

Questions and Conclusions

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Preacher: Cory Brock

- [0 : 0 0] Let me read for us just very briefly from 1 Peter chapter 3 verses 13 to 17. That's where we started this series back a good while ago.
- So this is God's word from 1 Peter 3. Now, who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed.
- Have no fear of them nor be troubled. But in your heart's honor, Christ the Lord is holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you.
- Yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that when you are slandered, those who revalue your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good if that should be God's will than for doing evil.
- This is God's word. Let me try to do this in five minutes, and overview very quickly of everything we've said so far in this Gospel Conversation series.
- [1 : 0 5] It occurred to me last week as we were going to Citigroup that we've focused on a different aspect of getting into Gospel conversations, but we've done it over so many weeks that it's pretty difficult to keep it all in your head in a way that you can actually move in the moment from start to finish from what we've said.
- So I just jotted down a few things of really what the big ideas of what we said each time. So I'll just give one minute and less really on each of the five or six of them now before we look at some questions.
- Number one, we began the series by asking, step one, do you clearly understand the Gospel in such a way that you can speak the Gospel?
- And underneath that question, we talked about how there's an art, but also an aspect of passion in being able to share your testimony and embed your own personal testimony within the structure of Christianity, which is creation, fall, redemption in Christ, and new creation.
- So being able to have a focus on Jesus' work in your own life, but doing that that helps somebody see creation, fall, redemption in Christ, new creation.
- [2 : 2 9] So that was week one. Are you clearly grasping the Gospel yourself in such a way that you're able and ready to give a defense, to speak the Gospel to somebody that asks for hope that's within you?
- Okay? Secondly, we said, Hunter, I think you told on this, do you know your context? Did you teach on that? Yeah? I know it. Do you know your context?
- So when we go to speak with people in the world that aren't Christians, are you able to discern with wisdom, has this person been church-ed?
- Do they know the language of Christianity or not? Can they handle religious jargon? What might offend them in a particular way prior to giving them the offense of the cross of Christ?

Unnecessarily, right? Questions like that. In what ways do I predict or imagine that they might have suffered in their past that might lead me to talk to them in certain ways leading up to presenting the Gospel?

[3 : 35] So these are all the kind of contextual questions that we have to keep in mind, and there's a thousand more than that. But that was what we did. So do you grasp the Gospel clearly?

And do you understand or you consider it of the context of the person that you're walking alongside and trying to bring towards faith in Christ? Thirdly, O5, are you ready to face your fears?

So we talked a lot in this series about what we're afraid of when it comes to sharing our faith and having Gospel conversations. We all struggle with fear in this area for different reasons, fear of rejection, the fear of breaking relationships, the embarrassment and shame of simply spending oneself in such a way in a public context as to share the Christian faith with somebody.

Are you ready to face your fears? We talked about courage, but the second subordinate question we asked was, is this a love issue?

So perfect fear, perfect love, not perfect fear, perfect love cast out fear, we should say. To what degree are we praying and asking God to help us to love people in a way that that love would overwhelm fear when it comes to Gospel conversations?

[5 : 05] So is it a love issue in my heart? And I think just like this past Sunday when we were talking about money and how we, if we're sinners and we handle money at all, we've got to be willing to say I may be struggling with greed to some degree.

And in the same way I think, because we're sinners, we've got to say I may be struggling with a love issue here to some degree. And so perfect love cast out fear, pray that God would help us to love people more than we're afraid of them.

All right, that was number three. Number four, are you a public Christian? So this is when we transition from kind of the pre-Avangelism questions to getting to it and that's number one, are you a public Christian?

Meaning, do you, is there nothing hidden in any way in your public life at work, in your neighborhood?

Are people very aware that this person is a Christian and goes to church without you ever having to give him a Gospel presentation? I think that's a huge important step is living a public faith.

[6 : 15] So in the workplace, amongst chat, in the flat you live in or wherever it may be, that there's an awareness from the people around you in a subtle way that you are a Christian and that actually tills the ground a little bit for a future conversation.

So are you living life as a public Christian? In other words, do you lay seeds, little seeds that might be picked up later for Gospel conversation?

Simple one would be the question we've all been asked a thousand times. What do you have going on the weekend? You know, and you say, well, on Saturday this and on Sunday I'll be at church on Sunday morning.

