



▶ READING OUR HEARERS



▶ THE POINT: THE THIRD DIMENSION OF PROXĒ STATIONS



▶ ASSESSING PRE-CHRISTIANS

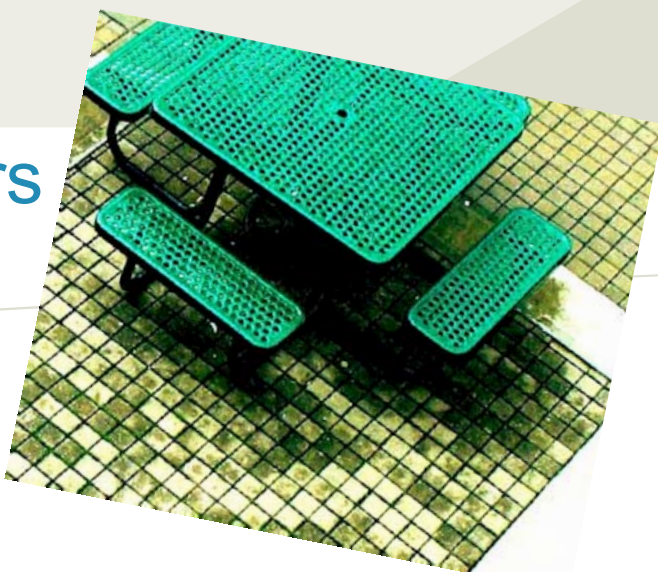
## Reading Our Hearers

*Why a “yes” may not always be a yes and a “no” may not always be a no.*

I’ve recently been helped by Kerry Bunker’s work on leading organizational change, “Responses to Change: Helping People Manage Transition.” This resource, while primarily dealing with organizational change, is profoundly helpful when it comes to reading people as we share the good news of Christ with them. Often, just underneath perception, are complex emotional and intellectual realities which can cloud not only our read on an individual’s response to the gospel, but also her true readiness to consider the invitation to life change the gospel offers. Bunker teaches us four primary ways a person comes to change and as we ask people to embrace the most radical form of change, life change through Christ, there is much to glean from this paradigm.

There are four ways a person initially approaches change.

1. **The Entrenched:** Often, a person begins in the “entrenched” quadrant. An entrenched individual is resistant to change and either verbally or indirectly states that the proposed change “will never happen.” They are primarily motivated to maintain their current life-status and continue in their existing life trajectory. Entrenched people hear the gospel and often deny the personal applicability, lobby for their existing view which allows them to continue on without life change, or resist conversation altogether. Because entrenchment can have an extremely wide variety of causes, it is important to spend significant time ascertaining past experiences and beliefs that may have given rise to this “self protectionist” stance. Continuing to challenge an entrenched person with the gospel without dealing with the barriers to change will almost always prove to be futile so slow it down, ask lots of questions, and listen with an open heart and mind.

