

How to tell someone about Jesus

Message for Sunday, October 4, 2015
by Bruce Fraser

Scripture: Acts 22:1-23

Children's Message: Luke 15:1-7, parable of the lost sheep.

Would you agree with me that it's important to know people's names? *Listen for responses.* I'd rather someone say "Hi Bruce" than "Hey you!"

And would you agree with me that it's important to know what people are like? For example, when you're choosing your friends, you'd want to know who are the ones who are going to get you in trouble, and who are the good ones. Does that make sense?

So what I've done is to make labels to put on people: these white labels are for the **Bad** people, and these blue labels are for the **Good** people. Great idea, eh? [If someone asks how do I know who gets which label, my answer will be: "Very simple. The good people are those who are like me!" 😊]

That's a silly idea, I know. But the point is this: Jesus made friends with all kinds of people. In fact, the religious leaders of that time were unhappy with Jesus because he often went to parties with "the bad people." In the Bible passage we read, Jesus tells a story about a shepherd who leaves the flock of sheep, and goes out searching for the one which is lost. The lost sheep is like one of the bad people, and God loves that one just as much as all the others.

[Thanks to Charles Bauer for the idea of "good" and "bad" cards, in his book *Little Lessons to Live By.*]

Message "How to tell someone about Jesus"

1) Tell about yourself, what Jesus means to you

Chapter 21 of Acts ends with Paul facing an angry mob, who are shouting, "Kill him, kill him!" The only thing that prevents them from carrying out their desire is a regiment of Roman soldiers who formed a shield around Paul.

Before the soldiers take him away, Paul asks permission to speak to the crowd, and is allowed. That's how Acts 22 starts.

So what does he say to this angry mob? Does he try to reason with them? Argue? After all, Paul trained under Gamaliel, one of the leading rabbis of Israel, and could debate with the best of their scholars.

No. Instead, he tells a story. Not just any story. *His* story. He tells them where he was born, how he was brought up — his Jewish roots. As he talks, something remarkable happens. The crowd becomes quiet. They listen. Not out of respect; they despise this man, after all. But out of interest.

Even when he comes to the point of telling how he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, how he became a Christian, the crowd does not interrupt. Perhaps they are thinking, "That could have been me." Perhaps they are thinking, "If there is more to God than what I know, I would like to hear about it."

It's only when Paul says that the message of salvation is now going to the Gentiles (non-Jews) that the crowd erupts again in a frenzy. That was too much to swallow. If Paul had said, "All Gentiles are welcome to become Jews, to adopt our Jewish laws and customs, and then to follow this new teacher Jesus," there would have been no problem. What they could not accept was that salvation was possible outside their traditions.

Even so, I think there were probably some in the crowd who believed Paul's story. We don't see it in the Bible, but there are documents from church history that tell that some of the Christians in the Jerusalem church were once priests and rabbis. They were there that day, and as they listened to Paul telling his story, they may have been thinking, "This is not like *The Avengers* movie. This is a true story. This really happened. And if it happened to Paul, maybe it could happen to me, too."

Are you aware how powerful your story is?

At this point, I asked Jef Kohlsmith to give an example of how he had shared his faith story.

Next Steps:

- Think about what Jesus means in your life. How can you put that into a story to share with someone else?
- Continue letting "your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" [Matthew 5:15].