That's a little seed actually that can get picked up later on. And then finally, fifth and lastly, start to speak.

Pursuing relationships, I think, in moving them towards Gospel conversations, as all of you know, we prize relational evangelism here more than street preaching and other things, though God absolutely uses those means sometimes, powerfully.

[7 : 32] But here, I think for 21st century people, the overall ethos we try to imbibe is relational evangelism. And one of the real dangers in relational evangelism is that you have a whole lot of relationship and zero evangelism.

And that is often the critique of relational evangelism, is that friendship keeps getting better but there's never a Gospel conversation. And so the ultimate goal here is that we do start to speak words of Gospel about the cross at some point.

You know, I think ways to get at that, we looked at this a couple times, are asking a lot of value questions, a lot of listening, asking a lot of story-based questions, looking for personal narratives to come out from people and being able to ask questions specific within those personal narratives that are value questions, questions about happiness, questions about freedom, fulfillment, questions about pain and suffering eventually that might lead towards a Gospel conversation.

We talked about the concept of subversive fulfillment, which is taking what a modern person is desperately looking for and trying to show them how Christ actually fulfills that thing, whether that is freedom, identity, happiness, whatever it might be, subversive fulfillment.

One thing I mentioned to our city group last week, and we'll finish with this and move on, is offering prayer. So I used to do this in the States a little bit.

[9 : 08] I think it does weird people out, but just saying, I'm going to be praying for you about that. And then maybe seeing how that goes and next time saying, can I pray for you?

And seeing how they receive it. So that can be a pathway. You have to again understand your context. Is that going to break a relationship, things like that? But that might be a pathway.

I'll just list one or two more. Inviting people into our Christian community. Maybe that's dinner with a few other Christians that are part of St. C's at your place.

Let people belong in order to believe. So let people see the beauty of the Christian community in order that they might walk in it for a while towards faith, belonging in order to believe.

A lot of modern people really need that pathway. And lastly, at some point we're called to share the hope of Jesus Christ through our personal testimony with a Jesus simplicity.

[10 : 14] So Jesus simplicity means simply this. Did Jesus Christ rise from the dead or not? That's Jesus simplicity.

That's the kind of question you're trying to get towards with a person. And if he did, then we've got to deal with everything else he said and believe it.

And if he didn't, then all the difficult Old Testament questions don't matter anymore. So sometimes getting bogged down in things, difficulties people have with faith, you might be able to cut through that, diagonalize it as it's been put by Jesus simplicity.

I think a man rose from the dead in the middle of history. And if he did, then he is what he says he is. He's God. And so everything else I can then come back to later and ask, yeah, well, let's talk about the Joshua conquest.

I know that's hard, but did he rise from the dead? And so Jesus simplicity is a real tool, I think, in gospel conversation. All right, that's what we've done all semester.

[11 : 18] Yeah. And I think now we're going to answer a few questions that we've received. Please, I'll just stay where you are. So thanks, Corey.

That was a great summary. And we got one or two questions mainly related to the subject, thankfully.

One kind of slightly broader. So just going to give just brief answers each and feel free to come in with answers with secondary questions or anything.

So it's informal this evening. First question is what would St. Columbus look like if a culture of faith sharing was more significantly established?

Okay. I'm not sure if there's a subtext there. There may be that it's not established and that's fine.

[12 : 14] It's a very difficult question. Can I repeat the question? What would St. Columbus look like if a culture of faith sharing was more significantly established? I think from my point of view, that's a great question because it's a constant aim for us, always an aim for us to establish faith sharing more as a church.

What would it look like? That's a great question. It would be quite good to get your answers of what you think about that. For me, I think it would be, and it kind of links in with what Corey's just been saying, an ever-increasing deepening of love for Christ and for one another.

Now that might seem like a cop-out, but it's not because it's got to be. If the love for Christ, if we don't desire Christ, we're going to be rotten evangelists anyway.

So it's our desire for Christ, an ever-increasing desire for worship, for prayer, and for experiencing Christ in our lives and with others.

To me, that's what it looks like. When we're in prayer times together, you're not just praying for your granny's corns, but you're praying for courage and faith to share the gospel with your neighbors tomorrow, to disciple and be disciplined, to be open with our faith together, and being thrilled to introduce your friends, not just to Jesus, but to your Christian friends as well.

