

WHAT THIS BOOK IS ABOUT

What if you could just talk about Jesus to others simply because you love Him and you want to introduce them to Him?

What if we didn't have to work ourselves up for an evangelism push, but found ourselves conversing about Him regularly, to our family and friends, to unbelievers, and to ourselves? Conversational evangelism is not about a plan, but about the truth and power of the Gospel. Richland Creek Community Church wants everyone to be able to just talk about Jesus and in these conversations present to our neighbors and the nations the Gospel of Jesus, so they may place their faith in Him as Savior.

This study will give you practical, real-life ways you can have Gospel conversations. As you learn to have these conversations, we pray you will move from focusing on getting every word just right in a presentation to knowing the Gospel's reality in your own life, leading you to have regular conversations with people in which you increasingly talk about Christ in the context of your conversation. We also hope that you will rehearse the Gospel more to yourself as a daily reminder of both its great truth and God's amazing love. We are not all great communicators or public speakers, but all of us have conversations all the time, and as believers we have some pretty amazing good news to converse about!

We are going to learn how to do this in a way that is foundational, transferable to others and adaptable to every situation. It is not a program, but a lifestyle. Conversational evangelism has three easy steps: First, tell them the truth. Next, tell them your story. And finally, give them the Word.

We pray God's richest blessings on you as you serve and obey Jesus.

- Pastor Jim Gillespie

SESSION 1: WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

2 Corinthians 5:18-21

In the Bible the word "Gospel" means good news. This good news is the message that God has made a way for sinners to be reconciled to Himself through the atoning work of His Son, the Messiah, Jesus. God has ordained from before the foundation of the world that Jesus would be the Lamb of God that would take away the sin of the world. The Bible tells us that we are sinners that have broken our relationship with God and we have no hope in ourselves to fix this relationship, but the Bible says there is Good News, that God loves us so much that He has made a way for us to be reconciled with Him through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Step 1: Tell Them the Truth

The first and most important step in sharing the Gospel is to tell the truth.

THE GOSPEL IS TRUTH

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.

Romans 1:16

The Gospel is a statement of the truth. It is not a sales pitch or an idea that we must convince people to believe. We do not need to defend it; we are only commanded to present it. Sometimes we make things more complicated than they really are. The Gospel can be summed up in a simple statement of what the Bible says is true.

At Richland Creek Community Church this is what we believe:

- We believe the Bible is true.

- The Bible says there is one true living God who has created everything including us.
- He created us in His image to have a relationship with Him forever.
- The Bible says that because of our thoughts, motivations, and deeds, which are against God, we have broken our relationship with Him.
- The Bible says because we are the ones who broke the relationship we cannot fix it; we have no hope in having a relationship with God by our deeds. We need someone to pay for our sin.
- Because God loves us so much He made a way for us to have a relationship with Him.
- He sent His Son who was all God and all man, who was born of a virgin, who lived a sinless life, died an atoning death, and three days later He rose again in a faithful resurrection and offers us salvation as a free gift.
- The Bible says that if we place our trust in Jesus to pay for our sin we can be reconciled to God forever.

This is the truth, it is the Gospel, it is the power of God unto salvation for all who believe (Romans 1:16). Evangelism is just telling people the truth and that truth is enough; we don't need anything else.

So, if evangelism is telling the truth then a good topic to tackle next might be considering *what evangelism is not*:

EVANGELISM IS NOT APOLOGETICS

For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

We have not been commanded to ask and answer questions about theology or cultural events, or to disprove a worldview. We have been commanded to proclaim His Gospel. Sometimes instead of just talking with someone we try and prove how the Bible is true and what he or she believes is wrong. This almost always brings the conversation to a point of unnecessary conflict. We do not need to know what people believe, or even why they believe what they believe, to share truth. We only need to know what we believe and then present that to them in the most loving way possible without compromise.

One of the greatest fears for most people in presenting the Gospel is that they will be asked a question to which they do not know the answer. Evangelism is not about knowing everything; it is about knowing someone, Jesus.

EVANGELISM IS NOT SILENT

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8

Sometimes we can tell ourselves that all we need to do is invite people to church or live the Christian life in front of them. Both of these things are great and biblical, but they are not evangelism. Evangelism is presenting the truth of the Gospel to others in order for them to either receive or reject Jesus as their Savior.

