

What kind of people are difficult to introduce to the gospel?

What kind of people are easy for you to introduce to the gospel?

Most believers are not ashamed of the gospel (**Romans 1:16**), though some may be. If we're saved, we know God's Truth, and we know that we need to tell others. So why are we hesitant to share our faith with anyone we encounter? It may be that **we simply do not know how to do it well.**

Everyday Conversations

In the New Testament, Christ and the first Christians continually use everyday situations to introduce their neighbors to God's Truth. For example, Jesus intentionally took a rest stop from his journey to Jerusalem to stop at a Samaritan well where he knew a woman would come to draw water (**John 4:3-30**). Jesus connected with the woman over their mutual desire for water and then steered the discussion to His identity as the Christ. This is by no means the only time that the Bible records an ordinary conversation taking a turn toward the gospel.

Can you think of another time in the New Testament that someone used an everyday situation to introduce God's Truth?

Certainly, the biblical examples have some advantages to us Christians today. In Bible times, one had to interact with other people several times each day. Yet they also seem to possess a confidence that we lack. What is their secret? Paul explains it this way in **Colossians 4:5-6**: “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.”

In other words, because time is short, we need to have wisdom about those who are lost. We cannot afford to ignore them! We must choose to interact with them in hopes of giving them God’s Truth. And when we do speak to them, our speech must be well-seasoned, reflecting God’s character of grace. Paul exhorts young pastor Timothy in much the same way, reminding him that **to be a good witness one must know, live, and share the gospel in wisdom.**

Wisdom to know the gospel

If the mandate to share the gospel with wisdom seems overwhelming, you are not alone. Most of us fear two things in our witness: first, we fear causing division through arguing and second, we fear being challenged in our faith.

1. What brought Paul to tears of joy whenever he called it to remembrance? (2 Timothy 1:4-5) the unfeigned [sincere] faith in Timothy
2. Why does Paul say that Timothy can “stir up the gift of God” without fear? (2 Timothy 1:6-8)

God doesn't want us to fear getting into an argument. An argumentative spirit is destructive, but powerful, loving, words from a sound (wise) mind can accomplish much for the cause of Christ.

3. Why was Paul unashamed of all the hardship that the gospel caused him? (2 Timothy 1:12) Paul was absolutely convinced that Jesus (“whom I have believed”) was going to preserve him to the end

Paul was not discouraged by his situation because he knew Christ, in whom he had believed. In the same way, we should not fear when someone challenges our faith because we know Christ. In fact, sometimes a challenger’s words can prove helpful because they force us to go back to the Bible to make sure what we believe lines up with what God says.

4. Paul then charged Timothy to “Hold fast to the form of sound words [the true gospel], which thou hast heard in me, in faith and love which is in Jesus Christ” and to “keep” or guard the gospel “by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us” (2 Timothy 1:13-14)

These orders were not something that Timothy could accomplish automatically. He needed to take energetic action to protect the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. As with any spiritual work, God will carry out the work of evangelism as we put in our effort.

Wisdom to live the gospel

God is not content with children that simply know the gospel. He wants Christians to become mature, to take what we know and make it what we do. Paul knew Timothy would face pressure from God’s enemies, so he encouraged him to focus on living the gospel with integrity.

1. Timothy needed to “study” or work hard to show “himself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed” (2 Timothy 2:15)

2. What are some things that God approves and expects all Christians to be doing?

3. Give an example of something that will distract you from following God's path of righteousness, faith, charity, and peace (2 Timothy 2:22)

Wisdom to share the gospel

If we know and live the gospel, the next step is to share it. But we must do it in the spirit of Christ, "with grace" and "seasoned with salt," not out of pride or spite. Paul outlines several tendencies that we should avoid, and then he identifies the qualities of a good gospel witness.

1. To share the gospel wisely, we must avoid squabbles about words because they will be to no profit, but the subverting (tearing down) of the hearers. (2 Timothy 2:14)

In the end disputing about words seeks not the victory of truth but the victory of the speaker . . . Word splitting whets an appetite for argument rather than building commitment to the living God. In the heat of debate we must always ask ourselves if the subject is actually worth a fight and a searing disagreement.

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2. We must also avoid godless chatter like "profane and vain babblings" because they will increase unto more ungodliness. (2 Timothy 2:16)

3. We should avoid getting into controversies or “foolish and unlearned questions” because they create strife, and the servant of the Lord must not strive (2 Timothy 2:23-24)
4. Instead, what qualities does Paul list as important as the servant of the Lord shares the gospel? (2 Timothy 2:24-25)

The phrase “those who oppose themselves” describes anyone who who opposes the truth of the gospel.

5. Paul goes on to give the hope of every gospel conversation—that God will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil (2 Timothy 2:25-26)

Paul does not, however, challenge Timothy to “close the sale” of each gospel conversation. He says that Timothy should instruct with meekness, if God peradventure [perhaps] will give them repentance. The responsibility, in the end, is God’s. The question, then, is how can I know how much of the gospel to share?

A Modest Goal

Most of us are not given the spiritual gift of evangelism. Though all Christians are called to share the gospel, they may not see the fruit of their efforts. “So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither is he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase” (1 **Corinthians 3:7**). Some are called to plant, some are called to water, and as God brings the increase, some are called to harvest. Instead of trying to do all the planting and harvesting ourselves, we must do what the Holy Spirit guides us to do in the moment.

Once we accept our small place in God’s big plan, evangelism is much more achievable. We do not need to hold ourselves accountable for the impossible task of converting sinners. Instead, we can adopt a more modest goal. **We want to put a stone in their shoe.** When we leave unbelievers, we want them to have something nagging at their mind about the truth. Eventually, they may accept the gospel and be saved, or they may reject it. But either way, we got to be a part of God’s work in their life.

Over the next six weeks, we will be proposing some creative tactics for turning everyday encounters into gospel conversations. These simple approaches are easy enough for any Christian to learn, and they will fit the New Testament model of evangelism. In the meantime, our job is to encounter unbelievers and to look at them through the eyes of Christ.

On a scale of one to ten, how would you rate your awareness of your neighbors’ spiritual condition?

In what ways might you need to change your habits so that you regularly interact with unbelievers with whom you can share the gospel?

Describe a challenging experience you have had sharing the gospel.

This lesson was adapted chapters 1 and 2 of Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions by Gregory Koukl.