

Evangelism

Through

Conversational Witnessing

Introduction to Conversational Witnessing

Almost 16 years ago, at the tender age of forty-four, I had a Baptist gentleman witness to me in his office in Columbia, SC. This was the first time that I could recall any Christian sharing their faith with me, although I am certain that some must have thought they were. Most, of course, by their lifestyle, and others by crude attempts to share how great their lives had become since Jesus!

It was not until I heard the Word of God spoken to me that something “clicked” in my spirit. My Baptist brother, Jim Evans, read John 3:16 to me and said that all I had to do was believe!

Two days later, after much reading and soul-searching, I came to know Jesus as my Lord and Savior through a Charles Stanley broadcast and an invitation.

It was evident in a pretty short amount of time that my main gift was evangelism. I told everybody about Jesus, and led my first fellow to the Lord, (with Jim Evan’s help), in my office in Murrell’s Inlet, SC, three months after I was saved.

Even though I had a zeal for evangelism, I did not have the all of the tools of the trade until I took the long version of Lifelong Evangelism at Garr Memorial Church in 1995. Following that study of Conversational Witnessing, I saw the instances of people that I witnessed to effectively go way up! The difference was using God’s word in an effective manner, and learning how to “Close the Sale”.

That will be the focus of this study. You will learn to build your witness around God’s word, develop your own unique presentation, and give an invitation that is hard to refuse. So, relax, and most importantly, have fun. God has given you this gift to be enjoyed!

Will Dallas

Four-Week Schedule Of Evangelism through Conversational Witnessing **

First Week:

Conversational outline introduced but not taught.

Lecture: Laws of conversational witnessing, (John 4)

Student Assignment: Memorize John 3:16: ***"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life"***. And: Romans 3:23: ***"for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God"***, Attend Visitation on Tuesday night*

Second Week:

Lecture: Pre-Presentation phase of the outline

Student Assignment: Memorize Romans 5:8: ***"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us"***, and: Romans 6:23: ***"For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"*** Attend Visitation on Tuesday night*

Third Week:

Lecture: Presentation phase of the outline

Student Assignment: Memorize Revelation 3:20: ***"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."***, Hebrews 13:8: ***"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."*** Attend Visitation on Tuesday night*

Fourth Week:

Lecture: Point of Decision and Assurance of Salvation

Student Assignment: Memorize Romans 10: ***"that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."***

9: For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Attend Visitation on Tuesday night*

*This is a "hands on" class for those serious about sharing the Gospel of Jesus with the lost, with the intention of leading them to salvation.

** This is a greatly condensed version of the Lifelong Evangelism course developed and taught by Avery Dunn of the First Assembly of God in Winston-Salem, NC.

The Laws of Conversational Witnessing

Jesus Christ was not only a master of the Law; he was also a master teacher and master witness. In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, verses 5 through 24, our Lord demonstrates His ability to present the truth and bring a person to the point of accepting or rejecting the truth.

A careful reading of this scripture will explain more fully this summary of events. Jesus has left Judea to go into Galilee and has decided to go through Samaria; on route through Samaria He came to a city called Sychar near Jacob's well. Jesus is wearied by the journey, so He waits at the well while His disciples go into the nearby city to buy food. The time of day was high noon or the sixth hour and while there, a particular Samaritan woman comes to the well to draw water from it. Jesus initiated the conversation by asking her for a drink. She was surprised that a Jew would speak to her, a Samaritan. Normally a Jew would not even speak to a Samaritan.

Jesus' response to the woman's surprise that He would speak to her was, "Lady if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asked you for a drink you would have asked of Him and He would have given you living water." The woman's reply was that Jesus had nothing to draw the water with and the well was quite deep. How then could He get her water? Then she asked a leading question. "Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?" Jesus points out that whoever drank of this water would thirst again. However, anyone who drank the water that He could provide would never thirst again. The woman's response was natural, "Sir, this is what I want."

We can draw certain principles from this portion of scripture that Jesus, the Master Witness, used in His contact with the woman at the well.

1). The Law of the Conversational Bridge:

Note that Jesus first employed a very basic tool with the woman that He used in nearly all of His teaching. Simply stated; **the law of the conversational bridge employs a figure of truth already known and understood by a person, to illustrate a spiritual truth that is unknown.** In essence, Jesus works from the known to the unknown, thus building a bridge in the conversation by beginning with what the woman understood, and then using

that to illustrate what she did not understand. The truth that Jesus uses to take her from the known to the unknown is “water”. As the woman approaches the well, she understands her need for water, so Jesus begins the conversation where the woman is and then takes her where he wants her to be, and what is unknown to her.

