

Seven Principles Of Personal Evangelism from the Gospel of John (4:1-26)

INTRODUCTION

Most Christians want to and have a desire to share the gospel with other people. We know that we should and the reason is that it is part of our new identity in Christ. However, just like other aspects of Christianity, this is also an area where we need to be disciplined, trained and challenged to grow as believers in Christ.

Tonight we are going to take a lesson from Jesus, the master evangelist. Jesus was often engaged in both personal evangelism as well as public preaching. Both are important, but most of us will probably never be public preachers of the Gospel. So we should learn how to share the Gospel personally with the people God is bringing in and out of our lives on a regular basis.

Tonight we will look specifically at his conversation with the woman at Jacob's well in John 4:1-26. There are seven specific ideas I want us to see from this passage.

I. ENGAGE PEOPLE - WE MUST HAVE CONTACT WITH PEOPLE

A. JESUS INTENTIONALLY SOUGHT OUT PEOPLE WHO WERE FAR FROM GOD. And he intentionally put himself into places where people needed the truth and power of the Gospel. All kinds of places.

Religious places as well as secular places. He was with "sinners" in their homes eating dinner (invited by them) and he was also here in Samaritan territory. - John 4:1-6

1. Many Jews, because of their disdain for Samaritans, avoided Samaria and contact with Samaritans or anyone unlike themselves.
2. Jesus and His disciples chose to pass through Samaria, assuring contact with people who were far from God.
3. A similar example of Jesus making social contact - Luke 5:29-32

B. IF PEOPLE ARE NOT COMING TO CHRIST, WE'RE MUST GO TO THE PEOPLE!

1. What are your rhythms? Where do you usually go where you are already known? Where do you sometimes go?

2. Jesus idea of fishing was in a boat with a net.
3. Jesus idea of sowing was with a bag of seed throwing it onto plowed ground, but hitting all the ground around. - Haggai 2:19

C. CHRISTIANITIS.

1. The longer you are a Christian, your social relationships and friendships tend to become more and more populated by other Christians.
2. This means we must work harder to continue and keep associations and make friendships with unbelievers.

D. DO NOT CONFUSE SEPARATION WITH ISOLATION...

1. Yes, we must be separate from the world - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
2. But this does not mean we are to isolate ourselves
 - a) Note the prayer of Christ - John 17:15
 - b) Note the command of Paul - 1 Corinthians 5:9-11
 - c) Withdrawing ourselves from those who have not heard or obeyed the gospel is contrary to the will of the Lord!

E. WHAT ARE YOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONTACT...

1. We must make room in our lives for people we want to reach. Most of us have a limited number of spaces and a limited amount of time. Therefore if sharing the Gospel and evangelism is going to be a priority, we must order our lives and our time in such a way that reflects this.
 - a) At School
 - (1) How you serve now will likely be an indication of how you will serve later in life
 - b) At Work
 - (1) We spend much of our life with these people
 - (2) We have the greatest potential to influence them, especially by example
 - (3) Involve your life with these people outside of work hours
 - c) At Home
 - (1) Do we even know the spiritual state of our family?
 - (2) Do we even know our neighbors?
 - (3) Those closest to us can be difficult sometimes, but are reachable - e.g., Matthew 13:54-58; John 7:5; Acts 1:14

[Remember, Jesus said "Go into all the world..." (Mark 16:15). We must go where the people are! Another principle we can glean from Jesus' conversation with the woman is...]

II. ESTABLISH COMMON INTEREST - CREATE A BRIDGE...

A. COMMON INTERESTS ARE DISCOVERED AND UNCOVERED

1. Note Jesus' first words to the woman - John 4:7-8
 - a) She had come to draw water
 - b) He was thirsty
 - c) His first words centered around their common interest (water)
2. Realize the need to build rapport
 - a) Meaningful dialogue is not easy, especially involving spiritual matters
 - b) You must train and practice this skill
3. A common interest allows opportunity for meaningful dialogue
4. Once a bridge for communication has been established, it will be easier to discuss spiritual things with another person

B. COMMON INTERESTS ARE...

1. Family (such as children, grandchildren)
2. Activities (such as work, community projects, hobbies)
3. Shared experiences (such as travel, or even tragedies)

[Don't feel that you must immediately begin talking about spiritual matters. Take time to nurture common interests. Yet at some point we want to reach the next stage, which leads to our third principle...]

III. IGNITE SPIRITUAL INTEREST

A. THROUGH ACTION...

1. The example of Jesus - John 4:9
 - a) As a man He speaks to her, a woman
 - b) As a rabbi He speaks to her, an immoral woman
 - c) As a Jew He speaks to her, a Samaritan
 - d) He ignited interest by simply speaking to her
2. Regarding our actions
 - a) We can arouse spiritual interest by our example - Matthew 5
 - b) By showing kindness and compassion to all, even the evil and wicked
 - c) By not harboring racial or social prejudices to those who are different
 - d) By our own example of faith and hope - 1 Peter 3:1-2,15

B. THROUGH WORDS...

- a) The example of Jesus - John 4:10-14

- (1) Jesus' statement shifted their conversation to spiritual matters
- (2) He led them into a discussion on a common spiritual interest (living water!)
- b) Regarding our words
 - (1) We can raise questions or make statements that shift conversations to spiritual matters. For example:
 - (a) "What do you think our world is in such a mess?"
 - (b) "Would you be interested in what the Bible says about...?"
 - (c) The discussion should first involve matters of common agreement
 - (d) Start with things upon which you agree, to build rapport and instill confidence
 - (e) This was the practice of apostolic preaching - Acts 13:16-22
 - (2) Pay attention to other people's words. Oftentimes others are bringing up spiritual conversations with the topics and interests and especially their problems. Be smart and pray! Allow the Holy Spirit to help you and ask for the words to say.

