

1-1-1990

## The Challenge of Evangelism for Churches of Christ

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### Recommended Citation

Shelly, Rubel; Anderson, Lynn; and Shank, Harold (1990) "The Challenge of Evangelism for Churches of Christ," *Leaven*: Vol. 1: Iss. 4, Article 10.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/leaven/vol1/iss4/10>

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# The Challenge of Evangelism for the Churches of Christ

Lynn Anderson

Harold Shank

Rubel Shelly

An Interview

## What is your working definition of evangelism?

**Rubel Shelly:** Evangelism is our being Christ for the world in order to have the right to speak of Christ to the world. The order is very important to me. I think we have traditionally tried to speak a message about Christ without having exhibited the compassion of Christ, the acceptance of Christ, the concern that Christ showed for hurting and broken people, and that's why we have had limited effect, and we must concentrate more on being Christ as his spiritual body, the church, in order to justify the desire to speak a message.

**Lynn Anderson:** Let me work with the word "authentic." People who live authentically before God and present themselves to him in authentic, redemptive community. I'm talking about being the church like Rubel was saying. Authentic people in authentic church, doing authentic relationship with Christ and with his church. I don't see evangelism as having been completed in biblical form just because somebody heard the gospel. Even if they accepted the gospel and obeyed it, I think evangelism in Matthew 28 includes the nurturing and maturing of those people into functional membership in the church.

**So being God's church is a part of bringing them into God's church.**

**Anderson:** Yes, and here I'm not talking about defining ourselves by all the right doctrinal shiboleths, but

being the church in authentic community, being what God wants us to be in our relationships with each other and in our mission.

**Shelly:** I think in recent times we have tried to identify the church in a mathematical model. We've added this doctrinal test by this name to that worship procedure, etc., drawing the line and saying, 'therefore the church exists and we are that church.' I think that's a very self-serving and non-productive way of identifying the church. The church has to be seen as that authentic fellowship Lynn was speaking of by virtue of a clearly perceived identity between Christ's head and that body as appropriate to his lordship over them.

**Anderson:** And I wouldn't say that doctrinal matters have nothing to do with that, but I think we identify the church more by how they present themselves to God and to each other than exactly how they believe on all subjects.

**Harold, how do you respond to that?**

**Harold Shank:** Well, I have a great burden on my heart for people who are outside of any relationship with Jesus, and for me, evangelism is not so much defining what the church is, I suppose, but as just bringing people face to face with Christ. I'm a convert to Christ, having not grown up in any church, so my perspective is not so much a reaction against the way I was raised (I wasn't raised in any church), but it's a



reaction against what I see as many people uninterested in any aspect of sharing their faith. For me, there has to be a tension, a constant tension, between the proclamation, the relationship, and service. William Abraham, in his book **Logic of Evangelism** wrestles with the issue of 'Is evangelism just proclamation or is it everything the church does?' and that tension has been reflected in what Rubel and Lynn have said. For me, it always has to be a tension.

**Shelly:** Yes; could I just jump in and say that I see all the church does as essentially part of the definition of evangelism. I would agree that the proclamation of salvation through Christ is the needlepoint of evangelism, but the credibility base and the channel for evangelism is the credible community and the credible life.

**Shank:** I agree. I like the way George Hunter puts it in his book, **The Contagious Congregation**. He says we have cannon, that is the way we relate to other people. We have deacon, the way we serve other people, and we have kerygma, the speaking of the gospel to other people. And the three work together. To pull one out is inappropriate. All three have to be there to successfully bring people to Christ.

**Shelly:** That's a better way of saying what I was trying to get out earlier, that we've jumped the gun by positioning ourselves to proclaim Jesus without establishing the credibility for doing so -- by being Jesus in a compassionate way, in an accepting, loving, serving way, to the people who need most to hear that message. If they don't see a meaningful presence of Christ in whatever it is that we're about in our worship, in our programs, in our community life, in the families we're generating, they don't feel we have any right to offer them something that makes no practical difference in our own lives.

**Shank:** A friend of mine was sitting at the coffee table the other day with two of his friends, and he invited them to come to Highland (Memphis) to church, and the one person said, 'Oh, I know about the Church of Christ. You're the ones that don't have music and believe that you're the only ones going to heaven.' And the other person said, 'Well, I don't know about any of that, but I know about the Highland Street Church of Christ, and they care about people.' That makes a lot of difference to me.