A bridge is a connector from one point to another. In order to effectively share the gospel with a person, you must build a bridge from the secular to the spiritual by using the following three principles:

- **Attention:** Jesus got the woman’s attention by beginning where she was with a simple statement of, “Give me to drink.” To get and maintain an individual’s attention in order to make a Gospel presentation, we must be polite and demonstrate sincere Christian love.
- **Interest:** Jesus captured the woman’s interest in verse 10 where He said, “If you knew the gift of God and whom it is that who says to you give me a drink, you would have asked Him and He would have given you living water.” We can create an interest in people to hear what we have to say by showing an interest in them. We must identify common or mutual interests, raise questions and in the process earn the right to share our ideas.
- **Desire:** Jesus created desire in the woman to hear what He had to say by identifying a need in her life. His statement that He could give her living water which would satisfy her quest for meaning and significance; love and affection; and all of the other things that human beings need captured the woman’s desire to hear more. We can create a desire for people to hear what we have to say through our personal testimony of what Jesus Christ has done in our lives, and by using illustrations to clarify the Gospel presentation.

If we learn to wisely use the conversational bridge, it will be easier for us to earn the right to share the Gospel. We will be more successful witnesses because we will be able to present the gospel in a way that it is more understandable. Throughout your contact with a prospect, the law of the conversational bridge is utilized again and again. We begin the conversation in a normal witnessing effort by seeking a mutual point of interest between the witness and the prospect.

When we illustrate spiritual truth, we are in effect using the law of the conversational bridge. For instance, when we utilize the institution of marriage as an illustration of commitment, we are using the conversational bridge. If a man says that his relationship with God is personal and private, we may tell him of a burning house. Suppose we are walking home late at night and see that his house is on fire with his entire family sleeping inside, unaware of impending danger. Should we pass on by because of the fact that home is his personal, private business, or, should we stop to wake his family and usher them to safety? In that short illustration, we’ve taken him from the known; his home, wife and children, to the unknown; the reason why we Christians should feel compelled to share the Good News.

2). The Law of Conversational Sharing:

Primarily, The Law of Conversational Sharing helps you to earn the right to proceed throughout the interview. It builds on The Law of the Conversational Bridge. The Law of Conversational Sharing says that if I listen to you share your feeling, opinions, or ideas on a given subject, I then have earned the right to share with you my feelings, opinions, or ideas on the same subject.

In this conversational plan of witnessing, the entire conversation is built upon the idea of conversational sharing. Throughout the interview you earn the right to speak. Understanding “The Law of Conversational Sharing” can save you from many awkward situations when you are sharing your faith. A person may say that they do not want you to talk to them about the Bible. You can turn this situation around by asking what he thinks the central message of the Bible is. Once he has shared his view with you, and you have listened without interruption, you have earned the right to ask him if you can share with him what you think this message is. Of course, the central message is:

- 1). God’s Love, (John 3:16)**
- 2). Man’s Sin, (Romans 3:23)**
- 3). Sin’s Penalty, (Romans 6:23)**
- 4). Jesus’ Death, (Romans 5:8)**
- 5). Faith’s Door, (Revelation 3:20)**
- 6). Point of Decision (Romans 10:9&10)**

There are three primary rules to conversational sharing:

- a) a) The Rule of Common Interest says that people are more likely to converse with a total stranger if they perceive that they may share a common interest. We need to look for interests, which are common to the person with whom we are sharing. Be sure to invoke the law of conversational sharing here as well.
- b) b) The Rule of Personal Interest gives us an opportunity to show a genuine interest in the person that we are sharing with. If I want someone to be interested in me, I must be willing to show an interest in him or her as well. This also includes their opinions, which will probably clash with our own, but need to be heard with interest. They are creatures of free will also and will have to answer for the words that proceed from their mouths, only not to us!
- c) c) The Rule of Common Courtesy says that if I expect a person to listen to what I have to say, I must be willing to listen to them. This rule puts a burden on the prospect to give you a hearing once you have extended this courtesy to him. A good example of this would be the prospect that wants to argue with you. In this case, simply respond with, “My purpose is not to argue with you, I am very interested in what you believe. I will be happy for you to share your belief about God, Christ, or eternal life and then I will share with you what the Bible teaches about God, Christ, and eternal life.” When Jesus began to show a sincere personal interest in the woman at the well, without any regard as to what He could get out of her, she began to show an interest in Him and in His subject.

