

Pr Mark Turner: The Master's Plan for Personal Evangelism (25/7/20)

A few weeks ago, we explored a passage in 2 Corinthians 5 that talked about God bringing reconciliation through the agency of His Son - Jesus. Our work, according to that passage, is to be an ambassador for that process of reconciliation.

Today, we will be continuing with a similar theme, through a passage in John 4. As we reflect upon the interaction between Jesus and the Woman at Jacob's Well described in John 4, let's take a masterclass from the great evangelist.

Throughout his ministry, Jesus was constantly seeing things in people that everyone else had missed. Instead of seeing a distraction, a nuisance, an unclean man or a dirty sinner, Jesus saw someone who needed to be ministered to.

For context, this story is presented in stark contrast to the story of Nicodemus in John 3. Because of the varied circumstances and needs, the response of Jesus is completely different.

John 4:1-26 - The Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well

In the beginning of the passage, John described the geographical journey that Jesus took from Judea toward Galilee. The text says that Jesus "needed to go through Samaria." However, this was not actually the only path that led to Galilee. In fact, most devout Jews would have preferred another path that completely avoided Samaria - as they were seen as mongrels and despised by the Jews.

Jesus though, uncompromised by the prejudices of the Jewish people, wanted to go through Samaria in order to minister to a Samaritan woman in need of Him.

1. Interact Socially - be intentional.

"Christ's method alone will give true success in reaching the people. The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. He showed His sympathy for them, ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. Then He bade them, 'Follow Me.'"

Ellen White, The Ministry of Healing pg 143

For most of us, we have to be intentional about meeting people with whom we can connect in a meaningful way that would give us opportunities to reach them. It could be joining a gym, joining a photography or garden club, whatever it is that we enjoy doing that will connect us with people in order to reach them.

2. Initiate Conversation - establish common ground.

Verse 7: "give me a drink."

When Jesus came to the well, He initiated the conversation with the woman. She was not going to do that, even though she needed Him.

When initiating this conversation, however, Jesus did not go in guns blazing by saying that she needs to be saved - or something similar. Instead, He establishes common ground by making her feel needed.

This is a way that we can build a context with the people all around us, building a friendship that could later lead to a gospel opportunity.

3. Arouse Interest - build curiosity.

Verse 9 & 10: *"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."*

Though it may look like Jesus has started to evangelise at this point, what He was actually doing was building curiosity by capturing her surroundings and cultural background. You could think of it as sowing a seed - to see if there was interest in going deeper.

Jeremiah 2:13 - *"for My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns - broken cisterns that can hold no water."*

When interacting with people, rather than unloading on them from the beginning, we should sow seeds that might capture their interest, awakening curiosity and allowing them to ask for more.

4. Awaken Desire - but don't go too far.

Once curiosity has been built, it is important to continue to awaken desire. However, we need to avoid getting carried away.

5. Allow Conviction.

"Jesus now abruptly turned the conversation. before this should could receive the gift He longed to bestow, she must be brought to recognise her sin and her Saviour."

Ellen White, The Desire of Ages, pg 187

Verse 16: *"Go, call your husband, and come here."*

"There was nothing odd about this request, since it was not proper for a woman to receive religious instruction unless it was sanctioned by the head of the house."

Robert Coleman, The Master's Way of Personal Evangelism

This is not done to shame people. But to help them have the necessary experience that would prepare them to receive the gift of God - something that cannot be truly received without perceiving the need for it.

6. Avoid Condemnation.

While allowing the woman to feel a sense of conviction, He simultaneously avoids condemnation.

7. Answer Questions - but don't get side-tracked.

Verse 21-24: *"The hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Jesus was able to delicately balance answering her questions, while at the same time not getting side-tracked from the greater need.

This is something that we need to be conscious of, because sometimes we don't respect a persons questions well, as we are focussed only upon bringing them salvation.

8. Confront Directly / Call for Commitment.

After seeing her genuine conviction, Jesus invited her to make a decision that would see her living a better life.

John 4:28-35

After this encounter, the woman could not help but go and share about her newfound experience with Messiah. And, as a result, a large portion of a community came running to meet the man who had changed her life.

John 4:40-42