

Ev221 Sharing Your Spiritual Journey

Lesson Ev221-26 Assessing Effective Methods: Bible-based

The Word of God is the foundation for reaching others with the good news that Jesus saves. We need to use the Scriptures as the basis for our outreach efforts. We must not only incorporate them into our witness to unbelievers, but also for assessing all our methods. Ask yourself, “Does what I am saying agree with scripture? Do our witnessing methods use sound scriptural principles?” This lesson is the first of five lessons that will deal with the keys to effective soul winning outreach. They are intended as a means of assessing whether the various methods you use meet these criteria. Furthermore, if they don’t fulfill them completely, how can we adjust our methods so they do?

To be most effective in reaching others with the gospel, the method must be Bible-based. For instance, we need to evaluate various evangelism methods used:

- music concerts
- door-to-door evangelism
- coffee house outreach
- intentional marketplace evangelism, talking to strangers in public
- children’s ministry or Sunday school
- church evangelism events
- small groups in homes
- distribution of evangelism literature

Do these methods, as you use them, include Bible teaching or preaching and testimonies using scripture? The main idea of this lesson is to examine our witnessing methods to be sure they are based on a solid biblical foundation.

As an example, in looking at public preaching as a method, we might refer to Peter’s preaching to the crowds in Acts 2. Or, we can listen to Paul’s preaching in Athens from Acts 17. For preaching in the church, we can observe Paul’s practice of going to the synagogues to share the gospel with the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. Each of them used the Old Testament Scriptures.

When it comes to door-to-door evangelism, there is a biblical example set by Jesus. He first sent out 12 and later the 72, “to every town and place where he was about to go.” They were to extend peace, heal the sick, and tell the people that the kingdom of God was near to them (Luke 10:1, 9).

Another example of the early church is that they witnessed both publicly in the marketplace and privately in homes. “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah” (Acts 5:42). Is this enough biblical testimony to support the use of such approaches in your culture today?

To illustrate how to assess our efforts, this lesson will address a key concept in our approach to sharing the faith. We have said that conversion is best seen as a spiritual journey, rather a one-time event. To support this assertion, we must show the biblical basis for such a claim. The Old Testament contains several theological patterns that support the idea of salvation as a spiritual journey. Consider Abraham’s journey from Harran to the land that God would show him. He was

called by God to leave his country, his people, and his father's household (Gen 12:1). The journey led him to all that God had for him in the Promised Land of Canaan.

The nomadic nature of life in response to Yahweh's call is given special emphasis throughout the accounts of the patriarchs who traveled to a specific place. Hebrew words used for 'travel' refer to 'walking the particular path of one's life,' 'a turning, as in the movement of conversion,' and the 'way.' The very language of the Bible uses the idea of traveling with God toward the future—the journey of redemption.

But what about the New Testament? The same claim regarding the theme of conversion as spiritual journey can be seen here as well. It is central to God's redemption story. The story begins with the very nature of a God who is on a quest. He came to earth "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). It continues with the urgency of the Lord's call to his disciples, "Come, follow me" (Matt 4:19). These speak of the concept of movement or traveling. In fact, in Jesus' time many were on a religious quest—beginning with the wise men from the east. Then we see those who went out from Jerusalem to hear John the Baptist. The crowds also followed Jesus and his disciples wherever they went.

Then, in the apostle Paul's language, genuine salvation is seen as a 'turning' to God away from the world. His teachings commonly depict faith as a movement along God's pathway for humanity. His use of the word 'way' and faith as a 'race,' show his view of movement. He did not see salvation as a one-time experience that involved settling into a specific place. He saw it more as a matter of journeying with God and his people.

So we have recounted the 'journey' theme throughout the Bible. The purpose of doing this is to point out that our various approaches to evangelism need to have a solid biblical basis for reaching unbelievers. Methods should explain the idea of accepting Christ as beginning a spiritual journey with God. Soul-winning methods should be biblical in foundation. That is the first assessment you must make.

Your next lessons will address the remaining four standards. These will show you how to assess your evangelism methods to help make sure they promote relationship with a faith community, are conversational in method, are spiritual in dimension, and are holistic in scope.

This lesson is **important** because you will want to make sure that your efforts will yield excellent fruit for the kingdom of God. How you obtain that fruit is critical to God's harvest. Your methods must be evaluated to make sure they have solid biblical content. One of the emphases should be that conversion is an ongoing journey with God, not just a one-time event.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that for our evangelism efforts to be effective they should be Bible-based.

Review Questions

1. How can we use the Scriptures as the basis for our outreach efforts? [Pause 5 seconds]
 - A. If you answered, "We should use the Scriptures in our witness to unbelievers and also for assessing our methods," you answered correctly.

2. In this lesson, what is the main question we must ask concerning our methods? [Pause]
 - A. If you said, “We must ask whether our methods for reaching the lost begin with a sound biblical foundation,” you are right.

3. What is one key concept that should be conveyed about conversion in our witness? [Pause]
 - A. If you stated, “We should present salvation as not just a one-time event, but as the beginning of a journey with God,” you would be correct.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to consider some of the methods that you have learned about in this course. Are they—the use of personal testimony, the Roman Road, one-verse evangelism, and using parables from the Scriptures—biblical in basis? Reflect on some of the other approaches you have used in the past to reach out to those who don’t know Jesus. Do these approaches have a basis in the Scriptures? If not, how could you change the approach to reflect scriptural principles in the future? Discuss your assessments with others at your church.