3). The Law of Conversational Diversion:

This law can be seen operating when Jesus asked the woman about her five husbands. Immediately, she goes on the defensive and seeks to divert the conversation from talk about her past and her sin to an argument about whether true worship is at Gerizin or at Jerusalem. “The Law of Conversational Diversion” says: “When a person recognizes his sin is being challenged, he or she will become defensive and will manifest that attitude with a defensive spirit. They raise a smoke screen to create an argument or to discourage a Gospel witness. When people feel as if you are getting too close to their sin, they will attempt to divert the conversation from the Gospel presentation to hypocrites in the church, or preachers stealing from widows, or the idea that a person does not have to be a Christian to go to heaven.

You will find it helpful as a witness to learn to identify this, and, in fact, expect it and be surprised if it does not come! An attempted diversion is a good sign that the prospect is paying attention to your presentation. The best way to handle an attempted diversion is to never argue with the person and always respond with a statement of truth from God’s word.

4). The Law of Conversational Confrontation:

The premise of Gospel confrontation is this: every lost prospect, to which we witness, deserves a confrontation with the claims of Jesus Christ. The goal of every witness is to confront the prospect with the truths of Jesus Christ in such a way that brings the individual to a decision. In the final analysis it is not one’s adultery, murder, or lying for which everyone deserves eternal hell. John 3:18 is very clear, “He that believeth on the Son is not condemned, but he that believes not is condemned already because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son.”

We must not violate “The Law of Conversational Confrontation” by applying it too soon in the witnessing conversation. Had Jesus confronted the woman at the well before He had shown her that He knew all things in her life, she would have rejected the confrontation. We must be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leadership in confronting a person with the claims of Jesus, since this puts the person in a position of having to accept or reject the truth of the Gospel. If this is done prematurely, we jeopardize the opportunity to win them to Jesus, and could possibly hinder future efforts to witness to them.

Learning to employ these four laws of the Gospel presentation and applying them within your own conversational plan will be very helpful to you. By building on these foundational laws, and using them in conjunction with the rest of this course, you will become flexible and ready to adjust to any witnessing situation.

The Pre-Presentation Phase

The Pre-Presentation section of the outline has five points and is primarily designed to take you in a smooth transition from normal conversation with secular subjects to subjects of spiritual matters. This method can be used in the course of any normal conversation even when there is no definite house-to-house visit involved. If you are not on a “home visit” with someone who has visited your church, eliminate point number three and go from the object of common interest to the personal and religious background, church or personal testimony, and then the qualifying question.

Sometimes, well meaning Christians have used an approach when sharing the Gospel that has been offensive, to say the least. Paul teaches in Romans, that the Gospel by virtue of placing every person under a guilt burden is an offense because the cross is an offense to men. There is no need to make the Gospel anymore offensive to the natural man than it is by its nature. While the Gospel is confrontational and sometimes offensive, we must never cause someone to take offense at the Gospel by our presentation.

Offensive approaches to avoid could be any of the following:

- An attitude of Condemnation: The witness begins by telling the other person how lost or how bad they are.
- A “Holier than Thou” attitude: The witness demonstrates either overtly or covertly that they think of themselves to be better than the prospect. (This will blow the presentation every time, and is a good one to use if you really want to get home early for the game!)
- Be too Abrupt: There are times, with the leading of the Holy Spirit, to move directly into the Gospel presentation. Normally this is not the case, and a short amount of time should be taken to gain the confidence of the prospect before the presentation is made. Sometimes the pre-presentation phase could take a couple of visits. It is very important to us this time to demonstrate that we love them as a person. Remember, you may be the only true believer this person is ever going to meet!

The full outline was designed specifically for use in home visits of people who have expressed an interest in the church or who have filled out a visitation card. However, as you gain confidence in your ability to be used by God to deliver His message, any three-minute period with a total stranger will become an opportunity to win them to Jesus, as you recognize the divine appointments that you are given.

