

## **Book Review/Summary: Evangelism without Additives**

Jim Henderson, *Evangelism without Additives* (Water Brook Press, paperback, 152 pages)

[NOTE: formerly titled *a/k/a/Lost: Discovering Ways to Connect with the People Jesus Misses Most*; this review includes information expanded and edited from a review by George Barna]

This is a book about evangelism, but it is not your typical book about evangelism. Research shows that most Christians would rather forget about evangelism. In fact, most of them do. During a typical year, only half of all Christians bother to engage in any form of evangelism. Most of the Christians who do try to share their faith believe they do a poor job. In spite of the Great Commission, spreading the gospel is one of the areas in which Christians have the lowest self-esteem—and the least interest in self-improvement.

Christian publishers usually regard books on evangelism with little enthusiasm. You cannot take people where they do not want to go, and most Christians have lived the evangelism guilt trip long enough that they would rather avoid the topic altogether.

Jim Henderson loves God but dislikes traditional evangelism approaches. Because of his love for Jesus and his desire to be faithful to God, he has spent most of his life trying to figure out how to use his life to honor God and nudge others toward the grace God wants to give them. This book is the result of his journey. Jim has good news about spreading the Good News.

The essence of his perspective is that we have made evangelism a program rather than using natural points of connection with people. His solution is for us to engage in “ordinary attempts” (OAs). An OA is what it sounds like: something simple and usually incomplete that puts another plank in the bridge between the “lost” person and Christ. (Note: Research shows that one of the most offensive things Christians do is call non-Christians “lost.” They prefer explorers, seekers, and other similar terms. “Lost” strikes them as judgmental.)

Ordinary Attempts acknowledge that evangelism is a process and that any one of us may play a part in the process through a variety of creative and natural connection points. Because God calls us to be obedient rather than successful, our responsibility is to be an ambassador of Christ to others through questions, encouragement, spiritual conversations, service, attention, prayers, listening, and other simple approaches.

Evangelistic purists may snicker and complain that Jim’s ordinary attempts amount to something less than authentic evangelism. But even Jesus, in most situations, did not engage in any like the version of evangelism the contemporary church has developed. You will be challenged by the sections in the book where Jim describes WJDD – “What Jesus Didn’t Do.”

This book recognizes that enabling people to accept Christ as their Savior helps them make the most significant decision they will ever make. The book releases us from the debilitating pressures and restrictions that our programs and procedures have placed on us.

In our country, we love to keep score. In most evangelism efforts, the only score we keep is “who gets the kill.” We tend to disregard the Lord’s teaching that some plant, some nurture or water and some harvest. We are a nation of harvester zealots. This book reminds us that God uses all of our efforts to achieve His ends. Like Jesus, we are effective when our efforts are built on love for God and others, a desire to bless people, a willingness to go to them, and the importance of establishing a meaningful connection with them.

*Evangelism without Additives* is easy to read and enjoyable. It contains great stories. The appendix provides five values that inform the “ordinary attempts” mind set. If you struggle with evangelism, feel guilty about your Evangelism score, need to be re-energized in your enthusiasm for outreach, or care about fellow believers who are downcast over their evangelistic impotence, this book can help. You will find new motivation to fulfill the role that you can reasonably and joyfully play in advancing God’s kingdom.