



EQUIPPING THE SAINTS

STEVENS' LAW AND THE SOCRATIC FORM OF EVANGELISM

NOTES

Introduction

The method of evangelism which you have been learning in this course is based upon the principles of two men. One of these men lived many centuries before Christ while the other is a twentieth century Christian. Even though these men lived ages apart, their principles combine to produce a very effective tool for evangelism. In this lesson we will examine the principles of these two men, Carl Stevens and Socrates, and try to understand why their principles are effective.

Stevens' Law

Background

Several years ago in Texas, there lived an outstanding Christian layman named Carl Stevens. Mr. Stevens conducted training seminars for the top sales executives of various companies across the country. Carl's seminar was only a one-day session, but it cost \$250 to attend. In the seminar Carl taught his law, or principles of selling, and showed these executives how to apply it.

Carl and I struck up a friendship, and he helped me to understand his law. As I thought about the ways that this could apply to my life, I realized that it could help make me more effective in evangelism.

Some years ago, a book called *The Hidden Persuaders*, written by Vance Packard, explored in depth the advertising business and how consumers respond to various advertising stimuli. This book was important to the sales industry because manufacturers / salesmen / marketing executives wanted to know how to effectively generate their advertising to potential buyers. Industrial psychologists further studied these ideas and found that consumers in general, base buying decisions upon their five senses. The psychologists also found that of the five senses, sight is the most important sense used when making a decision relating to a purchase. The other senses impact the decisions in lesser degrees. Mr. Stevens used this information as the basis for his law. He said it this way:

Never tell them what you can show them.

Never tell them what you can ask them.

Man's decision-making process is based on his Five Senses:

- 87% of the decision is based upon **Sight**
- 7% upon **Sound**
- 3% upon **Touch**
- 2% upon **Taste**
- 1% upon **Smell**



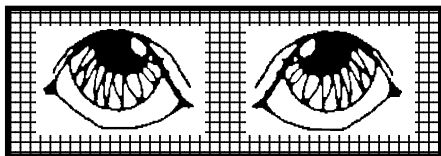
Example

Suppose you go to the supermarket to buy a can of peas. On the shelf you find five different brands—all the same size and selling at different prices—.48, .52, .60, .75, .90. How do you decide which to buy? You surely cannot examine the peas themselves by *smelling*, *tasting*, or *touching* them, so you are forced to judge by only *seeing* the label or brand. If you have seen advertising on TV or in magazines for one particular brand, that may influence you. Perhaps you have heard from a friend that one particular kind tastes better. Perhaps one of the labels on the cans in front of you looks more attractive or has a familiar brand name which you trust (even though, in reality, all the brands may have been canned at the same factory). All of these factors involving your senses in varying degrees, will influence your choice, but you are forced to make your decision based on what you see on the label. *Sight* is the major factor in making your decisions.

Christian Application

If this is the way God has put us together, we as Christians should be diligent to apply these facts to our Gospel presentation.

By drawing out the Bridge Illustration, we are appealing to the prospect's sense of sight. When we do this we are influencing 87% of the decision-making process through sight. This is why it is so important to make your Bridge Illustration as visual and sharp as possible.



If you also are able to present the Gospel audibly as well, sharing verses of Scripture and asking pertinent questions, you add another 7% to your total influence. The audio plus the visual presentation adds up to a total of 94% influence on the person you are witnessing to.

As you can see, the first part of the law deals with the visual part of the presentation and the second part deals with the audio, or the dialogue you are trying to create with the person to whom you are talking.

Remember: Stevens' Law Stated:

① **Never Tell Them What You Can Show Them**

We have already dealt with the importance of the visual part of our presentation, so we will not discuss it in detail here. But once again we *must* underscore the vital aspect of **sight**. This cannot be underestimated since it is so vital.

② **Never Tell Them What You Can Ask Them**

God never intended to carry on a monologue with man. He wants two-way communication with His children—He wants to reason with us.

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD:
though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as
snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as
wool.

(Isaiah 1:18)

We enjoy however, carrying on intelligent dialogue with another person because human beings were made by God for dialogue. Since we were created for dialogue, it is only natural that we have a built-in resistance to being *preached at* or *talked at*.

Dialogue is not only more enjoyable than monologue, but it is also much more effective in helping the person really understand the Gospel. Here is an example: Have you ever bought an appliance such as a sewing machine which was very well demonstrated in the store by the salesman? The salesman could make the machine do absolutely everything and do it very easily and beautifully. But, when you got the machine home, you found that you couldn't even begin to do what the salesman had done. If only the salesman had encouraged you to try it in the store and instructed you as you went along, if only he had allowed you to ask questions, if only he had included you in the demonstration rather than simply dazzling you with his skill, then you might have learned to use the machine yourself.

