

2.

BE READY TO SHARE YOUR FAITH (1)

LESSON 2 TEXT HANDOUT

The ultimate job of evangelizing is done by individual Christians who have prepared themselves to reach out to others. This lesson and the next considers six key areas in which each personal worker needs to be right. It is the combination of all of these that pays big dividends in reaching people for Christ.

1. THE RIGHT MOTIVATION

Why do you want to teach someone else how to be saved? The answer you give to this question will have a lot to do with your success. An obvious answer is that Jesus has commanded us to take His message "to every creature" (Mark 16:16). That is true; it is our duty. For a committed Christian, that is important motivation. Yet, most of us work better out of other motivations than duty. Perhaps the best passage in the Bible about motives for evangelizing is 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. Open your Bible and read that passage. See what motives you see suggested in that passage.

"Knowing the fear of the Lord"-God will punish evildoers and we want to help them avoid His wrath. "We are made manifest to God"-what we do is open to God. He is observing and we want Him to see in us what will please Him. "It is for God"-we have the opportunity to do something for Him who has done so much for us. "It is for you"-we can help others gain the greatest blessing they could have. "The love of Christ controls us." This could mean that Christ's love for us controls us because it makes us want to love Him back. Or it could mean that our love for Christ controls us because loving Him is our greatest priority. In either case, we love and want to share this love with others. God "gave us the ministry of reconciliation"-after all that God and Christ and the Holy Spirit have done through the ages to make salvation possible, they have now turned over to us the responsibility of getting this message to others. What a challenge! How vital that we respond to this challenge! "We are ambassadors for Christ"-what an honor! We have been made ambassadors for Christ. We are His representatives to the world. Let us conduct ourselves in a way to honor and glorify Him.

These are our motives. We must not evangelize to satisfy our pride or just to win a battle over someone else. We are not to share out of a sense of competition with someone else. Rather, we are to seek the lost because we love God, appreciate what Christ has done for us, and because we love the souls of others. In short, we want to help others go to heaven with us. Anyone who has had the joy of bringing someone to Christ will certainly be motivated to seek others.

2. THE RIGHT INVOLVEMENT

We must make the right relationships with others so we will have associates with whom to share. As we connect with others in school, on the playground, the athletic field, a job, at home, or wherever we are, the first thing we must do in order to start the road to reaching them is to have the right conduct. The most powerful tool we have in sharing our faith is a good example. When those who see our lives daily

notice that we are kind to others, that we handle our temper, that we are good sports in competition, that we are good listeners to those who are troubled, that we share with those in need, that we are regular in our attendance at church and youth activities, that our family gets along well together, that we are a good sample of Christ-like living, then they will want to know how we learned to live like this. Our lives, then, will open many doors of opportunity.

The opposite, of course, is also true. If our friends see in us those who participate in getting drunk, in sexual misconduct, in lying, in disrespect to others, they will not want to hear what we have to say about our faith. Some have thought that the way to bring people to Christ is to participate with them in some of their questionable actions and then to use this as the basis of moving them to better things. That approach, however, not only will drag us down, it will not result in our being able to improve someone else. Even though they will sometimes deny it and will even make fun of those who do not take part in their activities, those who participate in immorality will usually respect those who have higher standards and live by them.

We must also have the right conversations with others. Every day we are having conversations all day long—with our friends, where we shop, where we work, where we play, where we eat, where we study. Often these conversations are an opportunity to work in something about the church, about our youth group's activities, about something good happening at church, about someone at church we know who has done something good, about some event coming up for our youth group, about a lesson we had or a sermon we heard. Maybe a verse of scripture is on our minds or we have been studying a Bible character. All of these things and more can be points to raise in our conversations. In conversations with a waitress at a café where he often ate, a man let her know where he went to church. When she needed some spiritual help, she called on him and this eventually led to her conversion. A woman conversed with her hair dresser about "church" and this led to a Bible study and from that to the conversion of a family. Just as Jesus turned the conversation with the woman at the well to something spiritual, so we should look for opportunities in conversations we are already having to bring up things about Jesus, the Bible, church, good morals, or whatever may help plant a good seed. Such comments may open the door to an invitation to church or a youth activity, may cause the person to ask us questions about morals and religion, may cause them to know more about the church and thus to be more open to something down the road. Once you learn to do it, conversational evangelism is really fun because it is an easy way to "scatter seed," and you will feel really good about being able to use this way of sharing your faith.

The third right involvement is right connections. Sometimes we find it hard to know whom to ask to come with us to a class or to an activity because we have not built friendships with those who might be good prospects. Of course we have to choose the right balance here. It is good that our closest friends will be among those who share our faith and share our goals of living by the teachings of Jesus. Yet, if we do not have any connections with those who are outside of our spiritual fellowship, we will not be building relationships that can help us reach out to others. So you should be looking for ways to make connections. Work on the student newspaper, be in student government, participate in music or athletics, participate in local community projects. Certainly you can use a job for connections. Find those who are lonely, those who are having family troubles, those who have other needs and help them. Be connected with some who will give you opportunities for sharing your faith.

3. THE RIGHT PERSON

Once you have ways to be involved in the lives of others, you should then select from among these, the right person to teach. If you are committed to finding someone to teach, you need to decide on how you will locate that person. There are people who are willing to study, people who are searching, people who are open. Others are not at this point yet, but might, over time, be led to that point. We

must look among the churched and the un-churched, among all levels of society, among all races and backgrounds. We must look among those hurting from sin and from pain. We must cast our net broadly, look in many places, use a wide variety of approaches. But we must always be looking for those who will be willing to study. We have what they need! The message of Christ can help their families, personal and emotional needs, and their spiritual needs. But the first step in opening the door to reaching them may not be a Bible study. With many of these we will have to establish trust and friendship. We will have to demonstrate what Christianity can do for us when we face sickness, loss of job, death, disappointment, making decisions, or even how to act at a ball game.

Here are some specific ways you might find your right person to teach. You may have a close friend who might come to class or to church with you or who might be willing to talk with you about spiritual things. You might know someone who has a special need: maybe they are lonely, feel rejected, have had a tough setback, have parents who have divorced, been turned down for something they really wanted. Step up and help them and you will likely have someone who is ripe for teaching. Check out those who have visited your class lately and follow up by contacting them and inviting them to return. You may have met someone when you were working or doing some type of volunteer work. You might even look around the neighborhood where you live. Maybe someone new has moved in or there may be someone down the street that you could reach. To be effective in personal evangelism, you need to be making many contacts but you need to narrow your focus to two or three on whom to concentrate at a time. Think over those you know and ask which ones might be the best to work with in a more concentrated way as of this moment.