[Once spiritual interest has been aroused, another principle can be gleaned from Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman...]

IV. DON'T GO TOO FAR, TOO FAST

A. START WITH WHAT THEY ARE READY FOR...

- 1. Note Jesus' discussion with the woman - John 4:15-16
 - a) She wanted the "living water", but did she really understand?
 - b) Jesus saw the need to slow her down and provide the proper ground work
 - (1) She needed faith in Him as the Messiah
 - (2) He needed to provide evidence that He was the Messiah
 - c) So instead of giving her the "living water".. He tells her to get her husband, Which will result in her conviction of Him as a prophet
- 2. Sometimes people don't realize what they need first
 - a) They'll want to talk about a particular subject, But they really need something else first

B. SOME EXAMPLES...

- 1. Some want to study Revelation, when they need to be grounded on the rest of the Bible first

2. Some want to discuss issues related to church organization, work, worship, etc., when they ought to focus on the "first principles" of the gospel
3. It is important that a person not choke on the "meat" of the Word - cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2

[There is another principle of evangelism that takes into consideration the need of the prospect...]

V. DON'T CONDEMN UNNECESSARILY

A. THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS...

1. He could have dwelt on her being an adulteress - John 4:17-18
2. As stated elsewhere, He came to save the world, not to condemn it - John 3:17
3. Not to say He will not one day judge the world, but that the primary purpose of His first coming was to offer salvation - John 12:46-48

B. IN OUR EVANGELISTIC EFFORTS...

1. Though we preach against sin, our primary purpose is to save, not judge - 1 Corinthians 5:12-13
2. Our focus should be to inform others of the forgiveness God offers - cf. 2 Corinthians 5:18-20
 - a) God seeks reconciliation with sinners
 - b) Ours is a ministry of reconciliation

[Another important principle in evangelism to remember is...]

VI. STICK WITH THE MAIN ISSUE

A. IN THE CASE OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN...

1. She turned the subject away from herself to where one should worship - John 4:19-20
2. Jesus answered her question, while effectively turning the conversation back to the original subject: Who He is and what He offers - John 4:21-25 (John 4:10)

B. REMAIN STEADFAST TO YOUR OBJECTIVES...

1. If seeking to establish a common ground of agreement, avoid jumping ahead
2. As you move from common to uncommon ground...
 - a) Take one step at a time

- b) Do not go on until agreement at each step has occurred
- 3. If your objective is simply to obtain consent for a home Bible study, avoid getting into a detailed discussion at that time - Proverbs 15:28

[One last principle in evangelism gleaned from Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well...]

VII. CONFRONT DIRECTLY

A. JESUS' EXAMPLE THEN...

- 1. Finally, Jesus confronted the woman with His identity - John 4:26
- 2. This came after He had laid the groundwork

B. EXAMPLES FOR TODAY...

- 1. In trying to set up a Bible study
 - a) Take advantage of social connections
 - b) Develop common interests
 - c) Be open to comments that indicate a spiritual interest while demonstrating your own faith through actions and words
 - d) Avoid fruitless arguments, emphasize instead common beliefs. Always look to the Bible and point everyone to go to the Bible rather than opinions or feelings.
 - e) Praise their good points and encourage them in the right direction. Especially encourage them to look at, read, and use the Bible.
 - f) Have one primary objective: to encourage them to study the Bible even more
 - g) Ask if they would like to learn more about Jesus, the Bible, His church
 - h) Note the example of Aquila and Priscilla with Apollos - Acts 18:24-26
 - i) Ask them directly about an opportunity to study the Bible
- 2. During the course of a home Bible study
 - a) Continue to develop the social interest. Be their true friend.
 - b) Remember that their level of spiritual interest may take time to develop.
 - c) Continue to establish common interests
 - d) Take time to accentuate common ground you share in your spiritual interests
 - e) Go from common ground to uncommon ground carefully

- f) Stress the gospel message; don't obsess on their individual shortcomings
- g) Have one primary objective: to help them understand their need and gospel plan of salvation - Mark 16:15-16; Colossians 1:5-6
- h) Confront them directly with the invitation to obey the gospel of Christ; for example, by asking...
 - (1) "Does this make sense?"
 - (2) "Is there anything I have said that you do not understand?"
 - (3) "Have I been teaching you anything other than what the Bible teaches?"
 - (4) "Would you like to obey Christ now and be baptized for the remission of your sins?"

CONCLUSION

The result of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman was the conversion of many people in the city of Sychar - John 4:39-42

This demonstrates the potential of personal evangelism...

Who knows whether the one person you teach may in turn bring many to Christ?

That one person may be like a seed from which seeds may come forth

Realizing this potential, we can better appreciate the words of Jesus:

"Do you not say, 'There are still four months and [then] comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!" (John 4:35)