

Witness Well: To Anybody, Anywhere at Anytime
(www.any3.now)
Lead Someone To Christ Today!

What do missionaries do? During furlough, I often ask children in churches where I speak that question. Their answer almost without variation is, “Missionaries are people who go all over the world telling people about Jesus.” Then I ask a follow up question, “What do they tell people about Jesus?” Their response is, “that Jesus died for all of our sins and arose from the dead.” How well informed are the children of the churches who send us? These children got the answer right. At least that’s what missionaries are supposed to do, right?

Most missionaries answer God’s call to foreign lands to do just that – share the gospel. However, several factors erode our initial zeal so that in fact many missionaries frequently strategize about how to share the gospel, but rarely do it. Many full-time Christian workers witness to hardly anyone, hardly anywhere, at hardly anytime.

From personal experience and the experience of colleagues, here’s why:

Well, What Happened?
‘Be’ Stings That Poison Evangelism

Do you remember the last time you were stung by a bee? Of course you do, bee stings hurt really badly! What did you learn from that experience? Be more careful, be smarter, etc., so that doesn’t happen again. Bee stings make life miserable for a time, but we usually recover. Many missionaries have had their evangelistic wellness poisoned by one or more of the following ‘bees’.

A bee is pretty, but when it stings you its painful effects can linger until healing comes. Each of the following “bees” has a measure of legitimacy. However, when it causes witnessing to become fearful, embarrassing, slow, silent, expensive and unbiblical then its time to kill the bee. By exposing the poisonous bees, let us become the witnesses God intended us to be.

The purpose of this and following sections is so that we recover and build immunity from the poison of unhealthy views which hinder evangelism.

Killer Bees

Be Really Careful!

Did you hear words like these as you were preparing to go to the field? “Your goal is to be among your target people for a long-time, so don’t be too aggressive in sharing the gospel or you’ll get kicked out. What’s worse, you might get us all kicked out of there as well.” Not only did I hear words like these, I can still hear them echoing in my mind.

We become afraid of what might happen if I share the gospel boldly. So we begin to play the “what if” game each time we consider whether to share the gospel. What if this person is an informant? What if the person tells the ‘wrong’ person that I witnessed to him? What if the person becomes angry and either causes a scene or becomes violent? The witnessing opportunity passes us by. The person continues on his/her highway to

hell, but we are safe for now. Better safe than sorry? We're safe, but we're also sorry – sorry we disobeyed our Lord and sorry for the person whom the gospel might have saved.

By the way, most “what ifs” never happen. They aren't legitimate reasons not to witness, but excuses provided by the enemy so that God's victorious saints will cower down.

'Be' Sting Reaction: If I'm not careful, bad things will happen, resulting in expulsion.

'Be Sting Remedy: Realistically evaluate security concerns, count the cost, and share the gospel more freely.

Be Really Smart!

I still hear the echo of other words, “You can't share the gospel in your secure environment, like you used to in America.” If it is true that I can no longer share the in the effective way I previously learned to share, then I must relearn a new way to share. On top of that, if those on the field haven't had a breakthrough in how to share the gospel in their context, the I MUST INVENT A NEW WAY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL IN MY CONTEXT. How impossible does that sound?

Therefore, good missionaries must master their host culture before they can share the gospel. And then they must potentially invent a witnessing approach that fits that culture.

A friend of mine shared openly about why he became reluctant to share the gospel. In seminary his professor often referred to *stupid* mistakes missionaries had made in their ministries. Nobody wants to be the example of using “bone-headed” techniques, which later become the case-study for what not to do as a missionary. Therefore, self-consciousness stifles our evangelistic zeal.

'Be' Sting Reaction: When I get more knowledge of the target group's culture and religion, then I'll share the gospel more often.

'Be Sting Remedy: While studying culture and their religious beliefs, share the gospel frequently.

Be A Friend-Maker!

“If they like me, they'll like my Jesus.” By befriending people before we can share the gospel with them, they will know that we genuinely care about them and are not just trying to impose our religion on them. The idea is that we must earn a hearing for the gospel.

How long does it take to earn a hearing? A friend of mine approached me last month with this question, “I've known my friend for a year and half now. When should I share the gospel with him?” Has my friend now earned the right to share the gospel with his friend? If not, when will that take place? Other questions arise: Will my witness put a strain on the relationship I've worked so hard to build? Will my friend wonder why I waited so long to share with him? Will my friend be open to the gospel after all?

Friendship evangelism exposes lots of questions, but few concrete answers. Building relationships becomes the norm, but evangelism becomes nebulous and secondary. We realize that building friendships takes lots of time and energy. But it produces very few converts. We realize that Jesus didn't call us to befriend all people groups; He called us to make disciples of them. After all, how long would it take to reach the world through friendship evangelism if it takes so long to get to the gospel?

By the way, someone shouldn't have to become my close friend to hear about Jesus from me. I might be introverted or might not be a very good friend-maker. We may have differing personalities or interests. They may not have time to befriend me. They may feel more comfortable relating deeply with someone of their own culture. I may intimidate them. They may actually think I'm strange. Even so, everyone deserves to hear the gospel. After all, I may never see them again.

'Be' Sting Reaction: We equate being friendly with sharing the gospel.

'Be' Sting Remedy: Be friendly, and share the gospel early in every relationship.

Be A Really Quiet Example!

Good missionaries show the love of Christ by their actions.

"If they see Jesus in my actions, they will approach me and ask about why my lifestyle is different." It sounds good, especially to introverts or those who've decided they don't have the gift of evangelism. However, how often have people approached us asking us to share the gospel with them? It has happened occasionally (rarely).

Who among us is even almost like Jesus? The problem with the theory is that it requires someone to recognize your perfections before they will hear the gospel. Also, it places the initiative in their court to approach you about your incarnational lifestyle.

However, the lifestyle evangelism theory causes many missionaries to be content to just live among lost people, without aggressively sharing the gospel. In our hearts and minds we know the word of the Lord, is seek and save, rather than sit and wait.

People only get saved when they hear the gospel (Romans 10:14-17). Yes they could read the gospel and be saved, but they won't read it in our lives unless it is given to them in printed materials. Salvation requires a presentation of the gospel. Your life or mine is no substitute for the gospel

'Be' Sting Reaction: Living a 'godly' life replaces an oral gospel presentation.

'Be' Sting Remedy: Live a godly life while joyfully sharing the gospel with everyone.

