

Teaching the Lost

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Introduction: By Faith, Let Us Meet the Challenge of Teaching the Lost.

- A. Many Christians feel overwhelmed by the challenge of teaching the lost today and are quick to conclude that hardly anyone is interested in the gospel anymore.
- B. Gaining an opportunity to teach is challenging enough, yet what do you say exactly when you have the chance to teach? How do you begin the discussion?
- C. When we come to understand from God's word *just exactly* what our duty is, we will have the confidence we need to move forward!
- D. Evangelism is not meant to be easy, yet if we walk by faith we **can** do it!

I. Meet the Lost Where They Are and Lead Them Where They Need to Be.

- A. We are calling sinners, not the "righteous" to repentance (**Luke 5:30-32**).
 - 1. We often reason that those who are "religiously inclined" already are the best prospects, but quite often the reverse is true!
 - 2. Do we try to reach people like the Corinthians? (Worldly intellectuals **1 Cor. 1:18-25; 3:19-20**; Idolatrous, immoral drunkards **1 Cor. 6:9-11**).
 - 3. Peoples' lives are a mess without God, so be prepared for sin problems! (e.g., Simon the Sorcerer – **Acts 8:9-24**).
- B. In teaching the lost, each person must recognize their "sickness" (**Mt. 9:12-13**).
 - 1. Until the wall of pride comes down, the "righteous" or "religious" are not very good prospects (**Luke 18:9ff.**).
 - 2. The *real* prospects are those who are willing to see their sin, their need of the Savior and God's mercy and forgiveness (**Lk. 18:13; cf. Tit. 3:4-7**).

II. Teach Anyone Who Will Listen.

- A. Our duty is to "sow the seed" *everywhere* (**Luke 8:4-8**).
 - 1. We cannot determine where the seed (God's word) which we sow will land ahead of time.
 - 2. We cannot read men's hearts; God alone knows the hearts of the sons of men (**2 Chron. 6:30b; cf. 1 Sam. 16:7b; 1 Chron. 28:9; Jer. 17:10**).
 - 3. Therefore, it is important that we do not prejudge, but give every person a chance, no matter how unlikely a favorable response may *seem* to us.
- B. The odds are *only a few* will obey the gospel *and* remain committed to Christ.
 - 1. Most of the seed we sow will bear "no fruit to maturity" (**Lk 8:11-14**).
 - 2. It can be disappointing to sow a lot of "seed" and have little "fruit" to show for it; *so we search for those with good and honest hearts (v. 15)*.
 - 3. These are the odds that we are up against. Few are willing to travel the narrow road of truth that leads to life (**Mat. 7:13-14**).
 - 4. Even when people reject the truth, we still rejoice knowing we have done our duty to preach the gospel (**Acts 5:40-42**).

III. How to Talk to the Lost.

- A. Take the time to learn about the person you want to teach and show you care.
 - 1. Often, going straight to teaching the gospel will not be very effective.
 - 2. First, demonstrate that you truly care about them which will be shown, in part, by your interest in them personally (**Prov. 18:24a**).

3. Even asking just a few simple questions can go a long way in establishing friendly relationships with others (e.g., family, interests, etc.).
4. It is common for people to share their problems with persons they don't know that well (e.g., sickness, financial strains, work related stress).
5. Demonstrate compassion and speak words with grace (**Col. 4:6**).

B. Introduce the subject of religion.

1. To lead the conversation more naturally to spiritual truths that you want to discuss, ask some *general* questions first (e.g. What church do you attend? What religion do you belong? Are spiritual matters important to you?)
2. Most people will answer these questions and by this process you create an opportunity to be more specific about spiritual truths (**Ac. 17:22-23ff.**).

C. Lead the conversation to spiritual matters.

Example: *"I believe it is entirely possible for a person to belong to a church and yet, still not have a right relationship with God. What do you think?"*

1. Request permission to ask a more personal question:

Example: *"May I ask you a personal question about this? "Do you believe you are right w/ God or would you say you are still seeking God trying to find out what pleases Him?"*

2. If your neighbor says, *"Yes, I believe I am right with God"* then investigate the matter: *"When did you first get your life right with God? What happened? How did you get your life right with God?"*
3. Afterwards ask: *"May I tell you about my conversion?"* and proceed to teach the plan of salvation (**Mk. 16:16; Rom. 10:9; Ac. 2:38; Rev. 2:10**).
4. If your neighbor says, *"No, I do not believe I am right with God"* ask: *"May I tell you about my conversion?"* and proceed to teach the gospel.
5. If the person is not interested, then ask: *"Why aren't you interested?"* If a person is willing to share with you why he or she is reluctant to hear about your conversion, then you may be able to address those concerns.
6. If your neighbor says *"I am still seeking the Lord, trying to find out what pleases Him"* then he may be thinking about spiritual matters!
7. Respond by saying: *"Could I help you in your search for God? Would you be willing to study the Scriptures together to find out what pleases God?"* Then proceed to teach them the plan of salvation.