There are three basic objectives of the Pre-Presentation Phase:

- We must bridge the gap from stranger to friend. And we do this by conveying to the prospect our personal interest in him and his life. In the home visit environment, you will most likely be meeting a person for the first time, so you will have to find ways on the spur of the moment to identify with them. Find a common thread of discussion through careful observation of the home surroundings or the conversation. Ask thoughtful, but leading, questions about Family, Occupation, and Recreation. By using the conversational plan, the item of conversation can serve as your item of common interest.
- We must bridge the gap from secular objects to spiritual objects. This is what many Christians find difficult to accomplish. The feeling that our spiritual life is private and of no concern to anyone else must be overcome simply because the spiritual welfare and eternal destiny of everyone that we come in contact with is our business! By sharing your testimony and your religious background with a prospect at the appropriate time, you show the person that you have regard for him as an individual, and you are bridging the gap between the secular and the spiritual in his or her life.
- We must earn the right to ask spiritual questions, and to be heard. You must make certain that there is nothing in your basic approach or appearance that would turn a prospect away from the Gospel presentation. We all have heard stories, (and personally witnessed a few), of prospects being descended on by a well meaning street preacher, shouting, “Brother are you saved or are you going to Hell?” In most cases, this will close the door to a Gospel presentation. Remember to listen to their opinion about spiritual matters first, (we don’t have to agree with them!), and then you take your turn as you earn the right.

Let us discuss, in more detail, the individual sections of the Pre-Presentation phase of the outline.

Object of Common Interest:

This part of the secular conversation relating around something of mutual interest, will give you a starting place for a conversational friendship. As you enter the area of your meeting with the prospect, (i.e., home, work, etc.), look for things that you can carry on a conversation about or things that interest you. (You can pick things out of a conversation if the area is unfamiliar to either of you) Often a person’s job may be a way to identify with their secular life, although if the conversation is started about the type of work that they do, they may think that you are more interested in status than their soul.

Keep in mind “The Law of Conversational Sharing”. Whatever object of common interest that you use to begin, you should find a way to relate it to your secular life. If they share something about an object of common interest from their life, you have earned the right by listening to share something with them about your life. If you are going to

discuss an item of furniture you will want to share something about your experience with that piece of furniture. Constantly employ “The Law of Conversational Sharing”, which demands that I give the other person a hearing, and that I earn the right to be heard. Do not invade the other person’s life with questions. Make certain that you share something of your life with them.

Personal and Religious Background:

It is not out of order for us to explore a person’s background by a simple question such as; “**How long have you been a part of our community?**” This is a good question to ask strangers when starting a conversation. It assumes that they are part of the community yet it also gives them an opportunity to share with you whether they have moved in from out of town or whether they are natives to the area. Once they have shared a part of their background with you, then you have earned the right to share a part of your background with them. This leads the opportunity to ask the question, “**Where do you go to church?**” This question will not be deemed offensive and leads directly to the point in the conversation that you have been waiting for.

If you are visiting the person in response to a visit to your church, you would ask something like this: “**We certainly appreciate you (and your family) visiting with us Sunday, what did you like most about the service?**” This points the answer in a positive direction and cannot be answered yes or no. If you should get a negative response, (there are a few hard cases out there!), such as: “the long winded preacher”, or, “the loud music”, always be positive and upbeat. Emphasize that Christianity is a relationship to a person and not an institution, (and when people have that relationship they sometimes worship loudly and like long sermons), whenever possible. The goal is to lead them to Christ first and get them back to the church second!

The Qualifying Questions

What you really want to know is, are they “Born Again” or not. The statement that you just made about “**Christianity is a relationship with a person and not an institution**” is a natural bridge from the secular to the spiritual, and presents the opportunity to find out exactly what this prospect puts their trust in for eternal life.

For the first question, you might want to ask something like: “**Since we are talking about eternal life, Mr. _____, how do you feel about your relationship with God?**”

This will give you the chance to share your testimony after they answer the question.

The second question should be more direct. “**If you were to die tonight and stand before God, and He were to ask you why He should let you into His Kingdom, what would you say?**” Give the prospect plenty of time to answer. If you get a negative response to this, use a positive response like, “**Let me show you what the bible says about that.**” Most of the time, if a person is not saved they will look bewildered and respond with an “I don’t know.” type of answer.

