

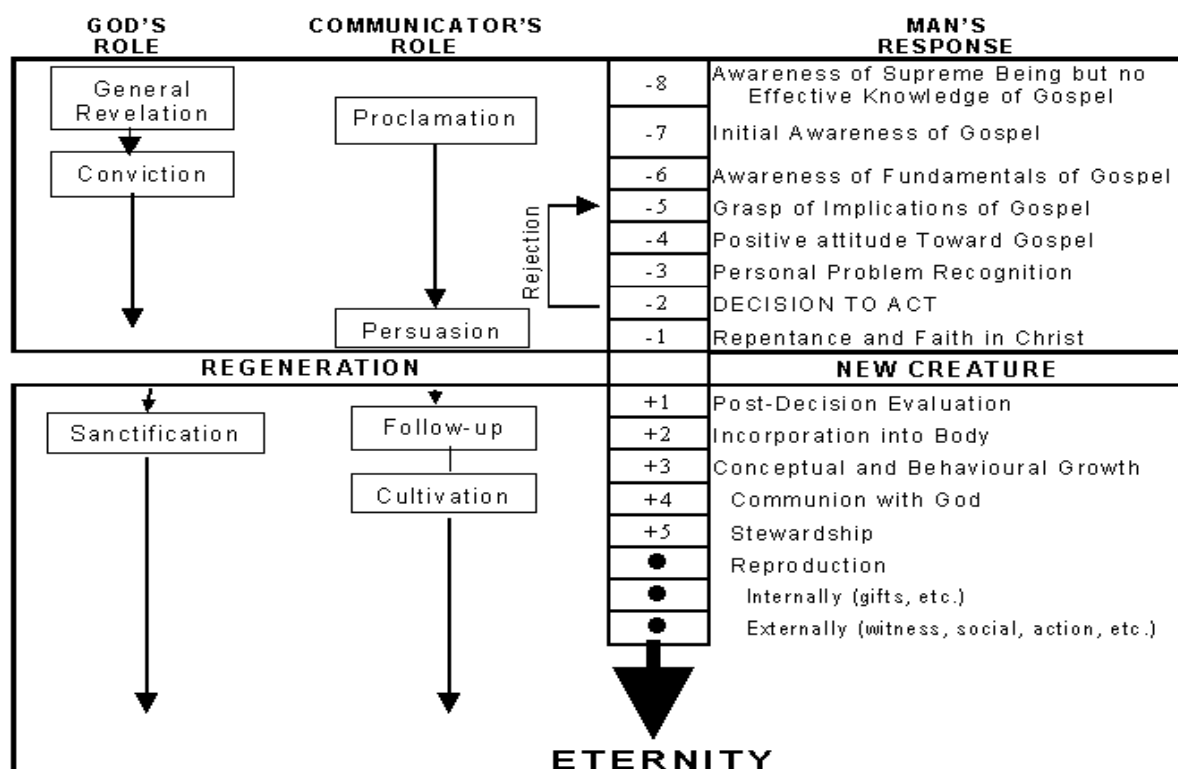
## The Engel's Scale - A Decision-Making Model

Dr James Engel, director of the Billy Graham graduate program in communications at the Wheaton College Graduate School, has given us a model of the spiritual decision-making process (see Figure 7).

This helpful model depicts the roles of God, the communicator and the listener in the process of communicating the gospel. Everyone we talk to falls somewhere on this scale in terms of his spiritual decision-making process and receptivity to the gospel.

This scale is helpful to us as communicators of the gospel in four ways. First, it shows us that apart from the convicting ministry of the Holy Spirit, no listener can understand or respond to the gospel. Only the Spirit can neutralize the spiritual noise caused by Satan's blinding and binding efforts and free the listener to appreciate the grace and truth of the gospel.

Second, it shows that the Spirit of God and the communicator work in harmony to bring the listener to an understanding of the gospel and to the point of personal decision. As Hendrick Kraemer points out, "The communication of the gospel, which is necessarily incumbent upon the church and its members, is neither primarily nor ultimately dependent on our human ability to communicate." Kraemer maintains that we are called to a constant sharpening of our skills, "the primary author of the effective transmission of the message is the Holy Spirit," the invisible third partner in the communication process. Without His witness, ours is futile. But with His witness, ours can be a tool in His powerful hand to effect spiritual results in the life of the listener.



This model as presented here has undergone an interesting history. In rudimentary forms, it was first suggested by Viggo Sogaard while he was a student in the Wheaton Graduate School. It later was revised by James F Engel and published in such sources as Church Growth Bulletin and elsewhere during 1973. Since that time, modifications have been introduced as others have made suggestions. Particularly helpful comments have been advanced by Richard Senzig of the communications faculty at the Wheaton Graduate School and Professors C Peter Wagner and Charles Kraft of the Fuller School of World Mission. (From What's Gone Wrong With The Harvest, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Press, 1975, p. 45. Used by permission.)

Third, this chart shows us that different people have different levels of spiritual understanding and interest in the gospel. While some are ready to respond today, some are not. While many are ready to take the next step toward accepting Christ, some are stalled in their decision-making process or are headed away from Christ.

Finally, this chart gives us insight into the sequence of decision steps leading to the actual event of conversion/regeneration. The listener must have an awareness of the fundamental's of the gospel before he can grasp its personal implications, and he must grasp those implications before he can recognize his problem.

### **The Application to Personal Evangelism**

This model lends strong support to the proposition that "success in witnessing is simply sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God". The New Testament is full of examples of the gospel being presented and received with a wide range of responses. When Paul preached the gospel in Athens, the crowd divided into three camps (Acts 17:16-34). Some sneered at the thought of the resurrection of the dead and rejected his message. Some joined him and believed. Others said "We shall hear you again concerning this". They were not yet ready to believe, but their curiosity had been sufficiently stimulated for them to return for more information.

Since not everyone is at the same level of spiritual preparedness, we need to ascertain as best we can at what point the listener is on the scale, then help him move as far toward trusting Christ as is appropriate. This model underscores the importance of encouraging feedback to determine the spiritual preparedness of the listener, enabling us to respond with the appropriate information.

To be sure, many are ready to receive Christ, and it would be a tragedy to deny them the opportunity. Some are struggling to gain a grasp of the personal implications of the gospel. They need to receive information and encouragement from us to take that step in the decision-making process and move closer toward receiving Christ.

I always pray two things in light of this model: first, that God would lead me to people who are ready to decide, so that I might help them enter His kingdom; second, that God would grant me the wisdom to determine where my listeners are in the decision-making process, so that I might speak to their point of need with relevance and with gospel's authority. Regardless of one's position on this scale, I can have an eternal impact on his life and fulfill my role as an ambassador for Christ.