they will not be needlessly alienated and (2) that they will actually listen to what we have to say. These writers follow the lead of Jesus by teaching us how to stimulate thought and awaken people to their need by asking provocative questions. Here we have answers to age old questions such as, how do I begin a conversation with someone who is not interested in the gospel? And, how do I learn to talk about my beliefs in an understandable way? In short, **here is practical instruction on how to introduce the Gospel into the market place of ideas without awkwardness or fear.”**

- **Dr. Erwin Lutzer, Former Senior Pastor, Moody Church Chicago II.**

“The Geislars have great insight into the thinking of unbelievers. This book gives valuable training in learning to ask questions, listening, and helping non-Christians move toward faith in Christ.”

- **Dr. Max Barnett, Former Professor of Collegiate Ministry, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, TX.**

“*Conversational Evangelism* isn't a good book that you read and pass on. It's a book that you read and reread, that you underline, highlight, notate, and dog-ear, that you keep within arm's reach because you use it regularly...in real life. David and Norm Geisler lay out what is not only a remarkably practical “oh I can really do this” approach to engaging those far from God in conversations that draw them toward Jesus, but also a wealth of helps in asking questions, uncovering issues, offering illustrations, and answering concerns. How do you

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take sharp apologetic thinking and integrate it into a life of winsome, missional living? *Conversational Evangelism* makes that life accessible. And isn't that the Point? Isn't that our point?"

- **Tim Hawks, Senior Pastor: Hill Country Bible Church, Austin Texas**

"If you're looking for a book that will help you share your faith more effectively, *Conversational Evangelism* is a great choice. It contains no gimmicks or slick methodologies, just thought provoking and practical ideas on how to spark engaging dialogue that will help you sow the gospel into the hearts of others. I especially appreciate the way the concept of "pre-evangelism" is developed. By using examples from Jesus' life and ministry, and observing how He built bridges into the lives of others before communicating eternal truth, brilliantly reveals Jesus' heart for evangelism. We have used *Conversational Evangelism* as a springboard for our weekly roundtable discussions among our pastoral staff. **I believe this book is a must read for every pastor, and anyone who seriously desires to win souls.**"

- **Lloyd Pulley, Calvary Chapel, Old Bridge New Jersey**

"Calvary of Albuquerque recently hosted David Geisler in conjunction with an apologetics conference. Speaking on the topic of conversational pre-evangelism, I found his points relevant and informative. **I would recommend his book to anyone wanting to clearly understand the nature of personal evangelism.** I particularly enjoyed the section in his book on how to ask the right questions, listening to a person's worldview; and then providing answers that connect them with the truth of Scripture."

- **Skip Heitzig, Calvary of Albuquerque, N.M.**

"**Conversational Evangelism is one of the most helpful and practical books on personal evangelism I've ever seen.** It makes evangelism seem as easy as having a conversation with a friend--which it is. You give so many ideas on starting conversations that don't shut people down. Students want to tell you what they think and sometimes don't care what you think. These tips give me ways to keep a conversation going with a student that doesn't seem to care. It is well written and easy to put into practice. When I think of some of the training times I have had with staff, I wish I had had this book for them to read."

- **Warren Culwell, Former Campus Crusade, Red River Regional Office, Texas**

"Why should I read *Conversational Evangelism*? Recent studies within churches indicate that successful evangelism is no longer being measured on how many tracts one hands out or how many times they got to share the gospel. Today it is being measured in terms like: "How many meaningful spiritual conversations did you have with non-Christians in the last six months?" Today it may take several encounters by several different people before the gospel is understood or embraced. Greg Hawkins of the Willow Creek association says,

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“The human spirit is wired by God to search for Him.” Part of our problem is how to dialog with people to help them know where to search or even to know that they have a need to search. It is often hard to start those dialogs, to know where to begin, how to bridge barriers to the gospel. This is where Conversational Evangelism fits. **This book is a great resource to help Christians effectively do that. There is room for this resource in any church’s outreach or evangelism process.**”