Be Really Generous!

"They'll never care how much you know until they know how much you care." Sounds familiar, doesn't it? The idea is that people won't be open to the gospel, until Christians meet their physical needs. So we give people money and things, while waiting for the appropriate time to share the gospel with them.

How many people could we help monetarily in order to share the gospel with them? When we are no longer around, will those whom we've helped continue strong in their faith, or will they find a different source of 'blessing'?

Although some have been reached in this way, more often we find that people begin to show interest in Christ in order to get money and stuff from us. In fact many people seem to lose genuine spiritual interest once monetary kindness has been shown to them. We should have 'earned' the right to share the gospel by now, but many times we still haven't done so.

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'Be' Sting Reaction: We give people money and things in order to 'earn the right' to share the gospel with people.

'Be' Sting Remedy: Share the gospel without condition, while discretely helping those with legitimate needs.

Be Really Incarnational!

Please hear me! Every Christian should live the Christ-life in context before the people they intend to reach. Many witnessing opportunities are irreparably hindered because of hypocritical or contextually insensitive Christians. Incarnational witness within one's own community often has long-term effects. Many who have professed faith in Christ often point to the life and witness of some influential Christian in their community or work place which positively impacted the person toward Christ.

As a Christian, we do have the responsibility to be incarnational in our context and strive to reach the community where we live with the gospel. Living in community and living among the nationals we are trying to reach gives teaches us about the culture and provides us the intimate relationships we all need and desire. However, sharing the gospel broadly and early in relationships allows us to find people of peace, who will in turn reach their oikos with the gospel, and perhaps start a CPM. That was Jesus' Incarnational mission pattern.

However, we must now reexamine what has been taken for granted about how Jesus accomplished His incarnational mission. When our family was preparing to move overseas in early 1998, we heard pleas from seemingly well-informed colleagues to imitate Jesus model of mission work, that is the Incarnational Model.

What we were taught as Jesus' incarnational mission model was as follows:

Living in community with our target people group, with the goal of becoming one of them in their context. With time one should become a respectable insider in order to share the gospel.

If successful, we will lead a person or group of people to Christ in our community, with us as their leader. We will disciple and influence this group of insiders to continue sharing the gospel in your community. We will spearhead a movement within the community. They will grow and develop a burden for surrounding villages. The movement will be reproduced in neighboring communities either by this insider group taking the initiative to reproduce what has happened in their community in other communities or by our relocation to a new community.

After all, if that's the way Jesus accomplished His mission, right? Therefore, good missionaries will want imitate Jesus' incarnational model. It seemed right to me. After all, I wanted to be a good missionary and do what Jesus did. Who among us wouldn't?

One day it dawned on me. **THAT'S HOW JESUS LIVED HIS LIFE, BUT NOT HOW HE ACCOMPLISHED HIS MISSION!**

If we wrongly Jesus reached his own community as his primary mission objective, then our perfect teacher failed in his missionary example. Jesus lived more or less 30 years before His public ministry as perfect man in his context. He was filled with perfect wisdom and modeled a perfect life and perfect love. However, as far as we know, at least until after the resurrection, almost all of the people of Jesus' community rejected Him. Jesus concluded, "A prophet isn't without honor except in his own home town and among his kinsmen (Mark 6:4)."

His own immediate family, relatives, friends, and neighbors in Jesus own community rejected Him. His mother and brothers concluded he had lost his mind, his neighbors would esteem Him no higher than a carpenter's son or an ordinary community member.

Jesus lived incarnationally, but did His mission relationally, in a much broader and free-flowing way.

Therefore Jesus went out of his community to find persons of peace (disciples). John 1 records the early spread of interest and faith toward Jesus among his disciples. Of the earliest disciples, it appears that Jesus initiated contact with two disciples personally, that is Andrew and presumably John. As the result of this divine encounter, Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus. Philip, who originated from the same town, then came to faith, followed by Nathanael, his friend. These occurrences clearly show the concept which most missionaries try to emulate, that is *oikos* evangelism. John records that Jesus reached the first generation of converts, and then they reached their own *oikos* (John 1:35-51). What the Incarnational Model misses is that the missionary does first generation evangelism. These first generation converts reach their *oikos*. They do 2nd generation evangelism. Apparently Andrew, Peter, James and John more effectively reached their *oikos* than Jesus reached His.

Later, while walking along by the sea, Jesus finalized his call of His disciples. There he called Peter, Andrew, James and John to follow Him (Mark 1:14-20). Later Jesus reached Matthew at his tax office (Mark 2:14-17). As the story unfolded, Matthew invited Jesus to His house to initiate the effort for Matthew also to reach his *oikos*.

'Be' Sting Reaction: Contextualism and bridges, rather than evangelism, become the buzz-word.

'Be Sting Remedy: Witness broadly (inside and outside your community and platform) in order to find people of peace, who will reach their communities with the gospel.

Time To Witness Well!

Bee stings are painful, and then they itch. That is the sign that the victim is getting well. Are you itching to witness well cross-culturally? Today's your day to get well. Jesus' witnessing encounter to the woman by the well is the thorough remedy for our 'be' stings.

The Any 3 Approach (Anybody, Anywhere, Anytime)

John 4:1-26 (NASB)

- 1) Therefore when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John
- 2) (although Jesus Himself was not baptizing, but His disciples were),
- 3) He left Judea and went away again into Galilee.
- 4) And He had to pass through Samaria.
- 5) So He came to a city of Samaria called Sychar, near the parcel of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph;
- 6) And Jacob's well was there. So Jesus, being wearied from His journey, was sitting thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.
- 7) There came a woman of Samaria to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink."
- 8) For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food
- 9) Therefore the Samaritan woman said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)
- 10) Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."
- 11) She said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with and the well is deep; where then do You get that living water?"
- 12) You are not greater than our father Jacob, are You, who gave us the well, and drank of it himself and his sons and his cattle?"
- 13) Jesus answered and said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will thirst again;
- 14) but whoever drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst; but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life."
- 15) The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, so I will not be thirsty or come all the way here to draw."
- 16) He said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."
- 17) The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have correctly said, 'I have no husband';
- 18) for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."
- 19) The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.
- 20) Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship."
- 21) Jesus said to her, "
Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father.
- 22) You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

- 23) But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers.
- 24) God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
- 25) The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming (He who is called Christ); when that one comes, He will declare all things to us.”
- 26) Jesus said to her, “I who am speaking to you am He.”
- 27) At this point His disciples came, and they were amazed that He had been speaking with a woman, yet no one said, “What do you seek?” or “Why do You speak with her?”
- 28) So the woman left her waterpot, and went into the city and said to the men,
- 29) “Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Christ, is it?”
- 30) They went out of the city, and were coming to Him.
- 31) Meanwhile the disciples were urging Him, saying, “Rabbi, eat.”
- 32) But He said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.”
- 33) So the disciples were saying to one another, “No one brought Him anything to eat, did he?”
- 34) Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work.
- 35) “Do you not say, ‘There are four months, and then comes the harvest’? I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest.
- 36) “Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.
- 37) “For in this case the saying is true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’
- 38) “I have sent you to reap that for which you have no labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor.”

