

Tools of the Trade

Luke 24:13-35

We are back to our series on evangelism after a great Fall Conference with Mike and Alyssa. So far we've covered what evangelism is and why we do it. The heart of evangelism is shining the light of Christ into the darkness of the world by living in a manner worthy of the gospel and looking for opportunities to share about the hope we have. And the reason we do that is because Christ has called us to – his love compels us to devote ourselves completely to him and follow his call to be his witnesses. We've also talked about what our role is. We plant and water seeds of the gospel that God can use to persuade people to believe, and we do so with reasonable and prayerful attitudes that are fitting for the good news we share.

This morning we are going to talk a little bit more about how to plant and water seeds. You can think of it like tools of the trade – I just finished remodeling our bathroom and in order to do that I needed to know how to do several things: patching walls, painting, refinishing cabinets, installing a new countertop and sink, and more. I also had to have the tools and materials for doing these things. I had to be equipped. Every task or job requires some tools and skills to complete it and evangelism is the same. We need to be prepared and ready and know what to do when opportunities arise.

There are a lot of methods out there that people have tried and some of them go well with certain personalities, others go well with other personalities. Certain methods appeal to some listeners and certain methods appeal to others. It's a real mixed bag and it's not like one size fits all or one method is going to work for everybody. But there are some basic things that I think we need to take into consideration no matter where you're coming from, what your personality is, or who you are talking with.

The study guide touches on a couple things that I'm going to preach on this morning and as I considered how to preach on them I was eventually reminded of the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus. After his resurrection, he was walking on the road to Emmaus and he met up with a couple other travelers and essentially shared the gospel with them. He was planting and watering seed the same as he's called us to do. And what he did with those men gives us a great pattern to follow as we plant and water seeds in people's lives. So let's turn to

Luke chapter 24 and dig into this story. I want us to look at the method and pattern Jesus used in sharing the good news with these two men.

Read Luke 24:13-26.

¹³ That very day two of them were going to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and they were talking with each other about all these things that had happened. ¹⁵ While they were talking and discussing together, Jesus himself drew near and went with them. ¹⁶ But their eyes were kept from recognizing him. ¹⁷ And he said to them, “What is this conversation that you are holding with each other as you walk?” And they stood still, looking sad. ¹⁸ Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” ¹⁹ And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, ²⁰ and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. ²¹ But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened. ²² Moreover, some women of our company amazed us. They were at the tomb early in the morning, ²³ and when they did not find his body, they came back saying that they had even seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. ²⁴ Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see.” ²⁵ And he said to them, “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?””

What do you notice about what Jesus did in this part of the story? If you look through the details, you can see he did the same thing three times – he asked questions. You can see in verse 17 he asked: “What are you guys talking about?” Then again in verse 19 he asked them about what had happened in Jerusalem. And after they answered his question, he asked a third question in verse 26 which was: “Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?”

Jesus entered a conversation with these men, and he did so by asking questions. He found out what they were thinking about, what they were talking about, what was on their minds, what they cared about, what was bothering them. He listened

to them and took interest. He entered conversation with them, and he entered into relationship with them.

When we are planting and watering seeds of the gospel with the people we come into contact with, whether we know them as acquaintances, friends, or strangers, one of the most important things we can do is to simply enter into a real conversation with them. We ask questions, listen, find out what they're thinking about and where they're coming from. As we do this there will be opportunities to plant and water seeds and ask further questions that may be related to God, or Jesus, or what they believe.

We enter into conversation and relationship with them and show we actually care about them. We don't preach at them; we learn about them and listen. And it's in that kind of relational context that we will be presented with opportunities to ask questions that make them think about what they believe and may give us openings to share.

I was surprised by an opportunity to plant some seeds this week. I was in the garage and Ayla brought me the phone and said someone wanted to talk with me. When I answered it became apparent that it was a political pollster and at first I was thinking "Thanks Ayla," but as the conversation went on, the person I was talking to actually broke out of auto-pilot and began to talk to me. She asked me what I believed about abortion and I told her, and she asked me why I thought that way. I said, "Do you really want to know?" and she said "Yes." So I proceeded to share with her about my faith in Jesus and how I was seeking to follow him and his ways because he has shown me such kindness, grace and mercy. So I entered a conversation and was able to plant some seeds with a pollster – thanks to Ayla!

Asking questions and having a conversation is the first thing Jesus does and it's a great first step and pattern for us in our context as well. The second comes in the second half of this story.

Read Luke 24:27-35.

²⁷ *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

²⁸ *So they drew near to the village to which they were going. He acted as if he were going farther,* ²⁹ *but they urged him strongly, saying, "Stay with us, for it is*

toward evening and the day is now far spent.” So he went in to stay with them. ³⁰ When he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. ³¹ And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him. And he vanished from their sight. ³² They said to each other, “Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?” ³³ And they rose that same hour and returned to Jerusalem. And they found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, ³⁴ saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!” ³⁵ Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he was known to them in the breaking of the bread.

So the thing I want us to see in these verses is in verse 27. When he had entered into conversation with them and found out where they were coming from and what they were confused about, it was at that time that he began to use the Bible. He used the Bible to answer their questions and show them what they were looking for. And when he did, it says in verse 32 that their hearts burned within them.

So here I see another very important part of this pattern that Jesus shows us that ties into planting and watering seeds. And that is using Scripture – when it's time, when it's appropriate, when the person or people we are talking to are open to it and ready. It's then that we open the Scriptures with them and look at God's Word together, looking at verses and passages that pertain to the questions they have or the conversation that we're in.

Why should we do that? The reason is that there's something different about the Bible than other books or than the words coming out of our mouths. The Bible is the Holy Spirit inspired Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16 Paul tells Timothy: *“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.”* God is the ultimate source behind everything written in Scripture. He influenced the writers to write what they wrote, and when we are in conversations with people and there is an openness or desire to seek answers in the Bible, the Holy Spirit can also work in their hearts to make the words of Scripture come to life. It's called illumination. The author of Hebrews says in Hebrews 4:12: *“For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”* Paul

says in 1 Corinthians 2:12-13: *“Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”* I don’t know how many times I’ve heard people say that all of a sudden it was like the Bible just came alive to them – that’s the Holy Spirit working through the inspired Word.

So when we’re in those conversations and there’s an openness to God in the person we’re talking to, it’s important to actually use the Word of God to find their answers. We shouldn’t be Bible-thumpers who bang them over the head with Bible verses right out of the starting gate. But when the time is right and there is an openness, we should use it. And in so doing we are putting them into contact with a spiritual power that goes beyond just their mental or cognitive abilities. The Holy Spirit works in the hearts of people as they are reading the words that he inspired in the hearts of his apostles.

That’s what Jesus did. He first entered into conversation with them, entered into relationship, found out where they were coming from and what they were thinking about and then when he could see that they were wanting to know more, he brought them to the Scriptures and their hearts burned within them.

So I think the story gives us a wonderful and simple pattern to follow as we plant and water seeds of truth and the gospel among the people we live with and live among. We care for them and show an interest by asking questions and listening. We find out where they’re coming from and what they’re thinking about. Those conversations can go in many different directions and we go as the Spirit leads. And then, if at some point in the conversation it becomes evident that there’s an openness and the Holy Spirit is moving, we invite that person to study the Bible with us. And to the best of our ability we bring them to passages that have to do with what we’re talking about in the conversation.