

Your Story:

Our church's journey in evangelism

Discussion guide for
the Our Story Video



crossover

Helping Australian Baptists Share Jesus

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This discussion guide accompanies the Our Story video which you can download from the Crossover website. The video is designed to help church leaders and key ministry leaders consider how evangelism has changed in response to a changing culture and what evangelistic challenges and opportunities our churches face moving forward.

There are three key topics:

- Looking back at what we used to do.
- Considering how we have changed and adapted.
- Looking forward at how we need to change and adapt.

The video features the founders of Crossover, our State leaders and some key thinkers and theologians.

Norm Nix – founding Director of Crossover.

Scott Pilgrim – past Director of Crossover.

Mike Mills – State Executive Minister, South Australian Baptist Union.

Mark Wilson – Director of Ministries, Baptist Churches of Western Australia.

Daniel Bullock – Director of Mission & Ministries, Baptist Union of Victoria.

Ken Clendinning – Director of Ministries, Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT

David Loder – General Superintendent, Queensland Baptists.

John Smith – Superintendent, Tasmanian Baptists.

Karina Kreminski – Lecturer in Missional Studies, Morling College.

Michael Frost – Vice Principal, Morling College.

Keith Jobberns – National Ministries & Crossover Director, Australian Baptist Ministries.

Their contribution is designed to be a conversation starter. The key conversation is the one you have in your own church about your own context.

Knowing where you've come from, knowing where you are, and knowing where you are heading to, is critical when it comes to evangelism. We cannot afford to be in a perpetual state of reaction to our culture. It will serve us better to be in a perpetual state of evaluation and adaptation so that we can contend effectively for the Gospel in a changing culture.

We recognise that good tactics is not the primary fuel for evangelism. Our primary consideration is to seek to be empowered by the Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit we rely upon God for wisdom. We need to be in constant conversation and analysis about evangelism. We trust that this discussion guide can help shape your conversations.

Looking Back

"We've expected people to come to us... We have to start going out a lot more, doing a lot more discipleship with our people so that they are prepared to share their life and share their faith."

- **Daniel Bullock**

"The church has had an imagination around evangelism which is very much 'come and hear, we'll present it in a way that makes sense, and tell you about the benefits of the gospel and call you to a response to the love of God...unfortunately it seems that we haven't caught up with the fact that this shift has occurred in culture generally. Very rarely do people go to meetings like that to access information".

- **Michael Frost**

"To some extent churches are still doing what they have done in the past. You see some churches doing street evangelism and giving out tracts and putting on events with an evangelistic speaker but I don't know if those things are actually connecting with the community."

- **Karina Kreminski**

Question 1:

What are some of the ways that you have done evangelism in the past that may not be relevant today?

Question 2:

What are some of the ways that you have done evangelism in the past that are still highly relevant today?

Question 3:

Are there any things you need to stop doing that are no longer relevant today?

Question 4:

How do you think the evangelistic passion and intent of your church is going? How core is it to your ministries and vision?

Question 5:

Do you think the focus of your church is too inward?

"Nearly every church starts for one reason: "We want to make a difference for Christ in this suburb or this town and they plant a church there. But then after a while they forget about that and they just do their own thing. How do we keep that before us at all times, as part of our ministry, we believe in the Gospel, we fully believe that people can be saved, and we're going to at least try reach people with the good news".

- **Norm Nix**

Current Challenges for Evangelism

"We've reshaped evangelism around engaging in relationships rather than just the formulaic kind of approach. But in engaging in those relationships and caring for people and making connections we've lost something of the ability to have significant conversations around Jesus."

- Mike Mills

Question 1:

How do you rate the capacity of people in your congregation to have 'significant conversations around Jesus'?

Question 2:

Does your church provide any training/ mentoring/coaching to help people to articulate their faith more effectively?

"Often we speak from our own language, our own jargon and understanding. So we actually don't engage in a language that people understand. Our presentation of the gospel is not in a way that people can engage or understand what we mean by it."

- Ken Clendinning

Question 3:

How confident are you that your people are able to talk about the things of God in a way that people understand?

Question 4:

Do you take care to adjust the communication in your church services so that people unfamiliar with church can understand?

