

Grace Evangelism

LESSON 4:

“The Gospel Conversation”



Summer Evangelism Series

The Need for Biblical Balance

“We must learn to become assertive without being obnoxious. A better conversation model is to begin with common interests and seek to move deeper into values, attitudes and beliefs. We move gradually yet directly, and with a purpose in mind. Our goal is to touch the conscience.” (Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, pp. 187-88)



The Need for Biblical Balance

1 Thess 2:1-8, “For you yourselves know, brethren, that our coming to you was not in vain, but after we had already suffered and been mistreated in Philippi, as you know, we had the boldness in our God to speak to you the gospel of God amid much opposition. For our exhortation does not come from error or impurity or by way of deceit; but just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who examines our hearts. For we never came with flattering speech, as you know, nor with a pretext for greed—God is witness—nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, even though as apostles of Christ we might have asserted our authority. But we proved to be gentle among you, as a nursing mother tenderly cares for her own children. Having so fond an affection for you, we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”



Four Steps for Gospel Conversation

1. Pray for Opportunity
2. Live Wisely & Intentionally
3. Speak Graciously & Distinctly
4. Trust in God's Sovereignty



1. Pray for Opportunity

Col 4:2-4, “Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving; praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ, for which I have also been imprisoned; that I may make it clear in the way I ought to speak.”



1. Pray for Opportunity

A. HOW are we to pray?

1. Persistently
2. Vigilantly
3. Thankfully

B. WHAT are we to pray?

1. Divine Guidance
2. Personal Faithfulness



2. Live Wisely & Intentionally

Col 4:5, “Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity”



2. Live Wisely & Intentionally

“I have mastered the art of passing up good enough opportunities in the wait for a perfect one. This is not just cowardly—it’s foolish. The simple fact is that sharing Christ will almost always be inconvenient. There will be something unideal, something about the environment prompting the Devil to whisper two of his favorite words: ‘Not now.’” (Smethurst, p. 57)



2. Live Wisely & Intentionally

“Paul didn’t sit around waiting for people to come to him, to enter his world and comfort zone, before he dared open his mouth.... So, again, let’s not drag our feet waiting for the ‘ideal’ situation. For instance, if you’re a parent at the park, surrounded by rambunctious kids, that’s not an ideal environment. But it’s where God has placed you. Why not maximize the moment?” (Smethurst, p. 82)



2. Live Wisely & Intentionally

- A. Start with a common conversation.
 1. Learn the unbeliever's name and use it.
 2. Listen carefully.
 3. Ask good questions.
 4. Wait patiently for an answer.



2. Live Wisely & Intentionally

B. Pose a probing statement or question.

“One potentially helpful way of doing this is to listen for key themes to come up in conversation... forming around the four key themes of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation... For instance, any discussion about the enjoyment of creation... provides an opportunity to praise the Creator who spoke such beauty into existence. On the other hand, evidence of mankind’s fall into sin is everywhere.... [providing] an opportunity to speak of the God who created this world ‘very good’ and of humanity’s rebellion.... If we keep an ear open for these themes, we might find more opportunities to steer our conversations toward the gospel.”



3. Speak Graciously & Distinctly

Col 4:6, “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”



3. Speak Graciously & Distinctly

A. Speak Graciously

1. Don't debate or argue or make it personal.
2. Ask permission and a direct question.
3. Speak as an ambassador of reconciliation.

B. Speak Distinctly

1. Create new categories for them to ponder.
2. Appeal to the conscience as an ally.
3. Define your terms.



3. Speak Graciously & Distinctly

Eph 4:29, “Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear.”



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2 Cor 5:18-21, “Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”



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“...let’s remember that we must also labor to bring about, in the minds of our listeners, conceptual categories that may be missing from their mental framework. If we only use the thought structures they already have, some crucial biblical truths will remain unintelligible.... God brings about this new seeing and understanding and believing. But he uses us to do it. So we should give as much effort in helping people have new biblical categories of thought as we do in contextualizing the gospel to the categories they already have.” (John Piper)



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“God has built into all of us a point of contact—a sense of the Deity and a sense of responsibility for our moral actions (Rom 2:14-15). This sense may be buried, denied or suppressed but it is there even in avowed atheists. The truth of the gospel fits with the way people are made. Our task is to remind them of what deep down they already know: God exists and has created them to act rightly. When I came to realize the implications of this truth for my personal witnessing, I was liberated almost as much as when I learned of God’s sovereignty in salvation. I saw how much I had going for me every time I transmitted God’s message, for he had put a built-in receptor inside each person. We are to reinforce, educate and illuminate the conscience of unbelievers.” (Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, pp. 169-70)



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“If your main goal in evangelism is to hear yourself talk, especially with highfalutin biblical jargon, then many late-modern skeptics will walk—or run—away confused (at best). But if your goal is to be effective, then listen in order to understand, speak in order to be understood, and respectfully engage your fellow image-bearers in their lane of life with the best news they’ll ever hear.” (Smethurst, p. 40)



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4. Trust in God's Sovereignty

- A. Have confidence in the Word, not in yourself.
- B. Do not lose heart or take rejection personally.
- C. Continue to pray for the unbeliever's repentance.
- D. End with a warning.



4. Trust in God's Sovereignty

1 Cor 2:1-5, “And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”



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2 Cor 4:1-6, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart... And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, ‘Light shall shine out of darkness,’ is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”



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4. Trust in God's Sovereignty

Matt 7:6-8, “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces. Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.”



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Q&A

1. What practical advice would you add to all of this from your personal evangelism experience?
2. What have you found to be effective in turning a conversation to the Gospel?



Conclusion

“We do not fail in our evangelism if we faithfully tell the gospel to someone who is not subsequently converted; we fail only if we do not faithfully tell the gospel at all.” (Mark Dever, *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism*, p. 112)

