

So...*it worked!* By God's grace, you've thought about any means necessary to reach someone who doesn't believe the gospel. By God's grace, you've positioned yourself around that person and started and guided a spiritual conversation. The Lord has answered prayer: You've now sparked this person's spiritual interest. But...*now what?* You've gotten an intentional time set up with this person to talk about spiritual things, *but what will that time actually look like?*

That's the question I'm going to try to answer in this talk, and my hope is that you leave with some tools in your belt to reach for in evangelistic meetings lest we show up to them and just wing it. And the reason we don't want to just wing it is because the gospel is *important*. You don't just show up to a job interview and wing it. You study, think, prepare. To help you prepare, we've included some resources on your handout that you can read *to tool up* on your evangelism.

But this talk is about resources and methods you can *use* in your evangelistic meetings. Of course, the Bible doesn't say you must use this method or that method and part of the reason why is because method is not God; God is God, amen? (We're in a baptist church, when someone says God is God we say amen). Yes, we agree God is God. And we agree that we should pray to him before and after we evangelize; we agree if we're trying to scheme for evangelism without prayer, we are building a house in vain. That said, we can pray but still be asking the *now what* question. I trust that's why many of you are here. So in the name of wisdom, not law, I want to give you a couple more practical tools to reach for in evangelistic meetings.

And Here's the general rule I want you to keep in mind as you consider resources for your evangelistic meetings: *Chose one in which the amount of time required for that resource lines up with that person's spiritual interest OR the depth of your relationship. Chose a resource in which the amount of time required for that resource lines up with that person's spiritual interest OR the depth of your relationship.*

So let's say I'm evangelizing a guy named Jason. The resource and method I'm going to use will *most likely* depend on how well I know Jason OR his spiritual interest. Of course other factors should be considered like Jason's schedule, but I'm going to walk through three scenarios in our time together. I'm going to walk through what it would look like if I were trying to evangelize Jason if Scenario 1) I knew him really well or he was really interested; Scenario 2) I know him kinda well or he's kind of interested; or Scenario 3) I don't know him at all and therefore I don't know how interested he may be.

**So let's say I've known Jason a long time.** We grew up as neighborhood friends or we were roommates for years in college. Or let's say I recently met Jason, maybe at work, but he learned I was a Christian and he's texting asking me questions and would be happy to meet outside the office--in other words, he's really interested. The resource I'm going to grab is **Christianity Explained (this should be on the bookstall)**. This is a six-week study through the book of Mark. Now, six weeks, is a fair amount of time, which is why I want a fair amount of relational capital or spiritual interest on Jason's part for his (and if six-weeks is too long, I have a four week version that you can email me and I can send you). But I like three things about Christianity Explained. First and most importantly: They get people into the Scripture. Remember, God's Word is powerful (Heb. 4:12). We want to get folks reading it. But I get

leading a Bible study may be daunting. But the second thing I like about Christianity Explained is, in the book, they teach you how to do the lessons with practical wisdom. So you don't have to be a bible teacher to use this. It's very hands on. And they have practical tips like: "Don't bring this book dopey yellow book to the meeting"; "Don't ask the person you're evangelizing to pray." The third thing I like is we have a core seminar that will teach you how to use this. Which brings me to another tool for you to use: Our church.

If Jason is willing to give up three hours on a Sunday for me, I want to bring him here! So my wife and I have some friends we've known now for almost 10 years. The wife has been interested spiritually, and we've done Christianity explained with them, and I'm preaching on Sunday, so they're coming to hear me and we're doing lunch after. Please pray for that. But I think despite their spiritual interest, what I'm primarily trading on here is my relationship with them. But I think of Claudia Anderson who did Christianity Explained with Mark Dever 20 years ago. I don't think she knew Mark well, but she was interested spiritually. And I highlight these examples to show that the depth of relationship OR spiritual interest are helpful factors in considering what you're asking of people.