EVANGELISM IS NOT COMPLICATED

The truth of the Bible is something you have personally experienced. You know the Gospel because you have experienced it in your life. As we live our lives we find ourselves in conversations all the time, from everyday superficial meetings to talking with friends and coworkers or deep conversations with family and loved ones. All of these conversations are opportunities to bring God glory and praise by telling them the truth about Jesus.

There is nothing more important than Step 1. We may be able to continue the conversation after Step 1 or not, but as long as we have told them the Gospel that is all we need to do. Remember that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation.

SESSION 2: WHAT IS MY TESTIMONY?

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

Step 2: Tell Them Your Story

When possible our next step should be to tell people how God saved us and changed us through the Gospel. God has commanded us to “declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). We should declare this every time we have the opportunity. Our story is really repeating the Gospel in the context of who we were, what happened, and who we are now.

WHO WE WERE: SINNERS

... for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...

Romans 3:23

Explain to them what kind of person you were before Christ saved you. There is no need to embellish your testimony in any way. Sometimes we feel that if our story were filled with more depravity, people would be more impressed. Or perhaps, in the other extreme, we are afraid that if we tell them who we really were they will be revolted. Neither is true. God gave you your story to tell about His story. Be honest about who you were before Jesus.

WHAT HAPPENED: JESUS SAVED US

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:8

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 6:23

Explain to them what happened to you. Be as specific as possible. The statement “I went forward in church and prayed with the pastor” doesn’t mean anything to most people in America and around the world. Tell them what was happening to you at that moment.

Maybe it would go something like this: “I realized when I heard the Gospel that I was a sinner, I had disobeyed God and deserved to be punished by Him forever. I realized that God loved me and wanted me to have a relationship with Him so much He punished His son Jesus in my place. I believe Jesus died for me and rose from the dead and was offering me the free gift of salvation. On that day I placed my faith in Jesus and was reconciled with God.”

WHO WE ARE NOW: TRANSFORMING GOSPEL

And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with

which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:1-10

Explain to them how you have been changed by the Gospel. Explain to them how you want to live for Jesus now, and not live for yourself. I always tell them that I am not perfect, but I am choosing Jesus instead of myself.

Step 3: Give them the Word

So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Romans 10:17

If at all possible, I will present the Gospel a third time with the use of a tract or other tool. This not only allows me to tell them the Gospel again, but it also gives them the Gospel to take with them wherever they are going. It is always a good idea to have a Richland Creek tract on you at all times. The tract has our website information and address on it, so I can use it as a means to invite people to church, praying that the invitation turns into a Gospel presentation.

SESSION 3: HOW TO HAVE GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS

One of the most difficult things about sharing Christ, for many believers, is knowing where to begin. In the Men Equipping Men and Women Equipping Women classes we start with a plan that involves inviting people to church. This is an easy way to begin and get comfortable with evangelism. We have had hundreds of men and women start presenting the Gospel this way (usually for the first time) and grow until evangelism is just a way of life.

One great way to begin is simply inviting someone to a regular church gathering. In Luke 14:23, Jesus tells us that his servants will invite people to come to him. Since we are his servants, we should be doing exactly that! Invite someone to join you for a worship service or small group on Saturday evening or Sunday morning. They happen every week of the year, so there's always an opportunity.

Another related way of beginning a conversation is to invite people to an event hosted by Richland Creek. In fact, part of the reason we have a number of events is to give you opportunities to invite people to be a part of what God is doing here! Here are just a few things that you could invite someone to at Richland Creek:

- Mother's or Father's Day
- Easter Block Party
- Christmas Concert, Ladies' Tea, or Christmas Eve Service
- Harvest Festival
- Lake Baptism
- Free Pizza Friday
- Memorial Day or Labor Day Cookouts
- Summer Camp
- Upward Sports
- Tae Kwon Do classes
- So many more!

These are just a few things. There is never a bad time to invite people to church, anyone from a family member to a complete stranger.

After you invite them to church, ask them this question: "Can I tell you what our church believes?" You are not pushing anything on them. If they are interested in coming, most people want to know what they are getting into before they get there.

Note that we are not asking people what *they* believe. If they want to share that with you, it is fine, but the purpose is not to confront them and prove them wrong. The purpose is to tell them briefly about Richland Creek and what we believe.

