

Learning From Jesus How to Share the Gospel John 4:1-26

Most believers in Jesus Christ have a desire to share their faith in Christ with others and know that sharing Christ should be a joyful response to their life in Christ. However, many times this desire produces guilt, frustration and fear instead of joyful anticipation of joining God in His work.

Our reasons for not sharing our faith vary. Maybe you attempted to share your faith and your efforts produced more negative results than positive. Perhaps you just don't know how to go about sharing your faith so you don't. Maybe you assume that you have to change your personality and approach total strangers or push people into religious conversations. Possibly you are fearful of how people might respond and you fear that you might not have answers for their questions. It could be that you are defeated in your Christian life and overwhelmed with life so sharing your faith is very low on your priority list. Or perhaps the root of the reason would reveal that you are not responding to God's love in Christ and finding your greatest joy in your relationship with Him.

Consider that some of our assumptions about sharing our faith are false. For example, did you know that nowhere does the Bible command us to change our personalities so that we can share the gospel? The Bible does not tell us to be insensitive to people in sharing the gospel. Nowhere does the Scripture say that we have to have all the answers to every question people may raise. Beyond that the Bible does not tell us to share the gospel exactly the same way as others do it. Jesus' disciples did not all share the gospel the exact same way. Even Jesus did not have just one method of sharing the gospel.

But how do we get to the place where sharing the gospel is a way of life and is marked by joyful anticipation of joining God in His work of advancing His kingdom? The answer, as in every aspect of our Christian lives, is to respond to the love of Christ, be renewed in who you are in Christ, and make knowing Him your greatest desire (Rom. 12:1-2, Col. 3:1-3). Then look to Jesus Christ, your life and perfect example, for help. John 4:1-26 records the story of Jesus's encounter with the woman at the well. From Jesus' encounter with this woman we can learn how to share the gospel with others.

What is sharing the gospel?

In Jesus' dialogue with this woman he made Himself (the gospel), the central issue; "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that says to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." (4:10) He continued, "Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life." (4:13-14). He in essence says to her, I am the prophet and I am telling you that through me, the Messiah, you can worship in Spirit and truth (4:21-26). 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 is the clearest explanation of the gospel in the Bible and it tells us that the core of the gospel is that Christ died for our sins and rose from the dead.

Jesus was always under the control of the Holy Spirit and lived in complete dependence on His heavenly Father. What sharing the gospel was for Jesus is exactly what it is for us; sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God.

Jesus did not pressure the woman but simply shared with her who he was and what He alone could offer her. He left the result to God the Father. John 5:17-19 says that God the Father is always working and that Jesus lived in total dependence on God the Father. This tells us how Jesus is our example – we too are to live in dependence on the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit and join God in His work. We do this when we share Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leave the results to God. Jesus said in John 6:44, "no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him..." Indeed God was working drawing this woman and He used her to bring many others to faith in Christ.

The "drawing" work of God the Father is obvious in the story; she says to Jesus, "Why are you asking me for a drink since Jews have no dealings with us Samaritans?" Then she considers who he might be when she says, "You are not greater than Jacob are you?" Finally she says, "Give me this living water." But her perception of Jesus grows because she exclaims, "I perceive you are a prophet." Next she talks about the Messiah; "I know when Messiah

comes He will tell us all things." Jesus then says clearly to her, "I who speak to you am He!" She leaves her water jar and rushes into the city and invites people by declaring, "Come and see a man, who told me all the things I have done, this is not the Christ is it?" Finally the people come to Jesus and he stays with them two days and proclaims "This indeed is the Savior of the world."

Jesus shared the gospel (the good news about Himself) in the power of the Holy Spirit. As He did, God the Father was working and drawing people to faith. God is still working the same way today but now He works through us who are believers in Christ as we share the gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit. Have you learned to walk in the power of the Holy Spirit? If you have trusted Jesus Christ as your savior and Lord then you need to know that the Holy Spirit dwells inside of you and will be with you forever. You never get more of the Holy Spirit than the day you trust Christ as your savior but the Holy Spirit can get more of you. The Holy Spirit is the source of the overflowing life. The Holy Spirit is on duty 24/7 in every believer and His "job description" is extensive. For example, the Holy Spirit prays for you, guides you, teaches you God's word, gives you the power to witness for Christ and brings glory to Christ.

Why share the gospel?

Jesus' encounter with this woman not only models for us what sharing the gospel is but also why we should be sharing the gospel with others. We share the gospel for the same reason Jesus did; He came to seek and save the lost. People are lost without Christ and He alone can save them. This woman gives us a picture of what being lost is all about. She had a thirst that could not be quenched and she tried to satisfy it through her relationships with men. She had five husbands and was currently living with a man who was not her husband. The early church father Augustine said, "Thou have made us for thyself oh God and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in Thee." Because we were designed to worship God, we never stop building our ultimate security and significance on something. We were designed to build it on God but we are fallen. The default mode of the human heart is to love things and use God and people. We were designed to build it on God but we are fallen. So the essence of sin is to make the good gifts of God ultimate things and to turn them into "god substitutes". The Bible calls that idolatry.

