



# Personal Methods Of Evangelism

Tim Keller, 2004

## 1. Personal motivation.

Essentially, the pre-requisite of personal evangelism is that the gospel change us. We don't have to be perfect, but our lives must be unaccountably (apart from the gospel) different. Until that happens, we will be ineffective witnesses.

- First the joyful effects of the gospel in our own lives must give us an enormous energy for witness. How can we keep our mouths closed about such a wonder? If that energy is not there, we must repent and seek God until it flows.
- Second, the humbling nature of the gospel must lead us to approach non-believers without superiority and with lots of respect. Since we are saved only by God's grace and not our goodness, we expect to often find wisdom and compassion in non-Christians which at many points may exceed ours. Is that humility and respect there? If not, we will be ineffective.
- Third, the love experience of the gospel must remove from us the fear of others' disapproval. Is this boldness increasing? If not, we must repent and reflect on the gospel and God's acceptance with us until this fear diminishes.

These three character qualities are absolutely necessary. Put another way, if you are not effective in reaching others for Christ, it is because of a lack of joy, a lack of humility and gentleness, or a lack of boldness. Which is it? If the gospel fills us with joy, humility, and confidence, then we will not treat non-Christians as "evangelism cases"--people that we relate to, talk to, and care for only in order to win them over to our side. That is to objectify and dehumanize them, and, ironically, it is un-winsome. We should not love people in order to evangelize them. Rather, we should evangelize them in order to love them. The more these dynamics are present in our lives the more we will draw in new people like a magnet (Acts 2:47).

## 2. Building Bridges.

Look at your existing relationships. Choose 4 people to begin to pray for. Make a list of 4 people that fit these qualifications: a) We hit it off well together. b) We share some common interests. c) This person would probably enjoy our church or small group. Or at least a book or a tape. d) This person is open to me. Now begin praying for them, and begin thinking of ways to strengthen your relationship with them. (Note: they should probably live in the same place you live.)

Make the list: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Now seek to strengthen the relationships in your normal contacts. Do more listening and serving. But the most important thing to remember is that you should be serving them *not*

simply to convert them, but just to love them. We must never love someone in order to evangelize them. We only evangelize someone because we love them.

### 3. Guide conversations.

Do what you can to talk about issues of faith, substance, and spirit. Remember, in this kind of 'evangelism,' things should be natural. You would be glad and delighted if the person you are showing love to wants to talk about the gospel, but you never force it. It is always best when you only 'speak when spoken to,' when you speak about your faith because you are asked. However, it is sometimes good to encourage a conversation with some questions. It is critical to remember that these questions are only appropriate when a certain level of trust is reached! Some people have a warm gregarious temperament, and such questions are appropriate almost right away. Others need time. If you ask the question and it is clearly too early, back off!

- Less direct questions, getting "below the surface" to 'world-view level' convictions:
  - "What do you like about your job/not like?" [Eventually] "*What do you think a person really needs to be fulfilled?*"
  - "How do you like living in the city (or your community)?" [Eventually] "*What do you think is the real problem in society today?*"
  - "Did you read about---(some moral dilemma)" [Eventually] "*How do you decide what is right and wrong--what is your basis?*"
- More direct question for the person quite willing to talk about faith issues: "*Where are you with Christianity? Would you say you are--*[Put down the following 4 words on paper:]
  - **Dissatisfied** with it--do you find Christianity or aspects very unacceptable, distasteful? What is your trouble with Christianity? Where's your beef?
  - **Indifferent** to it--do you find Christianity simply unappetizing or not very relevant to you? Where does Christianity fail to challenge you? What would be relevant to you?
  - **Cautiously** interested--are you in a learning mode, interested, gathering information? What still does not make sense to you? What doesn't seem credible to you?
  - Actively **seeking**--are you really searching for Christ? if so what is blocking you or holding you back? Is there anything about becoming or being a Christian that worries you? Are the barriers--
    - *Coherence* barriers? (some ways Christianity doesn't seem credible or plausible?)
    - *Content* barriers? (some part of Christian beliefs that are hard to understand?)
    - *Cost* barriers? (some part of Christian commitment you hesitate to make?)
- Note: You must listen very carefully and very openly. Write down each problem and then get a willingness to meet again and address the questions. The best way to do so is to give the person some reading material or a tape and then get back with them again.

