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A PARENT'S GUIDE TO

EVANGELISM

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The unfortunate reality is that most adults don't seem to connect their everyday experiences with their faith. Or, at least, they aren't talking about it if they do... Christians in America today have to live in the tension between Jesus' commands to tell others the good news and growing cultural taboos against proselytizing—a core part of Christianity from its origins.

—Roxanne Stone, Barna

God So Loved the World, So Out of Love for Him, We Should, Too

What comes to mind when you think of evangelism? Going door to door? Handing out tracts? Walking through the wordless book or the bridge diagram? Maybe you think of times when you've had deep, positive conversations with people about your different beliefs.

How do your kids react to the idea of evangelism? When they think of sharing the Gospel, do they start feeling anxious and have no idea how to go about it, perhaps because they don't want to come across as pushy or awkward? Do they understand why sharing their faith is important? Do they think that putting "Love God & people" on their Instagram bios is evangelism?

Quite often, when we consider sharing our testimonies, we feel inadequate and [get an "imposter syndrome."](#) In addition, Christians have grown more reluctant to share our faith than we have been in the past. [According to Barna](#), in 1993, 89% of Christians agreed that all believers are responsible for sharing the Gospel. The number of people who agree with that idea now has dropped to 64%.

So what stops us from talking to people about the most important questions they could ever consider? Better yet, how can we live out our faith in daily life in a way that communicates what we believe even before we put those beliefs into words? How can we be more obedient in this area while helping our kids see it not solely as being obedient to God, but also as offering true, abundant life to the world around them?

What is the Gospel?

This might sound like a simple question with an easy answer, but is it? How would your teen answer this question? Simply put, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is good news, not just good news about what happens after death, but good news about life right here and right now. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God and prayed that it would be established "[on earth as it is in heaven](#)," which gives us a hint that the good news has a lot to do with what is happening socially, relationally, economically, politically, and globally. The Gospel isn't simply a prayer we pray or a statement of faith we make; it's a holistic way of living centered on the life, teachings, ministry, and resurrection of Jesus.

What stops Christians from sharing their faith?

Many of us who grew up in the Church have probably had some negative experiences or struggles with evangelism. One woman we talked to was encouraged to do cold evangelism (i.e., share the Gospel with random people she didn't know) on a university campus [using the bridge diagram](#). She was extremely uncomfortable with that model of evangelism at the time and is now convinced that such tactics are inadequate for reaching Gen Z.

In his article "[Why Is Evangelism So Hard?](#)" in *Outreach Magazine*, pastor and author Kevin Harney says that the main reasons why people don't share the Gospel are: spiritual warfare, fear (of rejection, their own ignorance, or being judged), and lack of training.

Another woman says that growing up she was taught some good principles for evangelism, but her overall vision for it was driven by fear more than anything else. One of the main reasons why is that she wasn't putting God first in her life, so love for God was not motivating her like it should have. Also, some people taught her that she needed to share the Gospel with basically anyone she knew or happened to meet, friend or stranger, or she'd be responsible for their souls.

Apathy is another significant reason why people don't share the Gospel. A lot of us simply don't care about reaching the lost as much as we care about living comfortable lives. Even though evangelism is his "calling and passion," Harney notes, "If I don't fan the flame and stay attentive to outreach, my heart can grow cold and my evangelistic activity will wane."

— What have we gotten wrong about evangelism?

Unfortunately, part of the reason why evangelism has gotten a bad rap is because, despite our good intentions, we often do it in ways that are harmful, not helpful. We believe that the following are misguided ways of doing evangelism:

- Approaching it as though we are the teachers and have nothing to learn.
- Thinking the people we're talking to have to make a commitment to Christ right away.
- Overly focusing on apologetics or debates, instead of experience or practice.
- Thinking that it only involves talking, rather than also being about living out one's faith for everyone to see, especially when it's hard or unpopular to do so.
- Not relying on or listening to the Holy Spirit.
- Expecting people to come to us (i.e. attend church) and not being willing to go to them.
- Approaching a person with answers to questions they aren't even asking.
- Following a formula to the neglect of wisdom.
- Speaking the truth without love.
- Thinking we can "love people to Jesus" without actually telling them who He is and what He came to do.
- Being afraid we'll offend people.

