

How Do I Tell My Friends About Christ?

(appropriate for Mid Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, March 2012

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

(Portions taken from Rev. John S. Mahon, Grace Community International, Houston, TX)

When you meet with your friends what are some of the common things you talk about?
(make a list on the board)

Its natural to talk about these things.

How common is it to talk about death, judgment, and eternal life? These things are unnatural.

Satan has set things up so that talking about death, judgment, and eternal life will not happen naturally. If you are waiting for a natural turn in the conversation to smoothly transition into the Gospel it rarely happens.

Why is the Gospel such an unnatural thing to talk about?

Romans 5:8-10

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.⁹ Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.¹⁰ For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

One reason is because we are bringing two enemies together for reconciliation.

Reconcile: to restore to friendship or harmony

It is not natural for enemies to become friends!

I Corinthians 1:18-25

For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.¹⁹ For it is written, "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND THE CLEVERNESS OF THE CLEVER I WILL SET ASIDE."²⁰ Where is the wise man? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?²¹ For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not *come to* know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.²² For indeed Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom;²³ but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness,²⁴ but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.²⁵ Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Another reason that talking about the Gospel is unnatural is because most people are perishing and for them the Gospel sounds like foolishness or nonsense. Talking about nonsense is unnatural!

II Timothy 4:1-5

I solemnly charge *you* in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom:² preach the word; be ready *in season and out of season*; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction.³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but *wanting* to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires,⁴ and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.⁵ But you, be sober in all things, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

What does it mean to be ready “in season and out of season”? Its like being a farmer who is working the field with his tractor. If we see him doing this during harvest time or planting time it seems natural because he is working “in season”. But what if we saw the farmer working his field in the middle of a winter blizzard with 3 feet of snow on the ground? Yet there he is going up and down the field in his tractor. That would be unnatural! Yet God tells us to preach the word both “in season and out of season”.

In other words there will be times when its going to be unnatural.

So, what do we need to do?

I Peter 3:15

but **sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts**, always **being ready** to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;

I Peter 1:13

Therefore, **prepare your minds** for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ

The most important thing we can do is prepare. Prepare our heart, prepare our defense, and prepare our mind. What are some of the specific things we need to do to be prepared?

- 1) Prayer – pray for the people you want to talk to about Christ. That God would give you the time with them, that they would be open, that they would understand, and that you would have the courage to bring it up with them. Also pray for God to help you prepare.
- 2) Memorize the Bridge Illustration and be ready to use it.
See “The Gospel For Youth Ministries” at this link: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>
- 3) Have a piece of paper and pen in your shirt pocket at all times that you can use to draw the Bridge Illustration on.

You will need about 20 minutes with the person without interruption. If you are in that situation what would be a question you could ask them to get things started?

Key Point: Its best to ask a direct yes/no question so that the discussion does not get derailed to a side issue.

(We’ll talk more about side issues later)

Perhaps we could say something like:

“I once saw an illustration that ties the whole Bible together. Would you like me to show it to you?”

(Let’s practice. Turn to your neighbor and take turns saying this to each other).

That came out of nowhere! Why would anyone say yes to such a question?

There are many reasons why a friend might say yes to such a question but the Bible says that there is a spiritual reason that is so powerful that even a stranger will sometimes answer yes to this question!

II Corinthians 2:14-16

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. ¹⁵ For we are **fragrance of Christ** to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; ¹⁶ **to the one an aroma from death** to death, **to the other an aroma from life** to life. And who is adequate for these things?

When we share God's truth with others we give off a spiritual fragrance – to those who are being saved it is the pleasant fragrance of life but to those who are perishing that same fragrance smells like the stench of death. When I was a freshman in college (as a nonchristian) one of the guys on my dorm floor was talking to me as we were washing our hands in the restroom. He introduced himself and said, "I'm having a Bible study in my room next Tuesday. Would you like to come?" Now, I didn't know anything about this guy. He was a complete stranger. He could have been a mass murderer for all I knew. But when I looked at him something inside me said, "You have to go! You have to go!" So, I said "yes". A few months later I became a Christian because of that study.

But if I was someone who was perishing I would have reacted to him as if I had smelled a decomposing body!

OK, now turn to your neighbor and look at them. While you are looking at each other I want you both to make a face as if you had just smelled a decomposing human body.

How might it feel if someone were to look at you like they just smelled a decomposing body? Not pleasant. Sometimes when you ask the question to start the Bridge Illustration that is the response you will get. If that happens to you don't worry about it. There is nothing wrong with you. You didn't do anything wrong. The fact is that those who are perishing are going to respond that way.

(II Timothy 1:8-9)

Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with *me* in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God,⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity,

But if they are heading toward salvation they will respond to you as if you were giving off the sweet perfume of eternal life – they will say, "yes".

If they say "yes" you pull out your paper and go through the Bridge Illustration.

One advantage for drawing out the Bridge Illustration is that some people feel uncomfortable talking about these kinds of things while looking you in the eye. Having an illustration that you both look at makes it easier and less threatening for them. This is particularly true for boys because boys are more comfortable doing things together instead of only talking.

What if They Say "No"?

