

# CHAPTER 14

## Beginning a Spiritual Conversation

### Introductory Thoughts

#### Dealing with Strangers is Difficult in Most Cultures:

Luigi Barzini says of the French, “In France a man’s privacy is sacred – even on the street.”<sup>982</sup>

Taylor explains how to start conversations with strangers:<sup>983</sup>

1. Starting Reference Point: “To go into a café and start talking to another customer could easily be considered an invasion of his or her privacy, or even a proposition on you part.”
2. Third Party Introduction: “Your best bet at a bar or café or shop is to wait until other customers have been presented to you through the waiter, bartender or clerk.”
3. Starting Conversation: “In the beginning, the less said about your personal life or theirs, the better.”

How does this impact the possibility of immediate conversations with strangers about the Gospel? E.g. I met a church planter who would not share the Gospel in a community until he befriended a “man of peace.”

On the other hand, listen to some of the dating advice of Andrea McGinty, founder of the dating business called, “It’s Just Lunch,” and relate her advice to evangelism:

- “1. Don’t take dating too seriously...”
- “2. Improve your outlook and your luck will change...”
- “3. Take a proactive approach. Get off the couch and get out there! The weather’s great. Dating is a numbers game. The more potential people you meet, the more likely you are to find “the one.”
- “4. Get the word out. Tell everyone you meet that you are available; casually mention that you’re on the lookout for eligible dates.
- “5. Be open. Be open to meeting someone new everywhere you go. There are lots of opportunities throughout your regular day to meet new people.
- “6. Create a ripple effect. It’s smart to talk to anyone, anywhere, even if the person doesn’t seem to be your type. You never know who the person might introduce you to in the future.”<sup>984</sup>

Let’s apply some of Andrea’s advice to evangelism by changing some words:

3. Take a proactive approach. Get off the couch and get out there! The weather’s great. Evangelism is [seems to be] a numbers game. The more potential people you meet, the more likely you are to find “an interested person.”
4. Get the word out. Tell everyone you meet that you are interested in their souls; casually mention that you’re on the lookout for open people.
5. Be open. Be open to sharing the Gospel with someone new everywhere you go. There are lots of opportunities throughout your regular day to meet new people.
6. Create a ripple effect. It’s smart to talk to anyone, anywhere, even if the person doesn’t seem to be open. You never know if they might be interested in the Gospel, or if they might introduce you to someone who is in the future.

Notice Paul’s words about evangelism:

“Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself that you might be exalted, because I preached [evangelized] the gospel of God to you without charge?” 2 Cor 11:7

---

<sup>982</sup>Sally Adamson Taylor, *Culture Shock: A Guide to Customs and Etiquette—France* (Portland: Graphic Arts Center, 1990, 1996), 134.

<sup>983</sup>*Ibid.*, 38-40.

<sup>984</sup>Andrea McGinty, “Dating Advice for Summer,” *Southwest Airlines World Traveler* (June 2006), 42.

## The Great Commission and Prior Relationship:

### Introduction:

Leighton Ford sought to built an argument for friendship/relational/servant/fellowship evangelism through use of the word “wait” in reference to “wait” for the reception of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4).

“Not until they could show the fellowship of truth and demonstrate the deeds of truth, were they ready to speak the words of truth”<sup>985</sup>

However, using this text to show the need to “wait” to exemplify fellowship and deeds prior to sharing the Gospel is a *non sequetor*.

### God at work in preparing total strangers—I Kings 17:8-16:

#### Elijah speaking to the Sidonian Widow:

Example of stranger-to-stranger spiritual communication

God prepared her heart to receive Elijah, v. 9, “Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, **I have commanded** a widow there to provide for you.”

Elijah saw a widow gathering sticks (she was busy), v. 10

Asked her for bread, v. 11

[note the parallel passages of Jesus and the Woman at the Well (John 4) and Abraham’s servant and Rebekah (Gen 24)]

### Note the NT parallel of Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch—Acts 8:26-29:

The Eunuch was reading Scripture...

“But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, ‘Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.’ (This is a desert *road*.) So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship, and he was returning and sitting in his chariot, and **was reading the prophet Isaiah**. Then the Spirit said to Philip, ‘Go up and join this chariot.’”