Once you ask the question, "Can I tell you what our church believes?" and they say yes, then begin with Step 1 and Tell Them the Truth (remember that statement you wrote out earlier?)

After you have shared the truth statement, the other person may say thanks and leave (with tract in hand). If so, then praise God that you had the opportunity to proclaim the truth of the Gospel, and pray that it would grow and spread in that person's heart.

But if the conversation continues, and it often will, then you move to Step 2 and Tell Them Your Story (this is the personal testimony you should have already written out). My (Pastor Jim's) personal testimony looks something like this:

Who I Was: Sinner (This is usually short) In my life, I had walked down a road that led to drugs, alcohol and violence. I was very much a person who lived for myself with no real regard for others. My life consisted of lies, abuse, hate, and self-pleasure, but that really is everyone. The Bible says that all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory (Romans 3:23) - everyone, me, you, everyone - because our thoughts and actions have sinned against God.

What Happened: Jesus Saved Me (This is usually longer) I was at home when my wife said something about the Bible she had read or heard. I thought she was wrong so I started to read her Bible and investigate for myself.

While reading through the Gospel of John and Mark I realized I was a sinner and I saw myself for who I really was and what I was really doing. I realized I couldn't save myself. Since I had sinned, I couldn't fix the sin. I couldn't pay for the lies or the hatefulness; I couldn't pay for my sin.

I realized that I needed someone to pay for my sin for me. The Bible told me that the wages of sin is death, which is to be separated from God forever in a place that the Bible calls hell. That's what I deserved.

But the free gift of God is salvation through Jesus Christ. Jesus paid for my sin for me and God offers me a gift. I read that if I would place my faith in Jesus as the payment for my sin that I could be forgiven, saved from hell, and reconciled to God (Romans 6:23).

God does this based completely on His love toward me and I don't need to do anything. God did not want me to be a better person before He gave me the gift of salvation, but wanted me for who I was, right then. God demonstrates His love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:8). Jesus said that He would die for my sin and three days later would rise from the dead to prove that this salvation was real.

I realized that all of this was true and at that moment I stood up and said to God, "If you will take me the way that I am - you can have me." I confessed with my mouth Jesus as Lord and I believed in my heart that God raised Him from the dead and I placed my faith in Him (Romans 10:9). God says whoever calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved (Romans 10:13).

Who I Am Now: Transforming Gospel (usually short) Everything from

that day forward has changed. God is changing me from the inside out. I want to live for Jesus and love others. Those things I used to do now hold no power over me. I don't want them! All I want to do is live a life that is pleasing to God and even though I don't do that perfectly, I know God loves me and I am going to be with Him forever.

After you share your testimony, the other person may leave (with tract in hand). If so, pray for them, and praise God that you had the opportunity not only to share His Gospel but also to testify of the great things He has done in your life!

But if the conversation continues, you would ask a question: Has this ever happened to you? Based on that question, one of three things will then occur:

1. They will say yes.
2. They will say no and walk away.
3. They will say no but stay and continue talking.

If number 2 occurs, then show them our church information on the tract as they leave. If number 3 occurs, go on to Step 3 and Give Them the Word. Use the Gospel tract or other tool to share again, in a different way, exactly what you have shared previously with the truth statement and your personal testimony. No matter what happens, we remember that God has everything under control.

This entire conversation usually takes 20 minutes or less. Because the Gospel or my personal testimony never changes, it can be adapted to any and every situation anywhere in the world. Because it is so basic you can build on it until you have something you are comfortable with in any situation.

Remember, though, that no matter how conversational we become, our conversations about Christ can and sometimes will become uncomfortable. The Gospel, no matter how winsomely we share it, confronts us at our very core. Our conviction of its truth should always outweigh the discomfort of hard conversations. Even so, we believe we can more effectively share the importance of Christ, the reality of hell, and the hope of the Gospel in conversations as opposed to rote presentations.

Most of the time, your conversation will not lead to a conversion. But it will help nudge the person further along in their Gospel understanding. Chester and Timmis describe this:

“As often as not, our role is to move people one or two steps along the way rather than get them all the way to (salvation) in one go. God is in control of mission. He is sovereign in salvation. Trust Him to take the little morsel of the

EQUIPPING EVANGELISM

Gospel message you give to people and use it as part of His purposes in their life.”

We pray that you would take these three basic steps and share the Gospel with the world around you.

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Ephesians 3:20-21

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