

Lovingly sharing our Savior's heart

Eight questions to ponder about sharing the gospel

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First, some preliminary thoughts....

Motivation

- Why do we witness? Because we love or because we are meeting an obligation?
- People aren't "projects" – do we give them time? Do we care about anything else about them?

Attitude / personal testimony

- Are we positive, joyful and grateful or negative, complaining and critical?
- Do we exhibit humility and non-judgmentalism?
- Do people envy our attitude and lifestyle?

Approach

- We need to talk less and listen more; do we care enough to ask and listen?
- Don't speak at people, speak with people; dialogue NOT monologue
- "Arms length" evangelism, although important, is the easiest

Contextual awareness and intelligence

- Mars Hill context--Acts 17 vs. Jerusalem Acts 2

1. What biblical advice can lay a foundation for evangelizing?

- **Build Relationships:** Colossians 4:5-6 (NASB) - "Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person."
- **Listen and Understand:** James 1:19 (NASB) - "This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to anger."
- **Share Our Personal Testimony:** Revelation 12:11 (NASB)
- **Use Scripture as a Foundation:** 1 Peter 3:15 (NASB) - "always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."
- **Address Concerns Respectfully:** 2 Timothy 2:24-25 (NASB) - "with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth."
- **Highlight the Gospel Message:** John 14:6 (NASB) - "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.'"
- **Tailor Our Approach:** 1 Corinthians 9:22 (NASB) - "To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means save some."

2. What is the greatest “advertisement” for the Christian faith to those who are not yet believers?

- **Love and Compassion:** John 13:34-35 (NASB) – “... By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
- **Forgiveness and Grace:** Ephesians 4:32 (NASB) - "Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."
- **Personal Transformation:** 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NASB) - "he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come."
- **Hope and Joy in Difficulty:** Romans 12:12 (NASB) - "Rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer."
- **Authenticity and Humility:** Micah 6:8 (NASB) - "to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
- **Lifestyle Consistency:** Colossians 3:17 (NASB) - "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus...."

3. What are some of the mistakes that sincere Christians make when they share the gospel?

- Overemphasis on converting to the minimizing of caring
- Assuming everyone wants to discuss and learn what we know
- Neglecting relationship building
- Not admitting when we don't know
- Using fear-based tactics
- Being argumentative instead of reasoning
- Not listening actively
- Using Christian jargon without explanation
- Disregarding doubts and questions
- Oversimplifying complex issues
- Focusing solely on intellectual arguments
- Neglecting personal sharing

4. What spiritual realities, both positive and negative, are at work when a Christian is evangelizing?

- **The Role of the Holy Spirit:** John 16:13 (NASB)
- **God's Initiative in Drawing People:** John 6:44 (NASB) - "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."
- **The Power of the Gospel:** Romans 1:16 (NASB) - "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek."
- **Spiritual Blindness and Resistance:** 2 Corinthians 4:4 (NASB) - "In whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."
- **Free Will and Rejection:** John 3:18 (NASB) - "he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God."
- **Spiritual Warfare:** Ephesians 6:12 (NASB) - "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places."

5. What objections are most often presented as reasons not to believe in the Christian message?

- Problem of Evil and Suffering
- Lack of “proof”
- Incompatibility with “Science”
- Religious Pluralism
- Unanswered Prayers
- Biblical “Inconsistencies”
- Cultural and Historical Critiques of Christianity
- Morality and Ethics w/o faith
- Exaggeration of Christ’s claims
- Personal experiences
- Perceived lack of Empowerment
- Unbelievable claims of miracles
- Concept of Hell

6. What are some of the primary obstacles that prevent people from accepting the Christian message?

- **Differing Worldviews and Beliefs:** Accepting a new worldview can challenge deeply ingrained beliefs.
- **Intellectual Doubts and Questions:** Some individuals have intellectual questions or doubts about the theological concepts presented in Christianity, such as the nature of God, the Trinity, and the concept of substitutionary atonement.
- **Skepticism of Miracles:** The idea of Christ's miraculous birth and resurrection might be met with skepticism, especially by those who prioritize empirical evidence and scientific explanations.
- **Perceived Injustice or Unfairness:** The concept of substitutionary sacrifice can raise questions about the fairness of one person taking the punishment for the sins of others, especially if they have a strong sense of justice.
- **Moral and Ethical Concerns:** People might struggle with the idea that faith in Christ is the only way to salvation, especially if they believe in the inherent goodness of people from other religions or worldviews.

6. (cont.) What are some of the primary obstacles that prevent people from accepting the Christian message?

- **Religious Trauma or Negative Experiences:** Individuals who have experienced negative encounters with religion might be hesitant to embrace any religious message.
- **Cultural and Peer Pressure:** the fear of being ostracized by family or community.
- **Fear of Change:** significant changes in one's beliefs, lifestyle, and relationships can be uncomfortable.
- **Emotional Resistance:** Some individuals might have deep emotional reasons for resisting the message, such as unresolved pain, anger, or grief that they associate with religious ideas.
- **Lack of Spiritual Awareness:** People who haven't yet explored their own spiritual questions might not be open to considering deeper religious concepts.

7. What approach and prayer requests did New Testament believers focus on in order to effectively share the gospel?

Reliance on the Holy Spirit: Acts 1:8 (NASB) - "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses"

Building Relationships: Acts 16:14 (NASB) - "A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening...."

Addressing the Audience: Acts 17:22-23 (NASB) - "So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects... What therefore you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.'"

Boldness in Proclaiming the Gospel: Ephesians 6:19-20 (NASB) - "and pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel...."

Open Doors for the Gospel: Colossians 4:3 (NASB) - "praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word...."

7. (cont.) What approach did the apostles and others in the New Testament take in order to effectively share the gospel?

- **Preparation and Message**

- **Study and Knowledge:** Acts 18:28 (NASB) - "for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, demonstrating by the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ."
- **Christ's Death and Resurrection:** 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 (NASB) - "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures."
- **Repentance and Forgiveness:** Acts 2:38 (NASB) - "Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.'"
- **Salvation through Faith:** Ephesians 2:8-9 (NASB) - "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast."

8. What open ended, respectful questions would be great conversation starters for discussing the gospel?

- "Where are you on your spiritual journey?"
- "How will God decide who makes it to heaven?"
- "If I were diagnosed with a terminal disease and scared to meet God, what advice would you give me?"
- "What have been your experiences with serious Christians?"
- "Do you believe Christians have exaggerated Christ's claims about Himself?"
- "What has been your exposure to the Bible? What is your view of it?"
- "If you were to die today and to defend your life choices to God – how confident are you that He would be satisfied?"

