

How Can Local Churches Be Empowered for Evangelism?

Last week, I wrote about the eye-opening conversation I had with two evangelists that I hugely respect and admire on the state of evangelism in modern America. I highly encourage you to read that piece [here](#).

Shawn Carlson is the executive director at Time to Revive (TTR). Founded by Kyle Lance Martin, TTR is equipping the saints for the return of Christ. They started out going city to city throughout the U.S. stirring up the church to come together, to be equipped to share with people, and then leading outreaches for a weekend or weeks at a time in that local region. Though they still have active ministries all over the nation, they have moved to an international focus all over the world through their product `reviveSCH00L`, now in 85 countries that is discipling people on the totality of the Scriptures revealing the Messiah from Genesis to Revelation and empowering ordinary people to make disciples.

Wade Aaron is the founder of Christ's Reward. His ministry focuses on evangelism, church workshops, "by faith" mission trips, and provides online equipping materials and resources for believers to walk out their faith in a practical way.

This is the second of two articles with their insights, and I challenge you to read their words and pray about how God might have you respond to Him. (Some of their answers were edited for the sake of time and conciseness).

The Responsibility of Evangelism

Bunni Pounds: My question to both individually—what is the responsibility of an individual Christian related to evangelism? We're all so busy, we're in churches, we have businesses, we have families and we have soccer games with our

kids. What should we as individual Christians be engaging in as it relates to evangelism?

Shawn Carlson: We mistakenly think that evangelism must look a certain way, and I will include myself in this camp sometimes. We think that evangelism must be a 10 a.m. outreach on a Saturday morning, where we're going out with some sort of gospel track or a Time to Revive Bible and band, and we're intentionally engaging people for two hours, and then to come back to the church and have pizza.

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Don't get me wrong, that's our bread and butter here at Time to Revive, but how often are we, as believers, just talking to the person in front of us on a normal day? We need to reframe what we think about evangelism and always try to engage people with a spiritual conversation. It doesn't have to be as exact as—is Jesus the Lord your life, or do you know Jesus? It's also effective to just say, tell me about your life. Tell me what's going on. What is your story? We can be engaging with people all the time and then transition to the gospel.

Wade Aaron: Evangelism is for every believer, no matter how busy we are, or what our occupations are. I think people, even in America, are aware that we've got a problem. We've got a problem in our nation. Our nation is sick. But what are we doing to fix that? There are so many great causes, but I'm convinced that the gospel changes lives and it is the greatest cause. When someone gets born again—it changes a person from night to day.

Whether you're a stay-at-home mom, you're a businessperson or you're in media, or whatever your role is, I believe that God has given you a circle of influence as a believer to reach people with the gospel. Sometimes we limit it to people like

me that are missionaries or evangelists. You are the only person who can reach your neighbors or coworkers. I think it's just a mindset in our heads that must change.

One of the biggest things I have found that helps me keep sharing the gospel is keeping my motive on loving people. My goal is to help other Christians realize they can love others. You can love them practically, but another way to love is by sharing the gospel with them. We sometimes build up these lies in our head that we don't want to be too forceful, overly aggressive, or too pushy. But at the end of the day, if your coworker, family member or friend, doesn't hear the Good News and they don't choose Jesus as their Lord, they are going to go to hell. Not only will they go to hell, but I would submit to you that they are living in torment already here on earth. We have the news that can change their lives. Will we share it?

Overcoming Fear to Share Our Faith

Bunni Pounds: What are some of the things that you all have seen as far as fears—things that you must get people over when it comes to evangelism? What are some of the mindsets that we must overcome to share our faith?

Shawn Carlson: I think the biggest hurdle that we must overcome, especially with the younger generations, is simply teaching people how to talk to people face to face. What is the art of a conversation? How do you break into a conversation and connect with somebody with a short intro? It is the very first thing we must get back to, so that people are used to having those one-on-one personal conversations. We teach them how to break into a conversation with someone at a coffee shop in a gentle way.

Because of technology, we go into meetings many times armed with information, we look up their biographies because we have the internet, and it usually gives us a starting place to

begin to talk. In talking with complete strangers, we must regain the art of thoughtful digging. How do we uncover information about people and draw it out of them by asking questions? That part of a conversation builds trust with the other person. For us here at Time to Revive, a 10- or 15-minute training before we take people out gets them a little bit comfortable with the tools and questions to ask, and then we just go out and have conversations with people and Lord willing, it will lead to a gospel conversation.

Wade Aaron: Well, first we must overcome ourselves. We have to get outside of ourselves. I think we just live for ourselves a lot. Whether we realize it or not, we go to the grocery store, we think about our groceries and we don't think about everyone in front of us. We go home, and we want to sit down and chill out for the day. If we reach out to one of our neighbors once a week or even once a month, and we live there for five years, we're going to reach a lot of people over five years. Sometimes I think we're living for our comfort.