### Note the NT parallel of Ananias and Saul—Acts 9:11-12:

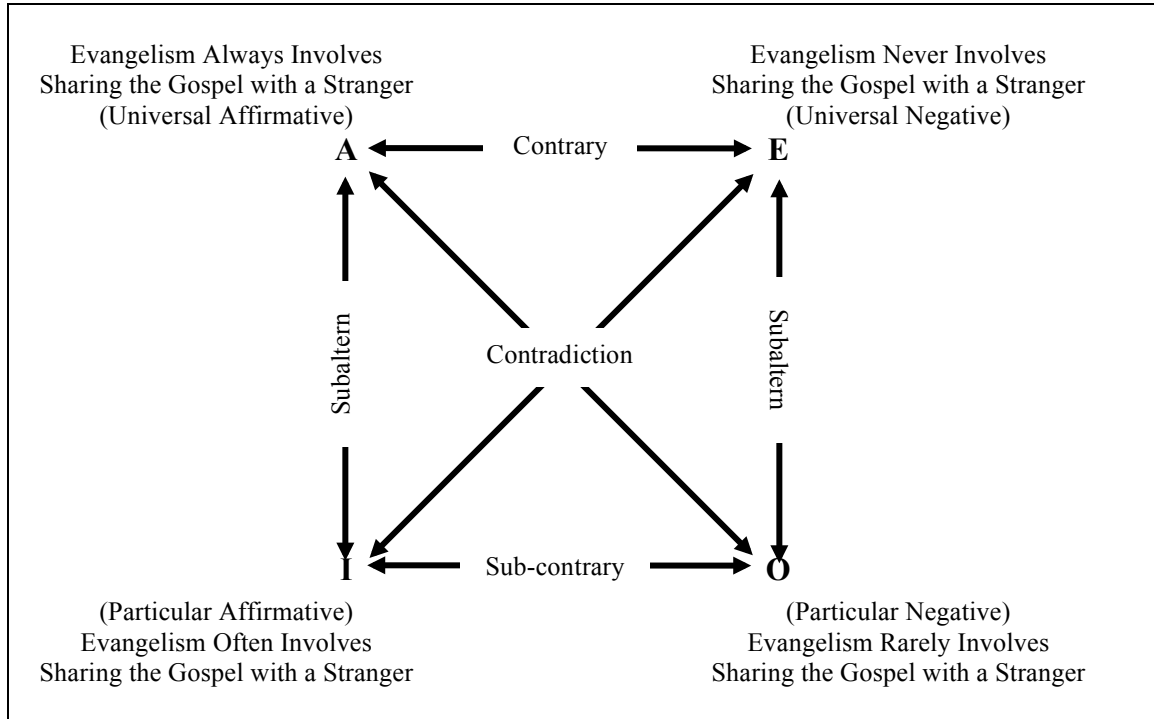
Saul was praying...

“Get up and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for a man from Tarsus named Saul, **for he is praying**, and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him, so that he might regain his sight.”

---

<sup>985</sup>Leighton Ford, *The Christian Persuader* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 68-78.

**Issue: Is stranger-to-stranger evangelism valid? Where do the examples of the Bible fit?**



- What does the Bible teach?
- What are the biblical examples?
- The interesting case of Paul evangelizing Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18:2-3, 18, 26.

## Beginning a Conversation

### 1. Some biblical personal evangelism situations showing ways to enter into spiritual subjects:

- Beginning with a common point of interest:
  - Abraham's servant addresses Rebekah, a complete stranger, and offers Isaac in marriage to her after this conversation starter, Gen 24:17, "Please let me drink a little water from your jar."
  - Elijah and the Widow from Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:10, "please give me a little water in a jar, that I may drink."
  - Jesus and the Woman at the Well, John 4:7, "Give me a drink" (using the method of Abraham's servant).
- Questions about a current event:
  - Jesus to two disciples on the road to Emmaus (not an evangelistic conversation, but a conversation started with strangers as they did not recognize Jesus, v. 16 and 31; they were also on-the-move walking, v. 13-15), Luke 24:13-25:
    - Q1 "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" Luke 24:17
      - R<sub>x1</sub> "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?"
      - Q2 "What things?" Luke 24:19
        - R<sub>x2</sub> "But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that He was alive. And some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see."
        - S "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! ..."

- 2) Seeking to stop false worship of themselves, Paul asked a rhetorical question: “Men, why are you doing these things?” Acts 14:15  
Whereas Simon the Sorcerer accepted the worship of men, Acts 8:9-10

c. Asking a question:<sup>986</sup>

- 1) Consider to the questioning sequence of Jacob in Gen 29:4-6:  
Q1 “My brothers, where are you from?”  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “We are from Haran”  
Q2 “Do you know Laban the son of Nahor?”  
R<sub>X</sub>2 “We know *him*.”  
Q3 “Is it well with him?” (hashalim low?)  
R<sub>X</sub>3 “It is well (shalom), and behold, Rachel his daughter is coming with the sheep.”  
Remember that in this situation, it would seem that Jacob was speaking Hebrew, and the “sons of the east” (29:1) would have spoken Aramaic (cf. Gen 31:47)
- 2) Jesus to His disciples (again not a direct evangelism situation, but applicable none-the-less), Matt 16:13-20 (parallel in Luke 9:18-20):  
Q1 “Who do people say that I am?” v. 13  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets”  
Q2 “Who do you say that I am?” v. 15  
R<sub>X</sub>2 “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.”
- 3) Jesus asked the sick man at the pool of Bethesda, John 5:6-7:  
Q “Do you wish to be made well?”  
R<sub>X</sub> “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”  
S “Arise, take up your pallet, and walk”
- 4) Jesus asked the man born blind, John 9:35-38:  
Q “Do you believe in the Son of Man?”  
R<sub>X</sub> “And who is He, Lord, that I may believe in Him?”  
S “You have both seen Him, and He is the one who is talking with you”  
R<sub>X</sub> “Lord, I believe.”
- 5) Jesus asked two questions of those on the road to Emmaus (see point above)
- 6) Philip asked the Ethiopian Eunuch a question, Acts 8:30-38:  
Q1 “Do you understand what you are reading?”  
R<sub>Q</sub>1 “Well, how could I, unless someone guides me?”  
Scripture Reading (Isa 53:7-8):  
R<sub>Q</sub>2 “Please *tell me*, of whom does the prophet say this? Of himself or of someone else?” Acts 8:34  
Philip’s explanation—evangelizes him about Jesus (Acts 8:35)  
R<sub>Q</sub>3 “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?”  
R<sub>a</sub> “*And Philip said, ‘If you believe with all your heart, you may.’ And he answered and said, ‘I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.’ And he ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him.*”
- 7) Sequence of theological questions, Acts 19:2-5:  
Q1 “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” Acts 19:2  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “No, we have not even heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.”  
Q2 “Into what then were you baptized?”  
R<sub>X</sub>2 “Into John’s baptism.”