**4. Share the gospel via a theme of relevance.** Though we are going to suggest a general outline below in part 5, there actually is no single 'gospel presentation.' All gospel presentations assume *some* theme of relevance--some reason that the listeners need the

gospel. (Traditional presentations like the 4-Spiritual Laws and Evangelism Explosion assumed listeners wanted to be good and go to heaven.) Therefore, you should try to discern the best specific theme of relevance for sharing the gospel with your particular friend or relative. That is, on the basis of listening and serving, recognize which 'avenue in to the heart' would be the best way to talk about the need for God's grace (the sin) and the provision of God's grace (the redemption.) Some possible themes:

- Relationship. "Would you like to know God personally?" (God designed us to know him personally. Our sin and guilt are barriers to that relationship. JC's death opens the way, etc.)
- Fulfillment. "Why don't we find we are really getting satisfaction out of life?" (God designed us for himself. Our sin leads us to worship the wrong things, which leads to lack of self-worth and emptiness. Through JC's work we can know God's total love and presence which alone fulfills.) See C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* on "Hope".
- Justice. "What hope do we have for justice and triumph of good?" (If there is no judge, than human rights are an illusion and so is the prospect of justice. But if there *is* a judge, then there is hope for the world, but it makes us anxious and guilty. JC is the judge who was judged, so he can be both judge and savior of those who believe) See Thomas V. Morris' chapter "The Folly of Indifference" in his book on Pascal's Pensees, *Making Sense of it All*
- Meaning. "What are you living for, why try to achieve it?" (Analyze your life's problems in line with S.Covey's outline under his second "habit". What is your life "centered" on? Can you understand your problems in terms of an inadequate "center?")
- Strength/power: how do you get the energy to keep on? To face your problems?
- Guilt how do you deal with your conscience?
- Death how do you face it?

## 5. Sharing your faith through a Gospel outline and a Summary of the Gospel

If a Christian is going to share the faith, it is necessary to have in your head both an outline of the gospel and a summary of the gospel.

### What is an outline of the gospel and a summary of the gospel?

An outline of the gospel is a framework on which you can hang all the relevant information about Christ so that a listener can believe and receive him. A gospel outline is an "accordion" that can be shared fairly briefly or be expanded very fully, depending on the circumstances. Examples:

1. The "two diagnostic" questions of Evangelism Explosion, (see D.James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion*)
3. The "Bridge Illustration" of Navigators, (see in Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*)

A summary of the gospel really needs to be brief, 30 seconds to a minute in length at the most. It is much shorter than the full presentation that needs to be given to someone who is very ready to believe.

### When to use a gospel outline or summary?

An outline of the gospel should be used when a listener is genuinely interested in knowing what the Christian faith is about and how to become a Christian. A summary of the gospel is not sufficient for a person who wants to become a Christian. Rather, it is for the early stages of a conversation or a relationship with a non-Christian. Its purpose is to get the basic idea of the gospel out on the table. Mainly, it is to distinguish Christianity from mere "religion and morality" and to give a gripping definition of sin and grace.

The goal of the brief summary is to get the non-Christian to reveal his or her particular problems with the gospel, the personal barriers against faith. These barriers can be worked through and then you can provide a gospel outline that more fully explains the faith. The reason we provide a "brief" summary of the gospel is so that eventually your sharing of the faith will be very directed at the person's particular and specific issues. If you provide first a longer outline of the gospel, you probably will be scratching where the person is not itching" and perhaps bore him.

### **How to use a gospel summary.**

**Do-Done** summary (Bill Hybels, *Becoming a Contagious Christian*).

*"Do". All forms of religion, (formal or informal), are spelled D-0, because they tell us we have to perform good works and obey moral and religious laws in order to find God, to achieve forgiveness, nirvana, or peace. But you can never be sure you have done enough. "Done". But Christianity is spelled D-0-N-E because God sent his son to earth to live the life we should live, and die on the cross to pay the debt we should pay for wrongs we've done. Buddha said "Strive without ceasing." Jesus said "It is finished" (John 19:30). To become a Christian is to turn from "do" to "done" by asking God to accept you for Jesus's sake and commit to life for him.*

**Sin-Salvation** summary (John Stott's *The Cross of Christ*):

***Sin** is us substituting ourselves for God, putting ourselves where only God deserves to be--in charge of our lives. **Salvation** is God substituting himself for us, putting himself where only we deserve to be--dying on the cross. Read 11 Cor. 5 - 2 1.*

*To become a Christian is first to admit the **problem**: that you have been substituting yourself for God either by religion (trying to be your own savior by obedience to moral standards) or by irreligion (trying to be your own lord by disobedience to moral standards). And second to accept the **solution**: asking God to accept you for Jesus' sake and know that you are loved and accepted because of his record, not yours.*

**Slavery-Freedom** summary (*What Does It Mean To Know God?*)

***Slavery.** We were built to life for God supremely, but instead we live for love, work, achievement or morality to give us meaning and worth. Thus every person, religious or not is worshipping something to get worth. But these things enslave us with guilt (if we fail to attain them) or anger (if someone blocks them from us) or fear (if they are threatened) or drivenness (since we must have them). Sin is worshipping anything but Jesus--and the wages of sin is slavery. **Freedom.** As a fish is only free in water, we are only free when serving Jesus supremely. For he is the only source of meaning that we cannot lose (freeing us from fear and anger) and that is a free gift (freeing us from guilt and drivenness). Read Matt. 11:28-30. His "yoke" " is the only one that does not enslave.*