

Chapter of the kook: PRACTICAL GUIDE TO
EVANGELISM HOW TO WIN AND KEEP
MEMBERS

2nd EDITION

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Evangelistic Visitation

THERE ARE numerous stories all across the globe of how the planting of Seventh-day Adventist congregations and the significant growth and expansion of the church is largely due to personal contacts between church members and those outside the faith. These personal evangelism encounters have brought hope and conviction to millions of people who are now living in anticipation of the Second Advent.

Pioneering Adventism in the Inter-American Division

In 1879, Pastor John N. Loughborough—an Adventist missionary from the United States of America who was residing in Southampton, England—and William Ings—a colporteur in the same city—sent a box of books and tracts to Haiti with no specific addressee. This literature reached the hands of an Episcopalian missionary, who in turn shared the literature with other Protestant missionaries. A Baptist missionary distributed the publications within his congregation. When Henry Williams and his wife—a young Jamaican couple in the congregation— studied the literature, they began keeping the Sabbath as the day of rest and sharing what they had learned with others. In 1892, after more than ten years, Pastor L. C. Chadwick visited them for the first time. He baptized them, and they became the first Seventh-day Adventists in the Inter-American Division.

Henry Williams and his wife continued their evangelistic activities across Jamaica, and their influence spread throughout the Caribbean region. There were people on other islands and in other countries who also participated in evangelistic visitation and literature distribution. This contributed to the growth of Adventism in the territory. As the membership grew, the General Conference provided leadership for the work in the territory with the West

Indies Union Conference, which was created in 1906. Subsequently, the Northern Latin American Mission was created in 1914. In 1922, The General Conference organized the Inter-American Division with 8,146 members in 221 churches distributed between 3 conferences and 10 missions. By 1924, the membership in Inter-America had grown to 11,670 members worshipping in 229 churches. It reached a membership of 3.6 million by 2012, and the growth continues today. A primary factor of this growth is the evangelistic visitation carried out by the laity.

Pioneering Adventism in the South American Division

A certain harbor worker in New York had a desire to send some Portuguese literature to “the neglected continent” of South America, so he placed it in the hands of a sea captain who promised he would give it to someone in Brazil. When the captain was about to return to New York, he remembered his promise and tossed the bundle of literature unceremoniously onto the dock from which his ship was already departing. A storekeeper from the state of Santa Catarina carried home the literature, which he used as wrapping paper in his grocery. One of his customers, a drunkard, used the paper to fill some cracks in his kitchen wall. While leaning against the wall one day, he began to read. The more he read, the more he felt impressed that he had found what he had been searching for. He became the first convert to Adventism in the country of Brazil. He began doing evangelistic visitation, and today that tiny lay ministry has reaped a bountiful harvest. Millions are rejoicing in the Adventist faith, and personal visitation continues to be one of the most important activities of the church in the South American Division.

Inspired Support for Evangelistic Visitation

Inspiration places great emphasis on the one-to-one evangelistic method. “The work of Christ was made up largely of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. From that one soul the intelligence received was carried to thousands” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, chap. 13, p. 115). Christ’s followers employed this same method of preaching the gospel. Acts 8:26–40 relates how Philip’s one-to-one interview with the Ethiopian eunuch resulted in this important government official accepting Jesus.

The story of the Samaritan woman in John 4 powerfully illustrates how Jesus' use of evangelistic visitation and one-to-one personal contact led a whole town to come to the saving knowledge of Christ. In *The Desire of Ages*, Ellen White wrote:

The Saviour did not wait for congregations to assemble. Often He began His lessons with only a few gathered about Him, but one by one the passers-by paused to listen, until a multitude heard with wonder and awe the words of God through the heaven-sent Teacher. The worker for Christ should not feel that he cannot speak with the same earnestness to a few hearers as to a larger company. There may be only one to hear the message; but who can tell how far-reaching will be its influence? It seemed a small matter, even to His disciples, for the Savior to spend His time upon a woman of Samaria. But He reasoned more earnestly and eloquently with her than with kings, counselors, or high priests. The lessons He gave to that woman have been repeated to the earth's remotest bounds.

