

# Making evangelism a way of life

## Telling the story like Jesus.

- Words.
- How do we tell people about Jesus?
- Majority of people who would say no to an invite to an event or church...how do we reach them?
- Jesus. How did he communicate?
- What did he communicate?
- What tools, skills, practices and patterns of Jesus can we use with randomers and regulars in our lives?

## The story of Jesus.

All the stories of the Bible are leading up to the cross or are leading away from that story. The reason that I include Jesus in my story are the changes and transformation in my own life because of him.

## Story of the sower, seeds and soils.

Mark 4 v 10. Given insight into the Kingdom.

### We know how it works.

Describes those we are sent to and how we are to communicate.

Stories that get told by us, creates a readiness in those who hear and begins to nudge them towards seeing. At the moment they cannot see what we are talking about/describe. As we share the impact of Jesus in our own lives, something gets nudges towards them seeing it.

Mark 4 v 13 Do you see how this story works?

He answers his own question. All my stories work this way.

**Our stories about Jesus creates a readiness in the one who hears and nudges them towards seeing.**

## God loves small things, small moments. He can make something big from the small.

- Mustard seed grew to a tree.
- A lamp that lights up a room.
- Yeast that becomes a loaf.

### What we bring is very small.

We are surrounded by people who have lives apparently 'sorted'. Who are living full and busy lives. Our seed is small and that's how God likes it. We move from small to big. Too often we aim to do or create something big rather than leave something small knowing its potential to become something big.

## How did Jesus speak to people?

- Jesus made connections with people.
- Connecting conversations.
- Jesus with the woman at the well.

- Jesus is not in any way uncomfortable being on someone else's turf and on someone else's terms.
- Being on the hearers 'turf' puts them at the advantage. Not us.

**We don't get to set the terms but we do get to test the water.**

Historically people would have been invited to church or to an event (not a bad thing and for some it still works) but if you remember back to the first week of exiles, this is no longer how society/those around us generally structure their lives. The church is no longer the scaffolding for many peoples lives. For those who accepted the invitation there was almost an unspoken agreement between the one invited, the one inviting and the church activity that at some point there would be a God conversation.

We no longer live our lives where that unspoken agreement exists. On our street, in our halls of residence, where we work and our social network the rules at play, spoken or unspoken may be against conversations deemed to be religious or about belief. This needs great dexterity to navigate if that is your context. How do you bring up or start a conversation about Jesus? This is exactly the place where the Kingdom of God conversations can happen and probably need to happen. As we step onto someone else's turf, into their life, it is their unspoken rules that are at play and not the ones we might prefer. We must become willing to be the weaker partner within any conversation about Jesus.

- Jesus settles himself down and becomes comfortable in the world of the woman at the well. He sets aside culture and expectations of those immediately around him (his disciples on this occasion).
- He allows a connection to become more than a pragmatic conversation (a drink of water). Jesus is humble, acknowledging his need, placing himself (gives power to the hearer rather than any need to be in control) at the mercy of the woman and a rapport is established.

**This rapport, the connection is now filled with:**

- Two way conversation/chat.
- Jesus takes the conversation seriously by allowing her to lead the conversation (her power in the conversation and freedom to leave the conversation is never diminished by Jesus).
- He listens and goes with the tangents that pop up.
- He doesn't try to control the conversation.
- He uses her words and her questions to draw the conversation further and deeper.

**Her life, whether good or bad is the only starting point there can ever be.**

A person isn't ever 'not in the right place'. They are in exactly the right place, in front of you, in your life, your neighbour, friend, colleague. That puts them in the right place.

They may self describe as not being in the right place, not a good person or someone who does not believe.

Whatever their story, they are made in God's image and at the same time and equally as true, they are fallen.

They are with you and God is willing to show up.

- We need to step into the other person's world before inviting them into ours.

- We need to see the world through their eyes and listen to their observations of the world, their questions and belief systems.
- Use their words and their observations to paint a picture of what Jesus looks like in their world.
- Look for and identify the image of God in a person and speak of what you see (avoid religious or mood music language).
- Where I see fallenness I do not condemn but I try and invest seeds/Jesus into their lives.

Too often we call out another persons fallenness and don't focus on what may be the image of God already in them.

Everyone has fracture lines in the lives they live. Grace, Humility and Mercy are the way any fallenness or fractures are met.

### **Speak primarily to the Soul of a person and secondarily to the mind.**

We see Jesus do this with the woman at the well and the man lowered through the roof, the internal life was spoken to before the external life (though both were spoken to). Jesus perceives and then speaks not to what was being said but to what was not being said. We speak to the depth of people.

The two disciples on the Emmaus road. Jesus speak to their minds in addressing questions they had about the scriptures but after the experience they say, 'did not our hearts burn within us', Jesus had been speaking to what was in them, the longings, the disappointments, the hopes.

### **Connecting God into the FULL story of people around us.**

This is why their life as it is, is always the starting point and it is to be our place of connection.

## **Jesus tells a really good story.**

- He makes God accessible, real and immediate in the stories he tells. He describes aspects of the Kingdom as possible.
- His stories were external (farming, fishing, servants, kings) and internal (stress, anxiety, debt, anger, being misunderstood).
- He used the realities of his context and the realities of people's lives.
- He adds a third level to external and internal, he adds a twist. He deviates from other stories just as he is coming into land. The ending is unexpected. God is unexpected. He gives a new arrival point.
- People are left to negotiate with themselves how they sat with the unexpected. When people realise they may have to reframe how they view God, or themselves or their neighbour means they either walk out of the story or walk further towards it.
- Stories need to carry in them what is real/true.
- They must be accessible.
- Fit the context of the one listening (have sufficient overlap with the life the person is already in).

