

Learning To “Speak Jesus”

Steve Dewhirst

Essential to the spread of the gospel is a willingness of disciples to speak their faith. It is one-on-one influence that has led more people to Christ than anything else since Pentecost. When we mention the importance of “speaking Jesus,” many begin to feel a sense of fear and dread, as though we were discussing performing an impossible task. We make it harder than it is. Many believe only “professionals” can teach God’s word effectively. But that’s part of the problem: most “professionals” stay ensconced in ivory towers, never teaching anyone. And besides, the work of evangelism is the work of every able disciple. Consider how we can help ourselves in this great work.

Earnest prayer. It’s not that we don’t pray; it’s that we don’t always pray for the right thing. How often have we heard men ask in public prayer that this church will continue to be an influence in this community? What influence? If the people who comprise the church are not active in trying to share the gospel in this community, we’re having no influence! A local church doesn’t influence a community by merely existing, especially when most of us don’t live here. Being “open for business” means little. Instead, we should pray earnestly that God would open doors for us to share His word - and we must really mean it. Paul wrote, “*Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving; meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word...*” (Col. 4:2-3). We don’t need idle, halfhearted prayers that pay lip-service to seeking the lost. We need earnest and oft-repeated prayers for God’s help. And we also need to pray that our hearts are willing and eager. Many of us lack motivation, not know-how. Pray that God will stir us up to see the urgent need for taking the gospel to others.

We must learn to mention spiritual things in everyday conversation. This is what it means to “speak Jesus”; simply referring to Him in normal discussions with people. Why should we think it so difficult? If the Lord is truly in our hearts, shouldn’t He also be on our lips? As Jesus explained, “*where your treasure is, there will your heart be also*” (Matt. 6:21). The question I have to ask myself is not, “Do I know how to teach the Bible,” but, “Is Jesus really in my heart?”

Perhaps one reason Jesus isn’t always in our hearts as He should be is because we lose the sense of urgency and passion we once had for salvation. Over time, that passion can cool to the point that we take our Christianity for granted. We settle into the routine of “going to church” and “serving the Lord” through ritualistic worship. Shame on us. The Lord is looking for men and women with a passion for salvation in Christ and for those souls still in desperate need of the Savior.

So how do we “speak Jesus”? We simply talk about Him. We refer to God and spiritual things in normal conversation with people. There’s no secret formula. There are no magic words. It just takes normal language in normal conversations. How difficult is it to ask, “Hasn’t the Lord given us a beautiful day today?” And if we’re bold enough to ask someone about his relationship to the Lord, they may be quick to change the subject. But that’s the nature of fishing. You don’t catch every fish and shouldn’t expect to. But occasionally, spiritual words will resonate with someone and you’ll have a conversation on your hands. Here is your opportunity! You can invite people to sit with you and read God’s word together. You can invite them to be a part of a Neighborhood Bible Study. You can invite them to a regular Sunday assembly, although more private settings are most effective these days. The choice is yours. A few words fitly spoken can have eternal consequences for people we meet.

What if we have already tried to talk with those we know about the Lord and have run out of prospects? Then it's time to broaden our base of acquaintances. Our lives rotate around family, work, and church. For the most part, we see the same people all the time. We might be able to increase acquaintances when our kids are active in school or sports, but not everybody has that option. So what do we do?

To be sure, we can't just sit around bemoaning the fact that we don't know who to talk to! We must get out of our comfort zone and into the world around us. *If we're serious about taking the gospel to people, we must first take ourselves to the people.* It means we must become active and involved in our communities. Volunteer at the hospital or local library. Join Rotary or the Boys and Girls Club. Build houses with Habitat for Humanity. The opportunities are endless.

Immediately people will protest, "But I don't have time." It's true that some of us have more time than others. But let's be honest. Very often we're just too selfish with our time. Or maybe we don't manage our time well enough to allow for anything extra in our lives. Yet somehow we find time for what's important to us, don't we? Taking the gospel to others *must become important* to us. It is not an "intrusion" into my life to spend time leading others to Christ. It should be a normal part of discipleship. It's what Christians do.

So what about us? We share with the apostles the mandate to "*Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.*" The world isn't going to come to us; we must get up and go to the world.