

III. WHAT IS OUR METHOD?

Some tips that might be helpful when communicating the gospel to unbelievers

REMEMBER THAT EVANGELISM IS A PROCESS

- You may be planting the seed that others will water.
- You may be watering a seed that others have planted and still others will harvest.
- You may be harvesting a crop that others have planted and watered. Or you may plant, water, and harvest at one time.

Your faithfulness is just as important as the faithfulness of others who may be involved in the process.

B. RELY ON THE HOLY SPIRIT

Pray, pray, pray

Rom. 10:1

Only the Holy Spirit can impart the spiritual understanding that leads to salvation.

1 Thess. 1:2-5

C. UNDERSTAND YOUR LIMITATIONS

You are the ambassador, proclaimer, farmer, sower, planter, and waterer. But God alone can transform a human heart.

2. You mustn't be complacent. You must be faithful. But you mustn't take upon yourself more than God has allotted to you.

3. That may be a new thought for you if you've been taught that the power of persuasion is able to bring someone to Christ.

a. You may reason, "If my words are effective enough, my timing just right, or my appeal emotional enough, that will do the trick."

b. Or, "What about 2 Cor. 5:10-11? Aren't we supposed

to persuade men to come to Christ to avoid judgment?"

"We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. Therefore knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men."

- That passage is not about evangelism.
- The context of that passage speaks of Christians who will appear before Christ for rewards, not unbelievers who will be judged.
- "Fear" refers to reverential awe for God, not fear of His judgment.
- "Persuade" addresses Paul's compulsion of persuading the Corinthians of His apostolic credentials so that he will fulfill his ministry in a way consistent with His calling (Hughes, NICNT).

c. When it comes to evangelism, a good rule of thumb is to work like it all depends on you; pray like it all depends on God! But don't confuse the two.

D. KNOW THE GOSPEL

1. Know a simply, clear, concise presentation of the gospel.

Such as our three-point outline from our last section:

- What did Jesus say about Himself?
- What did Jesus say about us?
- What did Jesus say about salvation?

2. Know where to go in Scripture to find the gospel.

a. One popular method is "The Romans Road"

- The fact of sin - Romans 3:9-12
- The extent of sin - Romans 3:23
- The solution for sin - Romans 3:24; 5:8
- The response to sin - Romans 10:9-13

b. Some other helpful passages:

- John 1:12
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-8
- Ephesians 2:8-10
- Titus 3:4-5
- 1 John 5:11-13

3. Some may ask, "What good does it do to tell people what Jesus said if they don't believe in Jesus or in what He said?"

Our task is to present the message. God will do the rest.

Rom. 10:17 - "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Faith comes as a result of hearing the gospel.)

Heb. 4:12 - "The word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

E. KEEP IT SIMPLE AND CLARIFY TERMINOLOGY

1. Don't assume that your message is easy to grasp.

The God of the universe coming to earth in the person of

Jesus Christ to die on a cross for our sins may be a familiar theme to you, but it is profound, and will likely sound strange or offensive to the uninitiated.

2. Don't assume that non-Christians understand Christian terminology.

Someone who reads a sign that says "Jesus Saves," may think, "Jesus saves what—dimes, nickels, quarters?" What may sound flippant or sacrilegious to us could be a perfectly logical response to someone unacquainted with our terminology.

3. Don't necessarily avoid Christian terminology, but be sure to define it as clearly as possible.

Do you understand the gospel thoroughly enough to explain the following words in simple terms? If not, you may need to do some study.

- Christian
- Grace
- Salvation
- Redemption
- Reconciliation
- Justification
- Sanctification
- Repentance

4. Even people who think they understand Christian terminology may not really understand at all.

a. That includes people who think they're Christians, but

really aren't.

b. Paul said of his unsaved Jewish brothers and sisters:

"Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not in accordance with knowledge. For not knowing about God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God" (which is Christ Himself) (Rom. 10:1-3).

5. Consider some of the more popular misconceptions about Christianity.

a. A Christian is someone who joins a church or is baptized.

- We call this error "conversion by association."

b. A Christian is someone who is born in America, because this is a Christian nation.

- Actually, being born in America simply makes someone an American.

c. A Christian is someone who is born into a religious family.

- Actually, being born into a religious family simply makes someone a member of a religious family.

d. Living a good moral life will get me into heaven.

- Morality isn't the issue: Jesus is.

e. Jesus is simply one of many equally good paths to God.