---

<sup>986</sup>Randy Newman in *Questioning Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004) made the statement, “We can have better results from our evangelizing. Our efforts can produce more fruit advancing the kingdom further than has been recently achieved. ... Perhaps the most important component to this kind of evangelism is answering questions with questions rather than giving answers” (26). Similarly, Sjogren, Ping’s, and Pollock’s chapter titled, “Active Wondering,” includes hundreds of very helpful questions (Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock, *Irresistible Evangelism* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 127-45).

- S “John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus”  
 R<sub>a</sub> “And when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus”

d. Initiating conversation with a statement:

- 1) Jesus to His disciples, “Follow Me!” Matt 4:19; 9:9; Mark 1:17; 2:14; Luke 5:27; 9:59; John 1:43
- 2) Peter and John to the Lame beggar, Acts 3:3-6:
  - a) “Look at us!” v. 4
  - b) “I do not possess silver and gold ...” v. 6
  - c) God performs a miracle
- 3) Paul cries out “Stand upright on your feet” to the lame man in Lystra, Acts 14:10

e. Replying to a question: (e.g. Ezek 24:49, Jonah 1:8-9):

- 1) In response to questions roused by the preaching of John the Baptist:
  - Q1 Luke 3:10, “And the crowds were questioning him, saying, ‘Then what shall we do?’”
  - Q2 Luke 3:12, “And *some* tax collectors also came to be baptized, and they said to him, ‘Teacher, what shall we do?’”
  - Q3 Luke 3:14, “*Some* soldiers were questioning him, saying, ‘And *what about* us, what shall we do?’”
- 2) Question of the self-justifying lawyer, Luke 10:25-29:
  - Q1 “Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Luke 10:25  
 R<sub>x</sub>1 Jesus responds by quoting Deut 6:5 and Lev 19:18
  - Q2 “And who is my neighbor?” Luke 10:29
- 3) “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” Mark 10:17 (cf. Luke 18:18); notice the difference in the Matthew 19:16 version: “Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?”
- 4) Samaritan Woman sequence, John 4:9, 11-12:
  - Q1 “How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?”
  - Q2 “Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?”
  - Q3 “You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?”
- 5) After the feeding of the 5,000 in John 6:
  - Q1 “Rabbi, when did You get here?” John 6:25 (they understood that some kind of miracle had occurred, cf. 6:2, 11-14)  
 R<sub>x</sub>1 “You seek me not because you saw signs, but because you ate the loaves, and were filled...”  
 John 6:26
  - Q2 “What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?” John 6:28  
 Jesus: “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent,” John 6:29
  - Q3 “What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform?”  
 John 6:30
- 6) Pilate and Jesus sequence in John 18:
  - Q1 “Are You the King of the Jews?” John 18:33  
 R<sub>q</sub>1 “Are you saying this on your own initiative, or did others tell you about Me?” John 18:34
  - Q2 “I am not a Jew, am I?” (rhetorical question) John 18:35  
 Pilate about Jesus’ Jewish ancestry: “Your own nation and the chief priests delivered You up to me,”  
 John 18:35
  - Q3 “What have You done?”  
 R<sub>x</sub>3 My kingdom is not of this world. ...” John 18:36
  - Q4 “So You are a king?” John 18:37  
 R<sub>x</sub>4 “You say *correctly* that I am a king. ....” John 18:37
  - Q5 “What is truth?” (last recorded words of conversation) John 18:38

