

■ DIGGING IN...

HOW JESUS INTERACTED WITH PEOPLE

Does evangelism make you nervous? If so, it will help to study carefully how Jesus interacted with people. Whom did He meet? How did He connect with them? Where did the encounters take place? Who initiated contact? What happened in the conversation?

Like Jesus' original followers, believers today are sent into the world to be His witnesses (Luke 24:48; compare Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8). We can learn much about how to handle that assignment by asking questions of the four narratives of Jesus' life—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They include more than 40 meetings between Jesus and various individuals.

Who started the conversation?

- **In nine cases, Jesus initiated the conversations. Examples:**
 - a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42)
 - a crippled beggar (John 5:1-15)
- **In 25 instances, it was the other party who started the discussion. Jesus responded to their inquiries. Examples:**
 - a rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-30)
 - a demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)
 - Jairus, a synagogue ruler (Mark 5:21-43)
 - a hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:24-34)
- **Other conversations were triggered by third parties. Examples:**
 - tax collectors and “sinners,” invited to a party (Matt. 9:9-13)
 - Herod, introduced by Pilate (Luke 23:6-16)
 - Nathaniel, invited by Philip (John 1:45-51)
 - an adulterous woman brought by the scribes (Jn 8:1-11)

Where did the conversations take place?

- **The majority of Jesus' interactions occurred in the workplace. Examples:**
 - with James and John (Matt. 4:21-22)
 - with a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42)
 - with a lame man (Jn 5:1-15)
- **Many took place in homes. Examples:**
 - at Peter's house with his mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)
 - with a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark u:24-30)
 - at Zacchaeus' house (Luke 19:1-10)

Few were in religious settings. Instead, Jesus talked with people about spiritual issues where they were most familiar. He did not need a special environment or control over the circumstances to discuss things of eternal significance.

What was discussed?

Jesus asked questions in more than half of the conversations He had. This is similar to God's first response to the first sinners in history, when He asked four questions of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:9, 11, 13). Examples:

- an adulterous woman (John 8:1-11)
- the scribes (Luke 5:17-26)
- His mother and brothers (Matt. 12:46-50)
- the Pharisees (Luke 6:6-11)

Jesus connected with people's thoughts and feelings. He understood that new ideas need to be connected with existing frames of reference if they are to last. He seldom pressed for “closure” or a decision. Instead, He understood that time is required for ideas to simmer and for people to own them before they act on them.

What can we learn from Jesus' example?

- **Jesus knew how to take initiative.**
- **Jesus responded to the initiatives of others.**
- **Jesus left room in his schedule for interruptions by friends and others enlisting his help.**
- **Jesus usually met people on their own turf.**
- **Jesus was interested in establishing common ground with others.**

Witnessing involves connecting your faith with people's experience in a way that they can understand it, in their own time and manner. It means cooperating with whatever God's Spirit may be doing with them and leaving the results to Him. ■

FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH: LESSON #5 - Sharing Your Testimony with Others

Jesus said, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witness to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." - Acts 1:8

When you accept Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior, you become a witness for Him. As a Christian, it is important to share your testimony with the rest of the world. You can tell others who Jesus is, what He did on earth, what He has personally done in your life, and what He desires to do in anyone's life who chooses to believe in Him.

What is a witness? "A witness is one who can give firsthand account of something seen, heard, or experienced." **What is a testimony?** "A testimony is a declaration by a witness given under oath."

It is important to define these terms because a witness is a witness regardless of whether they have shared their testimony or not. An example of this would be if you personally witnessed a crime and you knew that the person who was being charged was, in fact, not the person who you witnessed committing the crime. Your personal testimony of what you witnessed would then free the innocent person who was being charged. But if you chose not to share your testimony and the innocent person was found guilty, this does not make you any less a witness whether you shared your testimony or not.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY WITH OTHERS?

1. **BECAUSE JESUS HAS CALLED US TO.** (Read Mark 16:15-16 & Matthew 28:19-20). What does Jesus call us to do?

Why is the Gospel good news? (Eph 2) _____

2. **BECAUSE THIS IS WHAT THE APOSTLES OF JESUS DID.** (Read Acts 4:33)

What declaration or testimony were the Apostles sharing? _____

3. **BECAUSE WHOEVER HAS NOT RECEIVED JESUS CHRIST WILL BE LOST FOREVER.** (Read John 3:36) Who will inherit eternal life? _____

Who will not inherit eternal life? _____

WHAT SHOULD OUR MOTIVATION BE FOR TELLING OUR TESTIMONY TO OTHERS?

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." -Romans 5:8

"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." - John 3:16

What is God's motivation toward us? _____

What should be our motivation toward others? _____

HOW ARE WE TO SHARE OUR FAITH?

1. **THROUGH OUR LIFE.** (Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-3)

The apostle Paul says that our lives will be "read by all men". What does this mean?

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." - Matt 5:16

2. **THROUGH OUR WORDS** (2Corinthians 5:17-21; Rom 10:9-10)

What are we called to do with our mouths? _____

“How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” - Romans 10:14

Read Matthew 10:32-33. What does Jesus tell us to do? _____

You are a witness of Jesus Christ and you have a testimony of Him which can set prisoners free. The Bible encourages all believers to tell others about Jesus, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the grave. Understand, not everyone is called to stand on the street corner and approach people, but we are all called to look for opportunities, and as the Lord leads, to share our faith with those He places in our everyday path.

COMMON PROBLEMS OR EXCUSES WE HAVE WITH WITNESSING:

⇒ **“I DON’T KNOW ENOUGH, I’M A NEW CHRISTIAN.”** (Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

This passage shows the simple Gospel message. *Who died?* _____

What did they do with His dead body? _____

What did He do three days later? _____

One of the greatest approaches to sharing the gospel with others is sharing what Jesus has personally done in your life.

⇒ **“WHAT WILL MY FRIENDS THINK?”** (Read Matthew 10:22)

Read Matthew 10:37,38. Who/What is more important? _____

Read Mark 10:28-31. How will you be rewarded? _____

⇒ **“I’LL BE PERSECUTED AND HARASSED!”**

“Jesus said, Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...” - Matthew 5:10-12

Read 2 Timothy 3:12. What happens to us when we desire to live a godly life? _____

⇒ **“I’M AFRAID”**

Read Romans 1:16. What are we not to be ashamed of? _____

Why? _____

“There is no fear in love: but perfect love casts out fear...” 1 John 4:18

⇒ **“I DON’T KNOW HOW TO APPROACH SOMEONE AND START WITNESSING.”**

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-4. What did Paul not approach with? _____

“A servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition; perhaps God will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.” - 2 Timothy 2:24-26

Read Matthew 10:16. We are to be wise as _____ and harmless as _____ .

What does this mean? _____

IN CONCLUSION...

“...neither he who plants is anything, not he who waters, but God who gives the increase.” - 1 Corinthians 3:7

Read 1Corinthians 4:12

While God has called us as His witnesses to testify of Him to the world, it is important to note that it is God who does the work in bringing people to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ - not us. So realize that the pressure never needs to be on you to “make” someone believe in Jesus. In the passage above, it is interesting that a plant is used as the illustration of those with whom we share Jesus. If you were to physically plant a tomato seed in the ground and water it, can you “make” that plant grow by watching it? By coaxing it? How about by yelling at it? Absolutely not! It is God who created this plant who has decided how fast it should grow. So too with those we share Jesus with. We cannot “make” anyone believe in Jesus. All we have been called by God to do is share the gospel with them - as witnesses to what Jesus Christ has done in our lives and what He desires to do in theirs.
