



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

OPENING AND CONTROLLING A CONVERSATION

NOTES

Introduction

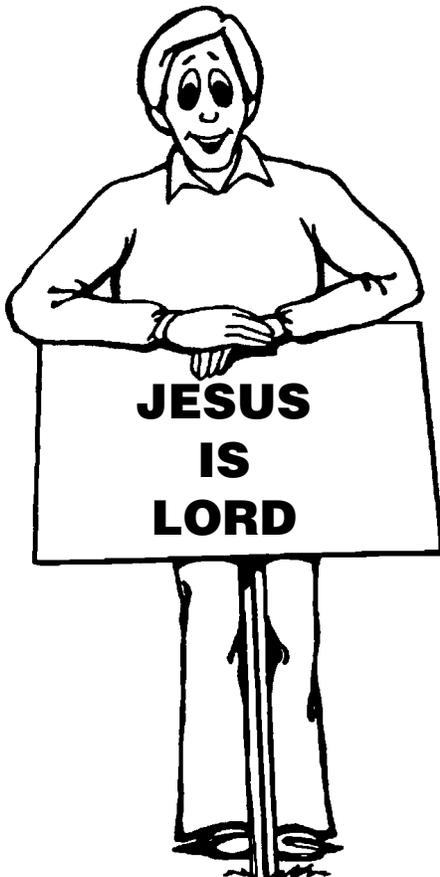
If Jesus Christ is first and preeminent in my life, it will be hard for me to tell you anything about myself without telling you about the **One** who is the center of my life.

A girl who is in love cannot talk at any length about herself without telling you about that special man who possesses her heart. How can we not share with others about Him who loves and died for us?

Paul had this type of bold unembarrassed freedom when he told others about Christ:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16



According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.
Philippians 1:20,21

This kind of freedom in proclaiming Christ is:

TRUE BOLDNESS!

If there is a natural fear of talking to people about Jesus Christ, we need to remember that fear doesn't come from God. The Bible tells us:

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

2 Timothy 1:7

So, if there is a fear rather than boldness, we need to understand where the fear comes from and deal with it. We learn from Acts 1:8 that God is empowering us to be witnesses. A part of the power is expressed in a boldness to be identified with Jesus and to share Him with others. It is wise to remember that we fear anything we don't know how to do. When we have learned how to do something, fear is often replaced by confidence and the joy that comes from obedience.

Relationships with Non-Christians

Most people live behind a series of masks. Whatever the occasion or the company they are in, they put on an appropriate mask so they will be accepted in that situation. For example, a man in the military may put on his "military" mask when he is in camp, use coarse language and act tough to be accepted among his peers.

However, if the same man is in the company of the pastor or some religious people, he will guard his language and try to act in an acceptable way for that occasion. In other words, he puts on a religious mask.

If we as Christians can leave some word of witness with people we meet, they will soon learn that we are Christians and will probably put on a more "religious" mask when we are around. This is helpful for several reasons.

- It is easier to penetrate a religious mask because he, at least, is identifying with you in some areas.
- If the person knows you are a Christian, he will not embarrass himself by doing or saying something crude that he would never have done if he had known you were a Christian.
- When you take a stand for Christ, people will either seek you out or decide to stay out of your way. The ones who do seek after you are probably the ones being prepared by the Holy Spirit—these are the ones we want you to be available to help.



If your life is a constant witness for Jesus Christ, you will not become so likely enticed into adopting the non-Christian lifestyle as you would be if no one knew you were a Christian.

Guiding a Conversation to Spiritual Things

Often we meet people and want to talk to them about Christ, but we just can't seem to turn the conversation to spiritual things. We end up talking about the weather, sports, current events, or gossip, but we would like to be talking about Christ. How can we turn a conversation to things of God? Let me suggest seven ways that have helped many:

① Ask Lots of Questions

When people get tired of answering questions, they will begin to ask you some. Also, asking questions to draw a person out indicates that you are interested in him as an individual.

② Volunteer Information

When you are asked a question, give more of an answer than you are expected to give. In this way you can turn the conversation to spiritual things.

Example:

Often when I travel and am meeting new people, I am asked what I do. I can answer by saying that I work for *Equipping The Saints*, a Christian training organization. This meets the requirement of an answer for the question. However, I could go on to say that my job is involved with training laymen in churches to share their faith in Jesus Christ. With this information it is easy for me to turn the conversation by saying, "Are you interested in spiritual things?"

