

**A Series
of
Three Bible Studies**
by Roger Green

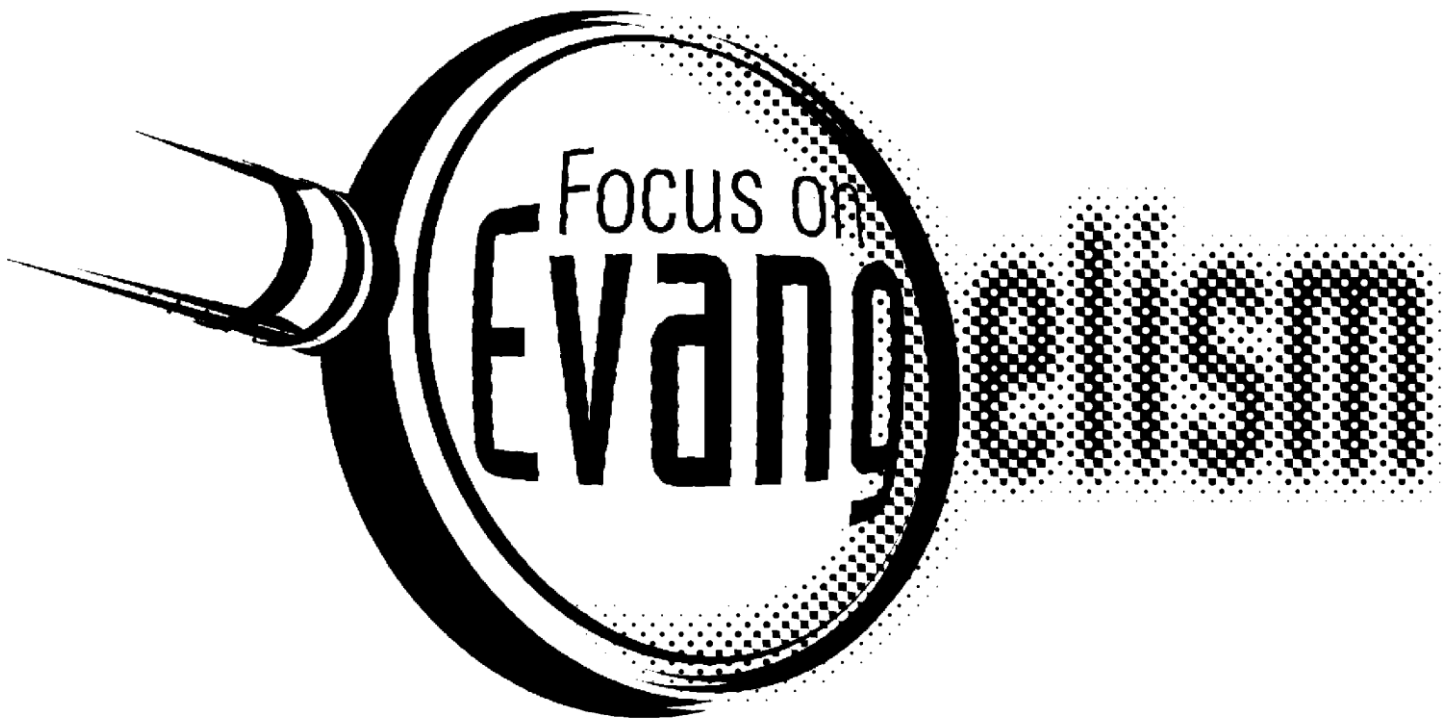


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1

The Impossibility of Evangelism

"I might preach to you for ever, I might borrow the eloquence of Demosthenes or of Cicero, but ye will not come unto Christ. I might beg of you on my knees, with tears in my eyes, and show you the horrors of hell and the joys of heaven, the sufficiency of Christ, and your own lost condition, but you would none of you come unto Christ of yourselves unless the Spirit that rested on Christ should draw you."

Charles Spurgeon

Talkabout

Do you think evangelism is hard? Why?

Investigate & Apply

1. The reality is worse. It isn't just hard, it is actually impossible. Evangelism is actually impossible. Why is evangelism impossible? Consider the following verses?

John 3:19-20,

1 Corinthians 2:14,

Romans 8:7-8,

Ephesians 2:1,

2 Corinthians 4:4,

Ephesians 2:8-10 & 2 Thessalonians 2:13

Acts 11:18 & 2 Timothy 2:25

2. Given the condition of sinners, is it likely that even our most clever evangelistic strategy will work? What chance have we got here? Without God, absolutely zero!
Looking at the following passages - what things help us in our fearfulness & inadequacy?
Specifically list what does God do and what do we do? It is impossible and YET we can be confident! (Huh?) Why we can be confident evangelists (in our impossible task)?
Consider the following verses.

Jonah 3:10-4:2 & 1 Tim 1:13-14

Matt 28:18-20

Romans 1:16

Ephesians 6:19-20

Colossians 4:2-6

Evangelism is only possible because God does it. Full Stop. Without God's involvement our efforts are futile. This ought to give us great comfort & confidence. And it ought to drive us to regular prayer!

