

Approaching People

Part 1

Intro

One of the most common concerns I have heard, regarding witnessing, is that people don't know how to start a conversation. This problem is not only in those who are more introvert by nature but those who are very social. Those who are more social have no problem with talking to people, but when it comes to talking to someone about spiritual matters, many tend to get lost and disoriented. My goal and prayer is that after this lesson you will be more equipped and comfortable with coming up to people. For this part of the lesson, we will look at several principles that may help us with starting a conversation.

Pray

I have heard someone say that, "before we go and talk to people about Jesus, we must tell Jesus about those people". This indeed is important in witnessing. Don't go alone without God. Pray about yourself and others before you witness. Remember, witnessing is a spiritual thing, and when we talk to none-Christians we are going to a spiritual battle because the enemy does not want to let go of souls very easily.

Questions 1-3. Please read Matthew 17:14-21.

1. What is it that the disciples of Jesus could not do?
2. How does Jesus, say in verse 21, (New King James Bible) that demons are cast out?
3. What does this tell you about the importance of prayer?

I remember a couple years ago, my family and I went to Alaska. I had a burden to witness to people in the downtown of Anchorage. So we gathered with a few brothers from the local church and prayed all night about our desire to witness. The following morning, after little sleep, we went and shared our faith. It was one of the most powerful evangelism of my life. So many people were open to the gospel and I really felt that God was speaking through me. I've also learned the power of praying and asking God to send people my way during the day so I can witness to them. Every single time I have prayed this prayer, God would send someone in my life. Of course, this doesn't mean that someone just randomly shows up at my door wanting to hear the gospel (although this has happened too), but usually as I go about my day, God will send a person to me who is interested in hearing the gospel. This can happen at work, school, church, store, gas station, and just a simple phone call from someone. God will also give us a burden, or a heavy feeling inside of us, that urges us to witness and share the gospel with an individual. This may happen unexpectedly and often times to people who you don't even know, but God will do this so we can share our faith. God will also speak to us and we may hear a voice inside of us saying, "Come up to this person and tell him about Jesus". We see that something similar happened to Philip in Acts 8:29 "*Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go near and overtake this chariot."*" We will study this passage later, and see how Philip was obedient to the voice of the Holy Spirit and how Philip was used by God to bring a soul to salvation. Finally, **we should also pray that God would speak through us and give us wisdom as we talk to people.**

Questions 4-5. Please read Acts 6:8-10.

4. Who tried to argue and debate with Stephen?

5. Why weren't they able to stand up against Stephen?

You see God gives wisdom and gives us His Spirit. When we go with God, we are not alone, because He is there guiding us and speaking through us.

Go!

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus said, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”*.

This is often neglected. Many times, Christians are expecting someone to come to them. Sometimes Christians purposefully avoid too much interaction with the none-Christians as it may supposedly defile them. However, when we look at the life of Jesus, we see that He was the one going to people, which included the sinners, tax-collectors, and self-righteous men. According to a recent survey done by Lifeway Research, **“More than half (55%) of those who attend church at least once a month say they have not shared with someone how to become a Christian in the past six months.”**¹ This statistic is very alarming, as many Christians are just not going and sharing their faith with others. When I read statistics such as this, I can’t help but ask, “if Christians aren’t talking about Jesus, what are they talking about? And if Christians are physically going to witness, where do they go? How are people spending their time?” One of the traps that we can even fall into, as we study about witnessing, is to just stop here and not actually go and witness. Many times Christians will talk about witnessing, pray about it, have conferences, read books, and listen to sermons but forget to do one thing—witness! May God help us so that we don’t just study, although this too is important, but to actually go. One more point on this subject. I’ve noticed in my life that **as I grow closer and closer to Christ, my desire of “going” and witnessing becomes so much greater and God gives me more boldness and courage.** So if one is still struggling with getting up and going, he or she should evaluate their relationship with God, just as we spoke on week 1. Finally, we should also realize that people around us will not always be here with us. We are all here temporary on this earth and no one knows when their last day here will be. Therefore, we should also take this calling of Jesus to “go” very seriously. Many people will die and go to hell if they do not repent of their sins and believe unto Jesus. God is calling His children to go and warn people of this and share the way of salvation.

Question 6. For this question, please watch this short video. [George Street - Inspirational Witnessing Story - YouTube](#)

6. How did this Christian fulfill the commandment of Jesus to “go” and witness?

Strangers

The next subject I want to talk about is “strangers”. For this subject I will post some thoughts from brother Mark Cahill.

One of the fun things about traveling is all of the different people that you get to meet. On a recent trip to the South, I met a bold brother in the Lord who gave me a booklet that proposed the idea that when it comes to evangelism, the question to ask is not “Is it effective?” But the question to ask, “Is it Biblical?” Was the true gospel proclaimed, was Jesus glorified, was the attitude of the Christian biblical as he or she communicated the gospel? These are the type of concepts that Christians want to think about.

One of the more fascinating statistics in that booklet is when you look at witnessing encounters in the four gospels, 87% of them happened with a total stranger who was confronted with biblical truth about sin, repentance, Jesus, the cross, and judgment to come. In the book of Acts, it was 83% of the evangelism happened with total strangers. Wow!