If they say, "no" you say "OK" and just sit there until they say something – no matter how long you have to wait!

The worst thing you can do in this situation is to try to keep talking about it. They already said "no" so to keep talking about it shows a lack of respect for them.

The second worst thing you can do is for you to start talking about something else. Don't change the subject.

Just sit quietly and wait. After a while they will either change the subject themselves and start talking about something else (which is fine) or they will start asking you questions about God, the Bible, Church, etc. Go ahead and talk with them about whatever they bring up. There will be other days when you can ask again about the Bridge Illustration.

Side Issues

Sometimes when we are sharing the Gospel with a non Christian a side issue will come up. A side issue is something about God or the Bible that is not critical to understanding salvation but is brought up either as a legitimate question or as a challenge. Some of these are legitimate questions. Others are more along the lines of wanting to start an argument.

Satan loves to bring up side issues to get the Gospel off the table. When he does this how should we respond?

II Corinthians 5:18-20

Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, ¹⁹ namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.

We need to respond the way an ambassador would. How do ambassadors respond when challenged by someone from another country?

Usually they are humble, respectful, and kind. They will often verbally acknowledge those elements of truth in the other person's statement and then calmly state their answer. We need to do the same.

II Timothy 2:24-26

The Lord's bond-servant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, ²⁵with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, ²⁶and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

We also need to be patient and gentle because the other person is a captive of satan and does his will. We are in the middle of a spiritual battle between satan and the Holy Spirit so don't take anything the other person says personally.

How to Deal with Side Issues

- 1) The first rule of side issues is: Don't bring them up yourself! This happens more often than you might think and derails the Gospel. Discipline yourself to only bring up something if it is critical for salvation. One of the nice things about preparing yourself by memorizing the Bridge Illustration is that it keeps you focused on the Gospel and helps you not derail yourself by bringing up side issues.
- 2) Some side issues are not important. They are style issues of various denominations. What are some examples? (ex: why do Catholics baptize one way and Baptists another?) If the side issue is not really important, its just a personal preference or style issue, just say that and start the Bridge Illustration.
- 3) Some side issues are important but you don't know the answer. Say, "I don't know but I'll find out and get back to you in a few days but right now lets go through this illustration – it may answer some of your other questions". Make sure you don't forget to find the answer to their question and get back to them with it.
- 4) Some side issues are important and you know the answer but its not quick or easy to explain. Say, "Excellent question. I've studied that quite a bit but the explanation is kind of long. Let's go through this illustration first then we can talk more about that". If they insist on talking about the side issue go ahead and do that. Perhaps you can share the Bridge with them some other time. Examples of these kinds of questions are things like Evolution or Age of the Earth.
- 5) Some side issues are important, you know the answer, and its relatively quick to explain. In this situation if the answer is not controversial go ahead and answer it but get back to the illustration quickly. If the answer is controversial compared to the culture you live in then answer the same as you would in number 4. The reason is that if the answer is likely to be viewed as controversial then a long discussion may start so even though the answer may seem quick to you the result is that it will end up being long. In America's post-modern culture the answer to most of their questions are likely to be viewed as controversial so, in general, its best to answer these questions the same way you would #4. (Example: Is being gay a sin?)

Once you are done with the Bridge give them the paper to keep. This will help keep things clear in their mind when satan comes to steal the word away.

(Matthew 13:18-19)

“Hear then the parable of the sower. ¹⁹ When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil *one* comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.

Even after you have shared the Gospel with them in a clear manner they may not understand. Why is that?

II Corinthians 4:3-5

And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, ⁴ in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus' sake.

Because satan can blind the minds of the unbelieving so that they can't understand it. This is why it is so important to pray for them ahead of time.

Conclusions

Its not natural to talk about the Gospel but God wants us to do it anyway.

We need to be prepared ahead of time by praying for people, memorizing the Bridge Illustration, and being ready to share it.

Start with a simple yes/no question so as not to get sidetracked.

People are reacting to your spiritual fragrance, not to you personally. Those who are perishing will react as if smelling a dead body. Those who are being saved will react as if smelling a wonderful perfume.

Handle side issues like an ambassador and move them back toward the Bridge Illustration if possible. Don't be pushy. If they are not ready today there will be other days. God is in control.

Appendix

Sharing the Gospel is hard!

That is why one of the five special rewards or crowns is given for faithfulness in sharing the Gospel

See “Eternal Rewards – Compilation” at this link: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

I Thessalonians 2:9,19-20

⁹For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁹For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? ²⁰For you are our glory and joy.

Matthew 10:32-33

“Therefore everyone who confesses Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

Mark 8:38

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”

Luke 12:8-9

“And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man will confess him also before the angels of God; ⁹ but he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How Do I Tell My Friends About Christ?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Romans 5:8-10*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 1:18-25*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 4:1-5*

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JEREMIAH 15:16

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 3:15, I Peter 1:13*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 2:14-16*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 1:8-9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Timothy 2:24-26*

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PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 13:18-19*

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QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *How Do I Tell My Friends About Christ?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 4:3-5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Thessalonians 2:9, 19-20*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 10:32-33, Mark 8:38, Luke 12:8-9*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

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