This is why Stevens' Law says: "**Never tell them what you can ask them.**" Asking includes the other person; telling cuts him out. Asking makes them think and apply logic. When they apply logic, they're able to claim ideas for themselves, or claim ownership. If we apply this part of Stevens' Law to our evangelism, we will find that we are greatly helped in the following ways:

Advantages of Stevens' Law

- *Helps us to present the Gospel in the most effective way.*
- *Creates a dialogue rather than a monologue.*
- *Keeps the person interested and involved in the conversation rather than turning him off.*
- *Helps the person express himself so that we can better identify his personal problems or needs and thus bridge the gap to what the Bible teaches about those things.*
- *Helps us build upon what the person already knows and accepts.*
- *Helps the person to discover the truth for himself.*

To help us further in creating a meaningful dialogue with a person, we must examine the principles of another man—Socrates. As we combine this man's skill with Stevens' Law, we will find exciting new dimensions in effective witnessing.



Socratic Form of Evangelism

Historical Background of Socratic Reasoning

Socrates was one of the greatest philosophers of all time. He lived from 469 B.C. to 399 B.C. in Ancient Greece. His basic philosophy was that goodness is based on wisdom, and wickedness, therefore, is a result of ignorance. He believed that no man would willfully choose evil, but that in ignorance, one might choose an evil that appeared to be good at the moment. As Christians, we know people willfully chose evil. I am not asking you to subscribe to his philosophy, but to the teaching method he employed.

Socrates loved Athens and spent his days simulating the people to do intelligent thinking. He would do this by asking probing questions about their opinions. Then, when the people would answer him, Socrates would ask further questions, based on their answers. This

was an effort to help the people develop logical and well thought out convictions rather than empty opinions. Through this process, Socrates hoped to help the people discover true knowledge and wisdom.

As events progressed, Socrates offended some of the leading nobles by his question-answer investigations. They charged him with corrupting the young people who loved to reason with him. At the age of 70, he was forced to drink deadly poison hemlock for this offense.

Socrates' form of reasoning was deductive, which means that it goes from the known to the unknown, from the general to the specific. This is what is called the Socratic Form.

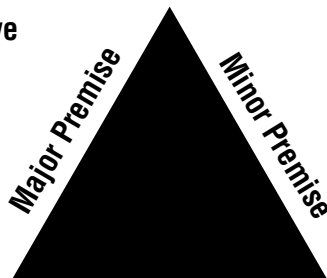
What is Socratic Reasoning?

The basic ingredient in socratic reasoning is the *Syllogism*. A **Syllogism** consists of two basic statements of fact called the **major premise** and the **minor premise**. From these two statements a person is asked to draw a conclusion. For example, if Satan were to share with us his syllogism, he would state as a major premise that God's plan for us to follow Christ is restrictive. As a minor premise, we are tempted to assume that these restrictions are bad. Satan concludes, therefore, that God's plan for us is bad, and this causes people to rebel against God even today.

General Syllogism Example

God's plan is restrictive

Restrictions are bad.



Conclusion

Therefore, God's plan is bad.

At the end of a syllogism, the conclusion becomes a new major premise to which we can add another minor premise and continue to build our reasoning process.

When Socrates reasoned with others, he extracted his premises from the person he was talking to—forcing the person to reason for himself.

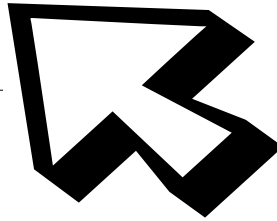
What is Socratic Evangelism?

Socratic Evangelism employs the Socratic method of dialogue and deductive questioning in an effort to help people discover for themselves the truth that I want to tell them.

When reasoning with people in evangelism we need to extract pre-mises from them concerning:

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The fact of sin
The penalty for sin
Judgment after death



Example

A beautiful example of this deductive reasoning process can be seen in John 4:7-26 where Jesus witnesses to the woman at the well.

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water. The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?

Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw. Jesus saith unto her, Go, call thy husband, and come hither. The woman answered and said, I have no husband. Jesus said unto her, Thou hast well said, I have no husband: For thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly.

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

(John 4:7-26)

Notice how in 20 short verses, Jesus had drawn her from a simple and every-day conversation into a deep dialogue about eternal things and about her deepest personal needs. He didn't preach at her; He *talked* with her, *leading her gently* to the truths *He wanted her* to discover.

Advantages of Socratic Reasoning

- *Uses “deductive reasoning.” It helps the person use his own intellect to discover truths rather than simply being “preached at.” God delights in reasoning with men—allowing them to discover Him.*
- *Creates a dialogue rather than a monologue. Allows for a natural and interesting discussion rather than a one-sided exposition.*
- *Helps you see the other person's problem or point of need.*
- *Builds the Gospel on Scriptural premises.*
- *Personalizes the Gospel for each individual.*