As soon as she had found the Saviour the Samaritan woman brought others to Him. She proved herself a more effective missionary than His own disciples. . . . Through the woman whom they despised, a whole city was brought to hear the Savior. (chap. 19, pp. 194, 195) Evangelistic visitation that is modeled on Christ's approach yields great success, and it is still indispensable to God's people as they engage in witnessing. Ellen White wrote, "For years I have been shown that house-to-house labor is the work that will make the preaching of the word a success" (*Evangelism*, sec. 13, p. 433). Thus she asserted that "it is not preaching that is the most important; it is house-to-house work" (*Gospel Workers*, sec. 10, p. 468). "In almost every community there are large numbers who do not listen to the preaching of God's word or attend any religious service. If they are reached by the gospel, it

must be carried to their homes" (*The Ministry of Healing*, chap. 9, p. 144).

Carrying Out Evangelistic Visitation

Believers in Christ must be proactive in equipping themselves to reach others and share their faith. To equip oneself for the task of evangelistic visitation, it is essential to spend much time in personal prayer and Bible study. It should be the desire of every sincere Christian to have a more meaningful prayer life and a deeper personal Bible study experience to enrich their spirituality (1 Thess. 5:17; Col. 4:2; 2 Tim. 2:15). Jesus' prayer life is a model for all believers. Like Jesus, each one should find a suitable time, place, and method for prayer. They should pray with expectancy, believing that the Lord will answer. Prayer and study of the Word should constitute a way of life that precedes and accompanies evangelistic visitation.

Evangelistic home visitation is done with a specific intent: to influence souls to Christ. There are various types of evangelistic visitations that one may engage in; however, in this section, we will focus on only three types:

(1) *new-interest* visits, (2) *sequel* visits, and (3) *decision* visits. Where an individual begins with a new-interest visit, the natural progression will be to advance successively to the follow-up (sequel) stage and eventually to the decision stage. Every believer should have the desire for evangelistic visitations to culminate in decisions for Christ.

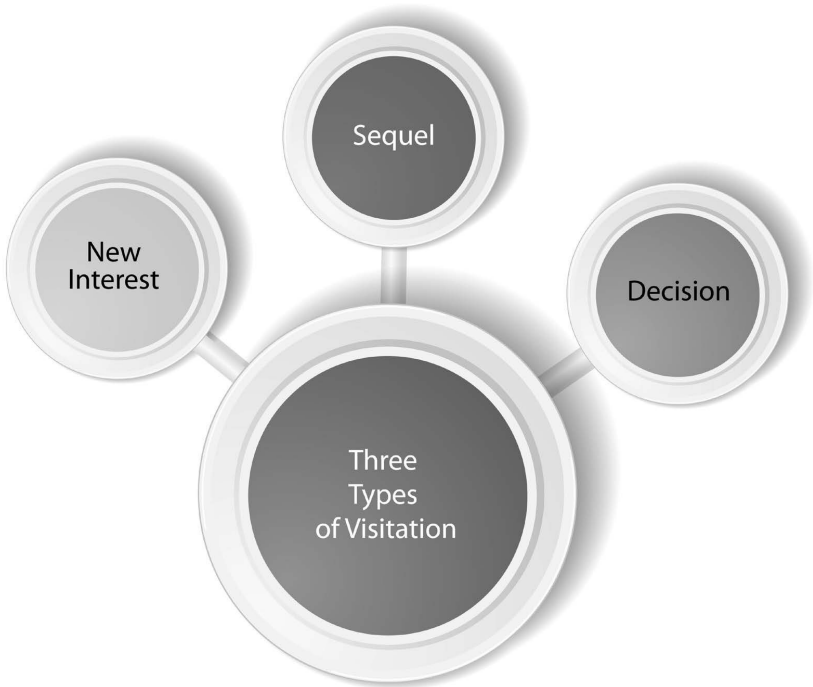


Figure 1: Types of Evangelistic Visitation

New-Interest Visits

New-interest visits are those that believers make to persons with whom they have not had a one-to-one relationship and whom they desire to influence to Christ. Initiating this kind of visit does not require the believer to focus directly on salvation issues, but rather to build a social relationship and eventually shift attention to the spiritual mission. This will require the believer to engage in return visits. Believers should not only be concerned with leading those with whom they are familiar to Christ, but should endeavor to reach strangers as well. The first step in carrying out new-interest visits is to develop a new-interest contact list. Present the names on this list in prayer to the Lord and ask for His guidance in how to contact and influence these persons to begin an intimate walk with Him. While

