



USING THE UBIQUITOUS

CELLPHONE TO

RELATE THE GOSPEL

BY TAYLOR BERGLUND

Daniah Greenberg's model of "cellphone evangelism" may revolutionize the way a generation approaches the gospel. Her three-part approach trains clergy and laymen alike how to be effective witnesses for Christ to a technologically driven millennial generation. In doing so, she's hoping to bridge the church's generational gap.

Greenberg, founder of the Messianic Jewish Family Bible Society and producer of the Tree of Life Version (TLV) Bible, says she was inspired by the book of Revelation.

"Revelation 12:10 says that we overcome the evil one by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony, and it goes on to say we love not our lives unto death," Greenberg says. "I have come to understand, growing up in a family of Jewish believers in Jesus, that when you add those two things together—your testimony and the message of the gospel—that's where the power of God changes a life."

She teaches congregations how to do cellphone evangelism in three two-hour sessions, using a combination of Bible teaching, role playing, making and watching videos, and sharing testimonies. Each session emphasizes a different component of evangelism. The first highlights intergenerational connection, the second focuses on the power of the gospel, and the third encourages attendees to have their personal testimonies ready to share.

Tech-Savvy Techniques

Cellphone evangelism gives traditional evangelistic techniques a necessary upgrade for a new generation. Greenberg says it's evangelism for a tech-savvy world—or, alternately, for believers "too young to hand out tracts on a corner." That's not an indictment of tracts; many Messianic Jewish believers were brought to Jesus through tracts during the Jesus Movement. But Greenberg says society is changing and rendering tract ministry ineffective.

"Back when [my husband and I] were new believers, we were being trained by people who had been trained in the Jesus Movement, so that was their model—to hand out tracts and confront people with the question, 'Where are you going when you die?'" Greenberg says. "Today that's not incredibly relevant to people. People don't think about where they're going when they die. They're too concerned about the fact that life is so fast and they don't have any free time. They don't have time to talk to you about eternity when they're walking by you. But I think millennials are very concerned about eternity, and I think they're very concerned about community. So we have the same message with a different method."

Greenberg contemplated what that new method should be. She believes every person presents an opportunity to share the gospel, but each individual is unique and requires a different approach. Furthermore, most pastors belong to the baby-boomer generation and have a different communication

style than millennials do. Greenberg says recognizing that difference—and understanding that neither style is right or wrong—is the first step to real conversation.

To test her theory, she invited pastors and Christian millennials to a meeting, paired up each pastor with a millennial and let them talk. Her hypothesis was accurate—and the pastors were blown away.

“From that first session, the pastors really recognized that millennials are not disengaged from church,” Greenberg says. “They’re just engaged in other ways, and it’s often through technology.”

Today’s generation is different, and the techniques required to reach them are

can talk about those all day long—but that isn’t what wins people to faith. What wins people to faith is recognizing that the same resurrection, the same power of God that raises you from the dead, lives in us, and they can have it. They can walk in a new life and have a new life.”

That gospel truth is the key component to any evangelistic effort. Outside of Christ, there can be no life change. Yet Greenberg says that few believers know how to effectively communicate the gospel. She says she’s been to countless churches where attendees were at a loss when asked to articulate the gospel.

“I say to them, ‘Can you please turn to

presents itself. The best way to be ready is to practice and prepare.

Happy Endings

The final training session focuses on personal testimony. One common hurdle believers face is, much like the gospel, they haven’t practiced their testimony. Some can’t remember how they came to Christ or think they don’t have an interesting story. Others ramble with intensely personal stories and dwell on the negative in their past.

Greenberg says she corrects both issues. She encourages participants to rehearse and then record a one- to two-minute testimony on their phone. Then, if the opportunity strikes to share the gospel, a Christian can just press “play”—no memorization required.

“Testimonies don’t have to be hideous to be relevant,” Greenberg says. “Testimonies are relevant because God is real. Things are relevant because they involve revelation. Things are revolutionary because they change the way you see things. And all it takes to change the way you see God is to have a moment with Him when you and He are communicating, and it doesn’t matter how few or how many people there are in the room. Everybody wants that, in this life and the afterlife.”

The key, Greenberg explains, is to focus on “before” and “after” moments. Believers can give the audience a snapshot of their past, sinful life before explaining—through gospel terminology—how Christ transformed them. Almost no one will reject a testimony that ends in positive growth.

“When you [share] a testimony and it ends with a happy ending, people don’t really get mad about Jesus,” Greenberg says. “They say, ‘Wow, man, cool. That worked out for you. Awesome.’ They might say, ‘Oh, it’s not for me,’ and that’s OK for now. You rolled out your testimony in front of them. But to never share your testimony? Or to make it six hours long? That’s just extreme. I’m looking for an easier way to do it, where it’s natural. You’d feel totally natural saying, ‘Hey, look, I’ve got a cat video you need to look at.’ Why can’t we do that with testimony videos?” ■

TAYLOR BERGLUND is assistant online editor at *Charisma Media* and co-host of the “*Charisma News*,” “*Charisma Connection*” and “*C-Pop*” podcasts.

“People talk about all sorts of things from the Bible, but they forget the key to our faith is in declaring the gospel.”

different too. Some differences are simple—millennials are digital natives and are more likely to use digital Bibles and devotionals than physical ones. They text verses to one another. They are in constant communication with friends. Other differences, like their lack of eye contact or seemingly short attention spans, may seem jarring to older generations.

Pastors need to remember neither generation’s way is right. To that end, they need to know how to read their audience—even when it seems like that audience is speaking a foreign language. Greenberg recommends leaders track what’s trending in popular culture and use that as an entry point for conversation. Not every millennial conversation involves cellphones, but many start there. To ignore that dynamic is to ignore an entire demographic.

Unchanging Gospel

But as methodology changes, the core gospel message must remain unchanged. Greenberg believes many churches have gotten away from the essential truths of the gospel—at their own peril.

“You [have to] teach people the power of the message is in the power of the gospel,” Greenberg says. “It’s not talking to people about how prosperous you are. It’s not even talking about the mission and all your works for God. Those are great—you

the person to your left or right, and just in one minute or 30 seconds, just tell them what the gospel is,” she says. “Literally, what is the gospel? Some people immediately turn and start talking, but a lot of people sit there dumbfounded, because they’re like, ‘What do you mean? What’s the gospel?’ The fact is that many people don’t know the gospel anymore. ... People talk about all sorts of things from the Bible, but they forget the key to our faith is in declaring the gospel.”

Greenberg says she’s not mocking believers though. The gospel is a powerful truth, and it’s one the devil does not want them to share.

“The gospel is one of the most difficult things in the world to memorize,” Greenberg says. “The whole time you’re saying it you’re feeling the fight in your spirit of trying to get it out. ... You have to practice it. Practice it in front of a mirror. ... You’re not just fighting your own memory, but you’re fighting the fact that the accuser doesn’t want you to talk about God. So there’s all this stuff that rises up unless you get used to saying it.”

As a result, the most important part of the second session is gospel practice. Greenberg has attendees practice sharing the gospel with each other again and again. Nobody wants to be caught unprepared when the opportunity to share the gospel