If my work was with a secular company I could say, "By day I am a salesman (teacher, mechanic, housewife, secretary, or whatever). In my spare time, I am an ordained layman and work with my church at building the Kingdom of God. By the way, are you interested in spiritual things?"

Remember that Jesus said:

Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

John 15:16 (KJV)

If you were an official of some secular group, you would have no problem or fear of sharing that with other people. We are ordained by God to be priests and should have no trouble sharing that either.

③ Invite People to Spiritual Activities

Every time there is a spiritual activity going on in the community, you have an opportunity to invite someone to attend. This automatically turns any conversation to spiritual things and gives you an opportunity to identify with Christ and try to share your faith. Even if the person you have invited can't attend the function you can still ask, "Are you interested in spiritual things?"

④ Tell People About Past Events

Every time you walk away from a spiritual experience, you take with you an opportunity to share your faith. When you meet a friend on Monday you can always say, "You know, we heard the *best* message yesterday in church." Then you can share briefly what impressed you about the message. At the end of your sharing you have an opportunity to say, "By the way, are you interested in spiritual things?"

Usually when one of your friends attends any activity, you are almost forced to listen to a blow by blow account of what happened. So, all we need to do is to exercise a little tact and wisdom and begin sharing ourselves.

⑤ Relate Testimony to People's Problems

So often when we interact with people, they share their problems. We can relate to about 80% of those problems through our own human experiences. We have faced similar events in our lives and can say to people, "You know, I faced a similar sort of thing in my life not so long ago and God really helped me with that." Then we can share with them how God helped us with a similar problem. This opens the door for us to ask, "Are you interested in spiritual things?"

⑥ Relate Current Events Back to Scripture

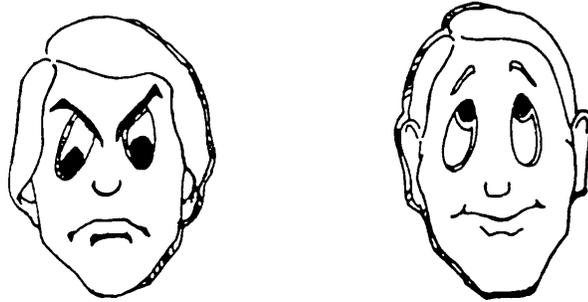
When we discuss world events with our Christian friends, we relate these events to what the Bible says. However, with non-Christians we say nothing. We need to capitalize on these opportunities and relate these events back to Scripture so we can ask people, "Are you interested in spiritual things?"

⑦ Develop an Approachable Attitude

Be a good listener.

Show interest in other people's activities, occupations, hobbies, problems, etc. Ask a thousand questions. You will be surprised at how much you can learn.

Be careful about body language and facial expressions when listening to people so that you express NO CONDEMNATION or shock over the things they share.



Don't place yourself on a pedestal where you always come out on top. Be as quick to share your failures as you are to share your successes. As people respond to your friendliness they will ask about your life and interest. As you share your life it will be natural to tell them about your involvement with Jesus Christ.

Questions to Take You to the Heart of the Gospel

All through this lesson I have worked towards asking people, "Are you interested in spiritual things?" This is not without design. Many years ago I learned a series of questions which help turn a conversation to spiritual things. This set of questions does several very important things for you:

- Tells you if the Spirit of God is at work in this situation.
- Limits the conversation to **how** a person becomes a Christian.
- Takes you from the general to the specific in 30-90 seconds.
- Extracts everything people know about the subject.
- Creates the right setting so that the questions will be low-key and inoffensive.
- Permits you to proceed to the next question regardless of how the previous question was answered.
- Reveals to you that people don't know how to become a Christian when they answer you with what a Christian does.
- Allows you to agree with a wrong or shaky answer and relate their answers to what a Christian does.
- Allows you to refocus the questions when people give you an incorrect answer. You can reply, "Yes, but you're telling me what a Christian does. I am asking *how does a person becomes a Christian?*"

- Encourages people to ask the question, “So how does a person become a Christian?” This gives you the opening you need to say, “*With your permission I would like to show you three things a person must understand to become a Christian.*”

Set 1

- **Are you interested in spiritual things?**
- **Have you ever considered becoming a *real* Christian?**
- **If someone were to ask you, “How does a person become a *real* Christian,” what would you tell him?***

*Make sure this question is indirect (i.e., in the third person).