The approaches above are either based in fear or apathy. Whether we share the Gospel out of fear or ignore our responsibility to do so, our focus is self-centered because we're either relying on our own efforts or prioritizing our own comfort. Another issue with how we've tended to do evangelism is that it can be formulaic with little room for nuance and creativity. We're imperfect, sinful people, so all of these things were bound to happen at one point or another, but luckily God is bigger than our shortcomings. And luckily, we can learn from the past.

— How does culture influence how we evangelize?

Evangelism is not carried out in a vacuum, nor should it be. The audience we speak to and the culture we live in ought to inform how we approach sharing the Gospel. We know a Christian Chinese woman who says that doing cold evangelism is much easier in China than it is in the United States. A missionary in Jordan with whom we

spoke confirmed that it's also fairly easy to do street evangelism there because, even if the Jordanians are only nominal Muslims, they're still fairly religious and respect Jesus. Another difference about evangelism in Jordanian culture is that if you get a bit intense and animated while sharing your faith, people won't get offended. In fact, they will respect you more because they'll see your passion as confidence that you actually believe what you're saying.

If we look at how [Paul shares the Gospel in Acts 17](#), he uses different approaches depending on whether he's talking to Jews or Gentiles. With the Jews, he goes to the synagogues and reasons with them from the Scriptures, which they revere. But when he talks to Athenians and foreigners in Athens, he doesn't use Jewish scriptures, which would have meant nothing to them. He starts with something *they* revere, an idol to an "unknown god," and also references their own poets. It's also worth noting that, despite Paul's savviness with his approach, he doesn't shy away from proclaiming Jesus' resurrection from the dead, even though it was an outrageous thing to say and people mocked him for doing so.

For us, that means when we share the Gospel, we need to consider not just the nationality, education, upbringing, and wealth of the people we're speaking to, but also their ages. Yes, telling a member of the Baby Boomer generation about Jesus *should* look very different than speaking to a member of Generation Z. This doesn't mean that we change the Gospel itself or water it down, just that we change the metaphors, verbiage, body language, and even tone we use when speaking about it.

— Is there *any* place for cold evangelism?

We know someone with multiple family members who became Christians because someone was willing to knock on their door and share the Gospel with one of them. The missionary in Jordan we mentioned earlier also does door-to-door evangelism in the U.S., but a key part of her strategy is that she does it with someone else, and they offer to pray for the people they talk to (most people say yes to this). She and her teammate also ask the people if they go to church and if not, why not. This is not only an easy way to bring up the Gospel but also a way to encourage people to get involved in a community of believers.

So we think that believers should not discount sharing the Gospel with strangers. If the Holy Spirit is leading you to do cold evangelism, by all means do it. But do it with respect. Instead of approaching an individual with all the answers, be willing to dialogue and learn from them as well. God definitely leads us to do things that are outside our comfort zones. But Scripture also exhorts us to have wisdom, and it's wise to know our audience and culture.

— What do we need to consider when evangelizing Millennials and Gen Z?

Here's the good news: As [Carter Heminger of Relevant Magazine](#) says, "The first step to take a loving approach to evangelism is to love God."

When asked what the greatest commandment in the entire Law was, [Jesus responded](#):
“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.

We must love God and know how much He loves us in order to evangelize. Only when we love God and understand how valuable we are in His eyes can we love others as we ought to love them.

The second step is realizing that **relationships are key**. At a recent event, Ravi Zacharias of [RZIM](#) said, “Apologetics now has to be with your arm around the person.” It’s always been important to speak the truth in love, but it’s more important than ever with Millennials (b. early 1980s to late 1990s) and Gen Z (b. late 1990s to late 2010s) in the western world that we lead with relationships. Younger Americans tend to be disillusioned by the Church, as well as with other institutions and leaders. They tend to rely on their feelings when making decisions and are leery of being manipulated. We must be compassionate and loving while never compromising the truth. As the cliché goes, “People don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.”

