

Good Soil E&D - Disclaimers & Affirmations

- 1. We are not saying: Good Soil evangelism and discipleship (E&D) is a “program.”

We are saying: Good Soil evangelism and discipleship (E&D) is essentially a *theology* of evangelism and discipleship—a way of understanding evangelism and discipleship on the basis of Scripture. When we refer to the Good Soil *Project*, we are talking about the correlated tasks of...

- Creating, translating, publishing, and distributing a collection of ministry resources that have been designed to help believers implement this theology of evangelism and discipleship in their ministries.
- Training believers to understand this theology of evangelism and discipleship and to learn how to use the Good Soil resources as effectively as possible.

- 2. We are not saying: The essence of Good Soil evangelism and discipleship (E&D) is the use of The Story of Hope (TSOH) and The Way to Joy (TWTJ).

We are saying: The essence of Good Soil E&D is to help people...

- Clearly understand the gospel (provide enough of the appropriate Bible content with enough of its related Biblical context in order for them to make a “good soil” decision to receive Jesus as Savior).
- Genuinely embrace the gospel.
- Firmly hold on to the gospel.

- 3. We are not saying: If you follow the principles emphasized in the Good Soil seminar you will always see positive, lasting results in your ministry of evangelism and discipleship.

We are saying: We do believe that if you follow the “Good Soil” emphases of Jesus in Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8, you will see more positive results in evangelism and discipleship than you would if you ignored those principles.

- 4. We are not saying: Unbelievers must completely understand all major teachings of the Bible in order to be saved.

We are saying: We need to help unbelievers clearly understand the essential gospel truths related to God, man, sin, the penalty for sin (death), Jesus Christ and His redemptive work, and genuine faith in Christ for salvation.

- 5. We are not saying: The only way conversion can be understood is as a process, as opposed to a one-time “event”.

We are saying: The statement on page one of the workbook asks, “In what sense” is “regeneration an event but conversion is a process”? This is only a discussion starter, intentionally designed to be thought-provoking, to introduce the Good Soil E&D Scale. It is not intended to establish an “either/or position” regarding the nature of conversion.

We know that the Bible sometimes refers to conversion as one-time event, as something that happens simultaneously with regeneration. However, there is also a more general sense in which people’s views concerning truths essential to salvation are “converted” (in the sense of “changed”) over a period of time as they are exposed to Biblical truth. That is what the Good Soil E&D Scale depicts and that is the sense in which the word conversion is intended in the discussion starter. It in no way is intended to nullify the need for a one-time regeneration/conversion experience.

- 6. We are not saying: The Good Soil E&D Scale will always accurately depict the sequence of human responses that all people will make in their relationship to God.

We are saying: The Good Soil E&D Scale is a humanly constructed model depicting typical levels of spiritual understanding and responses. The model can generally help us understand how to minister more effectively in evangelism and discipleship processes. But no model can perfectly describe or predict all human

spiritual responses.

- **7.** We are not saying: Relational evangelism is always best and initial contact evangelism should never be used.

We are saying: Initial contact evangelism and relational evangelism both have their advantages and their dangers. If used appropriately, they can both be effective.

- **8.** We are not saying: You should never “lead a person to Christ” after only a brief presentation of the gospel.

We are saying: We need to be reasonably sure that ¹an unbeliever understands the gospel before we urge him/her to receive Christ as Savior, and that when we do so ²we carefully exhort him/her to embrace the gospel in such a way that does not result in an insincere “decision.” Because of the Biblical knowledge that some unbelievers possess (particularly people from “Christian” cultures), these things can sometimes be accomplished effectively in a short period of time.

- **9.** We are not saying: Traditional North American gospel presentations (such as the Four Spiritual Laws, the Navigator’s Bridge to Life, Evangelism Explosion, Roman’s Road, etc.) are no longer effective.

We are saying: Gospel presentations that were created some years ago in North America generally assume some essential gospel knowledge that most people in the world do not possess, even many people now living in North America. If we use these kinds of gospel presentations with these kinds of people, we need to be sure to supplement the presentations in order to provide all of the essential gospel knowledge of lower scale levels that the unbeliever needs to make a “good soil decision” to receive Christ as Savior.

- **10.** We are not saying: The best or only effective way for doing evangelism is by presenting the Bible’s redemptive story chronologically.

