

Sharing Your Faith Without Losing Your Friends

Lesson 4

GROW DISCIPLESHIP CURRICULUM

Engaging the Learner

While attending seminary, I supported myself by waiting tables at a local restaurant. Serving on Friday nights, pulling doubles on Saturday, and working several other nights a week, I forged close friendships with several servers. I found them to be hardworking, friendly, and refreshingly open. Many, however, were also occasionally pagan, promiscuous, hard drinking, and unethical. As these friendships grew, I was often in a position to share my faith. Initially, these were scary times, but as my experience grew, so did my confidence. I shared my faith to bartenders on smoke breaks, lesbian couples waiting to begin their shift, and self-proclaimed “players” as we ate dinner together.

Few situations are as exciting—and terrifying—to the average Christian as sharing his or her faith. We want to. We know we should. We feel guilty when we don't. From time to time, we even try to do it. But for many Christians, sharing Christ with an unbelieving friend or co-worker creates emotional uneasiness.

Unfortunately, as I look back on my waiting days, I never lead one co-worker to Christ. As I consider those experiences, I realize one reason for this was I never asked anyone to join me in my walk. I talked about my faith, but I failed to share how to become a Christian. Until we ask someone else to come join us on our journey, talking about Christianity is the same as talking about our family or the health club we attend. While our relationship with God remains an important part of our lives, there is no entry point for friends. To truly share faith means sharing how someone else can enter into a faith journey. This aspect of witnessing is the focus of this chapter.

Exploring the Lesson

Sharing your faith can become a vital part of your spiritual life. If you resemble many other Christians, talking with friends about your church commitments and even the basis for your moral decisions comes naturally. However, knowing how to follow up these initial spiritual conversations with an invitation to accept Christ as Lord may present more difficulties for you.

Fortunately, Romans 10:8-13 outlines a three-step approach Christians have used to bring other people to faith in Christ for centuries. Known as the ABC's of faith, these steps are

Ask

Believe

Confess

You might even say becoming a Christian is as easy as ABC! Let's look at these steps in reverse.

Confess

“ If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’... you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9).

The first stage in conversion as outlined in Romans 10 is confession. We are to acknowledge that Jesus is Lord. Although we don't use “Lord” too much in our society, in ancient times someone's lord was his or her king—the person they were ultimately accountable to. The capitalized “Lord” of the New Testament

also refers to the Old Testament name for God translated “LORD”. This is the name God instructed the Hebrew people to call him. To confess Jesus as Lord acknowledges both that He has our ultimate allegiance and that we worship Him as God.

A convert must make this confession outwardly, “with your mouth.” He or she must be willing to be an open disciple of Jesus. Secret Christianity is not an option this verse extends to us. While Jesus was on earth, He taught that the person who confesses a knowledge of Jesus will be acknowledged before God.

Believe

“ If you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” (Romans 10:9)

Believing that God raised Jesus from the dead comprises the second stage in the Romans model for conversion. The English language uses the word “believe” in at least three different ways. The first is head belief or mental acceptance—looking at the facts and deciding that a certain statement is true. While it is necessary to believe with our heads that Jesus rose from the dead, it is insufficient for conversion. The Bible tells us that even the demons believe (in Jesus) and tremble.

The second usage of “believe” is momentary or temporary belief. Movies or television programs often illustrate this type of belief. We invoke it when we ask God for relief in times of physical or financial hardships, or for protection in times of danger. There is certainly nothing wrong with coming to God in these situations. God tells us to ask of Him and we will receive from Him. Nevertheless, this kind of faith does not save a person.

Finally, we use “belief” to mean believing in the heart, or genuinely putting our trust in something. This belief is specifically mentioned in the passage above. The call is to put our complete confidence in the fact God raised Jesus from the grave. Therefore, we confess Jesus as our ultimate authority and place our trust completely in God.

There is a story of a tight-wire artist who came to Niagara Falls. He stretched a line across the falls and announced his intention of crossing the falls on it. Needless to say, the publicity drew quite a crowd. Slowly, he walked from the Canadian side to the American side and back. Taking a chair and strapping it to his back, the acrobat asked the crowd if they believed he could cross with a person in the chair. A thunderous positive response greeted his question. “Good,” he said. “Who will be my first volunteer?” The crowd was suddenly quiet. No one stepped forward. While the crowd believed (intellectually) that he could do it, they would not trust him enough to get in the chair. This is the difference between head and heart knowledge. Belief in God is trusting God with your life.