One woman we talked to who is gifted in evangelism says we Christians need to first preach the Gospel to ourselves, to understand how the good news of God’s love applies to our own stories. If we don’t know how the Gospel applies to our stories, we’ll sound like we’re giving people a sales pitch, both to our kids and to others. She insightfully wonders, “If you can’t honestly relate the Gospel to your life, how can you relate it someone else’s life?”

Another woman we talked to (who’s a Christian and an older Millennial) told us about an experience she had with evangelism. When she was coming out of a grocery store, a group of Jehovah’s Witnesses approached her with some of their literature. She was in her early twenties at the time and had just bought some milk for the café at which she worked. She also happened to be driving a minivan. When the women approached her, one asked if she was buying milk for her babies. This assumption was so far off the mark that it made our friend feel extremely awkward, plus it was an extremely familiar kind of comment to make to a complete stranger.

She did accept the pamphlets, mainly out of curiosity to learn about what the Jehovah’s Witnesses believed. But she was very turned off by how they approached her and would definitely have preferred that they had taken the time to get to know her and really cared about her before trying to tell her about their beliefs. One question that’s good to ask when evangelizing is, “Is how I’m sharing the Gospel with others the way I would want them to share the Gospel with me?” This is a way of applying the Golden Rule to sharing our faith.

— **At what age should I start encouraging my kids to share their faith?**

Rather than focusing on age, we should focus on 3 key elements:

1. Is my child aware enough to truly understand what it means to make Christ Lord of every aspect of his/her life?

2. Is my child aware and mature enough to grasp why they believe in Christ and want to follow Him?
3. Can my child do more than just recite back facts about God and the Bible (i.e. can he/she describe why Christ's sacrifice means something to him/her and how it's changed his/her heart and mind)?

As precious and well meaning as young children are, they often recite to others what they've heard at church and at home without fully grasping the ramifications of what they're saying. Simply accepting Christ at 4.5 years old (as one Axis employee did) doesn't necessarily mean that they "get" it (the employee maintains that she didn't truly begin to follow Christ until her 20s after years of rebellion that sprang out of doing all the "right" Christian things—including sharing her faith!—in her childhood and teenage years). And even if our kids do truly grasp the Gospel at a young age, many of their friends aon't be mature or aware enough to grasp it themselves.

If a younger child really wants to tell others about Jesus, that's great! Don't discourage them, but also use the opportunity to keep the conversation about evangelism going. But for those who aren't so enthusiastic, don't worry. Instead of emphasizing outward expressions of faith, spend your child's younger years focusing on faith formation and comprehension, as well as prayer. When he/she is ready, you won't be able to keep him/her from telling others about the truly Good News!

— What do I do if my kids are Christians but apathetic about evangelism?

1. Lead with prayer.

Kevin Harney says, "If we are going to share the love, grace, and message of Jesus (and call others in the church to do the same), prayer will be a weapon we must wield every day. I would also suggest you develop a prayer team around you and your church."

We know of a woman who leads the prayer team at her church. She organizes the team so that every day of the month, there is always someone praying and fasting over the church's ministry. The pastor believes that a key reason why God has blessed their ministry is because there's always someone bringing their activities before Him in prayer.

2. Ask questions.

If we want to instill a heart for evangelism in our kids but they seem uninterested or apathetic, we need to start by figuring out why. Do they actually think it's unimportant? Or is there an underlying fear or insecurity that's manifesting as apathy? Could it be that they're uninterested in evangelism because they're still not sure what they believe? Or maybe it's that they don't feel like they have the emotional capacity to care about that when there are so many other things demanding their attention and emotions. Finding out where they are in their faith journeys will help us know where to start, so giving them space to be honest and talk openly about it is paramount.

3. Make evangelism the goal, not the first step.

Whatever the reason for their apathy (or hesitance), meet them where they are. One

huge mistake we see loving adults make is forcing kids into public evangelism. But if they're still working through their faith and unsure of what they believe or why, making them tell their friends how wonderful God is and how Jesus' sacrifice has changed their lives will be inauthentic, painful, and possibly harmful to their own faith *and* their friends'. Our kids cannot sustain love for others without first being filled with God's love.