**Anderson:** There's another ingredient to that. We've talked about service and fellowship and proclamation, but there's a stance, a demeanor of acceptance, (and I don't mean acceptance of sin), but total patience with and acceptance of sinful people. And that's part of that whole keying, too.

**Shank:** We had a line we used in Milwaukee when we planted a church there. We said, 'The best evangelism is good edification.' What we meant by that was we ended up setting more Bible studies and doing more expressing of the gospel at pot-lucks than any place else because people who were visiting sensed that there was something about this church where people cared and where there was some real concern among the people. That spoke quite loudly, and after pot-lucks visitors would quite often come up and say, 'What do I have to do to be a member of this church?' They were open then. So, if I needed another Bible study, I just arranged to go to a pot-luck, and I baptized some into Christ as a result of just eating lunch with them.

**Shelly:** Those are the responses that we get here. I

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- Rubel Shelly

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have more opportunities for personal Bible studies than I can ever fulfill. They grow out of the fact that this church has ministered to this individual or to this family in some very specific compassionate, Christ demonstrating way. Whatever it is we're about, they're open to learning about it. They want to be a part of it, and they come saying, 'What do I have to do to join your church?'

**Anderson:** I had that same experience with the Highland Church in Abilene. I would hasten to add on the other end of this that a lot of our people feel like they have done evangelism by being nice to folks. And somewhere in there we don't want - I don't want to be heard -- as saying that the telling of the good news to the person is always left to somebody else. And I think part of our people just aren't equipped. It's not that they don't care, it's just that they don't know how, so they rely on being nice to communicate the gospel.

**I think we all recognize that at some point, the 1950's, the 1960's, there was a great evangelistic fervor among us. There is also a sense, however, that this fervor has been significantly reduced and dampened, particularly in the last decade. What has dampened that fervor? What factors do you think have been part of reducing that**



**desire to evangelize, to proclaim the gospel?**

**Shelly:** I think the premise is a myth. I don't think we were ever an evangelistic, aggressive, Christ-sharing people in the 50's and 60's. I think our numbers grew right after World War II just like many conservative, evangelical churches did. I think we made claims that had no basis in hard fact as to growing size of our fellowship of people. Most of those figures were gen-

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- Lynn Anderson

erated in offices of church editors who were guessing about growth from a very narrow base of experience. When we started getting hard facts we thought, 'Oh, we've fallen off in evangelistic zeal and we've lost membership.' I think we never knew how many members we had, and I do not think we have been, certainly in my lifetime, an effective, evangelistic people. I know that there has been decline in specific churches, but I think the decline in many of the churches probably reflects that in the 50's and 60's people were more open to indoctrination and status quo and simply continuing to go to church. We're just at a different time in the way people think today, and if there's nothing happening that is practical and relevant, they're not going to keep going there. And I think our decline has reflected the fact that we've been perceived by our own members as getting very little in those assemblies and local churches that is making a practical difference in our lives.

**Anderson:** Aside from what Rubel has said -- and I agree with that -- (that we don't know what our numbers have been), there are a number of sociological factors to consider. I can remember when I would go out and hold evangelistic meetings in the summer, and I was disappointed if any less than 10 or 15 people were baptized. It wasn't that the people were all that evangelistic, it was just that the societal structures in those areas were different. That's what people did. And now, there are different sociological factors at work. There are demographic shifts. And I think that there are basic paradigm shifts in people's whole view of life and reality. It's not that people aren't as interested in Christianity -- they're not interested in the front

Christianity presented during those years.

**So, what you're saying is that in the 50's and 60's, people were more inclined to feel that it was socially acceptable and even worthwhile to go to church, that the message was more geared toward the status quo and perhaps even the middle class. But in recent years, in the last decade or so, that hasn't been the case.**

**Anderson:** Yes, there are so many more options now. In most communities then, church was the only show in town. And now, there are all kinds of options and there are optional lifestyles presented through the media, and there are optional interests, and there are optional world views with the heterogeneous nature of society now. And what was the dominant church style back then is not interesting any more to people.

**Shelly:** I've been in Eastern Europe a couple of times this year, and I think I've seen a social situation very akin to the one that was in America in the 50's and 60's. People will still come together in large groups and stay for 2 and 2 1/2 hours for preaching and asking questions. I don't know any churches here in Nashville who are having 2 and 2 1/2 hour preaching services and evangelistic meetings, but I used to go to those when I was small. I think Lynn's right. Culture changes. Attention spans are shorter. We want a media blitz. We're not going to think for any extended period of time about any deep subject.

