

5. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ

Becoming a Disciple Series

Communication of the Word of God Creates Faith in Christ.

There have been times in my life, usually in beautiful worship, when God has drawn close, and His presence seems heavy in the room. Have you ever been to a meeting like that? Imagine what it would be like to experience that type of encounter with Jesus being present in the flesh! When we experience the presence of God in a meeting, we often think to ourselves, "If only my friend had been there and experienced the closeness of God, he would have given his life to Christ!" However, people need more than an experience; they need to understand how to respond to the Gospel. They need a clear presentation of the finished work of Christ to lead them to a life-changing decision.

People are drawn to Christ for many reasons, but it is God's Word that cuts through the darkness and brings light. Jesus said, "My words are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). There needs to be an understanding of the finished work of Christ on their behalf. Paul, the apostle, said, "How shall they hear unless a preacher is sent to them" (Romans 10:14). The clearer the explanation of Who Jesus is and what was accomplished by His crucifixion, the higher the chance the individual will come through to experience genuine heart change. It is, therefore, essential for the truths of the Gospel to be effectively passed on so that people may genuinely be born again of the Spirit. I aim for everyone to effectively share Christ confidently to pass on words of life to others.

Paul, the apostle, explained the importance of the Word of God in conversion.

Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ (Romans 10:17).

What age did you decide to become a Christian? If you do not remember a specific time, was there a turning point in your life when you became spiritually awake? (Be brief.)

Peter was the first of the apostles to preach the Gospel publicly. God gave him this great honor on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). The Holy Spirit had just manifested with tongues of fire appearing, and the believers were speaking in other tongues. People heard the Word of God being proclaimed in their languages, even though they knew these men were "simple country folk," mainly from Galilee. A miraculous event drew them, but Peter still needed to make the Word of God understood. Upon hearing the Gospel clearly, it was then that they cried out: "What must we do?" They needed more than an experience; the experience got their attention. They responded to the clear message of the Gospel and were cut to the heart. That is what the Word of God does. God will always back up His Word with the power of the Holy Spirit. We cannot always see what is happening inside a person's mind and heart, but God knows, for no one can come to the Lord without God Himself drawing them.

No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him. And I will raise him up on the last day. (John 6:44).

We may come across people hardened to the Gospel. Perhaps they have even grown up in church hearing the Word of God but, for some reason or another, have set themselves against it. Others may go to church routinely but still not have a living faith. A person can become vaccinated against the truth by growing up in a church but not having any personal connection to the message of Christ. They may attend church to appease family or because of tradition. When someone has become apathetic, how can we engage that person in a conversation about spiritual things? Depending on how well you know someone, you may start talking to them about something that you know is of concern to them, which helps you get beyond the surface level of conversation. I have offered some suggestions below for starting conversations. You can use these ideas, or perhaps they will spark other ideas for approaching spiritual topics. If someone is in need, we can often meet someone at that particular point of need and then go on to point them to Christ.

Questions to Stimulate Interest

Most people have difficulty bringing up the subject of the Gospel with their friend or relative, so asking a question can be an excellent way to bring up the issue. In Acts, chapter eight, the Holy Spirit spoke to the disciple Philip, telling him to walk along the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. When an important official of the Ethiopian government came passing by in his chariot, the Holy Spirit told Phillip, **“Go over and join this chariot” (Acts 8:29)**. We can learn from how Phillip began to engage in conversation with the Ethiopian eunuch reading the scroll of Isaiah the prophet:

³⁰Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. **“Do you understand what you are reading?”** Philip asked. ³¹“How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. ³²This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading: “He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth. ³³In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth.” ³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?” ³⁵Then Philip **began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus** (Acts 8:30-35).

Did you notice how God had prepared the situation ahead of time? Phillip arrived on the scene at the exact time the Ethiopian was reading Isaiah's prophetic word about the suffering servant of God in Isaiah 53:7. It is such a joy when you see God working on a person ahead of time so that when you arrive their heart is prepared for the sowing of the seed of the Word of God. Notice, too, that Philip asked a question to stimulate interest based on something the Ethiopian was doing at the time. When Philip had his attention, he helped him understand the Scriptures of the Lord Jesus Christ and His finished work on the cross. What kinds of questions can we use in transitioning the conversation to bring up the subject of the work of Christ? Here below are a few that you could use. With some of them, you may need to know the person somewhat before you have earned the right to ask such a personal question.

- 1) If someone asked, "What is a true Christian," what would you answer?
- 2) Have you ever thought about becoming a real Christian?
- 3) Are you interested in spiritual things?
- 4) Have you ever personally discovered Jesus Christ, or are you still in the process?

