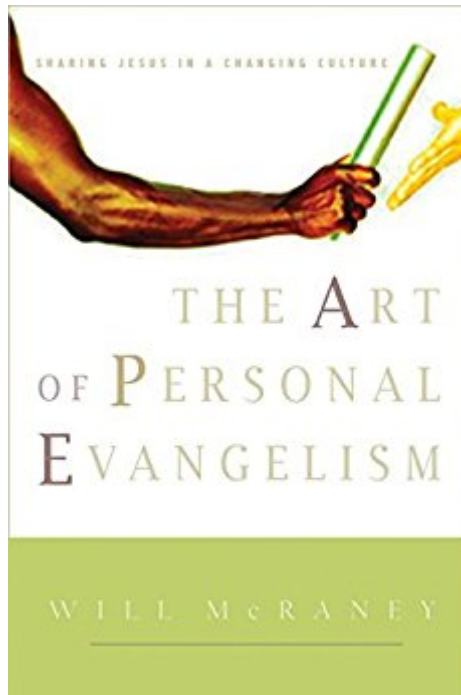




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# The Art Of Personal Evangelism



## Synopsis

Personal evangelism is the foundation for all church growth. As the culture and landscape of America shifts, people are looking for spiritual answers to life's significant questions. However, in the increasingly crowded marketplace of spiritual ideas, people are looking to the church less and less. Will McRaney addresses this problem at the heart of the solution. If the Kingdom of God is to expand, individual Christians will have to learn to communicate their faith story in a way that is engaging, personal, and relevant to the listening culture today.

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## Customer Reviews

The author does A great job of balancing knowledge about evangelism, giving a accurate picture of the current state of the church as it relates to evangelism, and practical advice for getting out and doing evangelism.

Many things have changed since I first heard the gospel, many years ago. We have changed the method and manner that we conduct business, read books and stay in touch with friends and family.

Church has changed the worship music, and the acceptable dress code in church. In order to successfully tell the story of Jesus, people of today must understand the words we say and the thoughts and ideas we are trying to convey. That requires that we repackage the gospel so it can be understood by people in today's society. The message must make sense to people involved with today's society.

The Art of Personal Evangelism is full of helpful information on how to effectively evangelize in the post-modern area. The author brings much experience and knowledge of evangelism and writes in a way that is easy to read.

If you have interest in your own need for salvation, then more than likely you have the interest in seeing others get saved and stay saved as well. This book will help you to accomplish goals for producing disciples for Christ. According to McRaney's common sense principles, "People are responsive and receptive to us when we consistently display interest in them" pg. 176 This book will surely help us to maintain a healthy attitude towards doing evangelism. If you desire to be effective in increasing the kingdom of God through effective witnessing, then you must read this book to obtain the knowledge you need to be successful at evangelizing the world for Christ.

Good book, I try and not use the word great too often because we have a tendency to just use the word great so casually. However, if you have a heart for evangelism you need to add this book to your library.

This book was very helpful. My favorite section was addressing the postmodern mind. I also appreciate the appropriate tension the author identifies at the beginning of the book between the work of God and the work of men in the task of Evangelism

**Synopsis** The Art of Personal Evangelism is an easy-to-read overview of the task of winning family, friends, and acquaintances to saving faith in Jesus Christ. McRaney approached the task of evangelism from the standpoint of a well-informed practitioner. His desire was to point out the scarcity of quality evangelism in North American churches, provide a theology of evangelism, outline theories of communication, and overview techniques for effective witnessing. The three chapters comprising part 1 provide a summary of the theology of evangelism with respect to God's involvement, the role of the witness, and the nature of salvation. Evangelism begins within the heart