Ask

“ Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13). The final stage in the Romans model for conversion is asking God. If we ask Him, He is eager and willing to accept us as His son or daughter. If you are sharing this path to conversion with someone, you will need to be certain and explain that we speak to God through prayer.

As you move into this prayer time, you will want to ask, “If you would like, I could pray first and then you could pray aloud, too. Would that be alright?” With some people, especially those with no church background, you may want to form a simple prayer and have them repeat after you. As you lead them in prayer, review how a person is saved. For example, you might pray, “Jesus, encourage Lyle to confess You are Lord and God. Help him to believe with his heart and ask You to save him. Give him courage as he now prays.

Enhancing Our Lives

You now know the basics to begin leading friends and co-workers to Christ. However, you will want to share this plan of salvation within the context of a relationship. Although there will be times when acquaintances or even strangers may come to you for information regarding a relationship with God, opportunities usually flow naturally from comfortable relationships. Expect to have a few spiritual conversations prior to using this model. Nevertheless, now is the time to begin preparing for this opportunity. Here's how:

1. Begin by praying for three unsaved friends (list these in the spaces provided).

A.

B.

C.

Pray the Spirit will work in their lives. Ask God to give you the courage to share your faith with them and the words to say. Finally, pray that God gives you wisdom as to when they may be ready to come to Christ.

2. Memorize Romans 10:9 and 10:13. Also, take the time to mark it in your Bible. You will want to be able to say it from memory, but if you have your Bible with you, your friend can read it for himself or herself. It often helps to see something in writing.

3. Learn the **A-B-C** outline discussed above. Do not memorize it! You want to be able to put it in your own words. Feel free to add your own stories and illustrations as you become more comfortable.

4. Talk through the outline and quote the scripture over and over again by yourself. You will probably be nervous and a little scared when the moment actually arises, so you want to be familiar enough with the material you don't forget it.

5. After you feel comfortable with the outline, practice with a Christian friend. Walking through the presentation aloud with someone else is the best way to prepare for the actual moment. Role-playing will give you more confidence, too.

6. Check off the areas that cause you fear in witnessing (almost everyone is afraid to witness for some reason).

- Inexperience
- Lack of knowledge of the Bible
- An inadequate relationship with Christ
- Lack of knowledge of how to witness
- Possibility of failure
- Social Disapproval
- Other _____

Make yourself available for in-depth training in evangelism. If this is not available at your local church level, it should be a part of your district Sunday School Convention or Sunday School Training Day.

7. Seek times and opportunities to have spiritual conversations. Ask your pastor or a friend who has some experience sharing his or her faith to go with you to talk with some church visitors.

8. (Optional) Prepare your personal testimony using the outline below.

A. What describes your life before receiving Christ? Be careful not to focus your time on this area. The bulk of your testimony should center on what Christ did in you.

B. What positive changes has Christ made since you began to live for him?

C. Use your testimony as a bridge to an invitation to accept Christ, using the **A-B-C** model taken from Romans.

Outline for Small Group Discussion or Personal Reflection

All questions and exercises are useful for either personal or small group reflection. While exercises marked with an asterisk (*) are written specifically for a small group leader, individual learners can easily modify the exercise for their personal study.

Exploring the Lesson/Enhancing your life

Is sharing your faith an integral part of your Christian walk? Are you comfortable inviting someone to become a Christian and explaining how to enter into a relationship with Christ?

Confess

What does it mean to confess that Jesus is Lord?

How important is making an outward, verbal confession of Jesus' Lordship?

*Divide the class into pairs (one group may have three). Review Romans 10:9 and 10:13. Practice saying these aloud to each other.

Believe

What are the three ways we use the word "belief" in our society? Which one does God call us to?

*Staying in groups of two, have both people practice telling the story of the tight-wire walker in his or her own words.

Ask

What must we do in order for God to receive us as sons and daughters?

* Remaining in your groups of two, practice leading each other in prayer in the same manner you might lead someone interested in accepting Christ.

* Switch partners and practice leading your new partner completely through the **A-B-C** format for evangelism. If you have some time left in class, ask for a volunteer couple to come up and demonstrate for the class. Allow for a time of questions and feedback.

*In closing, lead the class in prayer. Allow for a minute of silent prayer for unsaved friends and co-workers with whom class members had identified to share their