

# Basic Principles of Evangelism

Every Christian should be seeking the lost. While everyone may not be skilled enough to actually open the Bible and direct a lost person to Jesus, it should be the hope of everyone to one day be able to do so. Let me suggest some commonsense guidelines about teaching for your consideration.

1. There should be enough **time** to teach. Moving through a checkout line or filling your gas tank does not give you the time to bring a lost soul to Christ. While I have been some grocery lines where I could have read "War & Peace" usually there is not enough time to do a proper job of teaching. In John 3 Nicodemus came to Jesus in the evening and I suppose they had all night to talk. The woman at the well in John 4 spent a good portion of the afternoon learning from Jesus. Since our goal is instruction, proper time is very important. Grocery lines and gas stations are excellent places to invite to a class or recommend a study. Much more than that can be fruitless.
2. The **location** needs to be conducive to study. Sometimes circumstances demand a difficult place, like in Acts 16, where Paul and Silas had success with the Philippians jailor but most often a quiet, private place like a living room or kitchen table can be found.
3. There should be the least amount of **competition** for attention to your study. Turn off the TV, radio, computer, iPod and anything else that competes for their attention. Also, large groups are usually the least desirable settings for teaching. Questions that might be asked privately by one member of the group can easily go unasked. The group dynamic replaces the personal dynamic. One persons' desire to defend a false statement will usually overwhelm another person's desire to ask any questions. Angry or disinterested relatives in the same room or house can stifle real study.
4. Are you **prepared** to teach? Sometimes people launch into areas where they discover they are not nearly as prepared as they thought. They may be unfamiliar with either the specific topic or the false doctrines taught about the topic. It takes time and work to be prepared. Simply listening to the local preacher present lessons refuting Calvinism does not necessarily prepare you to deal with some of the thorny questions that might be asked. Preparation takes time and effort.
5. Is the student a serious seeker or are they a personal worker themselves who is trying to teach you? The way you prepare for each person is different. It takes **greater preparation** and much more study to deal with someone who is trying to teach you. Here are three simple rules I use when studying with a person who is trying to teach me. 1. You need to limit the study to about an hour. 2. You must avoid interrupting each other. 3. You must agree to stay at one passage until you both agree to move to another. These rules have helped me have a controlled study with people who would have otherwise felt free to ignore all three and launch into a confusing and fruitless waste of time.
6. You need to feel comfortable enough with **your knowledge** of the Bible so that you can really listen to what they are saying instead of thinking about what you

are going to say in reply. This level of knowledge and confidence takes time and experience. You need to listen and they need to sense that you are really listening. This builds a rapport between you so that you can relate to each other in your study.

7. You must be in **control of your emotions** to the point that calmness and serenity are yours no matter what the topic. If you lose your emotional grip then all may be lost. People get revved up quickly when it comes to religion. Be calm!
8. Don't feel like you need to **disprove every false idea** they might believe in the first five minutes. Take a look at Acts 17:18 where Paul taught the Epicureans & Stoic philosophers. These two groups held unbiblical ideas about life and personal conduct yet Paul did not start his sermon there, he started with the most basic belief about God. If he could win that battle the other problems would be relatively easy to handle. Some topics are more important than others. Deal with the most important. For instance, don't get into it with a Mormon Elder about why he cannot be an Elder. There are bigger fish to fry!
9. Learn to **start where they are** and go where they need to go. Certainly, there is a huge difference between a person who denies the inspiration of Scripture and someone who accepts inspiration but never knew they needed to be immersed for forgiveness. Each one needs to start in a different place.
10. Try to **use the same Bible** version when you study. Don't use difficult translations and don't use a paraphrase version. Difficult translations can be awkward and confusing. A paraphrase is just that, a paraphrase. It is not a literal translation. Also, using the same version and Bible will help if they cannot find Ezekiel 6. You can just point them to the page number in your Bible, which will be the same in theirs.
11. **Don't overwhelm** them with information. Chances are what is easy and familiar to you or me will be totally new material for the student. They may have never heard of Abraham, Noah or Moses. I have recently been studying with a forty-two year old man who had no idea who Abraham might be much less his Biblical significance. I had rolled past Abraham and was half way to Daniel before he stopped me and asked about Abraham. What was I thinking? I'll tell you what I was thinking. It was "I have this great, seamless presentation, and it won't be very good if I don't present it as a single unit." I was providing a veritable Tsunami of information when he could only handle a wading pool.
12. **Go slow** and don't use technical terms. They need to feel like they can understand all this, which they can if I give them a proper opportunity. It is a chance for them to learn, not a chance for me to show them how much I know.

Please bear in mind it is God who gives the increase (I Cor. 3:6). Whether I judge my efforts to be effective or ineffective is of no real consequence. I am just a worker out in the field. While I must work and do my best for God, the results do not depend on me. My Father is the one who is in control.