of God who has a desire to see all persons come into a restored relationship with himself through their faith in the reconciling sacrifice of Jesus Christ. God is at work. He works in the life of the witness and in the life of the lost person through the superintending activity of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit empowers the witness and enlightens the understanding of the lost person. While the Holy Spirit will empower the witness, the evangelist must take responsibility for adequately preparing for the task. The witness must understand the role of evangelism in the economy of God, the essential elements of the gospel message, and the nature of various evangelistic encounters. McRaney wrote that the witness "should prayerfully and persistently pursue the presence of lost people, then proclaim and persuade at the prompting and in the power of the Holy Spirit" (73). The lucidity of part 1 gives way to the tedium of communication theory in the three chapters of part 2. McRaney summarized the nature of communication with respect to effectively presenting the gospel within the postmodern context. As many others have noted, the American culture has recently experienced a dramatic shift from modernity to postmodernism. This cultural shift necessitates a change in evangelism communication techniques. Whereas modernity defined truth as that which was provable, postmodernism defines truth experientially. Thus, the Christian witness in the postmodern context must emphasize intentional relationship building with lost people so that he or she can experience the truth of the gospel as it is lived out in the life of the witness. The witness must seek to understand the context of the prospect with respect to age, social position, and worldview. McRaney noted, "An essential element of effective communication is to understand something of the lost person's culture in order to make sense of the gospel from the lost person's perspective" (157). The final three chapters provide a summary of tips and techniques for conversing with lost persons. McRaney summarized how to deal with various objections that may arise during the evangelistic encounter and detailed how to remove the internal and external barrier to effective witnessing. In the last chapter, McRaney provided guidance for understanding the different ways men and women process information and make decisions. Sensitivity to these differences will require gender-specific approaches to presenting the gospel. McRaney properly noted that the evangelist's job does not end with the convert's commitment to Christ. Thus, McRaney provided helpful guidance for following up with a person who makes a profession of faith. Evangelism must naturally flow to discipleship where the convert becomes the witness.

### Critical Analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses

McRaney rightly began his book with the theological foundations for evangelism. He reminded the reader that salvation is the activity of God. God took the initiative in the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ's propitiatory sacrifice. God takes the initiative in the process of awakening the prospective convert to the truth of the gospel message.

The witness joins with God's activity by offering a clear and culturally meaningful presentation of the gospel. The strength of the theological aspects of salvation are tempered by McRaney's definition of successful witnessing as both faithfulness and fruitfulness (47). There is sufficient biblical and experiential information to demonstrate that the witness cannot control the fruitfulness of the evangelistic encounter, only the faithfulness. A witness never knows if he or she is planting the initial seed or supporting the efforts of previous evangelists. A witness may never experience the joy of helping a prospect cross the line of faith. The responsibility of church leaders is to prepare members to actively engage their circle of influence with God's message of salvation as God provides opportunities. Perhaps the most helpful aspect of the book is McRaney's comparison and contrast of modernism and postmodernism. Those Christians over the age of forty have realized that the world in which they grew up is not the same world they live in today. Readers in this age group will benefit from chapters 3 and 4. Younger Christians, though, are more likely to have been raised with a postmodern worldview without understanding why the world is the way it is. They will benefit from an examination of postmodernism's assumptions and biases, many of which younger Christians share. McRaney's presentation on postmodernism will challenge younger Christians to compare their own culturally influenced assumptions by the standard of God's Word. Finally, McRaney presented the job of evangelism as the responsibility of every Christian, not just the trained professional. He demystified the task of evangelism for the average Christian by promoting relationship evangelism. Most all believers have formed relationships with non-Christians. By building friendships, the wise witness gains credibility and trustworthiness to share spiritual insights with seekers. Additionally, credibility provides an opening for more hardened unbelievers to seek spiritual counsel when they experience a critical transitional point. Some may see the chapters on communication as too academic and off-putting, however, most readers will benefit from McRaney's thoughtful reflections.

**Evaluation of Author's Objective** McRaney sought to present the task of evangelism as the only viable way to stem the tide of church decline in America. He chose to achieve his objective by examining the theological foundations for evangelism and by exploring the art of communicating the gospel message within the context of postmodernism. He has done both very well.

**Lessons Learned** This reviewer has learned that witnessing in the postmodern world is a time-intensive activity. As such, prospects will rarely come to Christ at the first evangelistic encounter. In order to build relationships with lost people, this reviewer must find opportunities to engage in activities where lost people are most likely to be found--quite a challenge for a pastor who spends 99 percent of his time with church people doing church-related activities. Additionally, this reviewer wonders how he can finding opportunities to build relationships with lost people without

compromising his responsibilities to minister to those who sign his paycheck. The challenge of evangelism in the postmodern world calls into question the outreach strategies traditionally employed by this reviewer's rural program-based church. The door-to-door cold call approach is dead. Non-Christians see a Baptist witnessing team no differently than Jehovah's Witnesses or Mormons knocking at their door. The lesson for this pastor is to challenge the church to examine its outreach program in light of the changing culture and needs of the community and to devise strategies befitting the ministry setting.

Delves deeply into the witnessing culture today, addressing the focus required through relationship building to reach people of the post modern generation.

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