(We need to) move away from a very pragmatic driven corporate model to learning how to do church a little more slowly. Thinking about relationships as priority."

- Karina Kreminsky

"I don't think we should have lower expectations but slower expectations. You can't just 'Boom!' hit them with a 20minute talk about Jesus and they'll totally change their lives. They're suspicious about that, they are desiring a different form of humanity, they know that the world is messed up, they don't think that it is the way it should be."

- Michael Frost

Question 5:

Do you recognise that the journey towards a faith commitment has become longer in your particular context? Do you have 'slower expectations'?

Question 6:

Are your people equipped to understand the journey required (for faith) and to travel with people on that journey?

"What they are looking for is someone to mentor them through the process of discovering truth. In that respect evangelists become more like coaches"

- Michael Frost

Looking Forward

"We're doing stuff but not really talking about why we're doing it, what our motives and hopes are."

- Daniel Bullock

"We're very good at building bridges into the community. Where we are falling down seems to be inviting people back over that bridge into the kingdom of God."

- David Loder

"As churches we have engaged more and more with the community than what we did twenty or thirty years ago, we're not necessarily engaging in those Jesus stories, the faith stories, we don't necessarily share our faith in a way that engages with them. Sometimes it's because although we engage with them we don't necessarily know their world as well as what we could. Therefore we don't have the right kind of language at times, or we are unable to speak from their perspective."

- Ken Clendinning

"I reckon it's easy to be just another good voice amongst hundreds of other opinions out there that are often good voices. The difference for us is the Gospel, the resurrection, the Ascension of Jesus. That's all central, and somehow that's got to get to people to hear that as the kernel of the good"

- John Smith

Question 1:

How engaged are you as a church with your local community?

Question 2:

Would you say that people would regard you as an indispensable part of your local community?

Question 3:

Do local people understand your motivation for serving them?

Question 4:

How can you sensitively do more to articulate the Gospel through what you do in the local community?

"Needs don't change, society changes, but needs don't... what are the opportunities and challenges in our community and how much financial and human resources are currently putting into mission?"

- Norm Nix

Question 5:

What percentage of your budget is given to mission in general?

Question 6:

What percentage of your budget is given to local & regional mission?

"We need to rediscover what it means again to produce churches that have a great culture of love. Jesus said that the world will know that we are followers of Him by our love for one another. It's easy to miss that, in the mix of all the other things we do, we sometimes forget the very central thing as a base from where we push off from to be able to actually tell the world that Christ died for them."

- John Smith

Looking Forward

“The difference we’re facing is we’re living in a post Christian world view where years ago there was a framework and people have lost that. So we’ve got to start from further back, and therefore the church has to be a lot more relational, has to be a lot more welcoming, and giving people a feeling of belonging.”

- Mark Wilson

Question 7:

How would you rate your church in terms of having a culture of love? What more can you do to foster this culture?

Question 8:

What do you think of Michael’s concept of discipleship as evangelism?

“I would suggest that evangelism starts to be thought of in terms of being a form of discipleship. We used to just befriend people, hit them with the Gospel and then start discipling them. I suggest we start discipling people as unbelievers. We start becoming coaches and mentors, we start to train people in the values of the kingdom, in how to be the kind of human that Jesus intended us to be and desires us to be and evangelism becomes discipleship even before there’s been any commitment to Christ or any understanding of the Gospel or repentance from sin. And then what we would now call discipleship just becomes the ongoing process of mentoring people into a deeper following of Jesus”.

- Michael Frost

“The challenge is for us to find a way to mobilise the church without the church feeling guilty and laden with ‘oughts’ and ‘should’s’ and some of that is recapturing the wonder of what it is to actually be a part of God’s family and knowing that we are loved and forgiven and graced by God in a way that shapes everything we are and not hide it under a bushel.”

- Mike Mills

Question 9:

Do people in your church feel guilty about evangelism (or the lack thereof)? How can you capture what Mike has suggested about a culture of evangelism flowing from grace?

We trust that this video has been a catalyst for your own conversation, and that you will see fruit from wrestling with the issues arising from a changing world.

The Apostle Paul said: *“I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings”.* - **1 Cor 9:22-23.**

We trust that you will be blessed with wisdom as you work out what that means for you in your particular context.