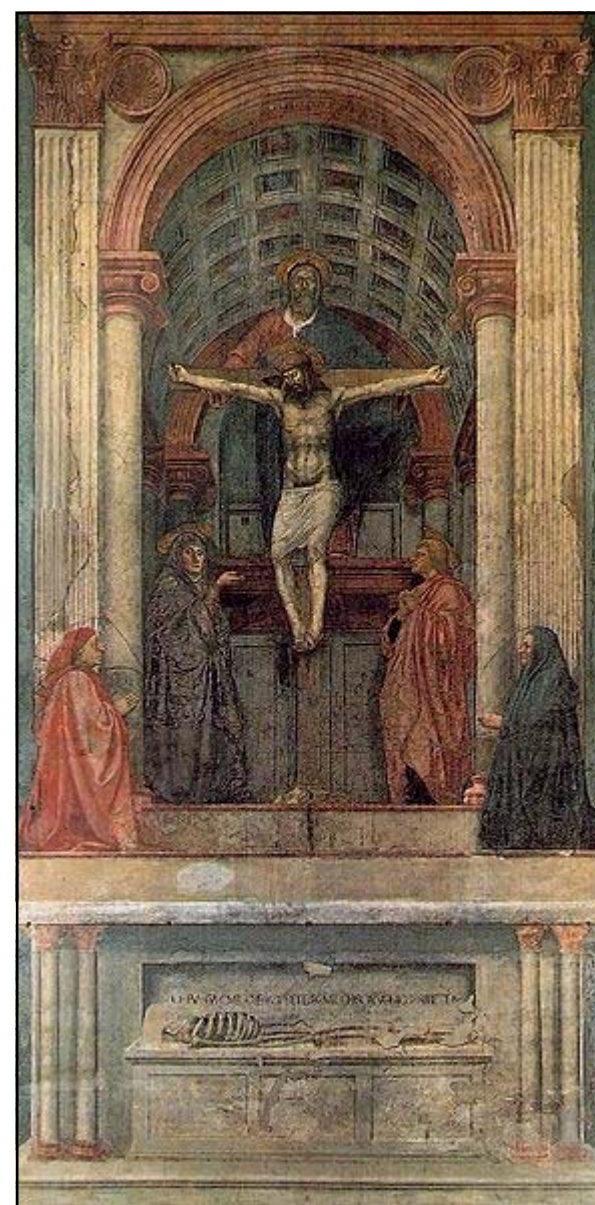


2. **The Overwhelmed:** Many people are overwhelmed with their current lives and any potential change can seem like one additional problem to manage. The overwhelmed are often anxious or angry, they feel hopeless and “frozen” in their situation. Depression and escapist behavior like excessive drinking, drug use, sexual coping or other destructive behaviors are tell-tale signs of the overwhelmed. For some overwhelmed hearers, the gospel can sound like a quick fix, an easy out of present problems, addictions, or relational difficulties. For some overwhelmed a “yes” to Jesus is just another attempt to cope and when their circumstances grow worse (or better for that matter), these overwhelmed depart from their decision to trust Christ because it wasn’t an authentic decision in the first place. For others, however, a “no” to Jesus can also be a no to incorrectly perceived requests. Some overwhelmed hear the gospel as an invitation to become religious or join a time-consuming organization instead of hearing the centrality of the cleansing of sin or the power of Christ’s resurrection. Very frequently, the overwhelmed are so overwhelmed with life that they need a much greater measure of pastoral care along the journey than others. Taking our time to care for the overwhelmed as we encourage them and invite them to trust Christ is essential.

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# Deep Roots *big reach*

## The Point: The Third Dimension of Proxē Stations



I entered the near empty, dark and drafty sanctuary of Santa Maria Novella church in Florence, an unsuspecting home for something that brought revolution to culture. Inside this Renaissance landmark adorning an otherwise dreary wall lives a fresco called The Holy Trinity, painted by Renaissance artist Masaccio around 1420.

What Masaccio did in the painting characterized the overall style of the Renaissance. Masaccio introduced the use of linear perspective, meaning that all the lines of the painting converged into one single point. This was huge! The use of perspective meant

that instead of the 2-dimensional icons of the Gothic period, paintings actually seemed like real life—they seemed to move and breathe— a much better portrayal of reality.

Through the use of Proxē Station evangelism (provocative, interactive stations that compel people to share their stories and connect them with the story of Jesus), we can compare the respondent’s experiences with these examples of classic art. In Masaccio’s artwork all of the lines of the painting converge in the center, where the trinity is depicted. Jesus is portrayed on the cross, the Father and Holy Spirit above. This is what Masaccio wanted his viewers to focus on. The other details of the painting are important and enhance the viewers’ experience but are there primarily to support the central focus, Jesus. This, friends, is the goal of Proxē Station evangelism.

Many well-meaning chapters are using interactive artwork and justice issues to engage students in spiritual conversations but they don’t actually lead to Jesus or a conversion opportunity.

When we solely bring awareness to social justice or merely scratch the surface of Christianity and fail to introduce people to Jesus, we are being only 2-dimensional, like the icons of the Pre-Renaissance.

Though beautiful in their own way, the details and figures all sort of blend together. The one particular focus gets lost in a shiny sea of gold halos. But 3-dimensional evangelism, like 3-dimensional painting, portrays real life. When Proxē Stations are used properly, they introduce lost people to the reality of sin and the solution to the brokenness in the world and in each of us. This type of 3-dimensional evangelism calls people to respond to Jesus and leads to changed lives.