Jesus is the primary example of how to do evangelism. Unfortunately, the New Testament says more about what Jesus did than what he said during witnessing encounters. Therefore, detailed witnessing encounters are limited. The most detailed account is given in John 4, where Jesus witnessed to the woman at the well. To be certain, witnessing beside a well to a person of the opposite gender, who was from a mixed-Jewish religious persuasion would be an exception to the kind of person Jesus usually encountered. However, the pattern he modeled in the event is helpful for the reader to picture what spontaneous anybody, anywhere, anytime evangelism looks like.

In his testimony to the woman at the well, Jesus teaches his followers, then and now, important time-tested principles about how to share the gospel in non-formal contexts. The following sections will show how these principles are effective in modern, everyday gospel-sharing encounters today as well.

Jesus was traveling with His disciples from Judea to Galilee (4:3). To get to Galilee, Jesus *had* to pass through Samaria (4:4). **NO HE DIDN'T!** If Jesus were in a hurry he would have **HAD** to pass through Samaria, because the road through Samaria was more direct, therefore faster. However, Jesus wasn't in a hurry. In fact He and his disciples stayed in Samaria for at least 2 days (4:43). It would have been seemingly more 'natural' for Jesus and His disciples to take the alternative route, which would have allowed Jesus and His disciples, like most other Jews of the time, to avoid contact with the hated

Samaritans. But yes, Jesus HAD to go through Samaria. He had to go, not because there wasn't a different route, but in order to show and teach His disciples about how evangelism should be done after His ascension. He HAD to go because there was a lost Samaritan woman and many other lost Samaritans who would come to faith if they heard the message of salvation clearly, because they were already prepared to believe it.

Why Witness Well to Anybody, Anywhere at Anytime?
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Jesus' early disciples had a lot in common with Jesus' present day disciples – They needed motivation, and they needed a role-model. Those are among the primary reasons that Jesus invited His disciples to experience His witnessing experience with the woman by the well (John 4.1-45). And those are the primary reasons the Holy Spirit had John record the experience for Jesus' modern disciples. By modeling evangelism for His disciples, Jesus taught five lessons which would prepare His disciples to witness to anybody, anywhere at anytime.

Jesus proceeded to teach them some very important principles about evangelism, using the harvest analogy. These principles can be summarized as follows:

Passion for the Harvest

Do you love to witness or hate it? Jesus loved it! However, it appears that for this encounter at least, His disciples hated it. At the very least they were more concerned about their physical appetite than the spiritual opportunity before them. While Jesus was preparing to witness beside the well, His disciples had gone to the city to buy food (4:8). While they were gone, they missed an opportunity to share in Jesus' witnessing encounter.

Upon returning from lunch (Jesus witnessed to the woman about noon.) the disciples were disturbed that Jesus was violating two deeply ingrained Jewish mandates: 1) Jews don't fellowship with Samaritans, and 2) Men don't talk to women in public. Even so, they dared not confront Jesus about his seeming violations (4:27). Instead, they offered Jesus lunch.

But Jesus had already eaten! It appears that the Savior always packed His lunch, and He had just finished it. "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work (4:34)." Jesus enjoyed witnessing more than eating lunch, even when He was very tired and hungry. Jesus would rather witness than eat! That exemplifies His passion for the harvest. Therefore, in the same way that you or I *have to* eat ice cream or our favorite food if it is sitting in front of us, Jesus *had to* witness. It was His passion.

Evaluation and Application:

- 1) Do you love to witness or dread it?
- 2) How does your desire for the spread of the gospel compare to your desire for worldly pleasures?

- 3) Which of the following activities should you do more often, for longer periods of time, or with greater quality in order to increase your passion for the harvest (God's will)?
 - a. Prayer?
 - b. Study of the Word?
 - c. Sharing the Gospel with friends or neighbors?
 - d. Getting out where people are in order to share the gospel?

Pressure of the Harvest

Time is off the essence. Therefore Jesus imbeds a picture in His disciples' minds in order to put them in urgent witness mode. It is likely that Jesus and His disciples were gazing upon a wheat-field from their vantage point near the well. From there, Jesus drew his disciples' attention to the field of humanity, over-ripe and perishing. "Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest (4:35-36)." If the disciples didn't ratchet up the intensity of their witness, the people would perish in the same way that over-ripe wheat perishes if the harvest is delayed.

The time was then for Jesus' disciples, and the time is now for modern disciples to witness with pressing urgency. Every day untold thousands of people, many of whom would likely be open to the gospel if they were to hear it, perish. According to Jesus, the pressure is on. Its time to harvest.

Evaluation and Application:

- 1) Do you witness every day, every month, or less?
- 2) How long do you know someone before sharing the gospel with them? How could you do it much earlier in the relationship?
- 3) If you knew that your target people were going to die soon (this week), how would your approach change?

Pattern of the Harvest

According to Jesus, the pattern of the harvest is sowing, with the goal of intentional reaping. Jesus demonstrated for His disciples that both sowing and reaping were the present task for each of his disciples. 'Now' was the time for both sowing and reaping. "Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together (4:36)."

By the well, Jesus was both sower and reaper. However, the disciples would sometimes reap where they hadn't sown (4:36-38). It stands to reason also that they would perhaps at times sow without reaping. Even so, the focus of John 4 is on reaping. Notice the following phrases, "Already, he who reaps is receiving wages (4:36a)" and "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored (4:38)". The goal of the harvest is never just sowing. Harvesting is reaping!

Evaluation and Application:

- 1) Do you usually draw the net when you witness?
- 2) How can you draw the net more effectively and efficiently in order to reap intentionally?

