



*Abiding Word Lutheran Church
September 19, 2009*

Session Four

How Will They Hear the Message?

We've talked about:

- why we should share our faith
 - putting the meaning of our faith into words
 - identifying our personal mission field, those with whom we can share our faith
 - the law and gospel message we need to share (God's Great Exchange)
 - communication techniques and pitfalls to remember
 - how to address our personal fears of witnessing
- now we're ready to talk about how to get into the conversation itself.

1. What lessons can we learn from these passages about creating opportunities to share our faith?
 - Proverbs 16:3
 - Read Matthew 5:13-16
 - Read Luke 19: 1-5
 - 2 Peter 3:9
2. As you enter ongoing friendships with people, you will have numerous opportunities to let Christ's light shine through you in your conduct, attitude, outlook, mannerisms, and speech. Part of relationship building requires being a good listener; we talked about that last month. Listening to others often gives you opportunity to tell your story and the gospel of Jesus Christ is a huge part of your story!

Many unchurched/never-churched people live with serious questions like the ones below. They are age-old questions often expressed in different ways. How would you deal with such questions—for yourself and for others? Answer them for yourself. Then be authentic as you help others find answers.

- First**, verbalize answers to the questions for your own life and from your perspective.
- Write down your personal thoughts and keep working at it and adding to the thoughts as you have new experiences with witnessing
 - Study the scriptural passages that bolster your answers

- Find additional passages; look for them as you do your personal Bible study, listen to sermons, or attend Bible class
- Think of Bible stories that fit different situations
- Use your catechism as another resource

Keep in mind the treasures of your Christ-centered life. When you do this your faith becomes so **contagious** that it overflows to everyone of your relationships.

Second, listen for questions like these from your friends. If they don't ask these or similar questions over a period of time, use the news or a mutual situation to bring up one of the subjects so that you can bear witness to your faith and life in Jesus. This is a **process** that requires **patience** and **persistence** and **boldness** out of **love** and **concern** for your friends and their **eternal future**. You may be the one God chose to bring his message to your friend. Do not assume that someone else is witnessing to this person. **Pray** for God to bless your witness.¹

1) **Who am I? (identity)** Thought starters—creation—baptism—new creation—salvation in Jesus—heir of heaven. Are you a product of chance? Hardly! You ought to like whom God has made you!

- Genesis 2:7
- Genesis 3:15
- Isaiah 40:26-31; 43:1
- John 3:16
- Galatians 2:20
- Galatians 3:26,27
- Ephesians 5:25-27
- 1 John 3:1
- 1 John 4:9,10
- 2 Corinthians 5:17-21
- 1 Peter 2:9
- Others:

2) **How does everything fit together? (Christ-centered history)** Thought starters: You are part of a larger story, the story of God's love to his people is outlined in the Scriptures; the Christ-centered line of history shows that God keeps promises; how Bible stories fit together and point to Christ; thoughts/ideas from the church year; part of the waiting/witnessing Church.

- Colossians 1:15ff
- Romans 5:1
- Ephesians 1:22
- Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ Note: much of the material in the following discussion was taken from *Bible Study – From Friendship Evangelism to Relational Witnessing* by Rev. Wayne Schulz, January 2003, found on the evangelism pages of WELS.net

- Ezekiel 37
- Others:

3) **To whom do I belong? Whom shall I trust? (loyalty)** Thought starters: God's history shows that he can be trusted, that he is authentic. God is faithful: kept and keeps promises. Worship and Bible studies remind us of this. How can our forgiveness from God be given to others? The gospel of Jesus replaces isolation from others with connectedness to God.

- 1 Peter 2:9
- Psalm 46
- Psalm 27:10
- Romans 8:15
- Romans 5:6,7
- Ephesians 2:14-19
- Others:

4) **By what shall I live? (values)** Thought starters: The Lord is our light and salvation. We live in the joy of the gospel. We keep God's commandments out of love and thanksgiving for him, a way to show our Christianity. How are Christians different from the world? Do we behave differently than the world does? Why? Does this mean we are better? Grow in Bible study and worship! Let your light shine!

- Psalm 119:105
- John 15:5-6
- Psalm 27:1
- Psalm 1
- Isaiah 2:5
- Isaiah 43:1-3
- Matthew 5:3-10
- Matthew 5:13-16
- Romans 1:17
- Romans 12:1-2
- Colossians 3:5-15
- Others:

5) **How can I protect myself/family? (power over fears)** Thought starters: What is the primary FEAR so many have? Think of how Christ conquered the primary fear. The main battle over fear has been waged for us. In Christ we have salvation already won for us. This helps me to have a proper view of every-day fears so that they do not overwhelm me.

