
The Messenger



“... How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things!” Romans 10:15

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At Jacob's Well

by Dempsey Collins

INTRODUCTION: (John 4)

How do I get started at personal evangelism? What method or procedure should I follow? What Bible lessons should I teach and in what order? Where can I find prospects? How do I initiate a Bible study?

Many books and manuals have been written seeking to answer these and similar questions. Some of these books are very helpful and some are a waste of time and money.

Before you go out and purchase one of these, you need to know that you already have in your possession the greatest personal evangelism manual ever written. The Scriptures, in both procedure as well as content, reveal all the principles we need to know about personal evangelism.

The story that follows is one of the greatest examples of personal evangelism in all the Bible. It is a story rich with practical lessons on this subject. Jesus' conversion of a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well shows us how to get started in this great work.

I. LOOK FOR OPPORTUNITIES IN ORDINARY SITUATIONS (vs. 6)

- A. The master teacher, first of all, shows us that in order to save others we must look for opportunities all around us.
- B. There are some men who believe unless you have a church building, an audience and an invitation you don't have an opportunity to teach.
- C. Jesus had none of these things in John 4, yet He found an opportunity to teach the gospel.
- D. Of all Jesus' teachings – we have recorded only 16 public discourses. Most of Jesus' teaching was outside the synagogue and it was not by invitation. His teaching was delivered to private audiences in common, ordinary settings such as resting beside a well in Samaria.
- E. There may also be prospects in your own backyard. The man or woman who works beside you, the neighbors on your street, your relatives, other parents at a ball game, a trip to the barber shop or hairstylist, a visit to the grocery store, a trip to the cleaners, the mailman, the mechanic. All of these and many more are the equivalent of Jesus sitting beside a well to rest. Opportunities to teach do not have to be planned and structured. They do not have to be in a church building and they don't have to be by invitation. Sometimes they are so common and ordinary we may miss them. God can help you turn these ordinary situations into extraordinary opportunities if you have the faith and courage to try.

II. START THE CONVERSATION WITH A SPIRITUAL GOAL IN MIND (vs. 7)

- A. Jesus asked the woman for a drink but His main objective was to provide her with “living water”. His main goal was to give, not to receive.
- B. In like manner, there are a number of effective ways for us to initiate a conversation with a spiritual goal in mind.
 - 1. The most effective way I have found is simply asking someone “where do you go to church?” Most people are happy to volunteer the information. From this question you might ask a number of other religious questions: “Do you believe the Bible is the inspired word of God?”, “Do you believe Jesus is the son of God?”, “What do you believe about baptism?”, etc.
 - 2. You may ask them about their physical health, but your primary concern is their spiritual well-being.
 - 3. You may talk about the weather, but your primary objective is to discuss the God who rules all nature.
 - 4. Our Lord and Savior asked her for a drink, but His main goal was to provide living water. Try to get your subject to look beyond the horizon into eternity.

III. KEEP YOUR MESSAGE PLAIN AND SIMPLE

- A. Jesus was the wisest man that ever lived yet His message was always plain and simple.
 - 1. Nearly one third of His teaching is contained in parables – “A common earthly story with a heavenly meaning.”
 - 2. Jesus could have taught in a manner in which the greatest earthly scholars would have struggled to decipher its lofty meaning, but instead He chose to use items such as a farmer sowing, the birth process, little children, leaves, pearls, fish, tares, a mustard seed and here in John 4, water.
- B. One of the biggest deterrents to successful evangelism is what I call step 10 mentality. We assume the prospect knows much more than they really do and thus skip basic and vital information they must first learn before presenting other Biblical truths.
- C. Where did the apostle Paul begin with the Athenians? (Acts 17) Before he could talk about repentance and the judgment, he first had to talk about the true and living God. Before Paul could talk to the Philippian jailer about baptism, he first had to teach him about faith in Jesus (Acts 16).
- D. In most Bible studies I have held I begin by asking people how much they really know about the Bible. Most are honest enough to admit a general lack of knowledge if such is the case. This admission then provides the opportunity to introduce the Bible and overall purpose.
- E. Just as we sometimes sing “One step at a time dear Savior, I cannot take any more”, let’s keep our teaching plain and simple and be patient, patient, patient. Never assume your prospect knows the same information you do. In most cases, he will not.

to be continued

News and Notes:

Remember to check the prayer list for those with ongoing spiritual weaknesses and physical illnesses. “...Pray for one another...The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.” James 5:16