Monique was a student I encountered one morning at a justice-oriented Proxē Station. She was very aware of the issues of injustice we were talking about that day and was intrigued by our conversation. If I had stopped merely with justice in my conversation with Monique, she would have been robbed of the opportunity to



## The Point: The Third Dimension of Proxē Stations (cont.)

assessment questions. Not every conversation we have with a Proxē Station leads to decisions, many times they serve as catalysts to start conversation, an entry point for GIGs, a first chance to hear the Gospel and then to later hear it again in another venue. Often, people will need to hear God's story more than once before they actually make a life-changing decision. Because of this, Proxē Stations can be used strategically in chapter planting and building to leverage evangelistic opportunities on campus well after an NSO or outreach event. Consider incorporating Proxē Stations more regularly into your overall mission strategy. Set one up in a cafeteria once a month engaging in different justice issues, use one leading up to a large group that addresses a particular topic, have different small groups commit to doing one regularly in different dorms....

As we continue to influence students with the solution to brokenness in this world, remember Masaccio's fresco—use all means to point them to Jesus.

**Beth Roselius**  
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## Reading Our Hearers (cont.)

*Why a "yes" may not always be a yes and a "no" may not always be a no.*

3. **The Posers:** Bunker also cites another very interesting reaction to change, "Intentional" and "Unintentional Posing." Intentional posers attempt to look like they are engaging with change but are mindfully misleading others about where they are at in terms of their beliefs, motives, and readiness to commit. In evangelism, these kind of hearers are very common, particularly where there are motives to pose. A male visiting a Christian group where there are potential romantic interests may have a high motivation to pose. Students whose parents have high expectations for religious compliance may intentionally pose for a season. Often, shame-oriented cultures where resisting or refusing requests or authority figures may produce a natural response of intentionally posing. Regardless of the motives, intentional posers are pretty common. When inviting a person to life change through Christ, it is always a good idea to state the high costs of discipleship and not merely the benefits of salvation. Intentional posers can be rooted out and caused to look deeper into where they are at through a clear explanation and call to the sacrificial nature of following Christ.

Another type of poser is the "unintentional poser." This response comes from those who want to be included in a group while being unaware of all that is expected as a result. They may choose to adopt beliefs and cultural norms for the sake of compliance and often dabble without fully committing. The important differentiation

between this poser and the intentional one is the volitional act of deception. The intentional poser sets out to intentionally deceive others around her while the unintentional poser is often either deceived himself or misappropriates the importance of sincere belief and allegiance. Regardless, the unintentional poser should also be challenged to deep discipleship and sacrifice but also included in missional activity in



Christian community as a way to more fully embed authentic faith. Through transformative missional

experiences in the context of community, an unintentional poser often sees the stark contrast between their artificial obeisance and the Spirit-filled life.

4. **The Learner:** A person who demonstrates authentic interest in life transformation, who is spiritually curious and who eagerly desires change is called a "learner." While some in church settings refer to this type of person as a "seeker," learner seems to fit more appropriately those who are open to change but may not be actively looking for it or know exactly what they are looking for. Often, learners are guileless individuals who would sincerely respond to the gospel if only someone would invite them to. More and more, college students in America are becoming spiritual learners. They engage spiritual realities with an open and sincere attitude,



withhold or delay judgment against difficult spiritual claims, and expose themselves to risky environments like GIGs (Group Investigating God or evangelistic Bible study). Learners have a sense that they are free to try things out, to fail or be wrong as long as they keep moving toward their spiritual goals and desires. The listen, ask good questions, and participate in Christian community and dialogue. Because of the increase in true spiritual learners, it is not uncommon to have large percentages of non-Christian learners routinely join and stay committed to the community as a part of their journey toward Christ. For learners, there are some dangers however. Many times, the learning process is not perceived to have an end, no final commitment is necessary in the minds of some learners. Other learners attempt to synchronize divergent beliefs and religious practices. Still others, sadly, are never challenged to make the step of commitment to Jesus. For learners, it is important to engage them in their journey, answer key questions, celebrate curiosity, even when awkward but eventually invite a decision for Christ. The learners join us because God is at work in their lives and not to join God in that work by inviting a decision is not only a mistake it is tragic.



Assessing the non-Christians in your community is an important part of reaching them for Christ. Consider using the 4 Responses of Our Hearers to categorize pre-Christian attendees in your fellowship. A 4 quadrant grid where you place each known name of individuals who have yet to follow Christ will help your leaders see the unique obstacles in reaching them and will help them formulate ideas and plans to do so. It may also be helpful to ask some "unintentional posers" to join your leadership team in the exercise and to engage the question, "what constitutes genuine faith in Christ?" This process can give life to the determination of a team to find the "lost coins" lost right inside the house!



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