- Jesus made exclusive claims about Himself: “I am the way, truth, life, no one comes to the Father but by me.”

f. To become a Christian, you simply have to kiss your brain goodbye!

- Actually, there is compelling evidence for the truth of Christianity if someone takes the time to examine it.

g. Jesus is someone you add to your life, like a cosmic good luck charm. He’s the Big Brother in the sky.

6. The Lord may use you to clarify what the gospel really is.

a. That level of ministry isn’t always welcome because an increasing number of people love vague religiosity and object to doctrinal clarity--especially when it challenges their religious traditions or upsets their lifestyle.

b. A good starting point for clarifying the gospel is to ask someone what he or she thinks of Christ. Their response will be a good indicator of their spiritual condition.

7. Remember that no matter how politely someone might reject Christ, their rejection is just as final as someone who rejects Him with cursing and blasphemy.

a. That’s what Jesus faced continually with the Jewish religious leaders, who were devoutly religious people but opposed Jesus to the point of killing Him.

b. Paul said, “If anyone does not love the Lord, let him

be accursed" (1 Cor. 16:22).

8. Additionally, some false teachers deliberately redefine terminology to appear Christian, but their goal is deception.

An example: 2 Cor. 11:2-4, 13-15 - "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin. But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.

"For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully. . . .

"For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds."

F. FOCUS ON CENTRAL ISSUES

1. Key question: Who is Jesus?

Matthew 16:13-15

"When Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He began asking His disciples, saying, 'Who do people say that the Son of Man is?' And they said, 'Some say John the

Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.' He said to them, 'But who do YOU say that I am?'"

2. Avoid arguing peripheral issues or getting caught up in intellectual debate for the sake of debate.

a. Winning a debate doesn't necessarily equal winning a soul.

b. Some peripheral issues include:

- Denominationalism
- Inspiration of Scripture
- Creation/Evolution
- Why do the innocent suffer?
- Are heathens really lost?

3. Be prepared to respond to thoughtful inquires.

a. John Stott said,

"We cannot pander to a man's intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity" (Cited in How to Give Away Your Faith, Paul Little, p. 106).

b. For example, how would you respond to these questions?

- Is Christianity reasonable?
- How can we know if the Bible is reliable?
- What did Jesus claim about Himself?
- How could Jesus, who was a man, be God?
- What evidence exists for Christ's resurrection?
- Do miracles really occur?

c. You should be able to give at least an initial response that is thoughtful.

G. DON'T PROCLAIM A MAN-CENTERED GOSPEL

In other words, don't emphasize what Christ can do for them, to the neglect of who Christ is.

1. We owe Christ allegiance.
2. We are obligated to Him.
3. We are to worship Him because of who He is.
4. We must not make the gospel so man-centered that we lose sight of God's holiness and righteous requirements.
5. If we slip into the health/wealth/prosperity format, we lose the ability to define and address a person's true spiritual need, and run the risk of attracting self-centered, shallow, emotional, rocky, and thorny Christians (see Matt. 13:18-22).
6. We must speak the truth in love, allowing the Holy Spirit to penetrate people's hearts and bring true conviction and repentance.

H. DON'T BE AFRAID TO "POP THE QUESTION"

1. "Will you receive Christ now?"
2. "What is preventing you from trusting Christ right now?"

I. BE PATIENT

1. How long have you been praying for the salvation of a loved one or acquaintance?
2. How long did it take you to come to Christ?
3. As long as an unbeliever is alive, there is hope for his or her salvation. Don't give up!

J. WATCH YOUR MOTIVES

1. Which leads into our next section.

2. Examples of wrong motives:

- “I want my husband to come to Christ so we will stop abusing me, cheating on me, etc.”
- “I want my wife to come to Christ so she will stop nagging me.”
- “I want my child to come to Christ so he or she will stop misbehaving.”
- “I want my neighbors to come to Christ so they will stop throwing all-night wild parties when I need to sleep.”
- “We want people in this community to come to Christ so they will attend our church and our church will grow.”
- “I want our society to come to Christ so it will be a better and safer place to live.”

3. A proper motive:

“I want people to come to Christ because salvation glorifies Christ, who is worthy of all glory, and because salvation the best thing that can happen to my spouse, child, friend, neighbor, society.

4. Remember:

Evangelism begins with the conviction that the greatest favor you can do for others is to introduce them to Jesus Christ so they can be reconciled to God.