

Witness Well To Anybody, Anywhere, Anytime

Jesus witnessed to rich and poor people, influential and common people, Jews and Gentiles, men and women. He witnessed anyplace: in synagogues and the temple, along beaches, while sitting on hills, while sitting in boats, and even beside a well. His witnessing encounters occurred at night, evening, morning and even mid-day. Jesus witnessed anywhere, to anybody at anytime; and He always witnessed well. In his testimony to the woman at the well (John 4:1-42) Jesus teaches his followers, then and now, important time-tested principles about how to witness spontaneously and informally. The following sections will show how these principles are effective in usual, everyday gospel encounters today as well.

GET CONNECTED: ESTABLISH COMMONALITY

First of all, Jesus established common ground with the woman. "Give Me a drink" (4:7). One might wrongly mistake this brief statement as a mere conversation starter. To the contrary, the bridge was relational - focusing on the common ground between the both of them. The statement identifies the common human situation of thirst, so that Jesus and the woman with very differing backgrounds could meet on common territory.

Jesus' witnessing encounter by the well dispels a common myth - that both participants in the witnessing conversation need to have a lot in common. In fact, the difference between Jesus and this woman were recognized by the woman herself: "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman (4:9)?" Men and women avoided conversation in public during that time. Also, Jews hated Samaritans and avoided them because they had distorted the Jewish religion. Nevertheless, Jesus emphasized a simple commonality - thirst.

Jesus also dispelled another common myth - that a long relationship must be established in order to gain a hearing for the gospel. Jesus initiated a conversation with a person, and then within minutes (if not seconds) was already into a conversation about spiritual matters.

Find a point of contact with people. This can usually be best done by asking guided, but not overly intrusive, questions about a person. The goal is to make the person feel comfortable and that he/she has

something in common with the witness.

GET TO THE POINT: TRANSITION TO SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

The conversation was centered around a common need and then quickly bridged into a discussion about Jesus, the Living Water. The point of contact, "Give me a drink" also served as the entrance point for the gospel. Using the water analogy, Jesus transitioned to spiritual matters. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Jesus presented good news about the Messiah to the woman using the analogy of living water. The analogy raised interest toward spiritual matters and left the woman wanting to know more.

Following Jesus' example, bold witnesses often immediately state the bottom line. For example, after building common ground with a person, the witness might say, "I'm certain that I have eternal life, and that I will go to heaven when I die", "Only through blood sacrifice can anyone's sins be forgiven", or "Jesus Christ has proven His faithfulness in my life". After statements such as these, the witness would then share his/her personal testimony or give proof from the Scripture.

GET THEM LOST: DISCUSS PERSONAL SIN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

After transitioning to spiritual matters, Jesus centered on the woman's ultimate problem - sin. He said to the woman, "Go, call your husband and come here (4:16)." "I have no husband," she replied. "You have had five husbands, and the one

whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly (4:17-18)." Jesus revealed the heart of the woman's problem in order to reveal the cure. Jesus would not permit the woman to ignore her sin problem or find the cure without facing the sinful facts which had brought her spiritual thirst. The woman would have to admit and face her sinfulness in order to be cured of its consequences.

The witness should not avoid the topic of sin and its consequences, nor should the witness come across "holier than thou". Instead, the witness can say "we all sin, don't we?" It is always helpful for the witness to admit that he/she is a sinner as well, including himself in the dilemma of being lost before God (Romans 3:23).

Lostness must necessarily precede salvation. The common state of lostness between the witness and the hearer generally allows the witness to share the good news as the way out.

GET THE GOSPEL TO THEM: HIGHLIGHT CHRIST'S SACRIFICE WHICH GUARANTEES FORGIVENESS OF SIN

Jesus quickly drew a distinction between the religious beliefs held by the woman at the well, compared to the true way of salvation that he taught and brought. The conversation was as follows: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship (4:20)." Jesus replied, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for

salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (4:21-24).” The point was not where a person worshipped, but the way a person worshipped (spirit and truth) Next the woman expressed her limited, but hopeful knowledge about the coming messiah. He would clear up any confusion, because “He will declare all things to us (25).”