Potential of the Harvest

One wheat plant has seeds already within it to plant multiple new plants. Each resulting plant has the same potential for multi-generational multiplication.

People are the same way! Upon hearing the good news about Jesus the Messiah, the woman left her water pot, and witnessed to her friends (4:29b, c). The witness of this woman led to the conversion of many people in Samaria (4:39).

In addition to witnessing, she called her friends to come and meet Jesus (4:28-29). As a result of hearing Jesus' testimony, "Many more believed because of His word (41)." They developed strong personal faith, apart from the Samaritan woman who introduced them to Jesus (42).

It was a worth-while investment of time for Jesus and his disciples to spend two unplanned days (from the disciples perspective) in Samaria in order to equip people of peace to reach their respective *oikos* (extended family and friends) for Christ.

Evaluation and Application:

- 1) Will your follow-up plan result in new believers or new churches?
- 2) How will you equip a new convert to most effectively immediately reach his friends, relatives, neighbors and relationships with the gospel?
- 3) How can you adjust your follow-up new converts so they immediately become a partner in ministry rather than a buddy?

Payment of the Harvest

The payment of the harvest brings great joy to the sower and the reaper (4:36). The one who reaps is already receives wages (4:36a), and will receive further wages (4:36b). Payday is now and later for the harvester, but the wage is the same now and later. What is the current and future payment for the harvester according to Jesus in John 4? One primary wage for the harvester is the fruit of the harvest itself.

Nothing satisfies a farmer more than a successful harvest. Seeing the already harvested wheat is the harvester's primary satisfaction. There are other primary motivations for witnessing such as seeing God's glory manifest and obedience to Christ's command. Nonetheless, the sheer joy of seeing people moving from death to life should motivate modern disciples of Christ to witness. Let what brings joy to heaven (Lk. 15:7) joy in the presence of the angels of God (Lk. 14:10) and joy to the Father (Lk. 15:32) bring you joy. Enjoy seeing spiritually dead people raised to new life here and in eternity.

Evaluation and Application:

- 1) Do you witness expecting for God to save the person to whom you are witnessing?
- 2) What if anything brings you more joy than leading someone to Christ?
- 3) Would becoming a more effective witness encourage you?

Jesus accomplishes two main objectives in John 4. First, He teaches his disciples why they should witness. The second objective is perhaps more important. Jesus demonstrates for his disciples how to witness.

What Were The Characteristics of Jesus' Witnessing Encounter?

Jesus witnessed to rich and poor people, influential and common people, Jews and Gentiles, primarily men but also women as well. He witnessed in all contexts: in synagogues and the temple, while walking along beaches, while sitting on hills, while sitting in boats, and even beside a well. His witnessing encounters occurred at night, evening, morning and even mid-day. Jesus witnessed anywhere, to anybody at any time; and He always witnessed well. Jesus' witnessing encounter with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well exemplifies all three factors: a unique place, a unique person and a unique time.

In his testimony to the woman at the well, Jesus teaches his followers, then and now, important time-tested principles about how to witness spontaneously in informal contexts. The following sections will show how these principles are effective in usual, everyday gospel encounters today as well.

Jesus' disciples didn't witness the actual witnessing conversation of Jesus with the Samaritan woman. However, He, or the woman herself certainly told them about what had taken place. That is the conversation could be truthfully recorded with such precision. What were the stages of the witnessing conversation and how can the modern disciple model it? Five stages of the witnessing conversation are discussed in the following section. The final section will give a sample dialogue which has proven effective for spontaneous, relational evangelism today.

1. Intentional

As previously discussed, Jesus *had* to go to Samaria in order to witness to the Samaritan woman. It was intentional. The prepared witness who understands the gospel and is willing and prepared to share it will have opportunities to do so. God will meet such a witness up with people who need to hear the gospel, many of whom are already open to receive it.

Prepare to share the gospel. And then make a plan to "hang out" where lost people are with the clear intention of sharing the gospel with them.

2. Informal

On this occasion Jesus witnessed beside a well, not at the synagogue. Most of Jesus' witnessing experiences occurred in the course of everyday life.

Most witnessing opportunities occur in everyday life for modern disciples as well, not at religious institutions. In fact everyday situations usually present great witnessing opportunities. First, the gospel seems more relevant when presented in the context of everyday living. Second, the witnessing encounter doesn't feel staged, and the person doesn't feel "set up". Third, Satan doesn't have time to "prepare" the person with ready made excuses or ways out. Fourth, the witness experiences the work of the Holy Spirit who "makes it happen". The Holy Spirit meets the witness up with people, then makes the gospel presentation happen.

3. Interactive

One can't help but notice the interactive, conversational tone of this witnessing experience. Jesus initiated the conversation by requesting a drink (4:7) then the woman responded. Next, Jesus clarified his previous statement, then the woman responded again. This was the pattern of the entire witnessing encounter. Jesus never became preachy or condescending in His approach.

The early tone of Jesus' conversation with the woman was very relaxed. The tone clearly changed when later on. However, tension didn't occur in the transition to spiritual matters. Rather the tone changed when the conversation became personal. Tension only entered the conversation when Jesus identified the woman's personal sin and began to call for a response.

When witnessing encounters happen in informal contexts, the conversation occurs in a natural, conversational manner. The tone of the conversation is very relaxed. The tone of the conversation usually doesn't get tense until the internal battle with truth begins. One of the greatest challenges for the witness is to witness with the same relaxed tone of voice and mannerisms as when talking about non-spiritual things. Even in the transition to spiritual matters, the conversation should maintain a very informal, relaxed tone.

However, nobody has every come to true faith in Christ apart from an intense inner battle. At this point the Holy Spirit is drawing the person to a commitment. Tension at this point in the conversation is vital. The key is for the witness himself not to introduce tension through personal nervousness, needless arguments or a preachy approach to witnessing. Therefore, when the Holy Spirit is drawing the person to salvation, the person will turn to the witness to help guide them to truth.

Be careful to not argue when witnessing. If legitimate questions arise, answer them. But don't be argumentative. People are rarely won to Christ through persuasive arguments. But they are often won to Christ through a simple, loving presentation of the gospel.