To step outside of ourselves, I have found a lot of people have fear that they must overcome. Fear of what to say, fear of what they don't know, fear that they will say the wrong thing. They are afraid that people might ask certain questions that they might not know how to answer or try to argue with them. They must overcome these fears. And that's where I would say—just keep your motive love. Keep loving people because love casts out fear.

Lastly, I think people need practical tools. One of my greatest strengths is making things practical. How do we share the gospel in two minutes? How do we make it simple? I was helping a student at the University of North Texas break it down the other day—repent of your sins, put your faith in Jesus and make him the Lord of your life, and you will be saved. At the end of the day, it's that simple. We must work with people and share that simplicity with people. We overcomplicate it. They just need practical tools—how do you

approach someone? How do you talk to someone? I have found that many people know the gospel, but they are not sharing it—so we train them on these simple questions. How do I engage someone with the gospel? How do I engage someone with my testimony? How do I pray for someone without praying too long? We give them practical tools to empower them.

Gen Z and the Gospel

Bunni Pounds: There's a lot of talk about Gen Z right now. What are you all finding on the streets? Is Gen Z open to the gospel? Are they hostile?

Shawn Carlson: They are open, wide open. If you get somebody from our generation, Generation X, who grew up in church, and then you try to have a gospel conversation with them, they are many times going to be hardened if all they have seen is religion. In our childhoods, we would get in the car and go to church on Sunday, our parents had the best intentions. But if people in Generation X are not walking with the Lord, there's a hardness around them. However, if you go down one more generation with the same experiences, they seem to be wide open. Even those who don't know anything about Jesus are open. If we can capture the hearts of Gen Z, we will get this revival thing nailed down. We just have to figure out how to talk to them. We must figure out how to reach them where they are—on TikTok, Snapchat and Instagram. Then we must get a heart connection with them, having a meaningful conversation. Those conversations can be awkward, but this generation desperately needs it.

Wade Aaron: I would say overall that I can tell they're curious. They are incredibly open minded to the gospel and having a conversation. Part of my ministry is that I am carrying a large cross to all 50 states. I've been to a couple of college campuses already. I've carried it from Princeton, to Harvard, to the University of Iowa, to even here at the University of North Texas in Texas. Every place there's people

that are curious. I think they're looking for what's authentic—for what is real. They have open minds. When you share with them the gospel, they listen. I'm convinced that the Word will go forth and that it has greater power than anything else we could think about.

Breaking Out of Consumer Christianity

Bunni Pounds: If you were advising the Church on how to break out from a consumer Christianity to a more first-century church model, how would you advise people? We're sitting in a pew, we're listening to a message, but how would you advise an ordinary Christian to try to break out of that consumer mentality?

Shawn Carlson: God's trying to do something today in our time. I think we need a 21st-century church, not just a first-century church. In the book of Acts—there was a movement because Jesus equipped the disciples on how to reach people of that century. They saw a lot of movement among the Greeks and the Romans who were under heavy oppression from their government. They also saw a huge movement and openness to the gospel among the Jews. I think if we try to implement the things that they did we're missing in our own cultural context. I personally am longing for the 21st-century church rather than the first-century church.

Wade Aaron: I think we need to recognize that they need to grow in this area. People are inspired by leaders. As a pastor if you're leading your congregation, and you have testimonies from the week of someone that you lead to the Lord and you're discipling, it overflows to everybody in your church. In the process, you raise up others in your community that are engaging in discipling. It can't only be the leaders of the church. Every man and woman in the church needs to know that God wants to use me. It's taking small steps to empower people over time, but you will start seeing change.

✖ There is a church in Arizona where this is really taking hold. They are doing what they are calling—gospel nights. Once a week, in this small church, they have 40 people who get together. They talk and keep each other accountable to reach people with the gospel throughout the week. They ask each other—who are you discipling? Who are you reaching in your circle of influence? I would love to see us create more environments like this. Ultimately, we need to get our minds around what Jesus told us to do continually.

What is the Christian Walk?

Bunni Pounds: If you were going to break down the Christian walk in one sentence, what would it be?

Shawn Carlson: I just have one word—obedience. I desire for God to lead me in every area of my life. I haven't fully submitted every area, I'm sure, but I want to ask God every day, what do You want me to do?

Wade Aaron: Following Jesus with all our hearts and being obedient. If we follow Jesus with all our heart, all the other stuff will work itself out.

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Bunni Pounds *is president and founder of Christians Engaged, a ministry activating the Body of Christ to pray, vote and engage regularly. Formerly a congressional candidate and 16-year political consultant, she is a motivational speaker and bible teacher. Her book, Jesus and Politics: One Woman's Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession comes out nationally on 2/6/24.*