So rather than worrying about the outward expressions of our kids' faith, it's important that we instead focus on cultivating an open, honest, loving, conversation-oriented, and truth-seeking environment in our homes. When we do that, we focus on helping them own their faith and stop renting it from us. The outward expressions of faith (i.e. the fruit of the Spirit, a desire to share what they've found with others, etc.) will be outpourings of that.

— My kids say they want to share their faith with their friends but don't know how. How do I help them?

Teach them to speak the right language.

Just as our starting place for evangelism should come from knowing and receiving God's love, when we consider teaching our kids how to evangelize, it won't do any good to try to teach them to share the Gospel apart from an understanding of how God's love meets the brokenness of the world. People agree that two of Gen Z's primary values are social justice and authenticity. And as we already mentioned, relationships are huge. Therefore, Gen Z is going to be averse to most traditional models of evangelism because, as effective as Billy Graham was for his generation, his evangelism was not built around relationship. And that's ok! It just means that we need to speak the language of Gen Z and help them do the same when sharing their faith with their friends.

It's also important to help them understand the full Gospel, and luckily Gen Z is already deeply concerned about many aspects of the Gospel. The temptation in older generations is to reduce the Gospel of Jesus into a set of truth claims or beliefs, instead of a very real way of being in the world modeled after the life of Jesus. The Gospel means living as Jesus lived, loving as Jesus loved, and joining Him in the ongoing work of bringing renewal and redemption to the world. It means being the hands and feet of Christ to the marginalized, the oppressed, the hurting, and the vulnerable.

We tend to talk about the "Social Gospel" as if there were any other kind. We can understand why some people have criticized some aspects of the social justice movement, but nothing can be more Christ-like than working for peace, justice, restoration, and reconciliation in real life. One way the Church has fallen short is by proclaiming Jesus as lord on Sunday while failing to meet their communities needs on Monday. As [the prophet Isaiah wrote](#), "These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me." Archbishop Desmond Tutu [puts it in modern language](#):

I don't preach a social gospel; I preach the Gospel, period. The gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is concerned for the whole person. When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, Now is that political, or social? He said: I feed you. Because the good news to a hungry person is

bread.

The Gospel means meeting needs as much as it means proclaiming Jesus as Lord with our lips. We need both. Encourage your kids to think of ways they can serve others and build genuine relationships in order to share the Gospel.

Help them leverage their strengths.

Even though [some are describing](#) Gen Z as the “first truly post-Christian generation,” Gen Z’s values actually mean what they have to offer people is pretty exciting. Because Gen Z values relationship and authenticity, we can encourage our kids to share their faith simply as part of their friendships. As any of us build relationships that have depth, it’s not authentic to hide who we truly are or what we believe. Sharing our faith can arise naturally as part of a relationship (it’s important not to be complacent in this, however, which we’ll get to later). [This author](#) encourages young people to think of sharing their faith as sharing the story of what God has done in their lives. The Gospel cannot transform us unless we are willing to honestly (i.e. authentically) recognize our need for Christ. So when encouraging your kids to evangelize, make sure they understand that what you are actually encouraging them to do is authentically share what Christ has done for them. (That doesn’t mean that there’s no place for apologetics and defending specifics of one’s beliefs. It just means that good evangelism will usually involve elements of both.)

Help them think through what it means to love their neighbors.

Try this with your kids: Open your address books and social media apps and ask, “What does it look like for us to be Christ to all the people on our friends/contacts lists?” Then go out on your porch and look at all the houses you can see. Then ask, “What does it look like for us to be the Church to them?” Both of these are important because we’re called to lovingly bring Christ not just to those we care for, but also to those we pass in our neighborhood or at work or in school, regardless of whether we consider them friends. We’re also called to love both people we interact with in person and people we interact with digitally.

So how do we do that? **Hospitality and service are key to reaching people with the Gospel.** Especially in the first century, sharing a meal with someone was a sign of acceptance, fellowship, and equality. So, when Jesus ate with prostitutes, drunks, tax collectors, and Samaritans, He was clearly communicating to the world who God loves, who God welcomes, and who God believes is worthy of a relationship with Him. One of our staff members hosts Taco Tuesday for their neighborhood during the summer. Everyone in the neighborhood is welcome to come and share a meal and drink and simply get to know one another. Sometimes 50 people show up, and sometimes it’s only 12, but it’s a great way to get the whole family involved in getting to know the neighbors and showing them hospitality. In addition, encourage your kids to eat lunch at school with everyone, especially the marginalized, unloved, uncool, and non-Christians.