**Anderson:** But back there in the 50's we sort of put a lot of our churches on auto pilot and haven't been back to the cockpit since.

**Harold, how do you feel about that?**

**Shank:** This is in some ways a sociological question, and I usually stay away from those. I'm usually wrong. My own pilgrimage might be helpful here. I was a convert. Two things I've noticed, I guess, and this is just my personal pilgrimage and reflects only the churches that I've known. One is that I've come to see insider issues dominate our churches, and when your attention is turned inside there's obviously not the concern for the outsider. I think that what Michael Weed, Richard Hughes, and Leonard Allen have tried to say in **The Worldly Church**, what Leonard Allen has tried to say in the **Cruciform Church**, and what Stanley Hauerwas and William Willimon are saying in **Resident Aliens** is that we've had things on our agenda that perhaps are not on the biblical agenda. A second change that I've noticed is that we have moved from poverty to affluence. Our family was poor and that was one of the things, I suppose, that attracted us to the church. It offered some hope. Now I preach for



a very affluent church, and I'm rich, I'm wealthy, I'm the upper class, in what's becoming a two-class society. I think that perhaps a lack of an interest in the poor can be cited here. One thinks of the first 25 years of the Central Church of Christ in Nashville. They had benevolent efforts in the 1930's where they gave away 30,000 free meals. You hear story after story of the coal truck they owned, the clinics they had. They had a three-story house for girls -- and 8,000 baptisms in 25 years. That's one a day. Or Russell Street before that, or David Lipscomb and his compassionate spirit toward the poor. And I think that may be a factor. If we're not interested in the poor, we tend to be interested only in ourselves.

**Anderson:** It's interesting, though, and I agree with that, but it's interesting that some of the most rapidly growing churches in America are not among the poor right now. Part of that is because we're not doing much among the poor, but I mean churches of all kinds that are growing, most of the growth stories are not among the poor.

**Shelly:** I think that what we've actually been saying as a group here is that for us to try to respond to our current situation by putting all our eggs in one basket is a big mistake. I think there are constellations of factors. There are sociological factors, demographic shifts, the underlying world view, the other things we mentioned - the concern of the poor, the affluence, the in-turned form of religion. There is a whole change in how you communicate in our culture. We also don't know for sure what we believe, what we're marketing, and all those things.

**Lynn, are there any factors that have caused our lack of evangelistic fervor to suddenly be revealed or to be dampened.**

**Anderson:** I can think of two very clear ones, there may be thousands of others. One of them is that we've been celebrating grace apathy. In other words, we were so geared to a works religion or we'd go to hell, and then we found out that's not how you get saved. We decided that what we were doing didn't need to be done. And I think that's been one of the biggest factors that sapped our motivation. You know, I can remember looking at a guy across the table and saying to him, 'Isn't it wonderful to know that we don't have to win another soul as long as we live?' meaning that's not how you get saved. Of course, neither one of us assumed that we were going to stop doing that. And I think that's really affected us. I think it's partly just been getting over the hurt of the other form.

The other thing I think is that our non-sectarianism, which is going to be our friend in the end, has

been our enemy at the beginning. Once we found out that there might be saved people outside of us, then our question was, 'Well, why do we try to bring them to us then?' and so we lost some of the evangelistic fervor which was based partly on sheep stealing. Now, we're having to figure out what it is we're bringing them to, and I think we're making a cycle around to where we're going to see relationship with Christ as the issue. I think that's going to be a positive again, but it's been a negative on our evangelistic thrust for a while.

**Shelly:** I would agree that a lot of what we have called evangelism in my lifetime has been a proving we're right and they're wrong relationship to other fellowship and pulling people away from there. More and more, as we begin to deal with a hurting, broken world, whether it's poverty, alcoholism, people with AIDS, we're realizing that the majority of the people out there are not terribly theological animals who want to fight the old battles of who's right and wrong about church. They're genuinely broken and lost where lost means totally lacking a clue about whether there is meaning and purpose in my life. Who is this Jesus? What's the cross supposed to mean? If our approach and focus begin to be on that truly unchurched and even sometimes properly called pagan world, we'll be doing evangelism in the true sense. We'll be less concerned to battle other religious fellowships than we will be battling Satan for the souls of people that he has trapped in some debilitating life situation or lifestyle that has left them without a clue as to a savior and the difference he would make. If we change our focus to this secular, God-denying, lost world and get back to that

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**- Harold Shank**

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initial proclamation of who Jesus is and what difference it makes to know him, we'll be doing evangelism.