praying for these persons, look for the right opportunity to initiate the visitation process. Also be ready in case the Lord provides an inadvertent encounter.

Now that you have settled on whom you want to visit, you need to determine an appropriate time and place. If you are unsure or timid about initiating the visit, you could ask someone who is experienced in evangelistic visitation to accompany you. However, this is your project with the Lord, and you have asked for His guidance and are assured of His presence, so you need to go forward in faith. If you choose to go with someone who is experienced, ask them to coach you in how to initiate the conversation and conduct the visit. It is important to always remember that the methods of others might not be tailored to your personality and way of working, so you should always endeavor to find your own approach.

People love to talk about their family, children, and career, so take advantage of this opportunity to establish a personal connection. If you know of a special occasion in the life of the person you want to visit, it would be a good idea to use that occasion as an opportunity to initiate the visit. If it is New Year's Day, pay them a new-year visit. If it is their birthday, anniversary, or graduation, take the opportunity to wish them well in that special moment of their life and thus initiate the contact. You may even want to take a gift if possible. Give gifts that will interest and delight the person. If children are involved, magazines, storybooks, or tapes with uplifting, Christian stories are examples of gifts that both adults and children can appreciate.

Other occasions that might offer an opportunity to initiate a visit include a new arrival to the family, a situation of bereavement, or other situations of significance in the person's life. A significant development in the community, society, or world could also provide such an opportunity. In this technological age in which people are busily attending to their personal lives and other interests, initial contacts may be made through e-mail, letter, phone call, text message, or social media. Sending a message through someone you know could work as well. For example, on your behalf, in your absence, a friend may say to the prospect: "I know someone gifted in social networking who would love to meet you someday. How about I introduce you to each other?"

This initial contact could provide an opportunity to build an acquaintance and begin to cultivate a strong social bond. Continued dialogue could lead to the opportunity to introduce discussion about God's providence. Then you could take advantage of opportunities to engage in joint efforts for the benefit of others. As acquaintance grows into social bonding, the way may open for you to introduce biblical subjects or even for the prospect to initiate discussion on some point of faith. Do not let such an opportunity slip away. Be vigilant and alert for every window of opportunity to get to your objective! Whenever an opportune time comes, invite the prospect to a church program. This could be a special musical program, holiday celebration, church-sponsored community project, or social activity.

How to Initiate the Spiritual Aspect of the Conversation

There are numerous questions and experiences that you can utilize to introduce and follow through with the spiritual aspect of a new interest visit. A natural transition may arise from the actual situation or conversation. This may create an avenue for alluding to the time and energy that people invest in choosing and developing their careers and relationships with others, often to the neglect of their spiritual lives. A relevant question in a situation like this could be, "How do you think people should attend to their spiritual growth?" If there is a case of tragedy, a negative experience, or even a positive outcome to a difficult situation, a relevant question might be, "How has your concept of God been affected by this experience?"

Conversation with the person might also lead to the following: "We've talked about many things, but we've never spent much time talking about religious things. If I may ask, where are you right now in your spiritual journey?" You could even ask the question, "What is your personal concept of God?" You could also initiate a spiritual conversation by saying, "Could I share with you a little about my personal relationship with the Lord?" Another question that could be used to create a conversation is: "Have you had the personal experience at some point in your life of accepting the Lord as your Savior?"

