



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

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INTERNET EVANGELISM TRAINING NOW AVAILABLE

Christians learn how to share their faith online

The statistics are sobering . . .

- ✓ Nearly 600 million people access the Internet worldwide – from nearly every language, religion and culture group.
- ✓ Web sites have less than 10 seconds to capture the attention of visitors before they click away.
- ✓ Many on the Internet are not and never have been involved in an evangelical church.

With those statistics in mind, the question is asked, what are people searching for? The answer is that statistics show many are looking for a spiritual connection and answers to tough life issues.

In some cases, these same people would never enter a church or pick up a Christian book, but feel safe exploring answers to questions of faith on the Internet. In doing so, they inevitably come in contact with Christians online, some who are competently sharing their faith but most not equipped to use the dynamics of the Internet for evangelism. While Christian ministries have developed web sites that address spiritual questions, until now no comprehensive online training was available for Christians who wanted to learn how to effectively share their faith online.

COLLABORATIVE EFFORT

The Internet Evangelism Coalition's (IEC) new Online Evangelism Training Program is now available at www.webevangelism.org/otoe. Dr. Sterling Huston, chair of the IEC, emphasizes "The training is another example of collaboration among Christian ministries to provide a strategic Internet evangelism resource for the Body of Christ." Partner organizations include Gospel Communications, Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, Christianity Today International, Christian Broadcasting Network, Crown Financial and others.

Motivating and equipping Christians to share their faith in an online environment – through email, chat rooms and personal web sites - is the focus of the new training. The curriculum was designed by the IEC committee on training, chaired by Dr. Dick Wynn, and written by Dr. C. Thomas Wright, who formerly coordinated Internet Evangelism for the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board and has continued to serve the IEC on a freelance basis.

Dr. Wright says the training is biblically based and biblically motivated. "According to Luke 19:10 the Son of Man, (Jesus) came to seek and to save that which is lost. There is a huge and growing community of pagans, seekers and believers on the Internet. Many of those believers want to share their faith effectively," he adds. The training offers visitors the opportunity to participate in seven, self-paced learning sessions in two categories: Preparation for Online Evangelism (The Need for Online Evangelism, An overview of the Internet Context and Preparing to Share Jesus Online); and Presenting the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the Online Context (Online Options for Sharing Jesus and Initial Nurturing of Online Converts). (For more information, please go to <http://www.gospelcom.net/bgc/iec/otoe/outline.php>.) Simply put, Dr. Wright believes the best result for the curriculum would be, "For every online believer to more effectively and intentionally reduce the population of Hell."

IEC BACKGROUND

The Internet Evangelism Coalition was born out of a consultation sponsored by the Billy Graham Center of Wheaton College (BGC) in April 1997. The consultation voted to establish a committee to facilitate collaboration on Internet initiatives.

Following an April 1999 IEC conference, a permanent organization was put in place to support the ongoing work of the Coalition. Recognizing that it would take several years for the organization to become self-sustaining, the Committee asked the BGC to temporarily set up and manage an office to begin the process, which it does today.

IEC GOALS

The Internet Evangelism Coalition has two major goals:

1. To promote Internet Evangelism: Inspiring strategic thinking and resource development to empower the Church for Internet Evangelism; and
2. Facilitate collaboration: Encouraging collaborative efforts and connecting partners and resources for Internet Evangelism.

OTHER IEC PROJECTS

In addition to providing Online Evangelism Training, IEC partners are also involved in other collaborative projects including: Evangelism Resources – www.evangelismtoolbox.com; Resources for Growing Christians – www.growinginchrist.com; and a Seeker Site – www.nowtrygod.com.

The IEC will hold its next major meeting September 9-10, 2003 in Chicago. For more information go to www.webevangelism.org or email iec@wheaton.edu.

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Media Note

To set up an interview with Dr. Sterling Huston or Dr. C. Thomas Wright concerning the Online Evangelism Training, please call Naomi Frizzell at 904.262.5202 or email iec@wheaton.edu for assistance.