**Would you say, Harold, that sometimes the purely rational and spiritual have been equated in the sense that the right information equals salvation.**



**Shank:** I guess I'd want to nuance that a little bit in the sense that I'm meeting more and more people who are interested in information but it's fundamental information. I'm meeting more people who are not sure about whether there's a God or not. They're interested in knowing what he's like and very interested in questions about suffering. I have found myself going to books like Job and Ecclesiastes to start more and more Bible studies, rather than the book of Acts. By the time they come to grips with God, Acts is no problem. Get down to repent, baptism, all that - 'yeah, let's do that.' There's no argument, there's no discussion. Those aren't issues. The issues are more in the realm of who is God and who is this Jesus and how does he relate to my life today. I think that's probably an influence of our secular culture.

**Shelly:** The point I was trying to make is that it's less a matter of arguing religious boundaries with other deeply committed church people as it is reaching out to a world that no longer has anything other than a set of secular presuppositions and values. They're wanting to know 'why do I feel so empty?' And there is our entre to touch them at the point of emptiness, the sense of needing God at a very basic level. They don't care about millennial eschatology. They want much more fundamental life issues addressed.

**Anderson:** That's what frightens our rank and file. It's one thing to ask people to go to somebody's home and turn on a projector or present these five steps with these passages. It's quite another thing to ask people to sit down and talk with a person who is not sure there is a God, and who has a number of existential questions.

**Shelly:** There are clearly two preaching patterns in Acts. There's the methodology to the Jews, the religious people, where you assume a lot of things and you begin from there. The other pattern is to go out to this pagan man and convince him that the God of heaven is other than the idol they know and that the values by which they ought to live their lives are greater than the ones that the pagan gods lived by, stealing each others' wives and stabbing each other in the back. And we're still doing our preaching on the former model.

**Shank:** We have to sit and hurt with people and talk with people. But I think that as an outsider to the Bible Belt, (I live there now but I haven't very much of my life), what strikes me about members of the Churches of Christ is that they have been taught to reject culture. We have people growing up in isolation from unbelievers, isolation from people who are hurting. I remember we had a girl who moved to Milwaukee who had grown up in a Christian home, Christian grandparents, went to a Christian preschool, Christian elementary school,

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- Harold Shank

Christian high school, Christian college, worked as a church secretary at the Church of Christ, and then moved to Wisconsin, and just couldn't make it. She couldn't cope with meeting people who were profane, or who were immoral.

I regularly present the fact that you have to rub shoulders, you have to be in the culture, you have to identify with people, you have to be there when they're hurting. It may be that some of our churches and our parachurch organizations have led us to believe that isolation, separation from the world, is the Christian life. And it's not.

**Lynn, I know in talking to you before that you have surveyed a lot of different models that are available, models of evangelism, models of church growth. Can you give me maybe one or two models that you see around that would be helpful.**

**Anderson:** I'm a little leery of pinning our hopes to one model. But, let me say that there are some models that are working and that I think have a lot of legitimacy. I would hope that Harold might give some thought about and some expression to a model about working in the inner city or with the poor. Harold said to me the other day that he thinks that if there is going to be a revival in America, it may be there. And I'm inclined to agree. The models that I've seen as effective see Sunday as the time people are going to come to church. So they gear their Sunday morning experience for the outsider, not for the church. They have church meetings at other times that are for the nurture, development, and worship of the church, but they gear what they do on Sunday toward the outsider. In these models, they go to great lengths to do what Harold was talking about -- to meet the people on their ground. They have developed careful step-by-step strategies to move them toward the faith from where they are so they don't hit it all in one jump and be turned off by the cultural shift. They also do a great deal to draw people when they do get connected with the church. They find out what they're designed to do and train them for a



significant place of ownership in that dream. The models that I know of working have those ingredients.

**What ingredients, Rubel, do you see when you look around at some of the models that you find faithful and helpful.**

**Shelly:** I agree with Lynn that they focus on creating an effective evangelistic outreach assembly on Sunday morning. They also have more flexibility for meeting the needs of the members. They see the church as designed to serve and save others rather than just accomplish holding operations for its own members. And they very quickly integrate people into a faith sharing mode, and that faith sharing mode is very seldom anything consider the 'personal work projects.' They teach them a very natural, lifestyle oriented method that is adaptable to classrooms, lunch times,

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business environment where they can share Jesus.