Teach them to see people, not potential converts.

As we help our kids share God’s love, it’s crucial that we teach them not to simply see them as “projects.” By definition, love is unconditional. We’re not to extend love because we want to get something from them, even if that something is a commitment to Christ. That’s the Holy Spirit’s job, not ours. One way we and our kids can resist

seeing other people as projects is by [letting them meet our needs](#) and not just serving them ourselves.

Remind them they don't have to do it all on their own.

Mormons are on to something in their strategy to send out missionaries in pairs. It will be very helpful if we can move away from the idea that we have to share the Gospel on our own. There will be times when we or our kids will share the Gospel one-on-one or possibly even to a group by ourselves, but if we can share our faith alongside a friend or with a group, that's ideal. Pray for a consistent small group of people who can be a team with whom your kids share the Gospel with others. Actually, if you have more than one child, then they already have a team! Teach your kids to share their faith together.

Encourage them to listen, ask questions, and have a posture of learning.

In the documentary "[Godspeed](#)," Eugene Peterson observes, "Nobody in America gets listened to very much." Indeed, the idea of evangelism itself seems to involve talking (*telling* others about Christ, *sharing* my faith), not listening to others talk.

The non-Christians we mentioned earlier expressed how frustrating it was to them when people didn't listen to them and just made assumptions. One man said, "My experience has been that when we share what we believe because we think it is neat, good, true, and helpful stuff, and are honestly interested in hearing what others think, things go pretty well. When someone starts from a position of trying to convince me of their belief and shows little to no interest in my understanding and insights about reality, things don't go so well."

Often Christians have approached evangelism as a one-way conversation instead of listening and learning from non-believers. One of the main ways we can serve people is by giving them our full attention, caring about what they have to say, and asking good questions. This is a skill and takes practice, but it's important to treat everyone this way, whether we're sharing the Gospel with them or not. When we learn to listen to others' stories, we'll be better at showing them how God's love applies specifically to them and what they're going through.

Remind them they don't have to "get it right."

There's an element of uncertainty in every social situation. We never know how any conversation might go. Even if we know people extremely well and can typically anticipate their reactions, they can still surprise us. So when it comes to having conversations about the Gospel with others, our kids need to learn to have grace with themselves. Yes, they should prepare—God's word commands us to do this. But people and conversations are not formulas, and they will probably not go how we anticipate they'll go.

At some point, they're going to fail or *feel* like they've failed. That's ok. God's grace is sufficient for us. He knows our weaknesses and imperfections and is faithful despite them. In fact, one woman we talked to said that if you feel like you've had the perfect conversation with someone, you probably should re-evaluate your approach.

Teach them to discern when to keep pushing and when to let something go.

Sometimes people need a compassionate, listening ear. Other times, they need someone

to confront them boldly with the truth. We talked to a man who realized several years ago that a friend of his was under the influence of a cult. He flew to where she was to try to convince her to leave and, while there, met with the cult leaders. He came prepared with Scripture and aggressively proclaimed the truth to them and to his friend. While his friend wasn't willing to leave the cult right then, she eventually realized she needed to get out and did.

Most of the time, we won't be faced with such a dramatic opportunity to exhort people to follow God's word. But how do we know when to show empathy and when to exhort? The answer is to ask God for wisdom ([James 1:5](#)) and to obey His leading. As we follow Him and listen to the Holy Spirit, He will guide us. The more we evangelize and listen to the Holy Spirit, the more in tune with Him we'll be.

Don't tolerate complacency.

We shouldn't share the Gospel out of fear, feeling like we need to follow God's rules in order for Him to approve of us. But there is a sense of urgency we and our kids should have because it demonstrates that we really believe what the Bible says. [In this older video](#), Penn Jillette of Penn & Teller describes a time when a Christian man approached him after a show and gave him a Bible. Even though Jillette is an atheist, he appreciated that the man was polite, kind, and cared about him enough to share his faith with him. Then Jillette makes the convicting and powerful statement that he doesn't understand Christians who are unwilling to share their faith: "How much do you have to hate somebody to...believe that everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?"