Negative Answer Examples:

Are you interested in Spiritual things?

No, I am not. I am burnt out on the church.

Have you ever considered becoming a Christian?

No, I never saw much need for that in my life.

Suppose someone were to ask you, “How does a person become a Christian,” what would you tell them?

By going to church and reading the Bible.

You’re right—Christian people do go to church and read the Bible, but you’re telling me what a Christian does. What I am asking you is, “How does a person become a Christian?”

By believing in God. Living a good life.

Yes, Christians *do* believe in God and try to live a good life, but again, you’re telling me what a Christian does. That is not what I am asking you. My question is, “How does a person become a Christian?”

I guess I don’t know. How does a person become a Christian?

With your permission, I would like to show you three things a person must understand to become a Christian or a Child of God.

Positive Answer Examples:

Are you interested in spiritual things?

Yes, I am. I go to church every week.

Have you ever considered becoming a *real* Christian?

Well, I think I am a real Christian.

Great! If someone were to ask you how does a person become a *real* Christian what would you tell them?

By going to church. Living a good life.

Yes, Christians do go to church and live good lives, but you're telling me what a Christian does. That is not what I am asking you. My question is, "*How does a person become a Christian?*"

Well, I am not sure if those things don't make you a Christian.

With your permission, I would like to show you three things the Bible says a person must understand if they want to become a Child of God. Would you allow me to do that?

Yes, I would be interested in what the Bible says.

(Then you start with the Bridge)

Set 2

This set is a good one, but you must know that the person at least recognizes some Higher Power. If a person doesn't believe in a Supreme Being, you will never get to the second question. I don't use this set if I think the person doesn't recognize a Higher Power. This is a good set to use with people who are religious, but not Christians.

Do you believe there is a God or a Supreme Being?

Yes, I do.

Do you believe that one day man will have to give account for his actions?

Yes, I think that we may have to.

If today were that day, would you be ready to give account for yourself?

I am not sure.

Do you know what the Bible says a man must do to be ready for that day?

I am not so sure I have considered what the Bible has to say, though I have my own opinion.

With your permission, I would like to show you three things a person must do to gain entrance to Heaven. Would you allow me to do that?

Okay, I would be interested in those three things.

(Go right into the Bridge)

Set 3

This question tells you what people are trusting in for their salvation. I don't use this question very often. I mostly use it when I want to be very direct.

If you were to arrive at Heaven's Gate and God were to ask you, "Why should I let you enter My Heaven?"—how would you answer Him?

I think you should let me in because I tried to do the best I could with what I had. I know I haven't been perfect, but I never did anything really bad.

Do you know what the Bible says a man must do to gain entrance to Heaven?

I'm not sure I know what the Bible says.

With your permission, I would like to show you three things the Bible says a man must do to gain entrance into Heaven.

Okay, I am willing.

(Go to Bridge presentation)

Questions For A Visitation Ministry

When I do church visitation I use the same questions, but with a slight modification, to turn the conversation to spiritual things. By incorporating the **FORM** Outline developed by *Evangelism Explosion*, the same questions become very effective for use in a visitation format.

Family

Occupation

Religious

Message

Background

In using the **FORM** Outline, we go from talking about **F**amily, to **O**ccupation, to **R**eligious Background. If the people we are visiting cannot give us a satisfactory answer on how a person becomes a Christian, our **M**essage would then be to present the Gospel.

EXAMPLE:

From your religious background and training, what is your understanding of how a person becomes a Christian?

By going to church and living a good life.

Yes, Christians do go to church and try to live a good life, but you're telling me what a Christian does. What I am asking is, "How does a person become a Christian?"

I am not sure. How does a person become a Christian?

With your permission, I would like to show you from the Bible three things a person must understand to become a Christian.

Okay, what are they?

(Go right to the Bridge presentation)

You will notice that we have bypassed questions one and two in the first set of questions and have modified question three. **From your own religious background and training**, what is your understanding of how a person becomes a Christian?

Conclusion

If Jesus is Lord of all, we must be identified with Him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year.