- 5) Have you ever seriously considered Christ's claims on your life?
- 6) Do you think it is possible to know for sure before you die that you are going to heaven?
- 7) What would you consider man's greatest spiritual need today?
- 8) Has anyone ever told you about the gift of God?
- 7) How did you personally give your life to Christ? (To ask a person who says he is a Christian, but you sense he does not have the experience of Christ in his life).
- 8) If you die today, where would you spend eternity?
- 9) Someday, when you stand before God, if God should ask you why He should let you into heaven, what would you say to Him? (Diagnostic question to give you an idea of what the person trusts in).
- 10) If you could ask God one question, what would you ask Him?

When asking some of the more personal questions, some people respond by hiding behind a "smokescreen" to change the uncomfortableness of the topic. A smokescreen can be something someone holds up like good works or a philosophy they live by. I even had one person tell me that God would let him into heaven because he saved someone's life once. He felt that no matter what happened, that one good work would be enough to earn his way into heaven. Some are deceived into thinking that a good moral life is all they need to do to get to heaven. What then would be the reason for God to send His Son to be crucified? In the book, *How to Give Away Your Faith*, author Paul Little writes:

A Duke University student said after a discussion, "If God grades on the curve, I'll make it." His words are an apt summary of today's confusion about religion in general. Most people will accept this philosophy that all we need to do is our best, and then everything will be all right, or at least we'll be able to squeak by. In this wistful hope, we see an incredible lack of understanding about man's sinfulness and an appalling ignorance of God's infinite holiness. God doesn't grade on the curve. He has an absolute standard, Jesus Christ. The perfect righteousness of Jesus Christ is the only basis on which we can come into fellowship with the living God.¹

I met with an engaged couple a while ago, asking me to officiate at their wedding. I knew the lady strongly believed in Christ, but it did not seem like the man genuinely believed in God. I started the conversation by just getting to know them. It is wise never to presume a person is born again (John 3:3) but to present the Gospel and let the Word of God do its work of touching the inner soul. Let those you are speaking with tell you what they are trusting in as the conversation develops.

After 5 minutes of chatting about how they had met and some of their history, I began by sharing my story of how I encountered Christ. People relate to a story. Sharing your story will often be the thing that will open up a person's heart. This kind of approach takes the conversation below the surface level. In speaking to this couple, I wanted them to know that even though I am a pastor, I am just like them, in need of the Savior. Then, I asked permission to share with them what I saw as a Christian wedding. I felt a responsibility toward them to help them understand the difference between a Christian marriage and one without the Lord at the center of the relationship.

¹ Paul E. Little, *How To Give Away Your Faith*, Inter Varsity Press, Downers Grove, Ill 60515, Page 79.

I had earned the right to share heart-to-heart with them because I had already been vulnerable. I started by asking them if anyone had ever told them about the gift of God. From that point, my presentation was the gospel message you will read further down, interspersed with different illustrations and clarifying specific terms such as repentance and sin—we live in a time where those concepts need to be clearly explained, especially among the young.

Has anyone's personal story or testimony inspired you to follow Christ or sparked a desire to be closer to God? Can you briefly share what was said and how it impacted you?

Six Crucial Elements to a Gospel Presentation

1. Salvation is a Gift
2. All Have Sinned
3. The Wages of Sin
4. The Substitutionary Death of Christ
5. Repent and Receive Christ
6. Assurance of Salvation

1) Salvation is a Gift

I often start a gospel presentation by discussing the concept of salvation as a gift. Many people have been taught that they have to earn their right to gain a place in heaven through their good works. The enemy suggests the idea of a set of scales, making them think that their good works must outweigh their bad practices. These kinds of thoughts come from the pit of Hell.

⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, **it is the gift of God**; ⁹not as a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Jesus answered her, “If you knew **the gift of God** and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water” (John 4:10).

He saved us, **not because of righteous things we had done**, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

To use an illustration of a gift, I sometimes talk about a child who has done wrong the day before Christmas, where traditionally, in the Western world, we give gifts to one another. (If you do not celebrate this holiday, think of another time when gifts are given). I ask if they would still give them their Christmas gift on Christmas Day, and most people answer in the affirmative. I remind people that when a gift is given, it is not because of anything the person has done to deserve or not deserve it; it is based on the heart of the giver, who, in this instance, is God Himself! The gift of God is given to us when we receive it by faith; good works have nothing to do with God’s salvation.