4. Initiative

Not only did Jesus initiate the conversation with the woman by the well, He took the initiative to guide the conversation to its intended goal. Although not preachy or condescending, Jesus presented truth very directly. Jesus obviously assumed the 'teacher' role as the conversation progressed. While maintaining an informal, interactive teaching approach, Jesus became the authority. He asked pointed

questions, guiding the conversation into spiritual truth and toward its ultimate goal of a decision for Christ.

The modern witness should emulate Jesus' approach. In building a rapport with people, the witness meets them on a person to person level. They talk together as equals. As the conversation turns to spiritual matters, the witness takes the initiative in the teacher role, while still using relaxed, interactive methodology. The witness teaches by using exploratory questions, then gives personal input as to the solution.

5. Introduction of Jesus the Messiah

The Samaritan woman became increasingly more aware of who Jesus actually was as the witnessing conversation progressed. Her understanding increased from Jesus being a Jewish man (4:9) to being perhaps greater than Jacob (4:12) to being a prophet (4:19) to being the Messiah (4:25-26). Jesus' goal was to help all people understand that He was the promised Savior. This is the goal of every witnessing conversation.

Today, the correct understanding of Jesus as Messiah is to understand that Jesus has already died to pay for our sin and that He has risen from the dead as proof that God received Jesus' sacrifice. This is the gospel that Jesus proclaimed after His resurrection (Lk. 24:44-49). This is also the message preached by Paul and the apostles (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Witnesses share the gospel! The gospel is the primary message that the witness brings. Personal testimonies about peace and love, talk about Jesus' wisdom and power, and discussions from the holy books of other religions are at times beneficial. However, only the gospel has power to save, therefore should be the primary message shared by the witness. Be a bearer of good news!

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-2:8 paying attention to references about the cross, the power of the gospel, and the way the gospel should be presented. The following statements leap from the text:

“For Christ *sent* me to preach the gospel, not in cleverness of speech, so that the cross of Christ would not be made void (1:17)?

➤ Do clever methods void the gospel of its power?

“For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1:18).”

➤ Should present the gospel or attempt to convince lost people of our intelligence?

“”but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumblingblock and to Gentiles foolishness, but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1:23-24).”

➤ Is the gospel message appropriate to be proclaimed to all people groups and religions?

“For consider your calling, bretheren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble (1:26)”

➤ Should we share the gospel with only the affluent, or with all people?

“And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified (2:1-2).

➤ What is the one message which must be shared in witnessing?

How Did Jesus Witness Well By The Well?

Jesus Got Connected (Established Commonality).

First of all, Jesus established commonality with his focus person. “Give Me a drink (4:7)”, Jesus said. The phrase is interesting because of its directness. If there was an introductory greeting or conversation, it isn’t recorded by John. Normally any witnessing conversation would begin with small talk about where the person’s family, where the person lives, the weather, current events, etc. This may have happened, although it is not recorded.

One might wrongly mistake the brief statement, “Give me a drink”, as a mere conversation starter. To the contrary the bridge was relational focusing on the common ground between the two parties. The statement “Give me a drink” identifies the common human situation of thirst, so that Jesus and the woman with very differing backgrounds could meet on common territory. It also exposed the physical frustration of having to come to the well from a considerable distance to draw water. Commonality is the first objective of developing a witnessing conversation.

Jesus’ witnessing encounter by the well dispels a common myth -- that is that many common bonds have to exist between both parties for the witnessing conversation to succeed. In fact the vast difference between Jesus and this woman were recognized by the woman herself who said, “How is it that you, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman (4:9)?” Men and women avoided conversation in public during that time. In fact, to converse with a woman in public was of the same offensive nature as to eat forbidden foods such as pork. What more, Jews hated Samaritans and avoided them, because they had distorted the Jewish religion, holding only to the Pentateuch. Nevertheless, Jesus emphasized a simple commonality -- thirst. Therefore, Jesus and the woman shared common human aspirations and needs.

Jesus also dispelled another common myth – that a long relationship must be established in order to gain a hearing for the gospel. Jesus initiated a conversation with a person, and then within minutes (if not seconds) was already into a very productive conversation about spiritual matters.

Application

Find a point of contact with people. This can usually be best done by asking guided, but not overly intrusive, questions about a person. Context will determine the number and content of the questions, so the one being witnessed too doesn’t feel intruded on. The goal is to make the person feel comfortable with the witness and that he/she has something in common with the witness.

Jesus Got To The Point (Transitioned to spiritual matters).

One might also be impressed by the short bridge Jesus used in witnessing by the well. The conversation was centered around conversation about a common need, and then quickly bridged into a relevant discussion about Jesus, the Living Water. However brief and direct the bridge was, it was very functional.

In Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well, the point of contact, "Give me a drink" also served as the entrance point for the gospel. Using the water analogy, Jesus transitioned to spiritual matters. "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." Jesus presented good news about the messiah to the woman using the analogy of living water. The analogy raised interest toward spiritual matters and left the woman wanting to know more. Jesus' statement which showed commonality also served as his bridge to share the gospel.

Jesus Got Her Lost (Revealed sin and its effects).

After transitioning to spiritual matters, the witness should attempt to reveal the general problem of all mankind. Jesus could have easily told the woman to get her friends, but he chose rather to expose her sin. "Go, call your husband and come here." A moment later Jesus replied, "you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly."

Jesus revealed the heart of the woman's problem in order to reveal the cure. Jesus would not permit the woman to ignore her sin problem or find the cure without facing the sinful facts which had brought her spiritual thirst. The woman would have to admit and face her sinfulness in order to be cured of its consequences.

This is the point of the witnessing conversation where Jesus' experience obviously separates from our witnessing experiences. Jesus was the Messiah, the sinless Son of God. Therefore Jesus could no longer be on common grounds with the woman by the well. However, every other witness since that time shares the common experience of sinfulness.

The witness should not avoid the topic of sin and its consequences, nor should the witness come across "holier than thou". Instead the witness should gently convince the hearer of the reality of mankind's sin along with its personal manifestations. This is accomplished as the witness admits that he/she also is a sinner and has faced its devastating consequences. Usually, the hearer will agree to being a sinner. Often times he or she will begin to discuss personal sins at that time.

Discussing the issue of personal sinfulness actually allows the witness to build more commonality and empathy with the hearer. Witnessing relationships usually see commonality in the sense of common interests which the two parties enjoy. However, the sense of commonality is strengthened when both parties admit to a common problem and its negative effects in their lives.