One woman we talked to observed that relationships can easily become a mask for people-pleasing. If we're hesitating to share our faith because we don't want to make the friendship awkward, we need to get over it and share the Gospel. She says, "Don't let relationships become the idol where you sacrifice your boldness." Jesus says if we love Him, we'll obey His commands. It's ok if we feel incapable of obeying Jesus by sharing the Gospel. None of us is able to obey Him without His help. Even Paul prayed for boldness ([Eph. 6:19](#))! But we must wrestle with this before the Lord and take seriously the fact that He has commanded us to share His good news with others.

Beware of teaching them to measure success by the number of converts they get.

We want people to believe in Jesus and have eternal life, right? So if they respond positively and decide to become Christians, that means we're succeeding, right?

Not necessarily. The most loving man who ever lived was crucified. If we make the number of people who have converted because of us a measure of our success, we run into the very real danger of being dishonest so that we can force a conversion. God never commands us to get a certain number of people to believe. He does command us to be obedient. In [1 Corinthians 3](#), Paul gives all the glory to God for any "success" that has happened through his or other leaders' efforts, noting that they all played different roles:

What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth.

This is important for us to remember as we encourage our kids to start sharing the Gospel and people respond by trusting in the Lord. If that happens, it's wonderful, and

we should thank God, but we and our kids should not take the responsibility for those “results” on ourselves. Most importantly, help them remember they aren’t saving anyone, only God can do that. He is the [“hound of heaven”](#) pursuing and wooing everyone back to Himself.

— **What if I or my kids feel like our failures disqualify us from sharing the Gospel?**

One man we talked to described how easy it was to feel like people won’t listen to him when he shares the Gospel because of his struggles with sin. There’s nothing Satan would like more than for us to believe that our sins and failures disqualify us from sharing abundant life with others. Our lives are a testimony to Christ’s faithfulness, so we do need to take our behavior seriously. But we all have sin that we’re working through and are all in the process of being sanctified. The fact that we or our kids struggle with sin isn’t a reason not to share the Gospel. We need to obey, be honest with people about our struggles as appropriate, and rely on God for help, looking for His leading.

This can be especially hard when it comes to unbelieving family members because they’ve known us our whole lives and know all of our flaws. [Even Jesus failed to convert](#) the people from His home town, reminding us that [“a prophet is not without honor, except in his hometown.”](#) Another man we talked to said, “I have found that if I prepare myself for the fact that my family’s initial reaction to what I say will be defensive, and if I remain calm, we have some good conversations. Another thing I do is ask myself if this is the best time to share.”

— **Any other practicals I need to know?**

Whether it’s you or your kids sharing Christ with others, the following are helpful to remember:

- Be aware that crisis is one of the biggest openings for the Gospel. We are obviously not trying to manipulate people, but it’s helpful to know that they’re more open to considering new answers to the big questions of life if they’re going through something difficult.
- Don’t end a relationship when someone is closed to the Gospel. If we do that, we communicate to them that we only cared about them to get what we wanted (a “conversion”), not because they’re people and worth caring about. Plus, some people say no for years before finally saying yes to the Holy Spirit’s promptings. So ending the relationship means we lose our influence and potentially lose the ability to celebrate with them when they do finally become Christ followers!
- Remember that a life well lived might be the greatest sermon you will ever preach. Loving others, having a faithful marriage, serving the least of these, and honoring the dignity of every human being is putting flesh on faith. You just might find people coming up to you and asking why you do what you do, which can be an easy transition into sharing with them what you believe.

