

Friendship Evangelism Teacher Guide

Winning family and friends for Christ – Otis T. McMillan

Do you know that un-churched people want to talk about God? Does it come as a surprise to you that un-churched people, "the spiritually homeless," actually like a good conversation about God.

Consider this information that Gallup turned up in one of his surveys:

1. 52% of un-churched Americans indicate they intend to return to worship services.
2. Of those 52% un-churched Americans...
 - a. 17% say they will go to church if someone will talk to them about spiritual matters
 - b. 13% desires someone to discuss their personal, spiritual needs.
3. Many Christians openly confess that "I want to witness effectively and to talk with people one-on-one about God." "I want to get beyond surface talk to discuss spiritual issues." And "I wish bridging the conversation gap from small talk to God-talk could be exciting and God-backed." But the big question is, how do I get started?

This is the big question, and as leaders, we can give our people some answers. Let me recommend two excellent books on the subject: *Making Disciples One Conversation at a Time* by D. Michael Henderson and *Evangelism In Everyday Life* by Lyle Pointer and Jim Dorsey. These books will challenge you to examine how we use our words and presents ways to bring Christ into the conversations of our everyday lives. We all need simple instructions for talking to others about God. We need "spiritual conversation starters" that help the most timid among us to get a handle on getting into a conversation about spiritual matters.

Friendship Evangelism 1 Corinthians 9:19-22 Key passage

The Fear Factor - Does the mention of visitation or evangelism strike fear in your heart? There is help for dealing with some of those fears.

Being a Christian for more than 40 years, a class leader, trustee, choir president and a pastor for more than 30 years, and a director of Evangelism in our church has not alleviated the fear that grips me at times when I do one on one witnessing. I know that Jesus said, "Go." I believe in witnessing. I recognize that witnessing is vital to the life of my church. I have participated in numerous witnessing classes and training sessions. I am convinced that witnessing is essential to the growth of the church. So why the sweaty palms, pounding heart, and shortness of breath?

In the book *Evangelism in Everyday life*, co-author Lyle Pointer states, "I have concluded God allows us to experience residual fear in this area, never completely removing all anxiety."

1. Fear may be God Allowed. God has a purpose and may use our fear several ways:

a. Our fear keeps us aware of our need for His power.

b. Our fear causes us to pray for courage, boldness, and opportunity.

c. Our fear humbles us and keeps the witnessing experience from becoming mundane or just putting another "notch in our spiritual belt!"

2. Fear may be the result of many causes. Let's look at four mentioned in the book, *Evangelism in Everyday life*.

a. Lack of confidence. Are you afraid you lack spiritual maturity? Statistics indicate that those who have most recently come to Christ are the most effective witnesses. You don't need a Ph.D. to tell others what Christ is doing in your life.

b. Lack of biblical knowledge. You don't have to know the answer to every question to be an effective witness. Remember, a witness tells what they have seen, heard, or experienced.

c. Lack of experience. Pointer cautions that training a new-Christian too soon can inhibit witnessing. He contends that training can cause a person to think that there is a right and a wrong way to witness. When you are ready, enroll in a witness training class. Carefully choose a plan, method, or technique that best fits your personality.

d. Fear of failure. Don't let your pride or the "what if syndrome stop you from

sharing your faith. God has chosen us to be his primary method of delivering the good news to a lost humanity. "He has entrusted something as fragile and eternal as a human soul into the care of fearful, fledgling Christians," reminds Pointer.

3. Friendship Evangelism is simply starting spiritual conversation about God.

a. What it is not:

1. It is not a hard sell of the Gospel.
2. it is not arguing the Scriptures
3. It is not pressuring others into accepting the gospel.

b. What it is:

1. It is God's way of bringing most people to Himself. 75% of converts are brought to Christ by a friend or family member.
2. It is sharing good news with spiritually hungry people. Jesus said, "Look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest!" (John 4:35).
3. It is using your own personality and cordialness to introduce family and friends to your best friend, Jesus Christ.

4. Friendship Evangelism is most successful when approached proactively rather reactively. Rather than focus on our fears, we can take the following proactive steps:

a. Be persistent in prayer.

1. Pray about your fears.
2. Pray for a passion for the lost.
3. Pray for witnessing opportunities and God will provide.

b. Make preparations. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" (1 Peter 3:15).

1. Plan what you are going to say.
2. Write out your testimony: 1) describe your life before Jesus; 2) describe when and where you received Christ; and 3) describe the difference Jesus has made in your life.

c. Prepare a list. Write out a list of friends and family with whom you can share your

faith. This list can help you to be more aware and sensitive as opportunities arise.

d. Choose a witnessing partner. The old adage, "There is strength in numbers" is true in visitation and witnessing. Visiting alone is really not wise. Partnering with another believer encourages faithfulness and accountability.

e. Practice a God Honoring Lifestyle. God loves all people and desires that "whoever believes in him [Jesus] should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Evangelism should not only be the words we speak, but the life we live.

f. Be Faithful to the Calling. Not everything in life is a choice. Jesus commanded us to, "Go." Our choice is not if, but how and when we will join Jesus in bringing a lost humanity to Him.

5. Learning and practicing the fine art of Friendship Evangelism

a. Reach out. *To make friends one must be a friend.* The opportunities for creating and cultivating friendships are endless.

b. Make Friendship a priority. Even though you may be busy, schedule friends on your calendar.

c. Show that you care. American journalist Walter Winchell, said, "A friend is one who walks in when others walk out."

d. Be open-minded. Strive to be understanding, empathetic and open-minded. Make every effort to see life you're their perspective.

e. Practice Flexibility. Although you never want to compromise your values, many things can be non essential for salvation.

f. Find common ground. Finding common ground is key to building relationships. Showing a genuine interest in people often leads to open and trusting relationships; then the stage can be set for sharing faith issues.

6. What happens after my friendship builds a bridge to God? One option is to lead them down the following road from the book of Romans. If you walk down this road you will understand how to be saved.

a. Admit that you are a sinner. (Ro 3:23 "For all have sinned and fall short...")

b. Understand that you deserve death for your sin. (Ro 6:23a "The wages of sin is death.")

- c. Ask God to forgive you and save you.** (Ro 6:23b "But the gift of God is eternal life..") **d.**
Give your life to God, he loves you! (Ro 5:8 "God demonstrates His own love for us..")
- e. Call out to God in the name of Jesus!** (Ro 10:13 "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved!")
- f. Confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.** (Ro 10:9,10 "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you shall be saved.")
- g. If you know that God is knocking on your heart's door, ask Him to come into your heart** (Revelation 3:20a "Behold [Jesus said] I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him" Is Jesus knocking on your heart's door?)

Sources: Books: ***Evangelism In Everyday Life***, Lyle Pointer and Jim Dorsey; ***Making Disciples One Conversation at a Time*** by D. Michael Henderson and ***Not Ashamed of the Gospel*** by Darryl B. Starnes and Otis T. McMillan; Evangelism articles: ***Friendship Evangelism*** by Victor Parachin, ***Do you know that un-churched people want to talk about God?*** By Holland Lewis, and ***Everyday Evangelism*** by Shirley Smith