Lostness must necessarily precede salvation. The common state of lostness between the witness and the hearer generally allows the witness to share the good news as the way out.

Application: Sin and lostness can easily be brought to discussion by discussing current events which demonstrate sinful behaviors. Thefts, murders, corruption and religious hypocrisy can lead to agreement about man's sinful condition. By simply asking the person what he/she is doing to get their sins forgiven, then asking if their sins are forgiven yet will usually result in the person himself realizing that what he/she is doing to

atone for sin isn't effective, now will it be. At this point agreement is generally reached about the joint sinfulness of mankind.

An illustration first communicated to the author by a friend can help as well. The point of the illustration is that all people are sinners, and no matter how great or small their sins, all people are separated from God. The illustration is as follows: "As the Mosaic law (or their own religious customs) states, that certain foods like pork aren't permissible to be eaten. Let's suppose that I offer to you a bowl of cooked pork. May you eat it or not? (The person naturally responds, "No, I am not permitted to eat it.") Then the witness says, "Suppose I only place a small piece of pork in a bowl. Then I cover it up with rice and vegetables, so that it is no longer visible. Are you permitted to eat the contents of that bowl? (The correct answer is that he may not eat the contents of that bowl either.) Then ask, Which bowl will you choose to eat?" The hearer wrestles with the idea but finally concludes, neither bowls of food containing pork may be eaten. At this point the witness presents the scenario of two sinners, one with obvious sins like murder and adultery, and another sinner with smaller, less-obvious sins. Which person will be received by God into heaven upon his death? The answer is that neither will be received, because they are both sinners and God is holy.

Jesus Got The Gospel To Her (Presented Jesus as Messiah).

Jesus quickly drew a distinction between the religious beliefs held by the woman at the well, compared to the true way of salvation that he taught and brought. To accomplish this, he clarified the differing religious understandings of the Samaritans and Jews. Therefore, Jesus found some common ground, stressed the commonality, and then showed the truthful difference, which could save the woman at the well. Jesus departed from commonality to show the truthful difference between what the woman believed, and what was true.

The conversation was as follows: "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, and you people say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship (4:20)." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth,; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth (4:21-24)."

The Samaritans held that Mt. Gerazim was especially sacred. Abraham and Jacob had built altars in the general vicinity (Genesis 12:7,; 33:20), and the people had been blessed from this mountain (Deut. 11:29; 27:12). In the Samaritan Scripture, Mt. Gerazim was the mountain upon which Moses had commanded an altar to be built, instead of Mt. Ebal (Deut. 27:4-6). In addition, the Samaritans had built a temple on Mt. Gerazim, which the Jews had destroyed, which escalated tension and hostilities between the two parties.

Of course, Jerusalem was the appointed place for temple worship. Therefore, from the woman's perspective, the point of difference between the two religions was the place of worship. Jesus didn't back away from truth in order to save the relationship with the hearer at this point. Rather, he clearly stated, "Salvation is from the Jews." There

was only one reliable source of truth to be followed, and that was the revealed word of God through Moses.

After establishing the source of authority, Jesus clarified the woman's misunderstanding about the important aspects of true worship. According to Jesus, the point was not where a person worshipped, but the way a person worshipped (spirit and truth) Next the woman expressed her limited, but hopeful knowledge about the coming messiah. He would clear up any confusion, because "He will declare all things to us (25)."

After agreeing on the issue of mutual sinfulness, the objective becomes to find the solution. Where does salvation come from? Every religion presupposes that mankind must do something in order to repair a broken or imperfect relationship between God and man. Therefore each religion proposes its own different, but very similar way to repair the separation between God and man.

In Buddhism the solution is to empty oneself of all desire (lust) in pursuit of Nirvana. In Hinduism, salvation is accomplished through becoming "one" with nature, in which God dwells (Pantheism). In Islam, people are potentially saved through keeping the five requirements: Saying the Muslim Profession of Faith, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammad is His Apostle, Prayers 5x Daily, Fasting during Ramadan, Giving Alms, and observing the Hajj. Other less recognized religions present their own individual ways to gain favor and salvation from God.

The Bible shows a different way from all the rest! It must be acknowledged that that many "Christians" as well, contrary to the obvious teachings of the Bible, also place their hope of salvation upon their good works. However, the revealed way of salvation in the Bible is different. Salvation comes by grace, through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who paid mankind's sin debt with his own blood.

In witnessing to people of other faiths, the witness must clearly differentiate between the way the hearer expects to have his/her sins forgiven, compared to the way salvation is revealed in the New Testament.

This is best done by asking a person about his or her religious preference. Then, instead of assuming one knows what that person believes about how he/she hopes to have sin forgiven, ask him/her. After listening to the person, then the witness graciously draws a contrast between what the hearer believes about salvation, and God's true way of salvation through Christ's sacrifice.

Application: After the transition to spiritual matters, agreement about our sinfulness can usually be easily reached by discussing the religious rituals people perform in attempting to erase or pay for their sins. The author often inquires about the religious activities of the hearer. "What do followers of this faith do to have their sins forgiven? The person may reply, "I fast, pray, or give alms." Then one can ask, "How often do you have to do that to be certain your sins are forgiven?", or "Is your sin debt already paid for?" At that point the author often responds, "So, if I understand correctly, hopefully your sins will be paid for if you are able to do those rituals well enough so that God will forgive you". Then the author's response is often, "You must be a better person than me, because I could never be good enough to be forgiven by a Holy God. But what I believe is different from what you've said." "I'm sure my sins are forgiven and I will go to Heaven someday. It's not because I'm a good person or because I do enough good things. I

believe that God himself arranged for my sins to be paid for.” At that point the gospel is shared.

It is shared at first as though it only applies to the witness, and not for the hearer at this point. The witness should avoid attempting to persuade the hearer to profess faith in Christ at this point in the conversation. The current objective is to differentiate what the hearer believes about salvation from the certain way of forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Jesus Got On With It (invited her to receive Christ and arranged follow-up).

Had the woman not been open to Jesus’ message, we assume that he would have heeded his own advice to his disciples. “Any place that does not receive you or listen to you, as you go out from there, shake the dust off the soles of your feet for a testimony against them. (Mark 6:11).” However, the woman was very open. Therefore Jesus pursued follow-up.