### **Introducing the twist.**

Twist 1

- A God people don't expect to meet with.

- A God who is accessible and a God who is immediate.
- Leaving the story. Jesus invites people to hear. The word often used for 'hear' means what are you going to do with what you hear? What will this look like in your life? What will you do?

#### Twist 2

- This God, this story... it is real in my life. Its who I am, its what my experience of Jesus is.

### **Jesus trusted the deeper truth of his story.**

The story of the sower, seed and soil.

- In first century palestine the seed was first sown and then ploughed in.
- There is only one soil in the field but different sections have different conditions.
- We have only one life with multiple conditions going on alongside each other.
- Somewhere there will be growth when seed gets ploughed into the breakpoints/fractures in people's lives.
- Jesus stories are left open ended. He doesn't corner people. He doesn't demand a response (other than from disciples...US!!!) from those who are still at the stage of being a listener. An open ended story leaves me and the hearer both able to return to an unfinished conversation/story.

### **Jesus makes a challenge.**

A growing invitation to would be disciples (see John's disciples who became the disciples of Jesus).

- Come and see (Jesus invitation to a new disciple)
- Come and see (the new disciples invitation to a family member)
- Come and see (another disciples invitation to a friend)
- They repeat what they have heard. They pass it on. They start to show what they have experienced.
- An invitation to observe God is not too difficult and people start to tell others.
- A shift happens in the invitation from come and see to come and follow. Come and see seems to happen far more often in the gospels than come and follow. I wonder if today we have we placed our weight on the wrong one.
- Helping people understand or see or experience God is not a conversation but it is a connection.
- Connections can lead to conversations and conversations can lead to conversions.
- Connection and conversion is what we do and conversion is what God and the person do, we need to have our focus on the first two .

### **Connections and conversations**

- Exposes people to Jesus being real in the substance of their lives.
- Following now looks like something they can put their minds to doing and their hearts can connect with.
- They get to see its outworking by being around your life.
- Connecting and conversation allows one of two things. It allows people to leave. It allows people to continue the come and see and move to come and follow.

- Its a lifetime of deciding to follow. It moves from come and see to come and follow. It then becomes lay down your life and take up your cross. Discipleship is a lifetime decision and deciding again and again as He calls us on.

Jesus honours people in their space and their place.

BUT if they (and we) are to follow him whether than be on our turf we follow on His terms. It is not a negotiation but we know the benefits of a life changed to be worth it. It is not without cost to follow Jesus.

## **Jesus keeps it simple.**

- They looked like the life of the person.
- They could imagine what they heard, they could see it in their life.
- Allow the story to be small. Your story might be as small as to say I will pray for you. To only do that is to miss the point, that would be 'ticking a box'. You are looking to give a tiny seed that will create greater connection and deeper conversations.
- Do not pass on complicated or inaccessible language or concepts.
- Don't pass on the warm and fuzzy feeling that has no substance or lingering thinking.
- What you pass on is what will be the seed that will grow up in that person's life.

EXTRA

You might find this helpful but it is an extra so busy people can ignore it!

This weeks observe yourself or others telling stories. This will require you to remember that you've just experienced story. How we naturally tell a story or pass on information is how we tell stories and pass on all information (by and large). It is our inbuilt natural and instinctive way to communicate. It isn't right or wrong but it is yours. We can freeze when we contemplate telling people about Jesus. If only we could do it in church hey! Then we could just pay someone to do it for us, we invite people and hey presto evangelism. Not anymore and in our gut we know that isn't how it works for the bulk of people in society. However we may have unwittingly taken the framework from church and try to apply it to our day to day world. We panic because we don't really want to open our bible in front of someone but that is how it works in church. We are more serious and focused in church so we think we need to speak to people with zero humour and kill off all tangents. It takes between 20 and 45 minutes to communicate anything in church AND it has a response. However your mouth dries up after 30 seconds when you talk about anything beyond your field of education and you hate the thought of conflict or asking anyone to do anything. At this point you have now eliminated yourself from any evangelism and dread the thought of ever having to open your mouth.

Evangelism should look like, feel like, sound like its you (and the Holy Spirit...but that is the job of the Spirit to sort out with you). When that happens you actually enjoy it. But like swimming you'd never start at the deep end. Start where you are.

And so an experiment for this week. Observing the stories people tell and your own.

When you become aware of a story being told, step outside of yourself and start watching. What made it natural to you (or the person speaking), what were its traits? Was it a monologue? Did it link

into the tellers life? Was it animated, have tangents, was it fun? How did it begin? Did it end or just blend into another conversation about something else.

Whether the observation was of a moment that was awkward or enjoyable you can learn how you naturally engage with people in word. These traits (the positive ones) are the ones that are going to be your best way of talking about Jesus to another person.

Another and a more stretching challenge. Tell someone this week about something that you are passionate about BUT NOT JESUS OR CHURCH. Again it's so you can step outside yourself and watch, learn and then make your practice when it comes to conversations about Jesus or Faith. You might talk about a hobby, a cause, a netflix series or national news. If you can observe yourself in conversation with a stranger and a conversation with a friend. It will be different though will still carry traits of what is natural to you.

If you do any of the above then let us all know what you learned and have fun with it.