

Advice on Sharing the Gospel in Real Life

Sunday School – September 3, 17 and 24, 2017

Sleater Kinney Road Baptist Church, Olympia, WA

Note:

- These notes are an excursus from a Sunday School lesson on 1 Peter 2:11-12. In that passage, Peter urged Christians to keep their whole way of life pure among unbelievers, so that, even as they speak evil of us as though we're criminals, they might glorify God on that day when He returns to judge the world.
- I wanted to take a detour from that passage and talk about how we can live holy lives and take advantage of opportunities to share our faith at work, in real life, in a very practical way. These notes (and the accompanying three hours of discussion), and the fruit of this little detour. I pray this may be helpful to you as you seek to serve the Lord and share the Gospel!

How do you keep your whole way of life pure among unbelievers (i.e. “gentiles”) in such a way that, as these unbelievers see the slander and accusations of criminality, wrongdoing or cultural deviance society levels at Christians, they see your good deeds and (hopefully) come to Christ?

A lot of advice you get from the pulpit is from well-meaning Pastors who *actually have no idea what it's like to live and work in a secular world!* Their advice is frequently well-meaning and heartfelt, but divorced from practical reality. I recently heard a good sermon from such a Pastor, who urged Christians to, “be bold, like Jesus! He didn’t tip-toe around, trying to friendship people to faith! He was bold and fearless! That’s how we should be!”

Anybody who works in a secular work environment knows this is useless advice from a practical standpoint. If you don’t believe me, try to “be bold and uncompromising” in the office Monday morning with the co-worker in the next cubicle – I’m sure your Pastor will take you on as a staff member as compensation once HR terminates you 😊

I want to spend the rest of our time in this passage considering how we can do this, *in a practical way, in the real world, starting tomorrow morning* – so, how do we do this? A few principles will help us get started:

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1. Realize people don't hate you, they hate who you represent
2. Never retaliate in kind
3. Realize that many people don't know *convictional, passionate, knowledgeable* Christians, so their prejudice is likely second-hand, fueled by media stereotypes and strawmen

Convictional = you actually believe the Bible, believe the Gospel, and that drives how you live your life.

Passionate = you actually believe Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life, and nobody comes to the Father but through Him.

Knowledgeable = your love God and you know His word.

4. Realize all this means you have a unique opportunity to show and represent God, Christ and His Gospel as a "normal" person, if you choose to use it.
5. Always remember who you represent.
6. Realize that if people know you're a reasonable person and level-headed person, you'll have an opportunity to speak truth into their lives on important issues

Advice for Real Life:¹

1. Pray!

Pray that God would give you opportunities to share the Gospel, even if they're seemingly small and insignificant openings. Pray for the boldness to step through that open door (even if it's only opened a crack) and speak Biblical truth into people's lives. Pray for that God would give you a love for lost people that you know you should have

2. Tell people you're a Christian!

¹ Some of these are my own, others are from Mark Dever *The Gospel & Personal Evangelism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2007), 55-68, and at least one is from Bill Peel and Walt Larimore, *Workplace Grace: Becoming a Spiritual Influence at Work* (Longview, TX: LaTourneau Press, 2014).

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Find a way to let the people you work with know you're a Christian at the beginning of your working relationship, so it's out on the table – and then keep mentioning this at appropriate intervals.

I suggest you *put particular emphasis on how you serve in church*, because that is how your faith is lived out in a very practical and passionate way – it is your door to put “flesh on the bones” of your faith, so it isn’t generic. I assume you’re passionate about how you serve the Lord, because that’s why you chose to serve in that capacity; so *talk about it!*

If you’re not serving the Lord in some capacity through some ministry in your congregation, it will be very difficult to speak of your faith, because you’ll have no “works” to prove that faith ☹. You can’t talk about passionately about something you don’t experience (e.g. coffee)

Your faith is proven by works, and without that practical dimension to your faith in Christ, you have nothing to talk about except generic “mushiness”

3. Plant a “faith-flag!”

Never neglect an opportunity to plant a “faith-flag,” and stake a position for the Gospel and for truth.

4. Care about people

Make friends with unbelievers, so you can share the Gospel with them, because you love them! Develop relationships. Care about people

5. Use the Bible (1 Cor 1:10-31)!

The Gospel is found in the Bible. Jesus’ teaching is found in the Bible. The prophesies *about* Jesus are found in the Bible. The Spirit uses God’s Word to save souls. So, *use the Bible* to explain the Good News to people. Remember the example of Philip (Acts 8).

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You may not have a Bible handy (particularly at work), but you should refer to it, paraphrase it, and quote it (if you can) when you chat about spiritual matters. Make sure the person knows it's your source of authority for what you're saying, and that God gave us this book so he (the unbeliever) can know how to have eternal life and be part of God's coming Kingdom

6. Be clear!

Don't use "churchy" language that means nothing to an unbeliever. Know how to explain Biblical concepts and "insider language" *in plain English*. If you've taught the Bible to little kids, you know first-hand how important and difficult this can be! This drive for "clarity" was the main point of my "Teaching the Gospel to Kids" presentation at church, recently. Clarity also means that we're willing to risk offense to get the Gospel message to people – because the Gospel *is* offensive

7. Compare and contrast

If you're in a politically correct environment, try to communicate the Gospel using the "compare/contrast religions" approach to get your foot in the door - *this has been particularly helpful for me!*

Other people are planting "faith flags" of their own, so listen for them and take advantage of the opportunities! If you have relationships and friendships with people, you'll have plenty of opportunities to do this with them. You want to honestly know and understand the other person's perspective, because you want to know the *best* way to point them to Jesus and His Good News.

Point out differences in eternal life, forgiveness, grace, "works salvation," etc. – *do everything you can to contrast their religion with who Christ is and what He's done for them*

8. Provoke self-reflection!

Try to make people think about the bankruptcy of their own positions.

9. Focus on the Gospel!

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Pivot away from side issues (e.g. rapture, heaven, Baptist vs. Presbyterian, how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, etc.) and get *to the Gospel as quickly as you possibly can!*

10. Use the church!

Invite people to Sunday worship and Sunday School. Use these meetings as springboards for evangelism

11. Stop worrying!

Don't worry about being sounding "perfect" or having all the "right answers." You won't be smooth, articulate or confident when you first start doing this – don't worry about it. You will get better with practice, just like you did with driving.

You don't need a pre-printed script, because there won't be time for one, and you'll sound like a bad salesman. You need knowledge, conviction and passion, and the will to use it to spread the Gospel in your own contexts.

Conclusion

People are naturally curious about foreigners. Their language is odd, their culture is different, their way of living is quirky, and they're exotic and mysterious. Christians are foreigners and temporary residents here - our language is odd, our culture *should* be different, and our way of living should be *very different*:

1. If we let people know we're Christians
2. If we seize opportunities to plant "faith flags" at appropriate moments
3. If we think of ways to turn conversations on relevant cultural and moral issues towards the Gospel, *and implement these strategies!*
4. If we're prepared to *never* respond in anger, rage or petty vindictiveness towards false accusations or slander about our faith or our God from people who are brainwashed by a godless society and blinded by Satan,
5. If people know us to be *knowledgeable, sane, convictional and passionate* Christians

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... then we'll have opportunities to share our faith, if we'll only take them.