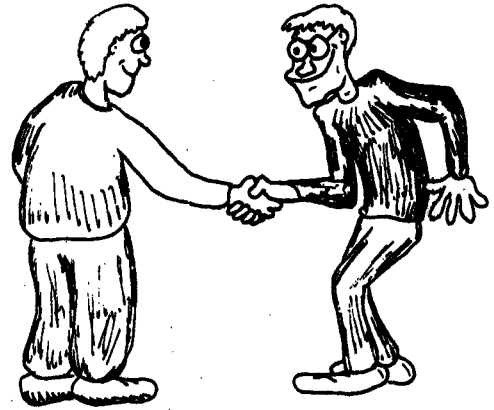
- 7) Following the Pentecostal speaking in tongues:
    - Q1 “What does this mean?” Acts 2:12  
Peter’s sermon
    - Q2 “What shall we do, brothers?” Acts 2:37
  - 8) Classic salvation question:
    - Q1 “What must I do to be saved?” Acts 16:31  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household,” Act 16:31
  - 9) Prior to Sotics and Epicureans forcefully bringing Paul to Areopagus, Acts 17:18-20
    - Q1 “What would this idle babblers wish to say?  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “He seems to be a proclaimer of strange deities”  
Narrator, “because he was evangelizing Jesus and the resurrection”
    - Q2 “May we know what this new teaching is which you are proclaiming [speaking]? For you are bringing some strange things to our ears; so we want to know what these things mean”
  - 10) Notice as well the tricky questions that the Pharisees asked Jesus in Matt 22:15-46; Mark 12:28-37; Luke 20:1-40, can we expect any different?  
Consider also in this light the many Inquisition questions gathered by Thomas Aquinas in his *Summa*
- f. Replying to a statement:
- 1) Jesus to several, Matt 8:19-22; Luke 9:57-58, 61-62
  - 2) Jesus to Nicodemus, John 3:3
  - 3) As to the Rich Young Ruler, Mark. 10:18.
  - 4) Jesus and the Thief on the Cross, Luke 23:42-43, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”
- g. Reaching out to an inquisitive individual:
- 1) Jesus and Zaccheus, Luke 19:5
- h. Responding to an invitation:
- 1) Jesus at Sychar, John 4:40-41
  - 2) Peter to men from Cornelius:
    - Q1 “Behold, I am the one you are looking for; what is the reason for which you have come?” Acts 10:21  
R<sub>X</sub>1 “Cornelius, a centurion, a righteous and God-fearing man well spoken of by the entire nation of the Jews, was *divinely* directed by a holy angel to send for you *to come* to his house and hear a message from you,” Acts 10:22
    - Q2 “I ask for what reason you have sent for me,” Acts 10:29  
R<sub>X</sub>2 “Four days ago to this hour, ... And so I sent to you immediately, and you have been kind enough to come. Now then, we are all here present before God to hear all that you have been commanded by the Lord,” Acts 10:30-33
    - S3 “I most certainly understand *now* that God is not one to show partiality, ... through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins,” Acts 10:34-43
    - E4 “While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to the message,” Acts 10:44  
R<sub>X</sub>4 “Surely no one can refuse the water for these to be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *did*, can he?” Acts 10:41
  - 3) Paul to Felix and Drusilla, Acts 24:24-25
- i. Speaking with aggressive individuals:
- 1) In Athens the Stoics and Epicurians took the offensive on Paul—note the progressively more aggressive language:
    - a) Marketplace conversations:
      - (1) Paul was reasoning (διαλέγομαι) with whomever happened to be present, Acts 17:17
      - (2) The Stoics and Epicurians were conversing/dialoguing (συμβάλλω) with Paul, Acts 17:18
      - (3) Paul was evangelizing (εὐαγγελίζω) Jesus and the resurrection, Acts 17:18

- (4) The Stoics and Epicurians felt that Paul was [ignorantly] throwing around words (Gk. *σπερμολόγος*; Lat. *seminiverbius*; Matthew Henry, “this scatterer of words”)
- (a) It is highly likely that they meant to mock Paul and get some free laughs, much like when Paul was the *piece de resistance* [the main course] at the gathering in Caesarea (Acts 25:23ff.) when he was brought before King Agrippa with great pomp and likewise before all the important men of the city
  - (b) It is also highly likely that this hapax legomena (*σπερμολόγος*) was meant as a derogatory term
- b) Terminology for taking Paul to “Mars Hill” was quite harsh:
- (1) They took him (*ἐπιλαμβάνομαι*), Acts 17:19, same word used in (these following include all the NT uses of that same form of the verb):
    - (a) Crucifixion narrative, Luke 23:26
    - (b) When Paul was seized and dragged before the authorities, Acts 16:19
    - (c) When Sosthenes was dragged and beaten, Acts 18:17
    - (d) When they grabbed Paul in Jerusalem and threw him out of the city to kill him, Acts 21:30
  - (2) And brought him (*ἄγω*), Acts 17:19
  - (3) Both words are also used together in Acts 9:27 of Barnabas bringing Paul to the Apostles
- j. Rebuking a disruptive individual:
- 1) Jesus rebuking the demoniac from Gerasenes:  
Mark 5:7, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I implore You by God, do not torment me!”  
Mark 5:8, “Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!”
  - 2) Slave girl with a spirit of divination, Acts 16:18
- k. Mentioning Christ in conversation:
- 1) John the Baptist to two disciples, John 1:35-36
- l. Testifying about what Jesus had done (cf. Job 33:27-28):
- 1) The Man from Gerasenes, Mark 5:20; Luke 8:39
  - 2) The Woman at the Well, John 4:39
- m. Finding someone for the purpose of sharing Christ:
- Introduction: This fits with the purpose of Christ “to seek and to save those who are lost” (Luke 19:10). Thus Jesus sought out persons for conversation.  
Hence the complaint of the Pharisees and scribes: Luke 15:2 (NKJ), “And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, “This Man receives [literally: “looks for,” from *προσδέχομαι*] sinners and eats with them.”
- 1) Andrew and Simon Peter, John 1:41
  - 2) Philip and Nathanael, John 1:45
  - 3) Jesus and the paralytic, John 5:14
  - 4) Jesus and the man born blind, John 9:35
  - 5) Paul and Lydia, Acts 16:14
  - 6) Paul in Athens, Acts 17:17
- n. Starting a conversation by mistake:
- 1) Eli began his conversation with Hannah because he falsely assumed that she was drunk, 1 Sam 1:12-14
    - a) In the resulting conversation, he spoke a blessing into her life, 1 Sam 1:16!