Read Acts 1:1-11

4. How do these verses impact you personally?

5. Put yourself in the shoes of the apostles. How would you feel if you were the first to be given the task described in v8? According to this passage how are we equipped for this task?

6. Can you identify a situation or setting that you will encounter this week where you will find it challenging to be visible as a Christian? Share with each other.

7. List the names of two people (at least one local) you are or would like to start praying for?
Will you commit to praying for the opportunity and the courage to . . .
. . . have a conversation about what they believe?
. . . invite them to church or to a course that explains the Christian faith?

8. Spend time praying together

Remember

GOD's Role

God's power is in the gospel message & the working of the Holy Spirit
God answers evangelistic based prayer
God provides opportunities for evangelism
God provides the words of the gospel in the moment of need
God gives boldness to speak
God calls people to himself (the results are in his hands)
God is the chief evangelist! (Its not like he participates in our work – we participate in his!)

OUR Role

Our role with regards to evangelism is
Prayer - Trust God
Matter - Be clear and truthful with the content of the gospel message
Manner - Be bold and gracious.

“Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders, make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation always be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”
Colossians 4:5-6

Talkabout

Have you been recently encouraged or challenged in some way about sharing your faith with others?

Investigate

Read Acts 17:16-34

1. What approach does Paul take to presenting the gospel in Athens?
2. In v16 we are told that Paul is greatly distressed by their idols and in v23 refers to “their objects of worship”. What are some of the idols and objects of worship for people in our culture?
3. How does the message of Christ speak to these objects of worship?
4. Notice that while Paul approaches people differently, his message is consistent. What are the some of the key elements seen in this chapter Refer to v3,18,24-28,30-31.
5. In Athens Paul finds ‘a point of connection’. He uses an inscription from one of their altars – ‘to an unknown god’ to begin to tell them about the living God. In the rest of the study we are going to think about ‘points of connection’ that help us to engage with the world & the thinking of those we come in contact with. Finding those points of connection can often come from careful listening and asking good questions. Read the notes on the next page and then turn over and have a go working out how you would respond to some of the examples listed.

NOTES

Our aim: To develop the skills of asking questions so that our conversations include God.

Most of us find evangelism difficult and awkward. You may have had a bad experience of evangelism in the past. But there is a way to start a gospel conversation that is quite easy and natural. It doesn't involve offending people, or being awkward, and you don't have to be theologically trained in any particular way. Furthermore, this skill makes you realise that there are hundreds of opportunities for evangelism you were never aware of.

What is it? *It is the humble art of asking questions*

This requires a prior skill – listening.

The art of getting into a God type conversation involves 2 simple steps.

(1) Listening: (Being aware of the conversation, the situation and the surrounding culture) As you listen you are looking for key words or concepts that relate to the Christian worldview. Ideas that you might be able to connect with biblical ideas. And so the idea is that we listen until we identify an idea worth pursuing. An idea that relates to biblical themes (Eg. Justice, Love, Morality, Value of life, Death/suicide, Eternity, Forgiveness, Revenge, Relationships, hope, work, commitment, enjoying creation, pleasure..etc)

Things that come out when they are expressing their LIKES, THOUGHTS, BELIEFS.

(2) Asking: (A question based on relevant information). With the hope that your question/comment will create an opportunity (more probably a *PRE-EVANGELISTIC* opportunity)

What we are seeking to do is move the present conversation from the superficial to the serious. We want to move from the conversation level of Liking > Thinking > Believing!

Most conversations probably hover around the top two layers (likes & thoughts)

<i>Conversational levels</i>		Listening/responding to...
1. Likes	Sharing what you like about stuff	Person / Situation / Culture
2. Thoughts	Sharing what you think about stuff	Person / Situation / Culture
3. Beliefs	Sharing what you believe about stuff	Person / Situation / Culture

We want to try and penetrate the third layer also (beliefs/values).

- (1) Common Interests/likes → What do you like about X?
- (2) Opinions/thoughts→
- (3) Core values/ Beliefs →

To move a conversation / relationship deeper and more serious you ask 2 key questions.

Two Mighty Questions: WHAT & WHY

- 1- What do you think about X ? (Define for me what you believe)
- 2- Why do you think that about X ? (Explain to me why you believe it)

Don't underestimate the power of 'what' and 'why'.

The **what** provides further information so you know what they believe (helps you to 'know' what they actually believe instead of assuming)

The **why** provides reasons they hold that opinion/thought/conviction (the undergirding world view assumptions that support or give rise to that belief)

Opportunity is staring you in the face. What do you say? Choose some of the following examples. What question will you ask to move the conversation forward to connect with a biblical idea or gospel conversation?

(1) Listening/responding to a PERSON

'What is with these suicide bombers, they are so stupid'

'I went to school at St Mary's'

'She is so generous'

'You can't trust politicians, they all make promises that they never keep'

'We just broke up?'

