

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-18 Methods: Asking Leading Questions

You are saying, “Yes, I want to witness. But how do I start?” This is the first of seven lessons on easy, practical methods of sharing your spiritual journey. Starting a conversation with someone often helps you determine their openness to the gospel.

Jesus often used questions to engage people in conversation. The questions would lead the person to further discussion, so they can be called ‘leading’ questions. On the road to Emmaus, Christ asked the two disciples, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?” After they answered, he asked another leading question, “What things?” This led them to tell him about the crucifixion. Then he asked a third question, “Did not the Messiah have to suffer?” (Luke 24:17-25). This led into an opportunity for him to teach them about himself. The rabbis had used question-and-answer as a teaching method for centuries.

You have already learned how powerful the gospel story can be when the seed of the gospel is sown in fertile soil. As Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (Rom 1:16). The message of the gospel has power within itself to accomplish God’s plan for those he is drawing to himself. But to be effective in sharing this message, you need insight into the person’s heart. One way to find out whether the person is open to the gospel is to ask them some questions. The questions may concern their spiritual practices, their ideas about a higher power, or what they believe about life after death.

For more than three decades, the author of this lesson has used this approach of asking leading questions to witness. It can be used with people you know well or with complete strangers. It involves asking questions to learn more about where a person is in their spiritual journey. Leading questions can be used as a form of a spiritual interview in door-to-door canvassing and in marketplace outreach. It works in urban centers, parks, or anywhere you meet people.

The questions may begin with broad topics, but gradually take on a more personal query into the respondent’s beliefs. Here are some examples of sets of questions that can be used to engage a person to see if they are open to discussing spiritual matters further.

Example #1: “Do you attend a place of worship?” The answer here may give you some sense of how devout a person is and what faith tradition they are coming from. Some people answer no, so I ask them, “Have you ever attended?” Some people practiced faith when they were younger, but have since become more secular or skeptical.

“If so, how often do you attend?” The answer to this will tell us how zealous they are in their religious practices and how devoted they are to that belief system.

This may take a little more thought, but you can ask, “Why do you attend?”

Typical responses might be, “My father makes me!” Or, “It’s what I’ve been taught,” or “It’s how I grew up.”

This question usually causes a person to reflect before responding. “Why do you think people don’t attend places of worship?” This question is not really about why others don’t attend places of worship, but why **they** may not be attending. The answer is going to come from their own viewpoint.

Example #2: “Have you ever had a profound spiritual experience with God?” This question is to determine what kind of relationship they might have with God. The question really asks for a yes or no response, but then you can say, “Would you like to explain it or tell me about it?” Many people have had really profound experiences that are the basis of their present beliefs.

Example #3: “What do you think will happen to you when you die?” This is a question that all humans must answer at some point. Many people will respond, “I don’t really know,” or “I’ve never really thought about it.” Or they may say that they hope to go to heaven or a similar place. Others will talk about reincarnation, or dying like dogs, or becoming dust. What is interesting about this question is that it will cause many people to really think about life after death. It may be the first time they have considered it. Every time their life is threatened in some way, they are likely to remember this question and think about it again.

You might add, “Could I briefly share with you what the Bible says about God and life after death?” This question is used to see how open they might be to hearing the gospel message. I have found that about half the people who have made it this far into the questions will be open to hearing the gospel as a result. At this point you will have to discern how open the person is to actually hear the gospel. And you must decide what the best way to share the story of redemption with them is. You will learn a number of witnessing methods in the next few lessons. You can use them to share the gospel.

Example #4: Another question that might be helpful is, “So, what is your story?” People are happy to talk about themselves, if they don’t feel threatened. You can ask, “What’s your name? Where are you from? Do you have a family? What do you do for a living?”

Once a person shares their story, they are more likely to ask in return: “So, what is your story?” Then you have the opportunity to tell them about who Jesus is and what he has meant to your story.

Example #5: “Do you believe in God?” Most people will answer yes to this question. So, the issue is not just a belief in any god, but who, or what is God to them. That’s why the next request may be helpful, “Please tell me what you believe about God?” Perhaps they will be open to hearing what you believe, in return.

It is not possible to cover all the possible questions that might be asked in our efforts to witness. The point is that you must try to have such conversations. Pray that God will open the door for you to share the gospel with those you meet. It could be a stranger on the street, a neighbor, or a close loved one. You need to be prepared to reach out in faith and to speak by asking questions. One question can lead to another. And you may have a chance to introduce someone to Jesus.

This lesson is **important** as it shows how to use a leading question approach to begin to witness to someone. A few simple questions and answers can begin a relationship that brings a person to Christ.

The **main truth** is that people are likely to begin a spiritual conversation when you invite them to give their opinion or information. This may overcome a person's resistance, instead of preaching to them. People are often glad to discuss spiritual things, if we are willing to listen first. Then we can ask for permission to share what we believe.

Review Questions

1. What kind of questions did Jesus ask the two men on the road to Emmaus? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you said, "They were leading questions, which opened the door for him to teach them," you are right.
2. Why do we need to have a way of determining where people are at in their spiritual journey? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, "Because the gospel has power within itself to communicate the truth of the gospel to the heart of hearers, but we need insight into a person's heart before we share it with them," you are correct.
3. Which question would likely have the most long-term impact on hearers, according to the lesson? [Pause]
 - A. If you answered, "What do you think will happen to you when you die?" you answered correctly.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to it as many times as you need to, in order to memorize the various questions to start a spiritual conversation with someone. Think of some possible situations where you might be able to use this approach for witnessing. Do you think it could be helpful in training others in your church to be more intentional about their evangelism efforts? Meet together with two or three other believers and practice these questions with one another. This is called 'role-play.' Practice as many times as is necessary to become comfortable in asking leading questions. Pray together that God will give you boldness to speak and anointing on your words. Ask for God to place people who need him in your pathway.