## 2. Some General Principles:

Introduction: The way to begin a conversation is dependent on the specific situation, the style of evangelism and the personality of the one who is witnessing. However, several general principles can be applied.<sup>987</sup>

- a. Flexibility, sensitivity and creativity is needed to start spiritual conversations with others.
- b. Begin with a common point of interest:
  - 1) Evaluate what the person would be interested in by his appearance.
  - 2) Some ideas of possible areas of interest:
    - a) What you or the other person is doing
    - b) The weather
    - c) Some known news item that might spark the interest of the individual.
- c. Ask a question, make a comment or ask for help. These and other openers are all valid ways to start a conversation. Some possible questions:
  - 1) On the church campus (as in Block Party or other special event):
    - a) Hi, my name is \_\_\_\_\_, have we met before?
    - b) Are you from \_\_\_\_\_? How long have you lived here?
  - 2) Further questions, or off church site:
    - a) Are you a praying man?
    - b) Has the Lord given you a church that you attend?
    - c) Are you a believing person?
    - d) Do you consider yourself a spiritual person?
- d. Be friendly and cheerful as it is appropriate to the context (culturally and socially).
- e. Some Bible verses provide appropriate social guidelines for evangelizing: <sup>988</sup>
  - 1) Respect was is right in the sight of all men, Rom 12:17
  - 2) Honor all men, 1 Pet 2:17
  - 3) Give no offense, 1 Cor. 10:32-33; 2 Cor. 6:3
  - 4) To speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men, Titus 3:2
  - 5) Not returning evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, 1 Pet. 3:8-9
- f. Remember the importance of a person's name, Luke 19:5, 3 John 14 (e.g. John 1:47-51).



## 3. Further Ideas for Starting Spiritual Conversations:

- a. In street evangelism or door-to-door, I usually get right to the point (as will be noted in the next Chapter)
- b. In stores, workers have name tags, or someone might tell you their name:
  - 1) If you know the biblical meaning of a name, you can say something like:
    - a) "Jonathan! That's a great name! Do you know that it's a biblical name?"
    - b) "Do you know what it means?"
    - c) "It means, the Lord is gracious!"
    - d) "Has the Lord been gracious to you?"

<sup>987</sup>Edwards has a practical discussion of ways to begin a evangelistic conversation (Edwards, 116-30).

<sup>988</sup>Charles Grandison Finney, *Finney on Revival*, arranged by E. E. Shelhamer (Minneapolis: Bethany House, n.d.), 66-74 is a chapter entitled, "To Win Souls Requires Wisdom." The need to be respectful is number 9 of his 22 practical and insightful points. R.A. Torrey in *How to Work for Christ* (Westwood, NJ; Revell, 1901), 174-75, wrote, "Be courteous," and "Avoid unwarranted familiarities with those with whom you deal."



- 2) If you know something about a biblical character by that name, you can say something like:
  - a) “Daniel! Now that’s a great name! Did you know that your name comes from the Bible?”
  - b) “Did you know that Daniel was a prophet of God?”
  - c) “He was thrown into a lions den one time, because he would not stop praying to God”
- 3) There are many names with which these ideas can be used:
  - a) Benjamin means “Son of my right hand”
  - b) Joshua means “The Lord saves”—this is a particularly good name to use, as its NT Greek transliteration is “Jesus”
  - c) Daniel means “Beloved of God”
- c. Tattoos:
  - 1) Often tattoos have meanings for people
  - 2) A comment like, “That’s a great looking tattoo! What does it mean to you?” can be a great conversation starter
- d. Jewelry:
  - 1) Sometimes jewelry can be a good conversation starter
  - 2) For example, “That is a massive cross! Do you know what happened on the cross?”
  - 3) Or again, “That’s a great looking cross! Aren’t you glad that we also celebrate Easter?”
- e. More direct questions (as will also be elaborated further in the next chapter):
  - 1) “How are you doing spiritually?”
  - 2) “Do you have peace with God?”
  - 3) “What is the condition of your soul?” (ascribed to Wesley)
- f. Be ready for God to open your eyes, as you ask Him to open your mouth. There are many ways to enter into spiritual conversations with others!

#### 4. Things to Look for:<sup>989</sup>

There are several things to look for when first addressing a person on a spiritual level:

- a. Contrite heart:
  - 1) A contrite heart evidences the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit
- b. Points of Pain/Need:
  - 1) Often God may bring points of pain in a person’s life that make them open to the Gospel (as noted in the previous lesson).
- c. Pattern of Prayer:
  - 1) Give attention to the fact that someone may be praying for the individual you are contacting for Christ
  - 2) You may want to ask the person if someone is praying for them.
- d. Witness of the Word:
  - 1) Sometimes the contact may have an unexplainable urge to read the Word of God, even prior to becoming a Christian, you may be an answer to the urgings of the Holy Spirit in their heart.

Conclusion: As you look for these items, you will likewise note if God is speaking through you to the person, John 6:45

#### 5. Lifestyle Evangelism Situations:

- a. **Definition:** People we see regularly in an everyday context will require a different conversational opening than in initiative evangelism situations. These lifestyle contacts are often found in the workplace and in living situations. Unsaved family members can also be put into the lifestyle category.

---

<sup>989</sup>Points b-d adapted from comments of Fred Jennings, Spiritual Emphasis Week, Crown College, 16-18 September 1992.

b. **Socratic Evangelism:**

- 1) Use points of conversation to bring in a biblical approach to the subject in an appropriate manner in order to spark interest in spiritual things. Strong intentionality is often needed to accomplish this. To this end, questions can be very helpful. There seems to be a renewed emphasis on the place of questions, as noted in a footnote above.
- 2) Steve Sjogren offers many helpful suggestions for asking questions, which he called “Active Wondering”; in this chapter he provided “99 Wondering Questions,” such as:
  - a) “Would you share the greatest piece of wisdom ever passed on to you?”
  - b) “How did 9/11 affect your view God and the world?”
  - c) “If you could ask God three questions, what would they be?”
  - d) “How would you change the way you were raised?”<sup>990</sup>

While Sjogren seemed to teach against an outright initiative approach to evangelism, communicated an anti-seminary mindset,<sup>991</sup> and taught a non-substitutionary approach to the Gospel,<sup>992</sup> his “Active Wondering” chapter fits perfectly with initiating Gospel conversations!