'Oh well we are all going to die someday – may as well enjoy it while you can'

'I'm not into institutional religion. The church is corrupt – and starts lots of wars'

(2) Listening/responding to the SITUATION

Sitting on beach looking at the stars.

Your watching the TV – news and the civil unrest in Egypt comes up....more bombings etc

It is Monday & your waiting for the lecture to start.

(For some ideas on how you might respond turn to the last page of this study book.)

Pray that you might be a good listener, who asks helpful questions that might lead to fruitful conversations for God's kingdom. Continue to pray for the two names you listed in study one. Share answers to prayer.

3

Gospel Partnerships

"In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now . . ."
Philippians 1:5

Talkabout

Did you have any gospel conversations this week? Were you able to ask questions to explore what someone believes? Were there any opportunities that you think you missed?

Investigate

Read Acts 18:1-28

1. List the people in Paul's life that you see in this passage.

2. Let's look more closely at some of those relationships.
 - (i) What was the significance of his relationship with Priscilla & Aquila? How did they share in gospel ministry with Paul? v3-4 & 18-19. Romans 16:3-4

 - (ii) Having partnered with Barnabas and Mark on his first missionary trip Paul now forges a new partnership with Silas and Timothy. Read Acts 15:22 & 16:1-5. What did Silas and Timothy contribute to Paul's life and ministry? See Acts 16:22-25 & 2 Timothy 1:1-10.

3. After leaving Berea (17:14) Silas and Timothy had travelled to Macedonia & Timothy to Thessalonica before being reunited with Paul in Corinth (18:4). What did they bring with them when they re-joined Paul in Acts 18:4? See I Thessalonians 3:1-8 & Philippians 4:14-16.

Apply

1. Reflect on the last couple of weeks. List some of the places where you spend time with non-Christians? Do you have many non-believing friends?
2. Do you think churches have a strong commitment to local mission? Why or why not? How can a congregation work together in sharing the gospel? As a home group, how can you partner together in mission?
3. We have seen in Acts the gospel going from Jerusalem to Judea, to Samaria and on to the ends of the earth. Churches are seeking to impact the world with Christ's love. How can churches partner well with link missionaries? How can we ensure that we keep a strong global focus on evangelism?
4. ESL helps reach out to those from other nations that have come to our local suburbs. Do you have anyone in your street or neighbourhood that might benefit from ESL? Spend some time praying for this ministry in your prayer time.

Study 2 – Some suggested responses that might lead to a gospel conversation

'What is with these suicide bombers man, they are so stupid'

- 'How do you think the bombers justify it in their minds?'
- 'What is your basis for right and wrong anyway?' (Is morality absolute?)
- 'Do you think their God will let them into heaven?'
- 'Do you agree with that concept?'
- 'Do you think God could or would forgive them?'

'I went to school at St Mary's'

- 'Have you ever been to a catholic church?'
- 'What kind of faith do you have?'
- 'Have you read much of the bible?'

'She is so generous'

- 'I love generous people, they remind me of God'
- 'What do you think makes someone generous – how would you define it?'
- 'I get my idea from the bible – God empties himself for me!'
- 'Don't you wish there were more nice people in the world – why don't you think there are?'
- 'What's the most generous thing someone has done for you? (For me its God!)

'You can't trust Politicians, they all make promises that they never keep'

- 'Are there any leaders we can trust?'
- 'What makes someone trustworthy do you think?'
- 'Do you know anyone who has ever kept their word perfectly?'
- 'The more I read the bible, the more I'm convinced of its assesment of human nature..'
- 'In my experience God is the only one I trust to keep his word....or 'God is the only one I know to have perfectly kept his word' (This raises questions of 'Where has God spoken? And What promises has he made? And how has he shown himself faithful?)

'We just broke up?'

- (obviously after listening and showing empathy) - 'Do you mind if I pray for you?'
- 'How do you cope? Who do you turn to?'
- 'I find God helps me in good times and in bad...'

'Oh well we are all going to die someday – may as well enjoy it while you can'

- 'What do you think happens after death?'
- 'How does that make you feel? Worry you?'
- 'Why do you think that?'

'I'm not into institutional religion. The church is corrupt – and starts lots of wars'

- 'Do you think Jesus would approve of it?'
- 'Do you think that is an expression of genuine Christianity?'
- 'I agree but that's not my experience of church'

Sitting on beach looking at the stars.

- 'How do you think the universe began?'
- 'Do you really think it is all an accident? Do you think there is anything out there?'
- 'Where do you think we all came from?'

In each of these examples, they may ask you the same question in return and then you get to speak about Jesus.

Your watching the TV – news and the civil unrest in Egypt comes up....more bombings etc

- 'What do you think the biggest problem in the world is? Why do you think humans cant stop fighting with each other? What is wrong with us? Do you worry about the future? (many issues relate to this) -Or go for the jugular – 'Why do you think God allows suffering?'

It is Monday & your waiting for the lecture to start.

- 'What did you do on the weekend? (church etc)'



Points for Prayer