- Romans 8:28
- Luke 22:19
- Psalm 46
- Psalm 103:17
- Psalm 121
- Isaiah 12
- Proverbs 18:10
- Matthew 6:25-34
- Others:

6) **What is the purpose of my life? (meaning)** Thought starters: As a child of God and a sharer of his good news in Jesus, what does that mean for me in my life—in my relationships at home (spouse, children), at church (familiar people and strangers), at work, at school, at play, in the city, the neighborhood, culture? What is the greatest thing I can do for people? How can I practice Christ-like servanthood? How can I love God? How can I love my neighbor?

- 2 Corinthians 2:14ff
- Philippians 1:21
- Philippians 4:4-7, 11-13
- Luke 12:22-34
- Acts 1:8
- Others:

7) **Why should I go on? (hope)** Thought starters: How do I counter nihilism and despair, disillusionment and hopelessness? It must be tough to live without certainty and to make everything relative (as many do). How do you ward off depression? The Christian's alternative word is **hope**. What makes Christian hope different?

- Romans 12:12
- Romans 15:4
- Romans 15:13
- 1 Corinthians 15:19
- Colossians 1:27
- 1 Timothy 6:17
- Hebrews 6:19
- Hebrews 11:1
- 1 Peter 3:15
- Isaiah 40:31
- Psalm 147:11
- Others:

8) **How can I deal with your claim that Jesus is the only way to heaven?** (**exclusivity**) Thought starters: Many Christians blurt out John 14:6 almost defiantly. The key is to communicate John 14:6 without sounding smug or superior. Christians speak from poverty of spirit (Matthew 5:3), not from arrogance. They come to God from their nothingness and emptiness and see their all in the Christ who came to make dead people live. They cannot communicate the love of Christ in unloving terms. It is good to look at the context of John 14. Read the entire chapter. Here the disciples were still in a searching stage. In love Jesus listened, asked questions, understood, and spoke the truth. This chapter gives many insights into Christ. The more people see Christ, the more they understand how lost they are without him. Jesus is the way, truth, and life! He is THE answer to all your searching! It is a word of great comfort foremost. You have beautiful feet when you bring this good news to someone. Eventually he is also a word of death to those who reject him.

- John 14:19
- John 7:17
- 1 Timothy 2:5,6
- Acts 4:12
- Romans 10:14,15
- Others:

9) **What happens when I die?** (**vision of future**) The resurrection of Jesus is the beating heart of all our hope. The body decays; the soul lives. Christ conquered death! On the last day body and soul will be reunited. This is a certainty, not just wishful thinking or a possibility.

- 1 Corinthians 15
- John 15
- John 14:1-6
- Others:

3. Following are some questions you might use to transition into a spiritual conversation. Can you see how they could help turn the conversation in a spiritual direction?

- If you could ask God any question, what would you ask?
- What is your concept of God? What do you think he is like?
- What was your religious upbringing?
- What were the negatives and positives of your prior religious life?
- Do you ever think of spiritual things in your day to day life?

- Why do you think people go to church?
 - What do you think is society's basic problem?
 - Why do you think there is so much violence in our world?
4. Break into small groups and practice getting into a spiritual conversation in these different situations. Share your thoughts with the group.
- 1) You're talking about a holiday (Thanksgiving, Easter) or something you're doing at church this weekend
 - 2) You are on a hike in the Grand Tetons with unchurched friends
 - 3) There was a very bad car crash that made all the news broadcasts
 - 4) Your friend is talking about his hobbies and asks what you do with your spare time
 - 5) A TV show that promotes questionable values comes up in conversation
 - 6) Your friend is experiencing a similar problem that you have had

FOR SATURDAY, OCTOBER 10:

1. Continue with your daily personal Bible study. Is it a habit yet? Are you finding it's making a difference in your life?
2. Scan through The Great Exchange several times, reminding yourself of the approach, the pictures, the Bible passages.
3. Try transitioning from casual conversation into a spiritual discussion with a friend or family member in a "safe" environment. Take note of what worked and where you felt uncomfortable. Try it again and see if it goes better the second time.
4. By now you should be ready to talk to at least one of the people you identified several months ago. Are you praying for the person to have an open mind and heart? Are you praying for the opportunity? Don't forget to ask God for the words and guidance. Try transitioning into a spiritual conversation next time you talk with the person.