Other leading questions could be: “May I share with you how I reached this point in my Christian journey?” “Do you believe spiritual values influence the way you function in your marriage, or do they affect your perspectives toward life and work?” “If you could be sure that there’s a God, would you want to know Him personally?” Or, “If you could know God personally, would you want to?” “What do you think about your faith?” “Have you made that exciting discovery of knowing God personally?” “How often do you go to church?” “Would you like to spend some time together to discuss the basic essentials of our Christian beliefs?” “Can we take some time to discuss some important issues in life?” “Do you think we should allow faith to have a greater influence in our lives?” “How about if I share with you some of the basic beliefs of my faith so that you can determine if this is what you’re looking for?” “Many people say they are Christians. What does it mean to you to be a Christian?” “Have you ever had a discussion with someone about how to strengthen your faith?”

Other Ideal Ways to Connect with People

Invite the person to your home for a friendly visit. Tell them how much you care about establishing a friendship or some kind of social relationship with them. During your visit, it would be good to offer a relevant prayer at some point. This could be an important witness to your faith. If necessary, invite—or ask them to invite—other families, friends, and acquaintances to participate in some meaningful activity.

If you are unsure of what you could do on such an occasion, try singing some songs or watching a Digital Recording with an interesting, spiritual message that can stimulate conversation. Serving a meal may add to the fellowship. It could also provide an opportunity to introduce the subject of healthful living. A family outing or other recreational activity could also be a good activity to capture attention, hold interest, build a relationship, and establish a transition to discussing more transcendent subjects and matters of faith.

The Sequel Visits

So the new-interest visits have gone well, the transition has taken place, and now dialogue has begun regarding spiritual issues. Or this might be a case in which a person has been referred for visits due to their interest in

discussing a particular point of faith. They may have attended a religious meeting and responded to a call, and the purpose of the visit will be to continue discussion. It may even be that they have indicated their desire to follow Jesus, thus the need for a sequel visit. Ellen White said, “The interest awakened should be followed up by personal labor—visiting, holding Bible readings, teaching how to search the Scriptures, praying with families and interested ones, seeking to deepen the impression made upon hearts and consciences” (*Evangelism*, sec. 13, p. 438).

Visiting a Person Who Is Missing from an Evangelistic Series

Persons who have shown interest in an evangelistic series may have missed some nights. This sequel visit serves the purpose of updating them on the central message of each topic they have missed and obtaining their response on the subjects presented. Some printed materials on the subjects in question may be presented to them. This visit also helps to encourage their return to the meetings. If there is some difficulty that has kept them away, then where possible, offer some assistance to resolve the situation and get them back to the meetings.

It would be good to inform them of the title the preacher will present at the next meeting. When introducing the title for the next meeting, always present the subject as something to be anticipated and not to be missed. Express regret if they indicate their unavailability to attend, find out which date would be better for them, and assure them that you will give them an update on the central points of the message. However, never leave without getting their commitment on the next date that they will be available to attend. Assure them that you will be following up to ensure that they stay informed and to help them return to the meetings.

As a Follow-up during an Evangelistic Series

When prospects respond to a call in an evangelistic meeting and express a desire to know more, it is time for a sequel visit. This gives the visitor an opportunity to prepare for the visit. This evangelistic visit should be properly planned to share biblical information with the prospect. If you know of any specific point of concern that the prospect has, make sure to research that point and have appropriate answers ready. One of the goals

of this visit is to get the prospect to the point of being ready to make a decision to follow the Lord in baptism.

The purpose of this visit is specifically evangelistic. If a series of meetings has occasioned this follow-up request, review with the person the main points of the messages presented and provide answers to any questions they may have. If they do not have any questions, then have them answer some questions regarding essential doctrinal positions. Use relevant Bible passages to reinforce these concepts. A series of Bible study lesson guides would prove very useful in this endeavor. A sample pledge card is listed below that can serve as a guide for important doctrinal topics that should be covered in these sequel visits.

General Advice for Making Sequel Visits

The request for a visit may not come as the result of a planned evangelistic series, but rather through an interest created through some kind of personal contact. It may even be the result of the prospect's own initiative due to a variety of factors. A series of Bible study lessons can be one of the best tools to ensure a systematic order of witnessing and responding to particular needs. It is always important to ensure that the person's questions are answered satisfactorily.