**Which brings me to the second scenario.** Let's say Jason and I work together. I know him kind of well but not really. We've been at some of the same events outside work. Jesus has kind of come up and while Jason hasn't been super eager, he's curious. Well, with Jason like this, I'm probably going to try to meet with him twice. In the first meeting, I'm going to try and do a 30 minute coffee and conversation. I'm going to use a tiny resource like ***Two Ways to Live***. So it'd be great to just buy 10 copies of one of these to have ready to pass out, but I'll come back to that later; suffice it to say for now, I want to give Jason a copy and say, "Hey, what if we read a page or two of this book together?" So no six week commitment, just a page. He can read it before we meet or when we meet. But *when we meet*, I'm going to at least ask this one question, OK, this is one question I want you to have in your tool belt: "Anything stand out to you?" And if in his response, Jason starts to show more interest, I want to encourage that and follow up on it, maybe even offer another meeting. If he shows less interest than when we originally started ("nah,, it was fine"), I'll probably let that be our one meeting.

But earlier I mentioned I wanted to try to meet with Jason twice. I don't tell him that ahead of time, but regardless of how our first meeting goes, I want to follow up with Jason a second time *and try to do something with him that isn't explicitly spiritual*. And that's because I want him to understand that he is *not a project but a peer*. And to help me think through the project/peer scenario, I've found it helpful to remember the difference between ultimate and ulterior motives. When evangelism is your ulterior motive, you're only getting to know someone so you can evangelize them. Now that's a great intention, but people are smart, and they can see when you don't want a real relationship. What's more, God sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous (Matt. 5:45); while his love is particular, it's also general. In other words, building a friendship with a non-Christian, even if they don't come to Christ is not a waste of time. We still image God in loving others, which is why it's helpful to think of evangelism as our *ultimate motive*. We ultimately want people to come to Christ, but if we don't, there's still other ways we can love them that glorify God. My friendship with Jason is still real even if my ultimate hope for him, becoming a Christian isn't realized. So Jason and I have our first meeting,

he doesn't show much interest, I'm going to let some time pass, and then ask him just to hang out and build into our friendship.

**But let's say scenario 3)** I don't know Jason at all. I've met him on a plane, or I'm he's my waiter at a restaurant. Either way, it's a contact evangelism scenario, and because I don't know Jason well, I can't really gauge his spiritual interest. So, to gauge that spiritual interest, I want to use some conversation starters that Paul mentioned. We can use bridges to the gospel. It might be a sports bridge--you, know the Super Bowl is coming up so you say, ("Hey, did you know Tom Brady is a Christian?") or let's say Jason and I are standing near the National Cathedral, I might bridge by asking ("Did you grow up religious?").

Now, if Jason responds with hostility ("Oh, I hate Jesus Freaks"), I stop the conversation. And that doesn't mean it's a fail. In my Lousy Evangelist talk, I talked about God being glorified even in our being rejected. That said, I like the rule Greg Kokul says in his book *Tactics* (you can find it in the resource list on your handout) -- "If someone gets mad in the conversation, you lose."

But I've found more often than not, people are at least willing to have a conversation. So let's say Jason is willing. *When it comes to the conversation*, my goal is to put a spiritual rock in his shoe. I'm not trying to close the sale per se. Usually I'll try to do that with a thoughtful question, and my go to has been: *have you ever seriously considered the claims of Christianity? Why or why not?* If they still seem interested after that question, I'll try to summarize the gospel briefly. I've printed up my breakdown of God, Man, Christ, Response for you guys to have. It's really useful to be able to summarize the gospel into four words like this. I'd encourage you to go home and try to write the gospel in your own words in a paragraph, in a sentence, and then in a few words. In the conversation, I literally say, I want you to remember these four words as I share with them. I'd then walk through God, Man, Christ, Response, and ask Jason what he thinks of what I just shared.

But let's say, I don't even have time to share all that with Jason. Let's say I'm walking off a plane and want to hand the steward something or at a restaurant and want to leave something. That's where I want to have in hand some pamphlets like two ways to live or little books like *Who is Jesus?* Or *What is the Gospel?* And that means I need to *think* to pack them ahead of time before I go anywhere. So if I'm going on a trip, I'm trying to be better at remembering to pack my books. A rule I'm going to start is pack my socks then pack my books. If I'm at a restaurant, before I leave a book, I'm leaving a fat tip. Stinginess does not commend the gospel.

Whatever I do, in contact evangelism, I might not be able to speak to that person again, but I am able to speak to God again. So I pray for that person. And I'll make it an aim to speak to my accountability partner about evangelism, but we'll talk about accountability at the end of our time together. That's the end of my time now so let me pray for us.

### **Discussion questions:**

- 1) Why do you think an unbeliever may hesitate to our spiritual initiative?
- 2) How can we see people as peers and not projects?