- Don't assume you know what people think based on what you've read in a textbook. The best way to find out what they think is to ask them.
- Sometimes, it can be easy to be legalistic about sharing our faith. "I better go over and tell that person sitting by himself about Jesus now." If we do that, it can come across as rote, insincere, and forced. Sometimes all we need is a change of perspective! Look at your life. What has God done for you? How has your life changed since choosing to make Christ Lord? How has He been faithful? Would you go back to how you were before? Usually, when we take time to reflect on God's immense goodness and kindness to us, it becomes clear: How could we *not* want to tell others about it?! But remember, just walking up to someone and forcing it into conversation isn't how it has to be done. Get to know them, spend time with them, love and serve them. Jesus will come up in conversation when it makes sense and is appropriate :)

What it looks like to share the Gospel can be as diverse as human imagination. God created us with various passions and skills. He wants to use these to reach the lost! Maybe you or your kids feel uncomfortable at the thought of doing street evangelism by yourself, but what if you considered how to use your talents to bring the Gospel to people? Pray and brainstorm about how God might use an area of life you're passionate about (like music, for example) to share His good news with others.

How can I prepare my kids for people's different reactions to the Gospel?

Recently, a pastor we know pointed out that when Paul shared the Gospel in Acts 17, he got three main responses from people. Some mocked him, some were curious but not serious, and some actually believed. These are the reactions we can expect to have from people. When we get rejected, that shouldn't surprise us. When people don't take Jesus seriously, that shouldn't be shocking. We should not measure our success by how people react, but by whether we are being faithful, obedient, and loving.

Discussion Questions

- How do you feel when you think about sharing your faith with other people?
- Do you know how to share the Gospel without using words?
- How could you share "the Gospel" in a way that's simply sharing the story of what God has done in your life?
- What is "the Gospel" and how might your understanding of it need to change in order to see God moving and acting in daily life?
- How do you think your non-Christian friends would react to what you believe? How have they reacted to it?
- What's a skill and passion you have that you could creatively use to tell people about God?
- Do you struggle to see how the Gospel applies to a particular area of your life?
- Are you willing to pursue evangelism by asking God to change your heart if needed?

- Do you have any friends who could and would do evangelism with you?
- Do you have any ideas on how we could do evangelism as a family?
- Have you ever shared your faith because you were *supposed* to? What did it make you feel? How did it make you view God?

Recap

- People are hesitant to share their faith because of fear, apathy, ignorance, or a reluctance to offend others.
- We should consider our culture and audience when sharing the Gospel.
- While God can use “cold evangelism,” it’s crucial that we lead with relationships, especially with younger generations.
- Evangelism starts with loving God and loving our neighbors as ourselves.
- Before doing anything, we should seek the Lord in prayer.
- Hospitality and service are keys to loving our neighbors well.
- Listen well, don’t worry about being perfect, and have wisdom in your conversations.
- Don’t be complacent and don’t focus on how many converts you get.
- Strive to honor God with your life, but don’t feel like your failures disqualify you from sharing the Gospel.
- Be creative and be prepared!
- Expect people either to be genuinely interested in Jesus, not to care about Him, or to reject Him completely.

Conclusion

Kevin Harney says:

When Christians declare their desire to engage in the evangelistic mission of Jesus and name their personal fears, something changes. As each fear comes into the light of Jesus, it melts, shrinks, and pales in comparison to the power and glory of our Savior.

The most powerful way to teach our kids is by example. If we prioritize evangelism by discipling our kids, leading our families in prayer, serving other people as a family, teaching our children how to have thoughtful conversations, and joining in God’s work to redeem all things, we will help them more than we know to have a framework for living the Gospel as they grow up.

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” —2 Peter 3:9, NIV

Related Axis Resources

To watch with teenagers:

- [Evangelism Conversation Kit](#)

- [Bible Conversation Kit](#)

To read before talking to teenagers:

- [A Parent's Guide to the Bible](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to a Doubting Teen](#)
- [A Parent's Guide to the Evidence for the Resurrection](#)

Additional Resources

- [Tactics: A Game Plan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions](#), Greg Koukl
- ["Becoming 'Homemakers' in Our Sacred Neighborhoods,"](#) Missio Alliance
- ["3 Practices that Welcome Heaven Into Your Neighborhood,"](#) Missio Alliance
- ["How to Witness to a Distracted World,"](#) Christianity Today
- ["4 Steps to Become an Urban Missionary,"](#) Missio Alliance
- [8 to 15, The World Is Smaller Than You Think](#), Tom Mercer

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