There is always a need for support, which is why Jesus sent the disciples in teams or small groups. Choose your team wisely. If you and the members of your team are faced with questions that you do not feel competent to answer, tell the prospect that you do not think you can answer their questions or concerns adequately. Let them know that there is someone who can address their concerns more effectively and that you will be inviting that person to the next meeting in order to adequately address the subject. Ask their permission to bring that person to the next meeting. If it is a question that you can address but need time to research, let them know that you will need some time to study the topic a little more and that at the next meeting you will provide the response.

Do not waste time arguing over points of disagreement. "Here is a lesson for all our ministers, colporteurs, and missionary workers. When you meet those, who, like Nathanael, are prejudiced against the truth, do not urge your peculiar views too strongly. Talk with them at first of subjects

upon which you can agree. Bow with them in prayer, and in humble faith, present your petitions at the throne of grace. Both you and they will be brought into a closer connection with heaven, prejudice will be weakened, and it will be easier to reach the heart" (*Evangelism*, sec. 13, p. 446).

There are times during these visits when social, emotional, or physical issues are unearthed that need to be addressed before the prospect can be led to make a decision for Christ. In such cases, if you cannot address the issues, refer the person to a competent professional who can guide them through the situation. Always be careful not to get into areas in which you are not competent. Let professionals do their job. If you make a referral, you should stay in contact with the prospect. Developing strong bonds can aid them in the process of dealing with the issues and will help them be comfortable to join the faith.

Decision Visits

When a prospect has been engaged in dialogue regarding issues involving their eternal destiny and the time comes for them to make a specific decision to follow the Lord in baptism, it is time for the decision visit. This visit may or may not follow previous new-interest and sequel visits, but the person is now at the point of making this decision that is so important for their eternal destiny. This visit should focus specifically on that purpose.

Determine quickly where to expend your efforts. If the visit is during an evangelistic campaign, is this person a prospect for this harvest or a future harvest? Keep your focus on those who are ready to make an immediate decision for baptism. There are those who are disposed to making the decision but, because of various situations, are not prepared to do so. Place these on the future harvest list. Do not abandon them, but rather keep in touch, letting them see, feel, and know that you have a genuine interest in them. Have others from the church visit them during this time. There are also those who are prepared but are not disposed to make this decision. You may need to ask for the assistance of persons to whom they could be more inclined and who would be more effective in securing their decisions. The decisions of those who are both disposed and prepared should be secured immediately.

Be mindful that arguing with a prospect is never an ideal approach. When a person is at the point of making a decision, they may look for ways to evade it. Recognize this, move on, and try not to engage in an argument that could divert attention from the mission at hand. At this point, Bible studies should only be done where absolutely necessary in order to clear up doubts or address specific issues. This is a moment when a battle for minds is raging, so prayer should be without ceasing. Give the prospect a commitment card and a covenant card to sign. Personally writing their name, signature, and planned date of baptism will help create a sense of obligation to the decisions they are making.

The commitment card covers specific doctrinal positions. It can serve as a guide for church members who are witnessing to prospects about the important doctrinal points that should be considered leading up to the covenant. Form A contains a sample commitment card that can be contextualized as needed.

Form A: Sample Commitment Card

My Personal Commitments

Name: _____ Date: _____

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of God:

1. The Word of God
2. The Godhead
3. God the Father
4. God the Son
5. God the Holy Spirit

Signature: _____

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of man:

6. Creation
7. The Nature of Man

Signature: _____

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of salvation:

8. The Great Controversy
9. The Life, Death, and Resurrection of Christ
10. The Experience of Salvation
11. Growing in Christ

Signature: _____

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of the church:

12. The Church
13. The Remnant and Its Mission

14. Unity in the Body of Christ

15. Baptism

16. The Lord's Supper

17. Spiritual Gifts and Ministries

18. The Gift of Prophecy

Signature: _____

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of the Christian life:

