

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR SHARING CHRIST

One, two, three strikes—you're out! Already you know where we are.

Mom is with Billy at his baseball game. Dad is encouraging David at his soccer match. Big sister impatiently waits for little sister's dance lessons to be over. Who of us isn't somewhere with an opportunity to share Jesus' love with someone?

You probably don't ask Frankie's mom, "What's the score...and if you would die tonight do you know where you'd be?" David's dad probably doesn't say, "Boy, was that a great save...speaking of being saved...do you believe that Jesus saved you?"

Many of us have the desire to witness for Jesus, but we find it difficult to make the transition from ordinary conversation to spiritual talk. One thing that helps greatly is to build relationships with people. Get to know them well. On the basis of your acquaintance, it will be more natural to share the good news of Jesus.

You have heard this described as friendship evangelism or relationship evangelism. But, do you understand its importance? Let me use a personal example. Today, by the grace of God, there are two families attending our church because they were assistant baseball coaches on my baseball team. The first relationship we built was in coaching. When we communicated well in coaching, then the step over from baseball to baptism came in a natural manner.

Turning the conversation from everyday life to eternal life requires the skill of listening. Communication is a two-way process. We listen and we speak. Telling about Jesus comes after listening to people talk about their feelings and fears, and about their problems and opinions. Draw people out as they speak about things that concern them. Say something like this, "That's interesting. What makes you say that?" With this question, you clarify issues and learn more about people. By patiently and intently listening, you foster respect and trust, so that people are more inclined to listen to you when you turn the conversation to spiritual matters.

A simple approach for turning the conversation is to remember the words "**Feel... Felt... Found**". After listening carefully to a person's concern, respond by saying, "I can see how you might *feel* that way... Others have *felt* the same way, I know...(or: 'I once *felt* that way myself.')

But what I've *found* is ..."

Then direct the person to the truth of God's Word.

When people speak with you about their problems, you may use this approach to turn the conversation. Think of these four letters: **p, P, S, s**. Our **problems (p)** are rooted in our main **Problem (P)** which is sin. In his love God sent Jesus as the **Solution (S)** for our sin. As God saved us from sin through Jesus, so now he promises to help us with **solutions (s)** to the problems we have in life.

To communicate our faith well requires some preparation. St. Peter wrote: “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). The Word of God is the power to bring a person to faith in Jesus and strengthen such faith. We prepare not to make the Word more powerful, but to be able to speak it clearly and completely.

A good way to prepare for communicating our faith is to join a class at church which studies methods for sharing God’s law and gospel. Ask your pastor about a course in “God’s Great Exchange.” This is an easy-to-learn five part presentation of law and gospel.

You can prepare yourself for sharing Jesus by going with a trained evangelism caller of your congregation. Listen to the presentation a few times. Then help with some parts of it. Gradually your confidence will build to the point that you can make the whole presentation.

Develop a personal witness statement. Think about Jesus – who he is, what he has done, and how he impacts your life. Write it down, learn it, and practice saying it. When opportunities come – and they will, confidently tell people about your faith in Jesus.

Build relationships, prepare yourself for witnessing, listen to people, and tell them the saving truth about Jesus. These are important steps for communicating your faith. So, next time you're at the ball park, or at a store’s check out area, or visiting the post office - use your communication skills with the goal of sharing Jesus' love with someone.

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