Jesus’ desire for reaching beyond just the woman at the well was clear from early in the witnessing conversation. “Go, call your husband and come here (4:16) is a clear indication that Jesus was attempting to draw a group of people, rather than a single individual to faith. Upon showing openness to Christ’s message, the woman went into the city and invited several men to “come, see a man who told me all the things that I have done; this is not the Messiah, is it?” (The woman’s question, although stated negatively, was hopeful that in fact Jesus was the Messiah.) Jesus stayed there two days with the result that, “Many more believed because of His word.”

Often times upon hearing the simple, brief, but powerful gospel, the person will be interested in Christ. If the person has heard the gospel previously perhaps he will be ready to receive Christ. If open at all, the person will want to know more about how he can know his/her sins are forgiven.

Application: After sharing the gospel, draw the net. Ask the person if they have any questions about what you’ve shared with them. Next, ask if he/she believes what you’ve told them. At this point, either draw the net or set a time to meet again.

If the person says that they believe what you’ve told them, then show them Romans 10:9-10. Explain that a person’s sins are forgiven when he/she professes that “Jesus is Lord” and believes that Jesus died for his/her sins and arose from the dead.

If confusion arises over confessing that Jesus is Lord, take time to explain Jesus’ virgin birth from the Holy Spirit, and his Lordship. However, often times if the person understands the concept of Jesus’ sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, he/she will willingly confess Jesus as Lord also.

For the person who is interested in Jesus, but not yet ready to profess faith, we recommend the following approach. Follow-up can best be done by telling the Old Testament sacrifice stories of Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham and Moses. This can be done immediately if time allows, but usually is done by setting a time to get together informally in order to study the stories during a series of informal meetings.

Ideally, like the Samaritan woman, the interested person will want to invite his friends to hear the stories as well. This situation is ideal because those who study the

stories together can become a house church if they profess faith simultaneously or during the same time frame.

How Can We Implement Jesus Anybody, Anywhere, Anytime Approach?

The following section presents a very simple witnessing model which follows Jesus' pattern of witnessing beside the well in Samaria. The approach works best if done according to the pattern of the characteristics of Jesus' witnessing encounter in the previous section. Be careful to not argue in when witnessing. If legitimate questions arise, answer them. But don't be argumentative. People are rarely won to Christ through persuasive arguments. But they are often won to Christ through a simple, loving presentation of the gospel.

Witness Well Any3 Approach

Goals:

- 1) To get people to understand and admit that they are lost.
- 2) To show the difference between salvation by grace and salvation by works.
- 3) To filter open people by using the gospel.
- 4) To either invite the person to receive Christ or to end the initial witnessing conversation with the person on a good note, making follow-up possible.

Necessary Tools:

- Basic understanding of target culture and its religious beliefs.
- Ability to carry out a conversation in a relaxed and natural way in target language.
- Understanding of how to present the gospel in a way that it shows the difference between grace and works as a way of salvation.
- Knowing how to use the sacrifice stories, particularly Adam and Eve, is often very helpful to show why Jesus' sacrifice for sins is necessary.

Application (5 Steps to Witness Well)

- 1) **Getting Connected** (Build Rapport through Small Talk, usually 15 minutes.)
 - "How are you?" and "Who are you?"
- 2) **Getting to the Point** (Transition to Spiritual Matters)
 - Pray for an open door.
 - If open door doesn't immediately happen, say, "Which religion do you follow?" or if you already know, "You follow the _____ religion, right?"
- 3) **Getting Them Lost** (Reveal Common Sin Problem and Frustration of Failing in our Religious Duties, by letting them talk about their religious experience.)
 - "Almost all religions are the same, aren't they?"
 - i. The point of religion is to try to do good and be good enough to please God, so that God will receive us. Almost all religions are concerned with doing good things to offset our sins, but we never get our sins paid off.
 - ii. We are all frustrated, aren't we? We try our best to please God, but fail (sin) continually, leaving us frustrated.

- We are all sinners, aren't we?
 - i. Our sin debt gets larger instead of smaller, doesn't it?, because we sin every day, don't we?
 - What are you doing to get your sins forgiven? (let them talk about it, then ask the following questions)
 - i. Are your sins paid off yet?
 - ii. When will they be paid off?
 - iii. In eternity, will your sins be forgiven?
- 4) Getting the Gospel to Them** (Brief Presentation of the Gospel to Show How You're Sure Your Sins Are Forgiven because of Jesus' Death and Resurrection, usually 5-8 min.)
- "What I believe is different from that."
 - i. My sins are already paid off, and it's not because of the good things I do. By the way, you're probably a better person than I am.
 - ii. My sins are paid off because God himself has made a way to forgive sins.
 - 1. Jesus came from Heaven and was born of a virgin.
 - 2. Jesus lived a holy life.
 - a. Jesus never sinned, although tempted.
 - b. Jesus never married, was from the ordinary class rather than from the upper class, and early in his public ministry fasted for 40 days and 40 nights.
 - c. Jesus performed might miracles, including raising people from the dead.
 - d. Jesus began prophesying to his followers that He was going to surrender Himself to evil rulers and would be killed to pay for people's sins, and would rise again 3 days later.
 - 1. All of our forefathers gave blood sacrifices to have their sins forgiven (Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah, Abraham, Moses).
 - a. Adam and Eve
 - b. 1 Sin Brought Severe Punishment from God Although They Had Done Many Good Deeds
 - c. Animal Skins Given By God Showed that a Blood Sacrifice Had Been Offered to Forgive Their Sins.
 - 2. John the Baptist – "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world."
 - 3. According to the Law, Prophets, Psalms, and the Gospel (NT),

“without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins.”

3. Jesus died to pay our sin debt, and then three days later he was raised from the dead, proving that God received Jesus' sacrifice.
4. The Gospel says that if we believe Jesus paid for our sins with His death, and surrender ourselves to Him as Lord, we will be saved. That's why I know my sins are forgiven, and it's not because I'm a better person than you, because I know you're probably a better person than me.

5) Getting On With It

- If not open to the gospel, share the gospel briefly, then change the subject.
- If open to the gospel
 - i. Invite them to receive Christ.
 - ii. Briefly tell them the other sacrifice stories.
 - iii. Invite them to invite friends to study the sacrifice stories.