We are saying: For people who have little or no knowledge of Christianity and the Bible, presenting the Bible's redemptive story chronologically is a good, and perhaps the best, way to help them clearly understand the gospel.

- **11.** We are not saying: It is never good to lead an evangelistic study beginning with the life of Jesus or to use the Jesus Film.

We are saying: If the people involved in the Bible study (or the viewing of the Jesus Film) do not have a general knowledge of the teachings of the Old Testament, it will be difficult for them to understand much of what they are studying or seeing and hearing. This will require a lot of "back-filling" (supplying important background Old Testament information) on the part of the person leading the study or showing the Jesus Film.

- **12.** We are not saying: The Story of Hope and The Way to Joy are "the best" resources available for evangelism and discipleship.

We are saying: There are many good evangelism and discipleship resources available, some of which will be more effective than TSOH and TWTJ in certain situations. But we do believe that TSOH and TWTJ are excellent resources that should be considered and used where they are well-suited for the ministry context.

- **13.** We are not saying: The only effective and appropriate way to use TSOH is to take the person through the narrative (40 Bible events) presentation as a basis for using the Chronological Bridge to Life (ChronoBridge).

We are saying: Often it is good, and maybe even best, to go directly to the ChronoBridge. This is especially true if the person has a reasonable degree of Bible knowledge.

- **14.** We are not saying: The ChronoBridge is "chronological" in the sense that it describes the sequence of Biblical concepts that unbelievers discover or understand.

We are saying: The ChronoBridge is “chronological” in the sense that it describes the sequential order in which the eight “bridge concepts” are revealed in the Bible. The Bible first introduces us to God, then tells us about man, then sin, then death (divine judgment), then Christ (the One who will conquer Satan), then the cross (redemptive work of Christ), then faith (as a means of appropriating the benefits of Christ’s redemptive work), and then life (current spiritual and eternal life). Thus, we can tell the chronological Bible story by threading it through these eight bridge concepts.

- **15.** We are not saying: You should never lead a person to Jesus Christ by inviting him to express his/her faith in Jesus Christ through a prayer.

We are saying: If you invite a person to express his/her faith in Christ through a prayer, be sure to make very clear that it is not the prayer itself that results in salvation. Be sure to help the respondent avoid the “I prayed the prayer” view of salvation.

- **16.** We are not saying: It’s only important that an unbeliever believe in Christ; repentance is not important.

We are saying: Repentance is just as important as faith in Christ! But these are not two separate steps to salvation (¹first, “I repent” and ²then “I can believe”), they are inseparably connected. Biblical repentance (metanoia) is a deep seated change of mind & thinking about core spiritual issues. At the moment a person truly places his faith/trust in Christ for salvation, he/she is turning loose of the false things he/she formerly trusted (repenting).

- **17.** We are not saying: All ABWE missionaries are required to use The Story of Hope and The Way to Joy.

We are saying: These resources were primarily created to provide cross-cultural evangelism and discipleship resources for ABWE missionaries. Their use is required of pre-field ABWE missionaries as a part of their evangelism and

discipleship training, but no ABWE field missionary is required to use either or both of them (unless a regional administrator should choose to do so)

- **18.** We are not saying: The Way to Joy is the be-all end-all (the essential factor and full extent) of discipleship.

We are saying: The Way to Joy is designed for the most basic type of discipleship— for new believers or believers who have progressed very little in their relationship with God. We think of this as “first level discipleship.” And further, we recognize that discipleship is not produced through a book, it is nurtured through a Christian relationship between a disciple maker (spiritual mentor) and a disciple (less mature Christ-follower). There are lots of good books that teach disciple makers how to lead others through the process of discipleship, but that is not the focus of The Way to Joy. It is simply a resource that can be used by a disciple maker to bring a disciple into contact with foundational, life-transforming, Biblical truths.

- **19.** We are not saying: The most important things to learn and take away from a Good Soil E&D seminar are chronological Bible teaching/storying evangelism, the ChronoBridge, The Story of Hope, and/or the Way to Joy.

We are saying: The most important thing to learn and take away from a Good Soil E&D seminar is the lifestyle of regularly initiating conversations that may lead to redemptive relationships with unbelievers (Colossians 4:2-6) and then to help these people ¹clearly understand the gospel, ²genuinely embrace it, and ³firmly hold on to what they have embraced.