- 3) Likewise, Randy Newman wrote of another type of Socratic evangelism, which he calls “Solomonic Soulwinning” that is, answering questions with questions:

“We can have better results from our evangelizing. Our efforts can produce more fruit advancing the kingdom further than has been recently achieved. ... Perhaps the most important component to this kind of evangelism is answering questions with questions rather than giving answers.”<sup>993</sup>

The heart of Newman’s book is an apologetic response to seven questions frequently asked by non-Christians.

- 4) Follow up on the interest shown on a given subject can be done by guiding the conversation towards the Gospel. This is where knowledge of the entire breadth of various subjects in the Bible becomes helpful (e.g. see the Book of Psalms).

c. **Servant Evangelism:**

- 1) Actively look for ways to serve the people that the Lord has laid on your heart, asking God to provide openings to share the Gospel, following the pattern of Titus 3, “to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men,” Titus 3:1-2
- 2) Service will provide proximity to the people, which can sometimes lead to open doors for sharing the Gospel

d. **The Use of Testimony:**

- 1) Be open to share your testimony in conjunction with the subject discussed, weaving in the main points of the Gospel, including the prayer to accept Christ.

---

<sup>990</sup>Steve Sjogren, Dave Ping, and Doug Pollock, *Irresistible Evangelism* (Loveland, CO: Group, 2004), 127-45.

<sup>991</sup>“He [Steve] was finally going to fulfill a lifelong dream. In September he would be attending seminary for the first time. He tells about his experience:

“...As the day wore on, my disappointment and cynicism increased, Maybe you’ve heard this uncharitable adage: Those who can, do. Those who can’t, teach. Those who can do neither, lecture. Seminary was feeling more and more like a bad dream in which I had died and gone to church hell. My punishment was to be eternally lectured by folks who were totally out of touch with present-day life and ministry” (ibid., 41-42).

<sup>992</sup>“Many Christians talk about developing an intimate *personal relationship* with God, but the message they present to not-yet-Christians focuses almost exclusively on explaining how the atoning death of Jesus satisfies the requirements of God’s justice. ... Talking about doctrines such as justification by faith and atonement by the substitutionary death of Jesus is usually unnecessarily confusing. These doctrines may accurately explain what happens (in a legal sense) when we pray to accept Jesus, but they don’t paint a very relational picture.

“...Relationship is the heart of the matter” (ibid., 149).

<sup>993</sup>Randy Newman, *Questioning Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 26.

- 2) The testimony often will not deal directly with salvation or conversion, but with some other aspect of life; this is where Scripture can gently be quoted on whatever the topic may be
  - 3) As interest persists, challenge the friend to accept Christ and ask if you can pray with/for him.
- e. **Follow-up:**
- 1) As in any style of evangelism, when spiritual things are touched upon, the reproach of Christ is felt, which will divide the interested and the uninterested
  - 2) You have planed the seed for the uninterested, so then focus on the interested, while remaining as conversant as possible with the uninterested
  - 3) Share the Gospel, etc.

## 6. Contact Evangelism Situations:

### a. Door-to-door evangelism:

- 1) Begin with your name, the name of the church or organization you are with, and the reason you are there—"to share the Gospel, of how Jesus died on the cross for your sins and rose again."
- 2) In door-to-door it is often good to be straight forward and lead right into the Gospel. Some diversion onto another topic might be good to lighten up the conversation. But get to the Gospel quickly.
- 3) Silence will work against you. Be ready to speak immediately when somebody gets to the door.
- 4) Sometimes a questionnaire can be effective. A good concise questionnaire leading to the Gospel can flow naturally into an effective time of sharing the Gospel (sample questionnaires follow in this chapter).
- 5) Be thoughtful and considerate of the person. Real Christian love shows through.
- 6) An honest mention of how much time may be necessary.

### b. Street evangelism (one-on-one or several people):

- 1) A friendly salutation is a good start.
- 2) Entering right into the purpose of the encounter (to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ) with the individual is helpful right away.
- 3) Be aware of how much time the person has and summarize the Gospel appropriately.

## 7. Example of Starting a Conversation:

In 1754, Baptist home missionary John Gano had this conversation with his landlord in North Carolina:

"Landlord — "Are you a trader?"

"Mr. Gano — "Yes."

"L. — "Do you find trading to answer your purpose?"

"G. — "Not so well as I could wish."

"L. — "Probably the goods do not suit."

"G. — "No one has complained of the goods."

"L. — "You hold them too high."

"G. — "Any one may have them below his own price."

"L. — "I will trade with you on these terms."

"G. — "I will cheerfully comply with them. Will not gold tried in the fire, yea, that which is better than the fine gold, wine and milk, durable riches and righteousness, without money and without price, suit you?"

"L. — "Oh, I believe you are a minister."

"G. — "I am, and I have a right to proclaim free grace wherever I go."

"This," says Mr. Gano, "laid the foundation for the evening's conversation, and I must acknowledge his kindness, though he was not very desirous of *trading*, after he discovered who I was."<sup>994</sup>

## Conclusion—Regarding the Need for Personal Work:

As a rule, the intensity of the appeal is in inverse proportion to the area covered; in other words, the greater your audience, the smaller the probability of your appeal coming home to a single heart. I once heard Henry Ward Beecher say, "The longer I live, the more confidence I have in those sermons preached where one man is the minister and one man is the congregation; where there's no question as to who is meant when the preacher says, "Thou art the man." Years after this, I heard the Rev. Dr. Nevius speak similarly as to the mission field in China.