Common Difficulty

- “I think God will forgive my sins, because He is merciful.”
 - Answer: God has said there is only one way He will forgive sins, that is through blood sacrifices.
 - After sharing one or more of the sacrifice stories and emphasizing the necessity of blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins, tell the motorcycle illustration, or one like it:

“Suppose a person wants to buy a motorcycle (or a car). He usually makes a payment plan at the bank to pay _____ per month. Let's say I bought a motorcycle this way, but when it was time to pay the first month's payment, I didn't have enough money. So I tried to find a way out on my own. I gathered up five chickens which I was raising to feed my family, and then took the chickens to the bank. Imagine walking into the bank with chickens. People are looking at you like you are weird, and you are embarrassed. Finally, the cashier calls your number, so you approach the counter with your chickens and lay them on the counter. Will he/she receive your chickens as payment for your motorcycle? Of course not, he/she will laugh, right? Why? Because the agreement for payment was money, not chickens. That's how it is with God. God has made an agreement with mankind that sins can only be paid through the shedding of blood. And Jesus shed His blood as the final and only way for people's sins to be forgiven.”

What Do I Do With A Person Whose Interested In The Gospel?

Big Fish Evangelism

3 kinds of pops

My wife's uncle enjoys hunting. Because he is financially able, at times he has taken safari trips in Africa with the aim of hunting big game. In fact he has some impressive trophies in his house, including tigers and other big prize animals, as proof of his hunting prowess.

Evangelism isn't like hunting. Jesus said follow me and I will cause you to become fishermen, not hunters. Even so, big catch fishing carries the same principle of big game hunting – the one who catches the biggest fish wins. However, Jesus' intent in using the fishing metaphor wasn't related to catching the largest fish, rather to catching the most fish. Fishing in Jesus' day, like in most of today's world is done with a net, not a pole. The goal is to catch many fish. If some big fish get caught in the net along with the normal to small ones, all the better.

Remember the Great Commission. Matthew 28 :20 states, "Make disciples of panta ta ethne (all the people groups). Mark 16:15 states, "Preach the gospel to every creature." Luke 24:47 states, "Repentance and forgiveness of sin should be preached in all the nations beginning in Jerusalem." And the "end of the earth" phrase of Acts 1:8-9 is parallel with the all and every phrases mentioned previously. Fishing for men doesn't prioritize big prize fish, rather prioritizes all fish. The question of biblical evangelism then becomes, which methods best ensure the gospel will reach all the people of the earth with the gospel.

The intent of this discussion isn't to open the traditional "classes vs. masses" debate. Both sides of that debate intend to reach the masses, therefore grapple with how best the masses can be reached.

If catching the "big fish" will lead to catching many-many other fish, by all means, lets reach the big fish. However, it should be clear that the gospel spreads primarily among 'normal' people, whomever they might be in any particular group.

How did the gospel spread initially, among the cultural and religious elite, or among the common people of Jesus day? Jesus himself said not many of the elite or wise people were chosen.

The gospel is for everyone including the "big fish". What's more, one can never guess who is open to the gospel until the gospel is shared. More and more the author is stunned to find out who the people are who are receiving Christ. Assumptions about openness or lack thereof should only be made based upon recent response to the gospel. That implies that the gospel has recently been shared with them.

However, why are the "big fish" often the highest priority? Apart from pride or bragging rights, practical reasons are often given for the desire to reach these elite people. After all, the above "big fish" are influential and could be a key to reach the masses. The potential influence of these power brokers is an undeniable fact. Potentially, they could reach the masses. However, practically the "big fish" are no more likely to reach the masses than the average man or woman in any community with far greater than average influence.

The "big fish" may have perceived influence, but others often have the actual influence. Positional leadership doesn't guarantee practical leadership. The author once attended a strategy training seminar in which the participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine who the person of peace would be in each of the participants individual ministry context. Did the participants visualize the community leader, the business leader, and the religious leaders who were out front in their communities "leading" in

their respective fields? Probably so, because one automatically envisions these as the “leaders” who are most likely to invoke change.

However, based upon experience, the author’s immediate response was, “You’ll never guess.” The people of peace may likely not be the ones seen leading. However, behind the scenes, they are the ones influencing the decisions people are making. The person of peace is the person with actual influence, rather than positional influence. They are the ones people include in the decision making process. People of peace are often average people with above average say (authority).

The basic reason why “big fish” are usually not the ones who actually cause the broad spread of the gospel is that they have a lot to lose by doing so. That is why Jesus taught, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that “You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent, and have revealed them to infants (Matthew 11:25).” And Paul wrote, “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the fooling things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong (1 Cor. 1:26-27).” The “big fish” potentially stand to lose their leadership position by following Christ, much more so if they aggressively spreading the gospel. They also stand to lose wealth and resources. Praise the Lord for people of standing who risk all to follow Christ and advance the gospel, but the reality is that such people are few—have always been few and will always be few. It is still easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Consider the biblical people of Jesus’ day who believed in Christ, then reached many others. Simon Peter, the woman of Samaria, and the like were the primary pattern (rule) of whom Jesus chose to reach the masses. Even so, there were some exceptions.

Paul was the exception. Obviously there are Pauls out there among the religious elite who will be willing to pay the price to fulfill the Great Commission. That is why

Such assumptions about “big fish” could lead the witness to neglect the leaders or even the main stream of society to share the gospel with the most open of society, that is the fringe. The fringe people are the outsiders of the community. They are often open to the gospel, therefore they should be reached. However, they do not have the influence necessary to spread the gospel broadly. The general principles of evangelism apply to the fringe people. They should hear and be reached with the gospel. At the same time the evangelist must realize that reaching insiders, rather than outsiders, is vital for the broad spread of the gospel.

Keys to Effective Evangelism

- 1) Share the good news. Bridges are very important, but they are not the good news. The good news is powerful!
- 2) Think of ‘relational’ evangelism, rather than ‘friendship’ evangelism.
 - a) Share the gospel frequently. It usually takes 3 or 4 times for a person to hear the gospel before becoming a believer.

- b) Share the gospel early in the relationship.
- c) Be sensitive to the person's culture and religious environment.
- 3) Learn to share the good news everywhere, but especially while 'hanging out.'
Make time for it.
- 4) As you are talking, pray in your spirit for God to open a door to share. He almost always will.
- 5) Don't be too selective as to with whom you will share the news. You'll be surprised by who is open to the gospel and who the person of peace might be.
- 6) Draw the net.
 - a) Healthy evangelism involves sowing and reaping. Sow frequently, and frequently attempt to draw the net.

Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel.