

Walk in wisdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time. Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man. - Colossians 4:5-6

Over the last five weeks, we have studied simple strategies for sharing the truth. God expects all Christians to know, live, and proclaim the gospel in wisdom—and His expectation is doable. See if you can list the four “tactics” or questions we learned that can help you to nudge a conversation toward the gospel:

1. Question 1 - What do you mean by that?
2. Question 2 - How did you come to think that?
3. Question 3 - Have you considered this?
4. Question 4 - What if you're right?

None of these tactics is an automatic home run or a replacement for the Spirit's leading. Instead, they provide a simple plan for taking everyday conversations and making them about God. A Christian's goal is not to save souls (only God can accomplish that purpose), but we can plant seeds of truth and water those seeds. To use another metaphor, we can put a stone in someone's shoe.

Have you ever walked away from a conversation thinking, “I wish I knew the right thing to say to lead that person to Jesus?”

Like it or not, we share this world with proud, immoral, lying, envious people—who are just like us. God loved these sinners enough to send His son Jesus to die as their substitute. We should resist the urge to keep our mouths shut, and instead, we should boldly spread this good news. Today we'll look at two examples of Jesus' followers doing just that.

A Confused Official

In His last instructions to the disciples, Jesus said that they would be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth. After preaching in Jerusalem, where thousands of Jews believed on Jesus, the disciples took the message to Samaria, where even the Samaritans believed and received the Holy Ghost. Then, God sent a message to Philip.

1. After following an angel's command to go to the desert of Gaza, what did Philip find? (Acts 8:26-28) an Ethiopian official reading a scroll of Isaiah in his chariot
2. At the Spirit's prompting, what did Philip ask to begin a conversation with the official? (Acts 8:29-30) Do you understand what you're reading?
3. Why do you think the official asked for help understanding the scroll? (Acts 8:31, 34)

4. Seeing that the official was reading Isaiah 53:7-8, "then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus" (Acts 8:35)
5. The official believed the message of Jesus, was baptized by Philip, and then went on his way rejoicing (Acts 8:39)

Notice a few things about this encounter. First, Philip was able to understand and obey the Holy Spirit's command. He approached the official and asked a helpful question. Second, the official was sincere in his search for truth, but didn't know where to look. He was ready for Philip to come help him understand. Third, **Philip was ready to preach Jesus.**

When we ignore the leading of the Holy Spirit, we miss out on the people God has prepared for us. But when we do follow His lead, we must be ready to share the truth that we have already accepted. We need to be able to explain who Jesus was and why He is important. Philip was able to share Jesus from Isaiah 53—a passage that clearly prophecies Jesus' suffering for sinners. Are we familiar enough with our Bible to explain the story of salvation from the Old Testament to the New?

A Desperate Officer

Paul and his missionary team followed the Spirit's leading to the region of Macedonia, where a woman—Lydia—and all her household were saved. But in major city of Philippi, they experienced resistance. By healing demon-possessed woman, Paul and Silas angered some influential businessmen, who took them to the rulers to be whipped and imprisoned.

1. What did the Philippian jailor do with Paul and Silas after receiving them?

(Acts 16:22-24)

2. How did the jailor react to seeing the open prison doors? (Acts 16:25-27)

3. Why do you think the jailor asked Paul and Silas, “What must I do to be saved?”
(Acts 16:28-30)

It may be that the jailor was familiar with the gospel from the preaching in the city. Or maybe he heard Paul and Silas singing to God at midnight. Regardless, he was ready to believe on Jesus, though he was the one locking up Paul and Silas in the jail. Despite being treated illegally (Acts 16:37), Paul and Silas showed the joy of the Lord—and the jailor noticed.

4. Paul and Silas answered the jailor, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31)
5. Though it would be the only time they spent together, the jailor brought Paul and Silas into his house, gave them food, “and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:32-33)

A couple things stand out as we observe the story of the jailor. First, the jailor was desperate for hope. His immediate circumstances turned on him, and he needed immediate answers. Second, Paul and Silas gave the jailor answers through quite possibly the simplest presentation of the gospel: “Believe... be saved.”

Tactic 5 - The good news

1. Briefly summarize the things and people that God used to show you that you needed to be saved:

The last several weeks, we explored several tactics for starting and continuing conversations about spiritual things. Most of the time, people are not ready to believe on Jesus since they are still believing things that contradict the gospel. With these people we want to “put a stone in their shoe”—to help them evaluate their own beliefs and point out where they fall short. But over time, Jesus will soften hearts and draw people unto himself, and we need to be ready to give them the truth at the right time.

2. What types of circumstances often draw people to see their need for Jesus?

Often, people need to see the “bad news” of reality before they understand the “good news” of Jesus Christ. The nature of all people is evil, so all people have done evil things that offend God, who is perfectly good. In His perfect goodness, one day God will punish all evil: He will condemn the Devil, his demons, and all evil people to the eternal fires of hell. No family member, personal quality, or good action can rescue a person from this punishment.

3. How should the coming judgement of God on evil motivate Christians?

Through conversation, we want to impress upon unbelievers something that they subconsciously understand. They are guilty and they deserve to be punished. But this reality is uncomfortable, and most of us suppress our guilt. This is why **relationships with unbelievers are so important**. Even when our message that everyone is guilty lines up with what they instinctively know, they will want to resist it.

4. How does the good news about Jesus solve the problem of God’s judgement on all people?

In the end, we know that Jesus is drawing all men unto Himself, and He will build His church. As the Spirit convicts unbelievers of their sin, they need answers. And that is when we employ our final tactic: **to give a simple explanation of the good news.**

5. Can you summarize the good news in only a few sentences?

Two thousand years ago, God gave hope to the world. Jesus, the God-man, died as a substitute for the punishment that we deserved. To prove Jesus’ death sufficient, God raised Him from the dead. And whoever believes this—staking everything on Jesus—will be pardoned and free to enjoy eternal life instead of eternal punishment.

Teachers, use this time to help your students use precise language. While we share the gospel, we sometimes use a lot of religious words and ideas that distract from Jesus instead of clarifying why He’s important. It’s best to avoid phrases like “born again” or “cleansed from your sin” we have time and opportunity to explain exactly what they mean.

Concluding Questions

In October 1857, J. Hudson Taylor began to minister in Ningpo, China, and he led a Mr. Nyi to Christ. The man was overjoyed and wanted to share his faith with others. “How long have you had the good tidings in England?” Mr. Nyi asked Hudson Taylor one day. Taylor acknowledged that England had known the Gospel for many centuries. “My father died seeking the truth,” said Mr. Nyi. “Why didn’t you come sooner?” Taylor had no answer to that penetrating question. - Warren Wiersbe

- 1. What is one possible sign that someone is ready to believe on Jesus?

- 2. On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your ability to explain the gospel simply and clearly?

- 3. What suggestion from this series has been the biggest help to helping you know how to share the truth with unbelievers?

This lesson was adapted from chapters 5 and 14 of *Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions* by Gregory Koukl.