After agreeing on the issue of mutual sinfulness, the objective becomes to find the solution. Where does salvation come from? Every religion presupposes that mankind must do something in order to repair a broken or imperfect relationship between God and man. Therefore each religion offers its own different but very similar way to repair the separation between God and man - man has to do something to repair the relationship.

In witnessing to people of other faiths, the witness must clearly differentiate between the way the hearer expects to have his/her sins forgiven, compared to the way salvation is revealed in the New Testament.

This is best done by asking a person about his or her religious preference. Then, instead of assuming one knows what that person believes about how he/she hopes to have sin forgiven, ask him/her. After listening to the person, then the witness graciously draws a contrast between what the hearer believes about salvation, and God’s true way of salvation through Christ’s sacrifice.

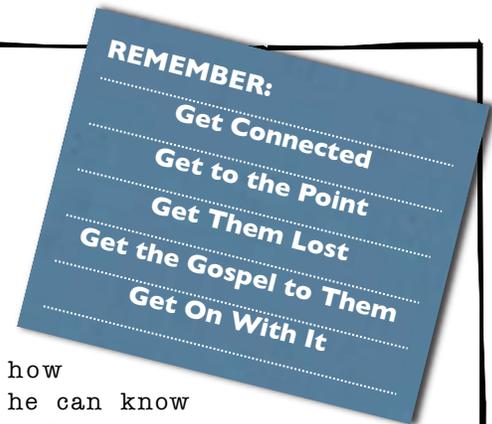
After the transition to spiritual matters, agreement about our sinfulness can usually be easily reached by discussing the religious rituals people perform in attempting to erase or pay for their sins. The witness often inquires about the religious activities of the hearer. “What do followers of

this faith do to have their sins forgiven? The person may reply, “I fast, pray, or give alms.” Then the witness can ask, “How often do you have to do that to be certain your sins are forgiven?”, or “Is your sin debt already paid for?” The response is usually “no,” “not yet,” or “I don’t know.” At that point the witness often responds, “So, if I understand correctly, hopefully your sins will be paid for if you are able to do those rituals well enough so that God will forgive you. You must be a better person than me, because I could never be good enough to be forgiven by a Holy God. But what I believe is different from what you’ve said. I’m sure my sins are forgiven and I will go to Heaven someday. It’s not because I’m a good person or because I do enough good things. I believe that God himself arranged for my sins to be paid for.” At that point the gospel is shared.

GET ON WITH IT: INVITE THEM TO RECEIVE CHRIST OR ARRANGE FOLLOW-UP

Had the woman not been open to Jesus’ message, we assume that he would have heeded his own advice to his disciples. “Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them. (Mark 6:11).” However, the woman was very open. Therefore Jesus pursued follow-up. Upon showing openness to Christ’s message, the woman went into the city and invited several men to “come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Messiah, is it?” (The woman’s question, although stated negatively, was hopeful that in fact Jesus was the Messiah.) Jesus stayed there two days with the result that, “Many more believed because of His word.”

Often times upon hearing the simple, brief, but powerful gospel, the person will be interested in Christ. If the person has heard the gospel previously perhaps he will be ready to receive Christ. If open at all, the person will want to know more about



how he can know his/her sins are forgiven.

After sharing the gospel, draw the net. Ask the person if they have any questions about what you’ve shared with them. Next, ask if he/she believes what you’ve told them. At this point, either draw the net or set a time to meet again. If the person says that they believe what you’ve told them, then show them Romans 10:9-10. Explain that a person’s sins are forgiven when he/she professes that “Jesus is Lord” and believes that Jesus died for his/her sins and arose from the dead.

If confusion arises over confessing that Jesus is Lord, take time to explain Jesus’ virgin birth from the Holy Spirit, and his Lordship. However, often times if the person understands the concept of Jesus’ sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, he/she will willingly confess Jesus as Lord also.

For the person who is interested in Jesus, but not yet ready to profess faith, we recommend the following approach. Follow-up can best be done by telling the Old Testament sacrifice stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham and Moses. This can be done immediately if time allows, but usually is done by setting a time to get together informally in order to study the stories during a series of informal meetings.

Ideally, like the Samaritan woman, the interested person will want to invite his friends to hear the stories as well. This situation is ideal because those who study the stories together can become a house church if they profess faith simultaneously or during the same time frame.

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