Your third question should be of the type that will question when the prospect asked Jesus into his or her heart, if ever. “**Can you think of a time when you prayed to receive Jesus, and asked Him to change your life?**”

(Remember that it is not our job to lead these folks to Christ, our job is to share the Gospel with them. If you do not get the opportunity to lead them to prayer, the next person may do so. As a person told me when I was trying too hard, “Sometimes we just need to kick the rocks out of the way for the plowman!”)

If you have asked the discovery questions and still have not determined whether or not the prospect is a Christian, make a presentation of the gospel. Do not drag out the presentation or introduction. If you are on a church sponsored visitation, they know why you are here.

The Presentation Phase

At this point in the conversation, we have determined the need for salvation through the use of the qualifying questions. We need to be very careful that permission is given for us to proceed with the presentation of the Gospel message. I generally ask something like: **“Would you like to hear how you can be certain that you have eternal life?”** This will vary from witness to witness. Develop something that fits your personality and stick with it.

God’s Love:

I start the presentation with, “I know for certain that God loves you!” **Quote John 3:16** it won’t take a lot of conversation to convince the prospect that he or she is included in the world. Substitution of the person’s name and your name helps to personalize the sacrifice that Jesus made also, i.e., “For God so loved Jimmy and Steve that he gave His only Begotten Son...

Man’s Sin:

Tell them that the reason that we don’t benefit from this love is that we are separated from God by sin. Explain that because of Adam’s fall back in the garden, we are all born with sin that requires a penalty be paid. **Quote Romans 3:23**

Sin’s Penalty:

Quote the first half of Romans 6:23 Explain that the word perish here is not physical death, but the absolute separation from God for eternity, including the concept of eternal torment in a place that is reserved for Satan and his angels, i.e. Hell! Finish with the good news of God’s gift of eternal life through Jesus. This is also a good place to illustrate the meaning of a free gift. Take your keys out and say, “If I were to give you my car with no strings attached, the car would belong to you with no money coming out of your pocket. I have already paid for it. But if you did not choose to receive the gift, the value of the gift is not diminished; it just goes to someone else.

Jesus’ Death:

The prospect hears in **John 5:8** that Jesus died for us while we were still sinners. He allowed Himself to pay our debt even though many would not receive that payment of shed blood.

Faith’s Door:

As you quote **Revelation 3:20**, tell the prospect that the door is the door to their heart and has a knob only on the inside. Jesus will not force his way into a person’s heart, but must be invited. Now is the most crucial time of your entire presentation. Lower your voice and ask the following question: **“Can you think of any reason that you should not ask Jesus into your heart right now?”** This is the closer for the presentation and leads directly to the last section of the course:

Point of Decision and Assurance of Salvation

You have just asked the prospect a question that requires a positive response most of the time. When they say “**No I can’t**”, you reply quickly and positively, “**I am going to pray with you, repeat after me.**”

Immediately make physical contact with the person, either by taking their hand or placing a hand on their shoulder and begin to pray: “**Dear Lord Jesus**”, if they are hesitant say, “**go ahead and pray.**” Then continue, “**Dear Lord Jesus, I believe that you are the Son of God and that God Raised You from the dead on the third day. I am sorry for my sins, please forgive me. Come into my heart and save me.**”

Ask the prospect if they meant what you both just prayed. **Show them Romans 10: 9:”If you declare with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” &10 “For a person believes with his heart and is justified, and a person declares with his mouth and is saved.”**

Announce to them that they are now children of God, (**John 1:12: However, to all who received him, to those believing in his name, he gave authority to become God's children,**) and as such are now royalty, fit to wear the regal robes of princes and princesses in God’s Kingdom.

Encouragement is very important at this point since this is a brand new baby in God’s Kingdom. Have them read the Gospel of John and ask them to join you in church this next Sunday. If you are away from home, call the pastor of an evangelical church and ask if they will do the follow up for you. (Don’t expect much there though, Human nature comes in to play here, besides, Jesus did not tell us to go and let someone else make disciples of them!)

It is very important that the new Christian receive water baptism as soon as possible after salvation. This is as much a spiritual step as it is an outward profession of their faith. There are several passages of scripture that emphasize the importance of water baptism, (**Romans 6: 4: “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.”**)(**Col 2:12 “buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.”**). Be as encouraging as you can without being pushy. The Holy Spirit has a remarkable way of accomplishing His purpose without much intervention from us!

Well, that is conversational witnessing in a large nutshell, practice, practice, practice, until it becomes second nature. You will soon develop your own style that will serve you in every situation.