19. The Law of God

20. The Sabbath

21. Stewardship

22. Christian Behavior

23. Marriage and the Family

I have studied, accepted, and believed the doctrine of last things:

24. Christ's Ministry in the Heavenly Sanctuary

25. The Second Coming of Christ

26. Death and Resurrection

27. The Millennium and the End of Sin

28. The New Earth

Signature: _____

The covenant card is a signed agreement that the prospect has made a final decision to submit his life to the Lord and seal that decision with baptism on a specified date. It also signifies a pledge to become an active disciple of Christ and a member of the church. A sample covenant card is provided

Form B: Sample Covenant Card

My Personal Covenant With God

My name is: _____

- I have accepted Jesus as my personal Savior and decided to become a Christian.
- I have wandered from Jesus, but I choose to wander no more. I hereby give myself fully to Him.
- I have been a follower of the Lord Jesus, but I have now accepted the additional biblical truth of the seventh-day Sabbath and have decided to live in harmony with the whole truth of Scripture.
- Recognizing that complete obedience is my responsibility, I covenant to be baptized.

Date of my baptism: _____

My address: _____

My phone number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

How to Get Decisions to Follow the Lord

People usually make decisions based on how valuable the decision will be to them. They consider costs and measure them against the reward that will be obtained. Usually, at the moment of decision, numerous distractions become prevalent. The prospect who is about to make a decision for the Lord must determine how that decision will ultimately be of value, especially if something very dear will have to be given up in the process. The devil usually orchestrates attacks and discouragements at these times, especially from persons with whom the prospect is closely connected. For this reason, prayer should have a prominent part in the visit.

There is an important place for the expression of emotion when making decisions. The Christian evangelist who seeks to influence decisions in the evangelistic visit should enthusiastically express the joy of the gospel. Let the prospect feel the joy and happiness that comes when the Spirit of the Lord is at work, and make them feel at liberty to express that emotion.

However, the prospect should not wait to experience a certain emotion. Making decisions is more than just a feeling. It is a calculated and intentional review of the facts presented and a conscious act of response to truth. If emotion were the only basis for making a decision, many who today are committed to following the Lord would never have made their decision.

Those involved in influencing evangelistic decision making have to provide information about the rewards and value of the decision to be made compared to the factors that cause resistance. The prospect must be encouraged to look to the greater value. Show them what will provide the best long-term result, and urge them to choose eternal reward over temporary satisfaction.

Depending on emotion may keep the person in a prolonged state of procrastination because, while they are able to recognize truth and the best course of action, they may have a challenge with value-based decision making. The decision may not feel good or seem appealing, and the wise option may appear bleak.

Cognitive control plays a major role in the decision-making process. Prospects have a problem with hoarding or maintaining, which is placing excessive value on a particular relationship or something else that is important to them. This does not provide incentives to sever ties and initiate new relationships. These people are inclined to choose immediate gratification over delayed reward. To overcome this tendency, they must take the necessary cognitive control to shift their attention away from that which they are hoarding. They need to learn to be adventuresome, take a leap of faith, and trust the Lord to fulfill His promises and carry them to new heights in their religious experience.

The Art of Persuasion

To get decisions for Christ, you must depend upon prayer. Divine power is a major influence in influencing decisions. However, we must also prepare ourselves with a knowledge of how human beings behave and what influences their actions. The art of persuasion is fundamental to the process of influencing people make decisions.

To obtain decisions for Christ, you must persuade individuals to love and serve the Lord. Aristotle,

oning, and arguments with which you present the truth. Those who are involved in gaining
sions for Christ should consistently employ all three of these elements of persuasion.

Review and Discussion

What biblical and Spirit of Prophecy support is there for one-to-one evangelistic visitation?

List at least five things that believers in Christ can do to equip themselves for effective evangelistic visitation.

Identify and differentiate between the three types of visitation discussed in this chapter.

Mention three ways in which a church member can initiate a new-interest visit.

In your evangelistic visitation, when would you use a personal commitment card instead of a personal covenant card?

Explain the relevance of ethos, pathos, and logos in evangelistic visitation.