---

<sup>994</sup>Excerpt from John Gano's Journal ("John Gano [1736-1804]"; available at: <http://www.therestorationmovement.com/gano/john.htm>; accessed: 20 Oct 2008).

He said he wanted no great preachers in his field. That was not the sort of missionary who were needed in China. If he could find a man who could talk familiarly, face to face, with another man, wherever he met him, he had missionary work for that kind of man in China. This is the way to do Christian work in China, or in America. ...

It is not merely that individual work is a helpful addition to other work of the minister, but that it is the chief work, and that from it come strength and power for other work.<sup>995</sup>

---

<sup>995</sup>Charles G. Trumbull, *Taking Men Alive*, 33-34.

## Chapter 14 Appendix

### Admonitions to Guide Our Evangelism from 2 Timothy

1. Do not be ashamed of the Gospel, 2 Tim 1:8
  - a. Do not be ashamed to the testimony of the Lord
  - b. Do not be ashamed of me [Paul] His prisoner:
    - 1) Was this a hint that Timothy may have been ashamed of the evangelism methodology of Paul that landed him in prison?
  - c. Paul himself was not ashamed of himself nor of his evangelizing, but rather he was fully assured that his being in prison was because he was a herald of the Gospel, and that he was in God's safekeeping, 2 Tim 1:12
  - d. Then Paul gave examples of those who were and were not ashamed of him:
 

2 Tim 1:15, "This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me, among whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes"

2 Tim 1:16-17, "he Lord grant mercy to the household of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he arrived in Rome, he sought me out very zealously and found *me*"
2. Join me in suffering for the Gospel, 2 Tim 1:8
  - a. Was it not true from the context that Timothy was so shameful of evangelizing, that he needed to be prodded by Paul to press on in the work of evangelizing?
  - b. Timothy's timidity in evangelizing was a real problem, which Paul dealt with gently, but directly (reminiscent of Matt 10:33; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26; 12:9):
 

"*This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.*  
*If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*  
*If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself*" (2Tim 2:11-13)
  - c. Finally, Paul commanded Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist":
 

2 Tim 4:5, "But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry"
3. Various other admonitions:
  - a. Retain the standard of sound teaching, 2 Tim 1:13
  - b. Guard the treasure entrusted, 2 Tim 2:14
  - c. Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim 2:1
  - d. Suffer hardship with me as a soldier, 2 Tim 2:3
  - e. Flee youthful lusts, 2 Tim 2:22
4. Be diligent as a workman, rightly "dividing" the word of truth, 2 Tim 2:15
5. The need to avoid quarrels:
  - a. Not to wrangle about words, 2 Tim 2:14
  - b. Avoid worldly and empty chatter, 2 Tim 2:16-17
  - c. Refuse foolish and ignorant speculation, 2 Tim 2:23
  - d. The Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, 2 Tim 2:24
6. Proper characteristics:
  - a. The need for gentleness, 2 Tim 2:24
  - b. The need for love and patience, 2 Tim 3:10
7. What about avoiding "Striving" in 2 Tim 2:24 (KJV)?
  - a. Does this admonition encourage us to avoid discussing spiritual things with others?
  - b. Let's study what the verb means, looking at how it has been translated:
 

Psalm 46:10 (NAS) "Cease *striving* and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

An Analysis of the Translation of 2 Tim 2:24

Wycliffe, 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed (1388)	Tyndale (1534)	KJV (1611/1769)	Webster's (1833)	Bible in Basic English (1949/1964)	RSV (1952)	NET (2005)
But it bihoueth the seruaunt of the Lord to chide not; but to be mylde to alle men, able to teche,	But the servaunt of the lorde must not stryve: but must be peasable vnto all men and apte to teache and one that can suffre: the evyll in meknes	And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all <i>men</i> , apt to teach, patient,	And the servant of the Lord must not contend; but be gentle to all {men}, apt to teach, patient,	For it is not right for the Lord's servant to make trouble, but he is to be gentle to all, ready in teaching, putting up with wrong,	And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing,	And the Lord's slave must not engage in heated disputes but be kind toward all, an apt teacher, patient,

- c. It would seem that the verb does not mean that one ought not enter into discussion with others (even uncomfortable discussion), but rather avoid being quarrelsome.
- d. Herein, the application of this admonition to evangelism should be tempered by two things:
  - 1) The commands of the Great Commission
  - 2) The examples of obedience of the Great Commission in the Book of Acts

## Chronological Issues in Determining the Usefulness of Using or Purposes in Using Various Conversations in the Bible For Training in Personal Evangelism

