

Identify Common Ground, Based on God's Word and Authority

(Lesson IV: Conversational Evangelism – Second Type of Conversation)

➤ = next PowerPoint slide

➤ Intro:

- continue series on Conversational Evangelism

➤ Review this series: Conversational Evangelism

- What is Conversational Evangelism

- sharing God's word with people in everyday conversation, rather than in a formal class
 - normally, conversations lead to home study or attending church, leads to obedience to Christ
 - rarely, lead to obedience without home study and visiting at church

- **illus.:** Pam and friend met 2 boys at bowling alley, came to church the next day, continued to come and visit at house, in a few weeks studied, one obeyed gospel that day and other a few weeks later

➤ - First two lessons:

- #1 Cultivate, Stimulate, and Recognize Opportunities
- #2 Review and Exemplify: Cultivate, Stimulate, and Recognize Opportunities – men helped

➤ - Next five lessons: – five different types of conversations we need to have with people

- #1 Learn About Them and Their Religion (Church) – last lesson
- #2 Identify Common Ground, Based on God's Word and Authority – this lesson
- #3 Help Them Understand What They (and their church, religion) Believe
- #4 Introduce Bible Teaching in Everyday Conversation
- #5 Overcome Objections

➤ In general, how do we establish common ground, based on God's word?

- identify areas you have in common with people

- Acts 22:1-5 Paul established common ground with the Jews who sought to kill him, before preaching the truth
- it's important that people know we can relate to them, and that they can relate to us

➤ - identify doctrinal areas both parties agree upon

- Acts 26:2-3, 26-27 Paul used his doctrinal common ground with Agrippa when trying to convince him of the truth
- not that you should ignore areas of disagreement at this point, but focus on developing a relationship on the areas you agree before moving into the areas of disagreement
- these areas you can use later when teaching regarding areas there is disagreement

➤ **Bible example of establishing common ground**

- **1 Cor. 9:19-23** Paul “**bent over backwards**” to establish common ground with people, to save them

- **What should we do?** - everything we can, lawfully, to establish common ground, become friends, so we can teach people

- **What does God think when we don’t seek to establish common ground, like Paul?** - lazy? - not care?

➤ **Present-day examples of establishing common ground – ask questions, discuss, commend**

- **Col. 4:5-6** **walk in wisdom** toward unbelievers, **make best of opportunity**

- **today: establish common ground, building relationships** to we can talk to people

- **79% of people are going to a particular church because family or friend invited**

- **95% of people from the world who are converted, was attracted to the truth by first witnessing a Christian’s moral and religious life** - better when witness several Christians

- **that’s why people often visit several times (20 times on average)**, before they respond to an invitation to study, become a members, obey the gospel – they watch to see if the people live by the Bible, and whether they personally want to be like them

➤ - **religious living – common ground – ask questions, discuss, commend – use questions to stimulate audience**

- go to church / go to Bible study

- **say, “It looks like you go to church on Sunday. . . .”**

- read the Bible

- **ask, “Do you like to read the Bible?”** - give your answer and converse

- pray before meals - at home, restaurants, silently or aloud

- **if in their house and they have a prayer before eating**, commend, talk about why it is good

➤ - **moral standards – common ground – ask questions, discuss, commend – use questions to stimulate audience**

- chastity vs. fornication

- **ask what they think about a current event reflecting positive or negative sexual morals**, discuss

- not abusing drugs - not using alcohol, tobacco, etc.

- **discuss the effect drug abuse has on society**

- family is important, raising children in the Lord, helping each other get to heaven

- **if have good children**, commend on children and their parenting

- **discuss - tell about families at church**

- to cheat an employer is to cheat God

- **share experiences at work – feelings when people try to cheat employer**

➤ - **doctrine – common ground – ask questions, discuss, commend – use questions to stimulate audience**

- there is one God / Jesus is Son of God, Messiah

- God created the world

- prayer: how to pray, when to pray, what to pray about, what not to pray about

- there is only one absolute truth - Bible

- judgment, heaven, hell

➤ - **use the example of your life – all have sinned / all can be saved – common ground – ask questions, discuss, commend – use questions to stimulate audience**

- tell your story of coming to God: weakness, need for salvation, how God worked in your life, how God is working in your life today

➤ **When establishing common ground, set a precedent of using God's word as absolute standard of truth – use later when talking about areas of disagreement**

- **agree on issues based on God's word**

- **God's word is truth**

- **Jn. 17:17** God's word is truth

- **principle: You're either with God or against Him** - no gray area, fence straddling

- **principle: If we disagree, both of us can't be right** - one can be right or both can be wrong

- **everything we do must be according to God's word**

- **Col. 3:17** do all in the name of the Lord

- **2 Jn. 1:9** go too far and not abide in the teaching of Christ, not have God

- **1 Cor. 4:6** not exceed what is written

- **2 Tim. 3:16-17** use Bible, complete, every good work

- **principle: I believe it because it's in the Bible**

- **principle: I don't believe it because it's not in the Bible**

- **principle: I believe something different, because Jesus said something different**

- **principle: God doesn't give us all the "do not's", but He gives us all the "do's"**

- if God told us everything we're not to do. . . .

➤ - **establish precedent: agree on issues based on authority from God's word**

- Why aren't animal sacrifices acceptable to God in the church?

- **in the OT, but God changed the law, we live under the law of Christ, must obey Jesus**

- Why can't we add milk and cookies to Lord's Supper?

- **God specifically command unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, silent on anything else**

- Why aren't books written by men authoritative regarding our service to God?

- **God's word alone is the basis of all truth (Jn. 17:17; 1 Th. 2:13)**

- Why was Noah and his family saved, and everyone else lost?

- **because they obey the foolish command to build ark, when it had never rained (1 Pet. 3:21)**

- **purpose: later we can use these principles to teach the truth in areas of disagreement**

- **illus.: man-made instruments of music** in the assembly - relate to above, #1, 2

- **illus.: a church's catechism, manual, etc.** are not authoritative - relate above, #3

- **illus.: baptism saves us today, just as Noah** was saved in the ark - relate above, #4

➤ **During this time, continue to learn their vocabulary, know what the words mean, speak in a manner they know what you are saying – common ground requires common vocabulary**

- **if we can't effectively communicate regarding things we agree upon**, we will not be able to communicate regarding things we disagree upon

- **often times, the hardest part of teaching** people is learning how to communicate with them

➤ - **how:**

- use questions, to learn what certain terms mean to them

- use questions, to learn what terms they use for certain concepts

➤ - **if we don't:**

- spin our wheels, trying to communicate with people, saying one thing the means something different to them than what we are talking about

- **e.g., terms "repent" and "baptism" and "confession"** are used differently by different religious groups

➤ **Summary / Inv.**

- **sometimes we fail to bring people to Christ with the gospel, because** we've not laid the ground work

- **if we have Paul's attitude**, we'll win the most people we can

- though I'm free from all men, I make myself a slave to all, so I may win more

- I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some

- I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it

- **inv.:** first thing you have to do to bring people to Christ is be a faithful Christian yourself