

YOU CAN SHARE THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS! (3)

Six “talk types” -- not all talk about Jesus is created equal!

By Bob Young

The failure of the 21st century church to share the gospel is a failure to talk about Jesus! A great problem in contemporary evangelism is that too few Christians are talking about Jesus to too few unchurched or unsaved people who are interested.

The church must learn that evangelism is not all presentation and proclamation. Evangelism is more than talking; the church must learn to listen. Research done by Barna showed the importance of listening. Almost two-thirds (62%) of the survey group – non-Christians and Christians who are no longer involved in church – said that when they were ready to talk about faith, the characteristic they would look for first was someone who would listen without judging.

The churches and Christians who are serious about sharing the Good News of Jesus will be helped by understanding how to talk about Jesus. I suggest six “talk types” – Presence, Pointing, Probing, Presenting, Proclaiming, and Persuading.

First, be Jesus’ PRESENCE. Take Jesus everywhere and talk about Jesus everywhere. Be the presence of Jesus in the lives of others. Live your life as an open book so all can see. Demonstrate the spirit of Jesus in your actions, attitude, speech and example. This will open doors for talking about Jesus. The church struggles with evangelism because we have few contacts with non-Christians in setting where spiritual conversations are acceptable. The church must increase contact with non-Christians in settings where it is possible to talk about spiritual concerns. Such spiritual conversations will be “give and take,” informal, listening and talking.

Second, POINT to Jesus. Learn how to initiate spiritual conversations. Learn how to put in a good word for Jesus, how to include a spiritual dimension in daily conversation. This is not an effort to teach. I call this POINTING to Jesus whenever possible.

Third, learn the art of PROBING. Learn how to ask questions. Asking questions indicates openness and transparency. Asking questions makes us listen and keeps us from talking too much. We demonstrate an inviting spirit. Asking questions is a good way to develop interest in spiritual subjects. By asking questions, we gain information about needs, thinking, feelings, and the spiritual condition of others.

These first three kinds of talking are possible for every Christian. Not all Christians will be gifted in presenting the gospel, proclamation, or persuasion, but everyone can demonstrate the importance of Jesus in their own life, can point to Jesus in spiritual conversations, and can seek and identify prospects and pique interest by asking probing questions.

Fourth, sharing the gospel requires PRESENTING the gospel. The truths of the gospel must be presented. It is important that presentation allow the Bible to speak. Many Christians, trying to share what they know, have experienced the ineffectiveness of sharing already digested information. Those who would present the gospel must learn that talking truth is not as effective as discovering truth. Inductive learning is more likely to be accepted than deductive. People must see for themselves. The words of Jesus must be the religious authority by which truth is measured. Presenting the gospel is a learned skill, an art, and also a gift.

Fifth, there is a need for PROCLAIMING the gospel. The church will be well served to have specific events where the gospel is preached or proclaimed. People whose interest has been awakened, people who have questions are often encouraged when they attend major events designed for preaching the gospel. Seeing others respond to the gospel is encouraging. Proclaiming the gospel allows a clear, outlined declaration of truth. In most churches, the task of proclaiming the gospel falls on the preacher. Preachers should include in their personal evaluation an analysis of how effectively the gospel is being proclaimed week after week.

Sixth, often there will be a need for PERSUADING. In local ministry, I would preach the gospel week after week with few visible results. Then during a campaign, a visiting evangelist would help us reap a harvest of souls with several baptisms each night of the campaign. What happened? Many churches are effective proclaimers and personal evangelism workers, but lack the gift of persuasion.

I believe the church that learns how to use these six “talk types” will experience an incredible harvest. More prospects will be identified, more members will be involved in evangelism. The local church will evangelize based on the gifts of the members rather than depending on members to do what they are not gifted to do.