**Anderson:** Most of them believe that it's very difficult to do evangelism and edification in just over an hour. After all, we've got to preserve 10 minutes for announcements. Plus the stuff that turns believers on might turn outsiders off when they're searching.

**Such as . . . ?**

**Anderson:** Well, for example, most of the church music we use is from another century. It's a different musical idiom in the culture and even the language doesn't connect with their heart language. But the holy horror of that is the church members that we've worked so hard to keep comfortable are immediately made uncomfortable with the introduction of that sort of music or different communication mode, e.g., drama, etc.. They want to immediately squelch that because

it stretches their comfort level. This is why there needs to be a time when the text is opened and very seriously studied in systematic ways, and there also needs to be a service designed to communicate to the fellow who doesn't have a clue about the meaning of life. That service needs to stay focused around the cross, and the practical relevance of that to his values, to his being able to negotiate life, to his being able to deal with what's most pressing in his life at the moment.

**I want to be clear about this. You would differentiate between times in which the primary focus is upon evangelism and a time when it's primarily for worship or edification.**

**Anderson:** Yes, I would say that for the church we need a worship assembly every week, at least one, and for outreach we need one. And they're not at the same time or the same design.

**You mentioned they would differ in the music, would they differ in any other way?**

**Anderson:** Yes. For example, I was at an assembly last Sunday morning in Chicago where of all things the preacher preached on substitutionary atonement. He had probably several thousand unchurched people present. Number 1, they sang only one congregational song because those people don't know the songs and they're not participators, they're watchers. Number 2, they used a piece of drama. Number 3, they didn't ask for money as they do in their assemblies when the churches met. The first thing the outsider is looking for is somebody that's going to ask for money. Number 4, they don't identify the visitors and have them stand up. These people were threatened by it. The content of the message and the style of its delivery and the music were much more geared to the ear, both in idiom and content, than the assembly would be for believers.

**Harold, how do you respond to this.**

**Shank:** I'd like to sound a word of warning and make the observation that church growth is descriptive and not prescriptive. That is, it describes what is happening in churches that are growing. But the factors that we identified may not be the factors that are causing the growth. I'm reminded of the British broadcasting program they did last year, done by Sword and Spirit, a seven part program on churches in the world, Christianity in the world. Part 6 was on the U.S., and for the United States' view of Christianity, they came to Memphis. The opening scenes were a large suburban church very much like the one Lynn was talking about in Chicago -- people playing on the basketball court, swimming in the church pool, bowling on the church



bowling lanes. The point that the film was making was that suburbanites were finding in these churches divine approval for their selfish lifestyles.

**Shelly:** I would say that that sort of church is the one with which we traditionally identify. That is, a church built to serve its own membership. That's not a church into outreach and evangelism. I don't know of any church that is doing effective evangelism that is into big-time party mode. Church as outreach and service center is very different from church and community center.

**Anderson:** This is a real interesting point, because I have visited a number of churches that a reporter doing a news clip could have taken those pictures and come away thinking that's what the church was about, and it would be a real misrepresentation. For example, the church I was in in Chicago, I don't know if they have a bowling alley, but they do a bunch of those same things. In the ones that I've studied, however, there is a very high demand gospel. There are very significant and intimate and strong relationships. There is high accountability. There's high morality expected.

**So one of the questions that should be asked in a situation like that is not 'Do you have a bowling alley?' but 'For what purpose are you using it?'**

**Shelly:** One size fits all may be a good idea for cheap socks, but it's not a good idea for a church's model for community outreach. What's appropriate in an inner city church may be very inappropriate for suburban, etc.

**Shank:** I want to say one thing here before you go on. I'm sure you don't want to leave the impression that evangelism is something that is just the proper manipulation of the proper kinds of service. The Holy Spirit is working today and God is moving in the lives of people and ultimately we are just tools in God's hands and we have to bow before the Father who makes all things happen. Church growth may not always be equivalent to evangelism, at least biblically. Our task is to throw the message out the best way that we can, but we certainly want to acknowledge God's power in all this. I know that we intend that but I thought that ought to be said.

**Let me get to these last two questions. Harold, when you look at all these other models, and then come back to our history and our tradition, what are some of our unique strengths and what are some of our weaknesses?**

**Shank:** I would like to respond with one word, and that's the word grace. And that, I suppose, is both a

strength and weakness. It was striking to me several weekends ago that about 35 of us got together in a retreat setting and we were all sharing our conversion stories. Those of us who had been converted out of the world had, by and large, moving stories that brought tears to people's eyes. But then, there were people who grew up in the Churches of Christ and their stories were rather dull and boring, and many of them apologized. But then one person who had grown up in the Churches of Christ told their story and said, 'You know what, I remember the time, the place, the pew, the speaker, the temperature when I learned about grace.' And from then on around the circle, everyone who had grown up in the Church of Christ told two stories. They told the story of their conversion and then they told the story of when they learned about grace and I say that as both a weakness in our movement and hopefully, now, as a present strength.

