

WITNESSING – JESUS' STYLE

Does evangelism make you nervous? Do you feel like you have to memorize “The Four Spiritual Laws” or “The Roman Road?” If so, it will help to study carefully how Jesus interacted with people. Who did he meet? How did he connect with them? Where did the encounters take place? Who initiated contact? What happened in the conversation? These are all questions we need to ask as we, as followers of Jesus, become light to a dark world.

Like Jesus’ original followers, we are sent into the world to be his witnesses:

- Luke 24:48 (NLT) - *You are witnesses of all these things.*
- Matthew 28:18-20 - *[18] Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. [19] Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. [20] Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*
- Acts 1:8 - *But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

We can learn much about how to handle our assignment to be witnesses by asking the above questions as we study the four gospels.

WHO STARTED THE CONVERSATION?

In nine encounters Jesus initiated or started the conversations:

- A Samaritan woman – John 4:7-42
- A crippled beggar – John 5:1-15

In 25 instances, it was the other person who started the discussion and Jesus answered them.

Examples:

- A rich young ruler – Matt.19:16-30
- A demoniac – Mark 5:1-20
- Jairus, a synagogue ruler – Mark 5:21-43
- A hemorrhaging woman – Mark 5:24-34

Other conversations were triggered by third parties:

- Tax collectors and other “sinners,” invited to a party by Matthew – Matt.9:9-13
- Herod, introduced by Pilate – Luke 23:6-16
- Nathaniel, invited by Philip – John1:45-51
- An adulterous woman brought by the scribes – John 8:1-11

WHERE DID THE CONVERSATIONS TAKE PLACE?

The majority of Jesus’ encounters took place in the work setting:

- With Jacob and John – Matthew 4:21-22
- With a Samaritan woman – John 4:7-42
- With a lame man – John 5:1-15

Many conversations took place in homes:

- At Peter’s house with his mother-in-law – Mark 1:29-31
- With a Syro-Phoenician woman – Mark 7:24-30
- At Zacchaeus’s house – Luke 19:1-10

Few were in religious settings. Instead, Jesus talked with people about spiritual things right where they were most familiar. He did not need a “sacred” environment to talk to people about things of eternal significance.

WHAT WAS DISCUSSED?

Jesus didn’t encounter people with the attitude of “listen to me.” He asked questions in more than half of the conversations he had and then he just listened. This is similar to Creator’s first encounter of the first sinners, Adam and Eve when He asked them four questions (Genesis 3:9,11,13).

Examples

- An adulterous woman – John 8:1-11
- The scribes – Luke 5:17-26
- His mother and brothers – Matthew 12:46-50
- The Pharisees – Luke 6:6-11

Jesus connected with people’s thoughts and feelings. He understood that new ideas needed to be connected with everyday, common things they were familiar with. He seldom pressured people to make a decision on the spot. Instead he gave them time to ponder his words and catch the vision. He knew that people had to “own” before they could “act” on them.

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM JESUS’ EXAMPLE?

- Jesus knew how to take initiative.

- He responded to the questions of others.
- He left room in his schedule for interruptions by people asking for his help.
- Jesus usually met people on their own turf.
- He was interested in establishing common ground with others.

Witnessing is a science, an art, and a mystery. it involves connecting your faith with people's experiences in a way that they can understand in their own time and from their own need. It means cooperating with whatever Creator's Spirit may be doing in their lives and leaving the results to him.