

1 Easy Way to Reach People for Christ

I was never good at talking to girls. From an early age, I saw them as a mysterious group with whom it was nearly impossible to communicate. Whenever I did attempt to communicate with them, it would always end badly. My mouth would go dry, and I would stumble over my words.

I would argue that for many of us evangelism, or simply sharing our faith, leaves us the same way. We either miss the opportunity or stumble on our words, or our mouths dry up rather than being able to speak clearly.

I recently stood with a friend who was asked by a total stranger what Christians believed. The sheer panic led him to try to cram everything he could into a sentence before the stranger zoned out. I almost had to put a hand on his shoulder and tell him to breathe.

So when it comes to sharing our faith, where do we start? Sin? Jesus? Resurrection? Do we go with something more palatable and vague? What about love? Everyone wants a bit of love, don't they?

The truth is there are some words that unlock conversation and some words that close conversation. A good example is "sin." Sin has been used for so long to bash people, the whole concept has become too familiar so people roll their eyes and shrug their shoulders and give us a "yeah yeah, tell me something I don't know."

So what do we do? Do we skip over sin? How can we? Sin is central to the gospel. Without sin we are left with a Jesus who came to do some miracles, but the cross becomes a lost symbol rather than a cataclysmic moment of salvation.

I minister in the heart of the east end of London. In fact, we planted a church here five years ago with the desire to reach a profoundly poor and lost community. As a population, we are 65 percent Muslim, so Jesus has to be front and center of all we do. But with a community that has become disillusioned with the idea of sin and a community that sees Jesus as nothing but a prophet, we have a hard job on our hands. Because of this, we have had to rethink how we tell God's story so others will connect.

Here are some things we have been learning these last few years.

Start With Them

Hearing their story gives you a route in. Whatever their story is, Jesus is always good news. That's the point; it's just working out how to connect the two.

"I love hearing how much you enjoy creation."

"It kills me you experienced that."

"It's exciting you love being hospitable."

By starting with their story, you're showing them you genuinely care and want to interact rather than argue and talk. Anyone can do that. The other great thing is that because we are not trying to argue about what's right or be clever with our words, there is no need for us to become tongue-tied. Unlike the teenage boy who is trying to impress the girl and his mouth becomes dry, we're not trying to impress—we're trying to listen.

Stories

People love telling stories and talking about their lives. Everyone has a story to tell: stories of heartbreak, suffering, joy and wonder. People love to tell stories—that's

why people love talking about their grandchildren or their last holiday. If you have time to listen, then people will talk and tell you so much of their lives. I think most people aren't listened to but are talked at. They turn on their TV or computer, and it's a one-way communication. So when you listen to them, they will love to talk. I recently found myself chatting to a woman who obviously doesn't get listened to very often. I stood listening to her, and after a few minutes, she paused and started to giggle before carrying on. It was like she realized, "He's still listening."

Sin

People can't see their sin, but they can see the consequences of sin around them. This is a great starting place. You could say people are happy to lie but don't like the consequences when caught lying. People like being self-centered until someone does it to them. Showing the consequences of sin in the world around and how it destroys people, friendships and families can help them as you slowly unravel how sin is silently prowling and damaging the world around. People often can see sin in others before themselves. That's certainly true of myself.

Pointing or Dragging?

For me, evangelism is hearing stories and telling stories. Simply put, evangelism is pointing to Jesus in telling my story. It's not about trying to drag people kicking and screaming into the Jesus Camp. It's about pointing to the one we follow and inviting others to follow with you. Jesus never talks about joining clubs, but He does talk about following where He is going.

Our role isn't to bash people with the Good News; it's to help them see that Jesus can take their struggles and carry them or take their passions and use them. The good news is no matter what we are going through Jesus is always real to deal with

and be the solution. Deep down people want to know God values them and wants to involve them, but sadly they feel they have nothing to offer.

Positive Words

In the same way some words lock down conversations, some words open up. Words that affirm and show love will always open people up. I sat with a young kid as he told me about how he loved music and producing music. As we talked, I told him God was so pleased with his creativity and loved to hear what he produced. The kid was amazed I would say such a thing. As I affirmed him, I asked him what he thought about God using his music to bring people together, encourage community and breathe life into others. The kid could not imagine God wanted to do that. We chatted, and I explained God was passionate about using his music and couldn't think of anything better. He was so affirmed that this conversation became the start of a relationship where he learned about his sin. He went on to learn that before he even knew there was a problem, Jesus had already dealt with the solution. The good news is he is now training to be a pastor.

Sharing our faith doesn't need to be worrisome or hard—it just needs to be authentic. We don't need to be clever, but honest, truthful and real. We don't need more “evangelists”; we need more honest followers of Jesus pointing people to Him. What the world is looking for are people who are willing to tell stories that invite people closer into the place of God's presence. I'm convinced we can all do that.

Cris Rogers (@Rabbirogers) took on the leadership of an Anglican church that had shrunk to seven people and is situated in one of the toughest estates in London. Cris and his family moved to Tower Hamlets with the desire of restarting the church. Five years later, the church is 160 people strong. He is an executive producer of *Intersect: Where Your Story and God's Story Converge*, a resource for those in

the church to engage those who might not yet be ready to step foot inside its walls. Visit for more information.