

Share The Gospel
First Baptist Church Dandridge
April-May 2024

Session Four: Flesh On The Bones/Conversational Pathways

Prepared to Improvise

"In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." – 1 Peter 3:15

1. **Be Prepared:** In order to be faithful evangelists, we need to prepare ourselves with biblical knowledge and doctrine, answers to difficult questions, godly wisdom for hard situations, and a good understanding of how the world thinks. Such preparation takes time and discipline.
2. **Be Creative:** When it comes to gospel conversations, merely repeating an orderly guide (e.g., "Two Ways to Live," the "Romans Road," etc.) will often come across as canned, mechanical, and unnatural. We must learn to use these guides as the backbone of our conversation, but be able to "improvise and express the gospel in our own words and style, and in a way that fits the particular conversation we're having" (59). (e.g., "You don't have to go to church to be a Christian." No, not technically. But, being a Christian means that you follow Jesus as Lord, and Jesus has called us to meet together on a regular basis. We do this to worship, grow, and encourage one another. If we don't meet for worship, we're outside of God's will). We must learn how to bring people to the truth through conversation. Sometimes this requires communicating the truth by asking good questions, using analogies and stories, and giving personal testimony.
3. **Be Kind:** One of the most overlooked aspects of this verse is mentioned last: "*Yet do it with gentleness and respect.*" We don't want to do anything that hinders the gospel, nor do anything that damages our witness.
 - **Group Discussion:** Why is this final aspect really important? How are we tempted to do the opposite?

Conversational Pathways

1. Continuing the Conversation

- a. **Quote:** “Of course, in talking about ‘conversations’ and how they unfold, nothing is mechanical or certain. Conversations are messy, unstructured, personal, unpredictable, and often interrupted. And most importantly, they consist of two or more people, any one of whom can take the conversation off in any direction at any time. All the same, with some thought and care and boldness, there are things we can do to make the most of the opportunities that come, and to ‘speak the truth in love’ (Eph 4:15) in everyday conversation with our friends” (66).
- b. **Flipping the Script:** We must learn to take whatever a person is talking about and relate it back to the gospel. People are always talking about something, usually personal problems or current issues. We must learn to answer their deepest questions through the gospel message.
 - **Example:** A person might be upset over the wars in Israel and Ukraine, or our failed justice system, or the economy, or how someone they know has been abused or hurt, etc. Our natural response might be to give our personal opinion about the matter. However, these issues are an open door to discuss the content of point two in “Two Ways to Live,” which outlines how we’ve all rejected and rebelled against God, which has led to pain and judgment. Then we turn the conversation back to point one, which details how God created us for his glory and personal fellowship and blessing. However, God sent Jesus to restore us (points four and five), and we must respond to him in faith and repentance to receive forgiveness and eternal life (point six). Even though our world is sinful, corrupt, and broken, God promises to restore the world into a perfect place, removing pain, suffering, sin, and death, and giving these blessings to those who know him. That’s the solution to the world’s problems!
- c. **Telling Your Story:** One of the best ways to communicate the gospel is to tell our story about becoming a follower of Christ. This story is often called our “testimony.” Our testimony is not the gospel, but it bears witness to the power of the gospel. However, there are some important principles about telling our story.
 - **Prepare to Be Clear and Concise:** When we tell others how we can know Jesus, we need to be prepared with the most essential details. We may not have long, or we don’t need to confuse or distract them with unneeded detailed. We

also must be careful not to use “Christian jargon,” which may not be understood by unbelievers (e.g., rather than saying “regeneration,” say, “Jesus changed my heart.” The word “regeneration” is important and needs to be taught, but not during an initial conversation with someone who might be confused by the word.

- **Make Jesus the Hero, Not Yourself:** While there are many details that relate to how our lives changed, we must be sure to emphasize all that Jesus did (e.g., perfect life, death, burial, resurrection, eternal reign, grace, forgiveness, etc.). Also, don't over-emphasize how sinful you were, almost like you're proud of how bad you used to live.
 - **Make Jesus the Hero, Not Who Told You:** Even though we may have turned to Jesus after hearing a powerful sermon or through a discussion with a prominent person, “don't tell it in such a way that magnifies the messengers and minimizes the content of the message
- d. **Using the Bible as a Conversation Starter:** The Bible is the best-selling book of all time. Many secular people are familiar with the more popular stories of the Bible. It's wise to use such stories as conversation starters.
- **Tell a Story from the Gospels:** Try telling the Parable of the Prodigal Son, or Jesus' encounter with Nicodemus or the Samaritan woman by the well, or discuss Jesus' final days. These stories will help people see the need for a Savior.
 - **Invite Someone to Read the Bible:** Ask a prospect to read the Bible along with you. Use a Bible reading plan and meet for discussion. You can invite another believer to join you. When you arrive at key gospel passages, use these places to give a full explanation of our need for Christ and how to follow him in faith.