2) All Have Sinned

Before they can receive the gift of God, we must bring up the problem of sin. What is sin? The concept of sin seems outdated to some who have grown up being educated primarily through media. If someone does not believe in God, sin is sometimes very foreign to them. I will always ensure they understand that I am not singling them out or commenting on their lifestyle. All of

humanity is in the same boat. We all need forgiveness. We all do things that we regret or with which we feel sorrow. The Greek word that the Scripture uses for sin is *Hamartia*. It is an archery term that means "to miss the mark." It is like aiming for the center of the target and finding that we continually miss it. God's standard is perfection. Only One has ever met that standard, and His name is Jesus. "Which of you can truthfully accuse me of sin?" (John 8:46). Sometimes people have told me that they have never sinned. I usually ask them if they know what the greatest commandment is. I have to tell them most of the time. Jesus said that it was, "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments" (Matthew 27:37-40). I ask them if they have ever kept that commandment before telling them what James wrote:

For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it (James 2:10).

It is paramount that the person sees themselves as guilty before a holy God and that they need forgiveness of their sin if they have committed one sin. I often ask them how many murders it takes before a person becomes a murderer; the answer is simple—one! How many lies does it take before a person is guilty of being a liar? Again, the answer is simple—one! How many sins does a person commit before becoming a sinner—one! God knows our condition has affected all the human race:

...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6).

When a person admits his guilt before a holy God, we must tell him the actual state of our predicament. Sin is rebellion before a holy God and must be judged. Tell them, "Before I can tell you the excellent news, I must first tell you about the justice of God toward sin."

3) The Wages of Sin

The concept of wages needs to be explained. Whatever employment we are in, we deserve a wage after our week or two weeks. In the same way, our life of sin deserves payment for what we have earned, the just payment of death:

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23).

This death is not just physical, which is obvious, but the death we are talking about is separation from the author of all life—God! Spiritual death is a place of separation from all that is good and holy, a place called Hell. If you would like to explore the topic of Hell, I would encourage you to visit groupbiblestudy.com, find the series called "*Insights into Eternity*," and download the fourth study, [*The Truth about Hell*](#). At the point of physical death, we face judgment before God:

Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

You may be reluctant to talk to a person about Hell, but did you know that there are more instances in Scripture of Jesus speaking about Hell than Heaven? If someone seems to have something in their way preventing them from responding to the Gospel, perhaps they are convicted of a particular sin. If so, you can pray with them about whatever is holding them back if they are willing. Unforgiveness or bitterness may hold them back. Be open to the Holy Spirit and ask them if it is okay to pray for them. Sometimes people will come up with reasons why they cannot accept Christ, usually due to guilt. The enemy does not want to see people set free from guilt and condemnation! You may also find that the person wants to talk about the thing holding them back. Be a listener. You cannot decide for them, but you can only lead them to where they hear the truth and can decide for themselves. If you have come this far in the conversation, then you can rest assured that God will continue to speak to their hearts by His Holy Spirit.

The fourth crucial element is:

4) The Substitutionary Death of Christ

We are now getting into the good news itself, and this truth should be explained so that people can settle the issue of righteousness once and for all. If a person feels unworthy, they will never approach God. Trying to live the Christian life on our merit and effort is impossible. We need the life of Christ living in us to live the Christian life! Period. There is a reason why Jesus had to suffer on the cross, and this is the crucial thing that people need to understand:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, **the righteous for the unrighteous**, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18).

Jesus did not die a martyr's death but a substitute's death. By that, I mean He took our place. What do we mean by a substitute? In the book *Miracle on the River Kwai*, Ernest Gordon tells the true story of a group of Prisoners of War working on the Burma Railway during World War Two. The tools were collected from the work party at the end of each day. On one occasion, a Japanese guard shouted that a shovel was missing and demanded to know which man had taken it. He began to rant and rave, working himself into a paranoid fury, and ordered whoever was guilty to step forward. No one moved. "All die! All die!" he shrieked, cocking and aiming his rifle at the prisoners. At that moment, one man stepped forward, and the guard clubbed him to death with his gun while he stood silently at attention. When they returned to the camp, the tools were counted again, and no shovel was missing. That one man went forward as a substitute to save the others. In the same way, Jesus went forward and satisfied justice by dying in our place.

"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24).

He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5).

The issue of the wage of sin had to be paid. In His love, God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, God in the flesh, to be born as a man and overcome sin and death for us. When He died on the

cross, He died as our substitute. This is the best word to describe what Jesus did by dying in place of you and me.