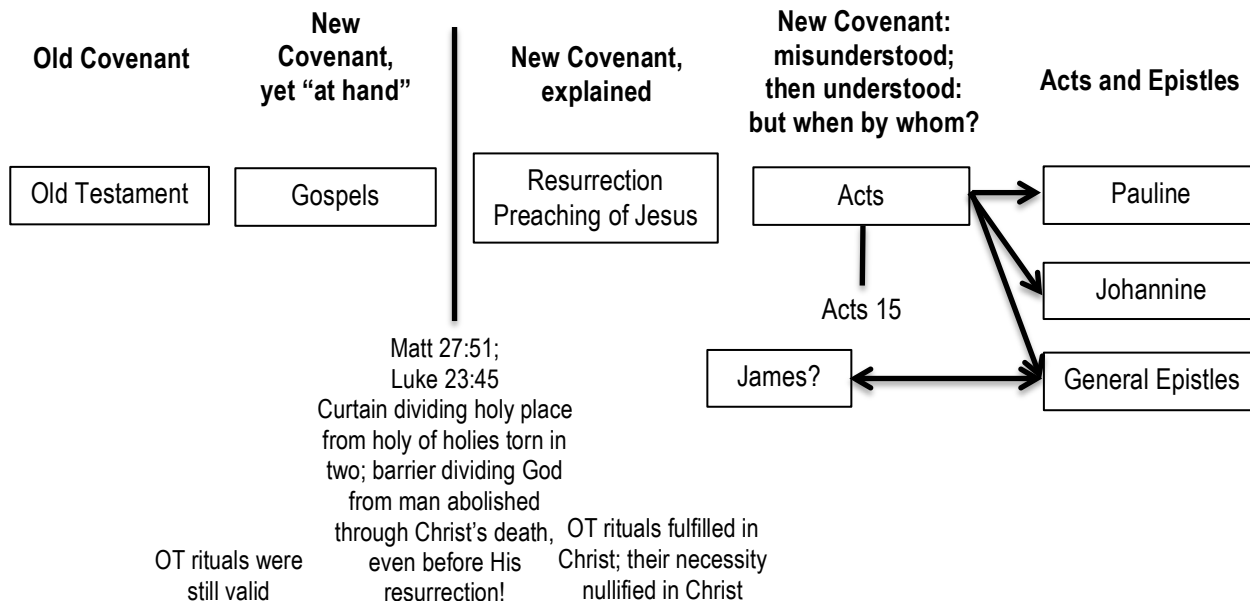
In order to properly place each conversation in its proper place in the development of salvation history, let us begin by considering the distinctions between the Old and New Covenants. Then considering distinctions among and within New Testament books.

Consider the possibilities: when is the exact break between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant?

- The annunciation to Mary?
- The birth of John the Baptist?
- The birth of Jesus the Christ?
- The baptism of Jesus the Christ?
- The transfiguration event?
- The death of Christ?
- The resurrection of Christ?
- The giving of the Great Commission?
- The ascension of Christ?
- The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

While all of these may or may not have a level of plausibility, depending largely on theological presuppositions of the subscriber, it appears that the death of Christ is the preferred possibility for several reasons:

- In Luke 23:45, at the end of the crucifixion, the curtain dividing the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn, signifying by a miraculous act, that the old had gone, behold the new had come;
- Jesus, then sensing in His Spirit that all had been accomplished, in Luke 23:46, breathed His last breathe;
- In Matt 27:50-51, that reverses the order of the last breath and the tearing of the curtain, we also find mention of an earthquake and saints being raised to life for a brief time, prior to the resurrection of Christ (Matt 27:51-52)!
- Further, Jesus came to "fulfill" and He said the rulership (kingdom) of God was "at hand." Therefore, during His lifetime, He still gave an expectation of a future event that had not yet happened.



While Jesus gradually revealed His death and resurrection throughout His life; even after the events, the disciples did not understand their meaning (cf. Luke 24). When came their breakthrough?

Or consider:

- In the apostles full understanding of the doctrine of salvation (as it relates to the OT law), where does the Jerusalem council fit in? Where they not to be the pillars of the church, and those who would remember the teachings of Jesus and pass them on?
- In the Pauline conception of justification by faith, where does that fit in with Acts 15?

- Therefore, do not (1) the Jerusalem Council and (2) the special revelation to Paul actually fill out the apostles' understanding and the NT's teaching of the concept of the doctrine of salvation (especially it appears as regards (a) the OT food laws, laws of association, and circumcision, and (b) justification by faith alone)? And if this is so, does this not provide another important doctrinal marker in the history of the preaching of salvation?
- If so, how does this relate to the developing sacramental or ritualistic doctrine of salvation in the "Early Church" and passed down to our time and further evolving in the traditions of the territorial churches?
- How do we interpret the teachings of Christ in the Gospels in light of the view after Acts 15? (esp. Sermon on the Mount; cf. Matt 22:34-40 and parallels)?
- How do we apply the examples of "evangelism" in the Gospels (Synoptic and Johannine), as well as those in Acts prior to Acts 15?
- Where does Book of James fit into this schema?
- Why did it appear that there were still some who (1) followed the prohibition laws of Acts 15 (e.g. 1 Cor 9-10) and (2) were believers and zealous for the law (Acts 21)?

Considering the full expression of the knowledge of the gospel chronologically in the New Testament:

- John the Baptist: His message, and the disciples of John the Baptist in Acts 19
- The Apostles in Matt 10; Mark 6; Luke 9 and 10
- Jesus gradually unfolding His death and resurrection to the Apostles (hence, the gospel)
- The Gospel in John, as considered in light of the Pauline Gospel and its pre-cross topic with a post-cross writing
- The disciples on the road to Emmaus and Jesus explaining the cross and resurrection, Luke 24
- The Great Commissions and their impact on the preaching of the gospel
- The Gospel proclamation in Acts
  - Pre-Jerusalem Council
  - Post-Jerusalem Council
  - Complexities of the Jerusalem Council on Acts 21 and "those of James" in Gal 2
- Paul's explanation of the gospel in Romans (et al.) as the final explanation of the gospel of justification by faith alone
- What of the offense of the cross, in light of observing the law?