



Work Shop

Building a Bridge

Tools for Evangelism:

We all have neighbors, coworkers, family and friends that we desire to reach with the Good News. Of course those folks are all different and so are the settings we find ourselves in day to day. The premise to this workshop is that despite those differences, there are fundamentals that will usher in an entrance if we can see them or can direct the conversation to them. This of course is not a guaranteed approach but this exercise is intended to give you some tools and confidence to get out there and share. That, after all, is the focus of our ministry (plant and water), it is God and God alone that works in the hearts of men (1Cor 3:6-7).

What is the Gospel?

It is probably best to begin with a clear understanding of the Gospel (Good News) because it will provide us with foundational truths. Those truths will serve as reference points and will contain key points that will allow you to gauge the receptiveness of your audience. These “truth seeds” may not germinate immediately but it is important that they be planted.

A review of the book of Acts will give us several examples of the Gospel content. The recurring emphasis is on:

- Jesus
- the cross
- the resurrection

Jesus must be introduced as the main character of this News. He was uniquely qualified to do something that we can not do on our own. Many criminals went to a shameful death on a cross. Jesus went to the cross because it was the means by which He could fulfill his unique role in human history. His sinless credentials and his sacrificial death were requirements for meeting God’s (the Father) justice. The evidence that God’s requirements were satisfied was the resurrection. The Good News is that Jesus didn’t do these acts for his own benefit; He did them for you and me. Jesus left heaven only to return- he didn’t gain anything; the gain is ours because now we can join Him- on my own and in my own sin, I am restricted from God’s holy presence.

The response that allows me to be “saved” is to repent (of my sins) and believe (that Jesus paid the full penalty allowing me to enter into God’s presence).

Acts 2:14-39

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Evidence: Jesus is exalted (Lord & Christ), fulfill prophesy

Man's response: repent (sin), believe (accept forgiveness)

Acts 3:12-26

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Evidence: Jesus is in heaven (in God's holy presence)

Man's response: repent (sin), faith (accept forgiveness)

Acts 4:8-12

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Man's response: only 1 saving option (exclusive path)

Acts 5:29-32

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Evidence: Jesus is exalted

Man's response: recognize sin and need for forgiveness

Personal witness

Acts 10:34-43

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Man's response: opportunity for salvation is inclusive (all nations), believe (see need for forgiveness [sin] & accept forgiveness)

Personal witness

Acts 13:16-41

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Evidence: fulfill prophesy

Personal witness

Another resource commonly called the Roman Road:

Ro 3:23 All have sinned (common ground)

Ro 6:23 Wage (deserved) of our sin is death

Gift (free to recipient) of God's love is eternal life

Ro 5:8 God's loves us (even though we have offended Him)

Ro 10:9,10 Confess our sins (repent) and believe (Jesus/cross/resurrection) and you will be saved

How can I build a bridge to the Gospel?

Now that we have a simple (3 points: Jesus/cross/resurrection) outline of the Gospel, how can we most effectively communicate that truth to others. Notice in the Acts text that the delivery process was different. Aside from the Gospel itself, there is mention of personal witness in several of these passages. The apostles got the privilege to walk with Jesus and had personal experiences that could not be denied. This personal experience is just as relevant to you and me today. We typically call this our personal testimony. This is our account of walking solo and then walking with Jesus and the difference He has made- like the apostles, these accounts are based on our experiences and can not be challenged by others. [see the WorkShop handout on Your Personal Testimony for helpful tips]

There is another means by which we can transition a conversation to either the Gospel or our own testimony. I will call these “truth seeds”. A truth seed is a word or subject that serves as a bridge into another area. Since our objective is to share the Gospel, we need to identify some key words or attributes that will allow us to transition the conversation. It may be difficult to get your audience directly to the Gospel in one conversational step so be ready for a few steps. Here is an example of a single step and a multi-step conversation:

Single Step:

Someone asks you about a tattoo or a cross necklace that you have. This immediately gives you an entryway to discuss the meaning of the cross and how that links to both Jesus and the resurrection.

Multi-Step:

Someone asks you about a situation at work. You get to describe what happened and the actions you took. This also gives you a chance to declare that years ago you would have had a different response. So why the change? Now you can share some or all of your personal testimony. If the person can relate to the “old you” and is interested in making the change in their own life, then you have an open door to talk about Jesus/the cross/the resurrection.

Another foundational reality that should not go unnoticed is the work of the Holy Spirit in the world around us. Since our desire is to work in the present darkness together, it should be noted that His efforts are centered on three key items (Jn 16:8-11):

- sin (man’s inadequacy, God’s holiness)
- righteousness (Jesus can enter the Father’s presence)
- justice (there will be a judgment)

If this is the Spirit’s tactic, we should be able to leverage these ideas because He is at work in the lives of those we are reaching out to.

Direct

Gospel

Jesus/cross/resurrection

Indirect

Truth Seeds

Make a list (workshop exercise)

Personal Testimony

Many Christians make the mistake of believing they do not have a personal testimony worth being told to the unsaved. The truth is that every Christian has a testimony worth telling others about. The issue is not whether I have a testimony, but how I can capsule my testimony and organize it into an effective evangelistic tool.

What can I do to prepare (train)?

Although we have not explicitly discussed prayer, that is our first step. We should seek the Lord's assistance, boldness, love/sensitivity towards others and overall direction. If there are already specific individuals we are burdened to reach with the Gospel, then we should make their salvation a matter of daily prayer. You should also consider sharing this with a small group so that others can assist and encourage you.

With regard to the conversational bridges we have discussed in this workshop,

Gospel- you have to know the basics, no exception

Personal Testimony- write it down, practice, use the Testimony Workshop outline

Truth Seeds- identify one or two key attributes or principles of the Gospel; practice steering a conversation to those items (don't make this overly artificial or corny)

Final Thought

This will not be easy but it will be a blessing- both to you and the ones that God is reaching. Your preparation, diligence and perseverance will be directly proportional to your level of "competitiveness". If you are intending to win, then you will be ready...
(1Cor 9:24-27, 1Pe 3:13-18)

Truth Seeds Worksheet

This is a “truth seed” exercise. Our intent is not to sharpen your conversational skills (at least not directly); we want to identify key words and concepts that surround the Good News. These key words/ideas will form a menu of sorts for how we can bridge a conversation to the Gospel.

Can you identify key words or themes that surround the Gospel (“truth seeds”)?
(Gospel: Jesus/cross/resurrection)
(Holy Spirit’s focus: sin, righteousness, justice)

Can you identify key words or themes that surround your personal testimony?

Can you identify attributes about the items below that will allow you to bridge to any of the key words identified above?

A map
An eraser
A ruler
A TV remote control
A clock
A chair

pick something in the room

Some words if you are having trouble: substitute, inadequate, separation, journey, exclusive, control, trust, empty, need, complete, alone, gift