

SHARING FAITH NATURALLY

Why? Having a heart for sharing.

Jesus gave the task to *all his disciples to be disciple-makers* – no one was excluded. (Matthew 28:16-20)

He described them as *his witnesses* taking the Gospel to the ends of the earth. “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)

Jesus explained his own mission of preaching to his disciples as “what he came out to do.” (Mark 1:38). He then spoke of *sending them as the Father had sent Him*. (John 20:21).

His first call was so that his disciples might “*fish for people*.”

That’s why, “The church exists by mission as fire exists by burning.”
(Emil Brunner)



Who? Staying where there is peace.

We only need to share the good news of the gospel in the way that Jesus did.

Jesus knew He could not be everywhere at once, and so targeted His mission. (Matthew 10:6)

He didn’t go to everyone or respond to every request: “Simon and his companions went to look for him, and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.””

In addition, *not everyone responded to His offer – and He didn’t force them*. For example, in Mark 10 the rich young ruler did not want to be pursued. “At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth...Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!”

There were people who were *not ready to hear His message, and they reacted strongly against Him.*

So He warned His disciples *it would not always be easy.* If the teacher is not warmly received, the students should not expect a warm welcome.

Instead He sent His disciples out to look for those who were “of peace”.

Luke 10: 1-6. “After this the Lord appointed seventy others and sent them on ahead of him in pairs to every town and place where He himself intended to go... *Whatever house you enter, first say, “Peace to this house!” And if anyone is there who shares in peace, your peace will rest on that person; but if not, it will return to you.*”

Only the Holy Spirit can prepare a heart to receive the gospel.

Therefore the first step in sharing faith naturally is always being aware of *when people are able to be “of peace” towards God, at any given moment.* You might be able to relate to this – there may be, or have been, times when you are more open to God’s loving presence in your life.

Where to start.

Jesus and the disciples looked for people who...

Welcomed them.

Listened to them.

Served and supported them.

Were warm to them.

Jesus said that when you find a person who is warm towards God, stay there. We should not force dialogue or relationships where they do not naturally flow.

He even warned his disciples *against being distracted* by those not ready to receive their message (Luke 9:5 and 10:4)

Paul did the same. On arriving in Philippi Paul set out to find a person of peace. He knew where to look and found Lydia. He stayed there and planted a church. (Acts 16)

Loving everyone

Jesus is always with you and therefore you can always display His love and kindness to everyone.

We can show God’s love through our words and actions to all, but if people are not “of peace” we must be careful not to put pressure on them.



How? What does faith sharing look like?

Different for different people – we are all called to be witnesses, who can give an account of what we believe (1 Peter 3:15) but only some have the particular gift of being appointed evangelists.

We need to have a connection with God before we reach out to others.

We are involved in both sowing and reaping – but it's God who gives the growth – we don't convert anyone. (1 Corinthians 3:6.)

Sharing good news is always best done in a team, and where two or three are gathered Jesus is there. (Matthew 18:20)

Passing moments of kindness may not bring people to faith but can help them move a step closer.

Evangelism is not just having someone pray a prayer but inviting them to walk the faith.



Three useful questions which can help us engage with people are:

Who are you? (Lovingly listening to their story...find out who they are, rather than first offering your story)

Where are you? (Finding out where they are with faith/God/spirituality/church – again, honouring them and working out whether they are “of peace” at the moment).

Why don't you? (What's the next step along the way that would be helpful? It may be coming to church, or going on a course, or it may be as simple as having a coffee together.)

Helping someone to come to faith.

If someone is ready to do this, the core thing is to help them “repent” i.e. turn away from being at the centre of their own life, and “believe” i.e. put God at the centre by surrendering to Him.

But this will start with different emphases depending on their situation – for some, it may mean being aware of the depth of God’s love and forgiveness, for others it may mean a much more intentional need to turn away from a lifestyle, for others it may mean surrender to Christ as Lord.

You will need to ask God to help you understand what is the right approach – so knowing them, and having listened to them will be so important.



Questions

Who is showing signs of warmth towards you?

Who can help me share good news with them?

Is there any area of relationships in which you are involved which are not “of peace” at the moment?

How might you respond?

Am I ready to walk the walk with those who are open?