- Ed Newell, Church Discipleship Ministry, Navigators

Testimonies of Former Seminary Students

“During my twenty-six years of pastoral ministry along with a seminary career that included evangelism courses from another well-known and respected institution, I had been exposed to various evangelism strategies which promised results but lacked relevant strategies for Christians to connect with non-Christians. But *Conversational Evangelism* was an altogether different experience for this skeptical seminarian. As I engaged with the *Conversational Evangelism* book and the course material, I quickly realized how useful it was for equipping Christians to connect with non-Christians in a post-Christian world. **Dr. David Geisler’s course helped me see how apologetics and evangelism work together to reach a world that desperately needs Jesus Christ. Of all the courses I have taken throughout my seminary career, I sincerely wish I had taken *Practical Apologetics* earlier in my ministry. It has not only changed my ministry, it has truly changed my life.**”

Matthew Dodd, Associate Pastor, Calvary Chapel Hillsboro, Oregon

“It is with the highest of enthusiasm that I recommend Dr. David Geisler's evangelism/apologetics doctoral class. I had the pleasure of taking Dr. Geisler's course in pursuit of my Doctor of Ministry while at Southern Evangelical Seminary. As a full-time supported campus missionary with Ratio Christi, my livelihood is largely spent dialoging with college students. I regularly engage in evangelism and apologetics. **The tools Dr. Geisler taught me through his course are instrumental in my spiritual conversations and are, I believe, vital for witnessing in today's culture.**

Dr. Geisler's entire philosophy of ministry permeated the course, enriching the specific tools with Christian purpose. The course curriculum was Biblical, practical, effective, and motivating. Furthermore, the deep passion Dr. Geisler feels for this subject matter was evident in the thorough, constructive feedback I received on each assignment - comments as comprehensive as I've received from any professor!

When I entered Dr. Geisler's course, I considered myself an apologist who does evangelism. I left the course an evangelist who does apologetics. In short, **the course was a ministry game changer, one that will enhance the efforts of every Christian, and certainly every student, who takes seriously the Great Commission.**”

Andrew Foland, Ratio Christi Area Ministry Director

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“As a pastor of a 3,000-member church in the progressive and hostile D.C. culture, I realized early on my background in biblical Greek and Hebrew exegesis, coupled with excellent training in homiletics at Dallas Theological Seminary, did not adequately prepare me to defend the faith and present the gospel effectively. So, in my late 50s, I headed to Southern Evangelical Seminary to enhance my apologetic skills. by enrolling in a Thomistic apologetic doctorate under one of my old professors, Dr. Norman Geisler. His classical approach to apologetics was just what I needed to learn how to better equip highly educated people in the Washington environment to reason people toward belief in God and, ultimately His gospel.

A surprising benefit in my education occurred when I took an Apologetics and Evangelism class by Dr. Norman Geisler's son, David. Though we had attended DTS together in the early 1980s, **he had developed skills beyond our graduation that I needed to acquire** to put myself and others in a better position to move people toward the God concept and faith in His dear Son. Frankly, I had never heard of his conversational evangelism method, but I found it not just intriguing, but highly beneficial.

If anything, David's emphasis on the art of asking well crated questions to non-believers, dovetailed with my other studies concerning the value of the Socratic method for evangelism and apologetics. **This art of questioning has now become the bedrock of how we train our people to be salt in light for God in challenging environments from the Pentagon to the White House.** Countless lives have been challenged and changed by the method I learned from David. **I can't thank him enough for his impact on my life and church.**

Now, instead of giving non-Christ followers answers to their questions right up front in a top/down format, we listen to them and seek to devise questions that can lead to less confrontational and more productive conversations. After all, are we not just beggars who are looking for bread? Indeed. Christians have, by God's good grace, found the Bread of Life, and **David's method teaches former beggars how to lovingly, compassionately, and thoughtfully guide those who are spiritually hungry to the One who can satisfy them for all time.**”

Marty Baker, Senior Pastor, Burke Community Church, Burke, VA