I always have people say to me, “I have to make friends with the person first before I share my faith.” Actually, no you don’t. You could share in the very first encounter that you have with the person, but you choose not to. I have had people tell me that they want to be friends with someone six months, one year, etc. before they will share their faith. After hearing that, I ask those people if they have shared with their friends at the six month mark? They told me no. By the way, how can you keep the most important thing about you, the Most High God and His Son Jesus Christ, to yourself for six months of a friendship? The only way you could is if God and His Son aren’t the most important thing in your life. Maybe that should be the first part of learning how to share your faith.

Acts 8:1-4 says,

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the

apostles. And devout men carried Stephen *to his burial*, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.”

Persecution came, and they were scattered about among a bunch of strangers. And what did they do? They preached the Word of God to those strangers. Why? Because that is what Christians are supposed to be doing!

Recently, on a plane flight, I was sitting next to a gentleman who was in the foyer of the first building that was hit on 9/11. What an interesting conversation! He had so much to talk about. One thing Lance told me, was that ever since that day, he has been seeking out what happens when you die. He has studied different religions, looked at reincarnation, etc. It was a most fascinating conversation. We talked the whole plane flight. He was eager to hear about what Jesus had done and why He was so much different than all other religious figures. He even wanted something more to read on the subject. I am so glad that I pray for whomever will sit next to me on a plane flight, and I am so glad that I talked with that stranger!

I just got this email from a friend in Lexington, KY:

“Kaitlyn met a married couple at the African Food store in Lexington the other day where we shop sometimes. They ‘just happened’ to pop in there and were asking the clerk about African food and meals. They asked Kaitlyn what she was doing with all the food she was buying. One thing led to another, and she invited them over for dinner so they could see African food prepared first hand—and meet all our children. They are really earthy yoga folks who are into Buddhism, meditation, etc., but very friendly too They showed up at 4pm and stayed ‘til 10. Here and there a little we worked in the gospel, praying silently and putting up with their yoga-ness the best we could. We talked about Christ, about our sin, about His forgiveness. We enjoyed a meal together, sang for them, showed them photos and videos.

Just before they left, I told them I had a gift for them, and told them there was a neat story behind it. I pulled out “One Heartbeat Away” and told them “a good friend of our family, Mark Cahill, wrote this book and...” She interrupts and says “I know Mark Cahill. He used to come to my health food store [Health Nut] in

Atlanta. I sold him the ‘Wellness Formula.’ I’ve seen him give people that book before.” What? I went on about how you blessed us with a gift to help with our adoptions. You should have seen their faces.

She said she saw you doing nice things for people—buying them supplements, etc., but ‘never knew you did something like that for anyone.’

Her husband seemed genuinely interested in the book. She tended to be a harder nut to crack—much more set in her yoga and meditative ways (but only God knows the heart).”

I am so glad that I talked with that stranger in the health food store!

When I checked in a hotel recently, I got the chance to talk with Ulises, Aldo, Alofa, Lee, etc. at the hotel where I was staying. Ulises became very interested in my books and started reading them. Within a few short days, I was listening to him talk to customers about Jesus. I am so glad that I talked with that stranger at that hotel!

Trying to eat healthy when I travel, is not always easy. One time, I returned to a town I had been to before, and remembered I had stopped at a Juice Stop when I was there the last time. I got some directions, and headed off to the spot. When I walked in, one of the guys behind the counter got a big smile and said, “Do you remember me?” I said, “Yes, I do.” He came over and gave me a hug and reminded me his name was Joe. Joe looked at the other guy working and said, “Do you remember when I give my testimony that I talk about that evangelist who came into the store and talked to me about Jesus Christ?” Joe looked at me, pointed and said, “That’s him!” Well believe it or not, that was six years earlier! I stopped in for three straight days and we had a blessed time talking about what God has been doing in our lives, and how we can reach the lost. I am so glad that I talked with that stranger named Joe!

Remember folks that every friend you have today began as a stranger. If you are married, there was a time that your spouse was a total stranger. Just think: you actually married a total stranger! I bet you are very glad you talked with that stranger!! People tell their kids all the time to be careful of strangers. What we should say is to use wisdom when talking with strangers, but strangers should be careful of you, because you are about to bring them eternal truth! But more

important than all of that, is to remember that it is Biblical for Christians to walk up to strangers and talk to them about eternity and Jesus Christ. You want to make sure in heaven that there are some strangers (although they will be strangers no more) that will thank you for taking the time to share with them what Jesus did for them.²

Asking Questions.

Asking questions is so important in witnessing and is very effective for starting a conversation. Jesus asked people many questions and some say that Jesus has asked more than 300 questions that are written in the Bible! Questions are good because they allow us to know more about a person. Remember, just because someone is smiling and looks happy doesn't always mean they are. Even asking a simple question such as, "how are you?" can reveal some things about the person, if that is, they honestly answer. Questions can also show you where people stand in their faith and possibly some lies that they believe in, which you can address, and we will cover this in later weeks. Questions also have the ability to make a person think, even if they don't answer your question. For instance, I remember a brother sharing about a time when he asked a question about a person's salvation, that is, if they are saved. This question really struck the other person and it did not give him peace. Later, the man accepted Jesus into his life because he realized that he was unsaved. We will talk more about this subject on our next lesson but for now, lets look at some examples of people asking questions in the Bible.

Activity. For this assignment, please read the passage and answer the questions below.

Passage	What Question was asked?	Why was this a good question?	What was the response to the question?
Acts 8:30-32			

John 21:15-19			
Acts 19:1-6			

References

1. [Evangelism More Prayed for Than Practiced by Churchgoers - Lifeway Research](#)
2. [Hey Stranger \(Part 1\) | Mark Cahill Ministries](#)