**Shelly:** I think one of our strengths is one of the things we coming very close at times to decrying. It has been a strength that we have held the Bible in high regard. We have had a rational approach to scripture and have worked hard to discern its factual content. I'm in the mode of Western thought, and I don't want to be divorced from rationality and develop an affinity for a warm fuzzy sort of religion that has no hard core of truth, but sometimes today when people decry rationalism as a means to "a God in a box theology," I think they slide into decrying being rational and having an identifiable core of truth to religion. We have sometimes slipped over the edge into rationalism in thinking that our ability to be good students was going to save us. But, you don't have to be irrational to get away from the rationalism.

So I think one of our strengths that we need to hang on to is, yes, we regard the Bible as inspired of God, and our norm for revealed truth in propositional form.

**Anderson:** I think there's another treasure that we have that I would hate for us to relinquish, and that is our emphasis on the autonomy of the local church. Along with this emphasis goes the priesthood of believers. I don't like what we've done with congregational autonomy sometimes, but I think it's a precious thing we have. It may be our salvation as a fellowship, that some congregations feel autonomous enough to chart a faithful, biblical course that become a model to some others that are frightened of change. Lyle Schaller had an observation about us. He said that denominationalism is basically dead in America, and we're becoming one 50 years too late.

One of our major weaknesses I would call the "powerless pastor." We have spearheading the creative approach to church ministry a guy who doesn't have the power to implement what he knows to do.



Instead, we have a group of men, who God called to be shepherds of people -- to be in relationship with people, and we ask them to know a lot about strategy and theology. I love elders and I think they are one thing we don't want to lose. I think we want to change how we do that. Let the elders be shepherds and let the visionaries lead. The second thing is the sectarianism -- which we're gradually losing. We need to lose it.

**When you look in the future, what kind of church will be both faithful and viable?**

**Shank:** That one is very difficult. Dwight Moody said, 'I am a leaky vessel and I need to keep under the tap.' I guess that I would hope that we would be a group of people that would remain close to God, open to his guidance, faithful to his scripture. I would hope that we would be people known for our practice of spiritual discipline, people who read and know and memorize scripture, who are daily in prayer, who are frugal, and careful with their money. I would hope to see us as a people who open our own lives to each other, practice that kind of fellowship that Paul proclaimed in the New Testament. I would hope that we would be people of accountability, willing to submit ourselves to one another in discipleship so that when we're called to proclaim, we proclaim; when we're called to serve, we serve; when we are called to relate, we can relate.

**Shelly:** I think maybe I would use four key words. Our churches will learn to be communities where people can belong, be accepted, feel they're significant to one another because each has seen the significance of the other to God. Anyone worth the blood of the Son of God has to be important to me, and I will care. The second word is the unique bond -- not guilt, not fear, not duty

-- that motivates us to serve. We come to understand love and grace, not as excuses for being lethargic Christians, but they really do become the motivation for our being powerful and dynamic people in the world. The third word would certainly be redemption. We are a redeemed people by virtue of Christ's blood, but we have the ability to be redemptive within ourselves. There's health generated within the body. We tend each other's wounds. We let recovery happen by the power of the Spirit of God. And then I think all of that together generates the fourth term here, an attractiveness about us that really makes us an evangelistic people. The church becomes a desirable, attractive body within a community and instead of people dreading us, mocking us, turning their heads away in derision, they seek whatever it is that's causing us to be that kind of community.

**Anderson:** I just want to amen what was said, but coming back to my word authentic again or genuine, I just think that the world is looking more than anything else right now for something genuine. That genuineness would begin with authentic openness before God. We are nothing without him, and like Harold said, we're going dry quick without being under the tap. So, our own worship is authentic, we're honest with ourselves and with God, and our relationships are real, and we don't make religious promises that we can't keep, and we don't boast of something we don't have, and we don't try to do numbers on people. Our community is genuinely redemptive and we do compassionate acts, not for public relations purposes, but because our hearts are broken over the things that break God's heart. And I guess the most important thing of all of is to have a genuine, authentic passion for lost people, to see them like God sees them.