5) Repent and Receive Christ

The word repentance is from the Greek word *metanoia*; it comprises two words: *meta* and *nous*. *Meta* means "change," and *nous* is the Greek word for "mind." It means changing your mind and, therefore, changing your direction toward God. If we say we change our mind about something and do not change our actions accordingly, how can that be true repentance? If you believe the good news, it will change your life. "I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds" (Acts 26:20). There must be a willingness to believe and to turn to the Lord. The words of Peter the apostle and the Lord Jesus follows:

Repent, then, and turn to God, so that **your sins may be wiped out**, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord (Acts 3:19).

"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. **Repent and believe the good news!**" (Mark 1:15).

This turn of the direction of your life is toward Christ and away from serving yourself and Satan. When you believe and trust in Christ, the Spirit of God comes to live at the very core of your being. When we believe the Gospel, we become a child of God:

Yet **to all who did receive him**, to those who **believed in his name**, he gave the right **to become children of God** (John 1:12).

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, **I will come in and eat with that person**, and they with me (Revelation 3:20).

⁹If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and **believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved**. ¹⁰For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved (Romans 10:9-10).

After sharing these Scriptures, ask the person, "Do these thoughts make sense to you?" Listen to them to see if they have grasped the truth of the Word of God and are open to receiving the gift of life. You could ask them,

Would you like to receive the gift of eternal life, which Christ is offering you? Tell them that there is no better time than the present.

For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, **now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation** (2 Corinthians 6:2).

You could ask them, "Is there any reason why you should not trust Christ now?" At this point, you do not want to push them, but you should also realize that the enemy is likely giving them a hard

time, and a spiritual battle is taking place inside the person's mind. You might want to ask if that is what is going on. Bring it into the light by telling them that this is an important decision the person must make. Ask them to whom they will listen, and encourage them to take the step of faith.

A Typical Prayer of Salvation

Dear God in Heaven, I come to you in the name of Jesus. I am a sinner, and I am sorry for my sins and the life that I have lived; I need your forgiveness. I turn to you today, believing that Jesus shed His precious blood for me on the cross at Calvary and died in full payment for my sins. You said in Your Holy Word, Romans 10:9, that if we confess the Lord our God and believe in our hearts that God raised Jesus from the dead, we shall be saved. I invite Jesus Christ to come by His Spirit and live in me according to His Word. Thank you, Lord, for dying in my place and giving me the gift of eternal life. Amen.

6) Assurance of Salvation

After praying for salvation, I usually tell them that heaven is rejoicing at the moment and that I want to welcome them into the family of God. Shake their hand, hug them, or whatever in your culture communicates congratulations. Jesus said:

Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).

I now tell them: "If you were sincere in your prayer and placed your trust and belief in Christ, by God's Word, you now have, present tense, eternal life. You will not be judged on that day for your sin but have crossed over from death to life."

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

²⁸and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. ²⁹“My Father, who has given *them* to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch *them* out of the Father’s hand. ³⁰“I and the Father are one” (John 10:28-30).

New Christians must understand that their righteousness comes from what Christ has accomplished for them. They also need to realize that the Holy Spirit will help them. Encourage them to read John's Gospel and approach God in prayer and thanks for all He has done. I would ask them if you could stop over to their house and pick them up and take them to church, house church, or small group, whatever their situation is in the country where they live. Their greatest need now is fellowship with other Christians who will be their friends. You might want to give them a book to encourage them or a radio station, podcast, or website where they can hear good Bible teaching. Remember that the enemy will try to snatch the seed from their hearts before it is rooted in God's love and grace: “When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path” (Matthew 13:19).

If you have the privilege of sharing the Gospel with someone, it is one of the greatest joys you can experience. You have just been instrumental in delivering to someone the words of Eternal Life. If you can only share a small part, pray that whatever you could leave with them will grow in their heart and bear fruit. God can use other people, circumstances, or even the words they have heard to continue speaking to their hearts. **“One plants, another waters, but it is God that gives the increase” (1 Corinthians 3:6).** We are given the privilege and the opportunity to work with the Holy Spirit in the harvest, for many people are living empty lives, are depressed, and searching for meaning. Jesus was moved with compassion for the multitudes, and He is looking for us to help Him touch people with His love, mercy, and grace. May the Lord give you a heart for the harvest!

Prayer: I pray, Father, for all those who read these words of life. Grant that each would know the presence of your Spirit upon them as they share your Word with a hopeless world. Give them your heart of compassion for those without You. May they know joy flooding their lives as they reach their friends for Christ. Amen!

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