This act of turning good things into ultimate things is like an addiction which will lead to denial, isolation and destruction. Idolatry, is building our hope, identity, security and significance around something other than God. We don't just commit sin, sin commits us. Our hearts are idol factories and left to ourselves we will spend our lives bowing down to "god substitutes" and unless this is stopped it will grow stronger and stronger until we are in hell. But God loves us and He is so committed to saving us that He entered the human race in the person of Jesus Christ to save us; to win us back to our created design to love God with all our being. He came into the world to rescue us by paying for our sin and destroying the power of evil without destroying us. He did not suffer so that we would not suffer but that when we do suffer we become like Him. Jesus did not come to make bad people good but to make spiritually dead people alive. Jesus did not come to condemn us, we are already condemned by our sins but He came to save us. He came to give us living water (which is the Holy Spirit) and eternal life (which is knowing God in Christ). He came to change us at the core so we love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength.

How should we share the gospel?

Jesus encounter with the woman also models for us how to share the gospel.

Take the initiative

Jesus took the initiative – He stepped across several barriers and took the initiative to engage this woman and share the gospel with her. She was a woman and He was a Rabbi – it was a cultural norm for men not to address women in public if they were not related to them and it was unheard of for a Jewish Rabbi to do this to a Samaritan woman. But she has come out at noon (not the normal time for getting water – the women of the village would come to get water in the morning or evening) because she was a social outcast. Jesus asks her for help – give me a drink. He is reaching out to her and expressing acceptance which gets her attention.

Bill Hybels in his book, *Walk across the Room* makes a point of urging us to step out of our selfishness and engage people. This does not mean that we have to always share every bit of doctrine and make a complete and full presentation of the gospel at every encounter. It does mean that we can plant seeds, move people up the receptivity scale and provide resources when the opportunity presents itself.

Did you know that almost 90% of those who come to Christ come through the influence of friends, relatives, associates or neighbors (FRAN)? The average Christian has four to twelve unbelievers in their circle of FRAN. Begin each day with a prayer in which you ask God to use you to take bring the gospel to others. Pray each day, "Lord today walk around in my body, think your thoughts with my mind and seek and save the lost through me. "

Engage in dialogue

Jesus engaged in dialogue with her- the conversation went back and forth and he listened to her. She ended up asking him questions and each time he pointed her to what he alone could offer her.

I know evangelists who simply use the question why to learn about people and point them to Christ. I often ask people what is your spiritual background? From your background have you come to the place that you know God and are assured of spending eternity with Him? People love to be listened too and taking a genuine interest in them is evidence of love, acceptance and a platform to share the gospel.

A relational approach to sharing the gospel helps to facilitate viewing evangelism as more of a process than an event. James Engel has developed The Engel Scale as a tool to help us understand this concept and a helpful synopsis of this can be read at: <http://www.internetevangelismday.com/engel-scale.php>.

In light of the Engel scale it is useful to discern where the person you are sharing with is in their spiritual journey so that you can attempt to discern how to best help them proceed toward Christ. Someone far down the scale may not be ready to accept an invitation to attend church, but they may very well be willing to meet with you one-on-one to read the Bible. A person closer to the positive numbers on the Engel Scale may be more willing to accept an invitation to a church service. For these people we encourage partnering with your church family in reaching others for Christ through - invest and invite. Invest in relationships through love, prayer, service and sharing the gospel, then invite them (your FRAN) to encounter the gospel by engaging in the family of God as they gather together around the gospel. Many exposures to Christ living in you, the family of God and the gospel is often required before people place their faith in Christ. Genuine love and concern, even if there is no interest in the gospel, honors people and builds a platform from which they may be more open to Jesus Christ.

Point people to what Jesus Christ alone can do for us.

Jesus pointed her to what he alone could do for her – give her living water. This includes dealing with sin. It is important to have some basic ways to share the gospel when the opportunity presents itself. Today we are providing you with a number of resources to help you.

- One good way to point people to Jesus is to share how He changed your life. Simply tell your story. Use the resource, *How to Write a Personal Testimony* on our web site. Write your story and memorize it. Ask God to give you opportunities to share it with others.
- *The 4 Spiritual Laws; Steps to Peace with God; How Do You Know When You Are Good Enough to Go to Heaven? The Jesus DVD*
- The Romans Road ; Romans 3:10,23; 5:8; 6:23; 10:9-10,13; 5:1; 8:1
- Jeremiah 17:5-10; what are the two images and what do they stand for? What determines which one we are? According to the passage how do we begin the process of becoming like a strong tree beside water?
- Luke 18:9-14; Jesus, the master communicator, tells a short story of just 121 words in the English language and just six verses in the NT, about two men who were both on the same quest - they wanted was to be justified or righteous in the sight of God. They both go to the temple to pray and seek God's approval. That is why the two key words in the story serve as bookends to the story – in

verse 9 the key word is righteous and in verse 14 the key word is justified. The story is about how to be righteous and justified – accepted and approved - before God. But Jesus' story has a surprise ending; it is counterintuitive and radically reverses what most of us would expect. The surprise of the story is that the man who is most morally upright, religious and devout ends up rejected by God. And the man who is an obvious sinner and law breaker ends up justified in the sight of God. According to Jesus, the two men have radically different approaches to God. They are moving in the exact opposite direction. The man we would think is moving toward God is actually running from Him and the man we would think is running from God is moving toward Him.

- 2 Corinthians 5:21; the great exchange

If you sense the need for further equipping in sharing the gospel with others, you are encouraged to take the *Sharing the Gospel* core elective that is offered every fall at Cherrydale.