D. Other questions to ask to spark a spiritual interest.

- "A lot of people believe that to be happy in life, a person must take care of their mind, body, and spirit. What do you do to meet your spiritual needs?"
- "Do you find that faith and spiritual values play a role in your life? (e.g., at work, in marriage, in your daily life, your view of life)"
- "What is your concept of God?"
- "Who do you think Jesus really was? How do you know this?"
- "If you could be sure there is a God, would you want to know Him and have a friendship with him?"
- "If you were to die tonight are you confident that you'd go to Heaven? Has anyone ever explained how a person can know for sure?"
- "If God was to say to you: Why should I let you into Heaven, what would you say?"
- "We've been friends for awhile now and I've never really talked to you about the most important Person (God) of my life."

E. Just by living the Christian life and enjoying the blessings of Christ daily, we will have something to say to the lost!

1. Tell them how God has forgiven your sins (**Act 2:38**); how He has cancelled your debt of sin absolutely! (**Heb. 8:12**).
2. Tell them how God has given you a “fresh new start” to live a brand new life! (**Rom. 6:4; 1 Cor. 6:9-11**).
3. Tell them how God has given you meaning, purpose, and fulfillment in life (**Eccl. 12:13; Eph. 2:10**).
4. Tell them how Jesus made your fellowship w/ God possible (**Heb 7:25**).
5. Tell them how God has given you strength and victory over your trials in life (**Phil. 4:13; 2 Cor. 12:9-10**).
6. Tell them of the wonderful family, the Church God has added you to (**Acts 2:47; Mark 10:29-30**).
7. Tell them of the “living hope” you have of going to heaven! (**1 Pet 1:3**).
8. To say such things to the lost shouldn't be chore but a joy! (**Lk 8:38-39**)

IV. Be Ready to Speak the Truth Boldly in Love and without Shame.

- A. Speak to people the way you would want to be spoken to (**Luke 6:31**).
1. Speak the truth in love (**Eph. 4:15**). Be careful not to speak in a brash, overbearing, or an arrogant manner; be kind, respectful, and courteous.
 2. Humility is essential (**Col. 3:12**), lest we come across as an arrogant “know it all” (**Prov 18:12-13**); being willing to listen is a sign of humility.
- B. Speak the truth without shame.
1. Brethren often reason that we need to get them to come to church where we can “freely” communicate God's word to them.
 2. Yet, shouldn't we feel just as free to discuss the Scriptures with people at work, at school, in their homes, etc? *If we do not, then why don't we?*
 3. Are we ashamed? We need to recognize that we will be condemned eternally for having shame of God and His gospel (**Mark 8:38**).
- C. Measures to promote boldness when speaking the truth.
1. Know your Bible (**2 Tim. 2:15**). Christians should do their best to be prepared to give an answer for their faith (**1 Pet. 3:15**).
 2. Do not overestimate the wisdom of the lost and be intimidated by them. *Most people who mock the gospel are woefully ignorant of the Scriptures.*
 3. There are many religious frauds, but you are not one of them (**2 Cor 4:2**).
 4. Hostility or persecution is to be expected (**Mat. 5:10-12; 2 Tim. 3:12**); *don't let negative responses discourage you from sharing the gospel.*
 5. Remember you are sharing the soul saving gospel! (**Rom. 1:16**).

Conclusion: The Conversion of Souls is not Our Responsibility, Putting Forth Our Best Effort to Teach the Lost is.

- A. We are responsible for trying, not for getting results. Beware of becoming too focused on numbers that you forget what God *really* expects from us.
- B. God is pleased when we make the effort *regardless* of the results (**1 Thes 1:8**).
- C. God gives the increase (**1 Cor 3:5-7**); He brings forth the results, not us.
- D. Did we put forth our **best** effort? (**Ezek. 3:16-19**). On Judgment day, we will not be held responsible for people's obedience, but for the *effort* we made.