[13 : 51] And I think that would all be significant, the belonging before believing kind of concept. I think that's important. And that means that we will come out of our comfort zones a little bit, we'll not be inward-looking.

There will be an outward-looking face to us. That would be just some of the things I would say. Corey, what would you... Yeah, that was good. In Psalm 27 tonight that we sang is basically that prayer that I would desire to see Jesus' face more than anything and then let that be the heartbeat of evangelism.

I mean, some of the practical things too, in addition to that, we would see more adult baptisms. And I think people tell stories about how when adult baptisms start happening a whole lot in places, that the whole church just gets really fired up and a lot more evangelism kind of comes out of that.

And so I think that would be one of the practical things. I read an article about this from Max Stiles last week, since you were talking about it in the last one of these. And it was pretty convicting because one of the big things he said was cultivating that culture of increasing evangelistic faithfulness and fruit.

He, Mac, was saying, is first the job of the ministers and the leaders.

[15 : 15] So he was talking about just how when the leaders are doing this, it can also help develop. So it was a convicting read, obviously.

But the other thing that he said, and this was the last thing I'll say about it because I know we've got to move on, is he said that developing evangelistic cultures in terms of the teaching ministry of the church is helping everybody to not only see but embrace the idea, which is a much older Christian idea, that evangelism is a spiritual discipline like Bible reading.

So he claimed looking at early church and medieval church concepts of spiritual disciplines, that sharing faith, persuasion, Christian persuasion was like prayer.

It's a discipline that you have to actually say, I'm going to read my Bible, I'm going to pray, and I'm going to share the gospel. Those are my disciplines. Are you meeting people that have never been baptized at all and are being baptized because they're coming to faith for the first time, unchurched, completely unchurched, coming into the body, never having been a part of the church.

And she's always thrilling to see. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah. Sharing, so Jean's just saying, if we talk about the gospel together, it becomes easier to talk about it with others.

[17 : 11] And I think that's absolutely key. Yeah. Because we were relaxed and it matters to us to share. That's good. Any other thoughts about what would be what St. Columbus would look like if a gospel faith sharing was more significantly established?

Bill, you can think about it. Chris, second question, this one, Nathaniel, I mean, there he had his comment.

I know something, my brother and I used to do with students back in the class when it came to the Easter and Christmas, we would take the gospel and then last time we did the Catholic and then we'd go to one second where each student would read a different chapter and they would take it away.

Full day because we would take it. It's hard to be true. But it was amazing how positive everyone was afterwards and how many stories he did get in the following weeks after that, when people have an adventurous thought and you saw how actually doing that, especially as a student, had believed in the gospel and how easily you could get the gospel and when you read what he wants in the Bible, I forgot that, still made about Jesus.

And I want to especially remind you to share that story, especially with these students. Yeah, I think sharing, I think actually if you're concerned and if you worry about how you're going to share the gospel with someone who you think is quite interested, I do think not in a winner, but just reading a gospel with them, maybe send them away, say, read the first three chapters, write down any questions you have and we'll discuss them.

[19 : 23] I don't think you can get much better than that because you're just going straight to the gospel. Great. Nathaniel. Nathaniel is a cold, blooded individual by the way.

He comes in tonight in the hottest day of the year with a shirt, a jumper, a jacket and a scarf. Okay. Second question, would it be possible to have a series of sermons?

That's a very short answer. Would it be possible to have a series of sermons in the work of the Holy Spirit in our personal and church life? Yes. You don't need to answer anything. We will.

We'll program that in. That'll be good to do. Third question, how do we appropriately use apologetics in our evangelism? So very quickly, all I would say on that is apologetics, the defense of our faith, I would use sensitively.

I think it's easy for intelligent people particularly to be tempted into one upmanship to beat someone in an argument, apologetically.

[20 : 30] I know things. That's a terrible argument you've got and I can defeat it, which can be significant but I think you've got to be aware that it's not about winning the argument, it's about winning their soul.

But on the other hand, it's important for people to see that we have a reasonable faith, a faith that's worked out, it's rational or at some point, so it's above rational.

But we believe with intellectual integrity so that there's a defense of what we believe. So that's what I would say. That's good.

I feel a lot different about this now than I used to. I used to be a person who wanted to be very apologetic. I feel like that's kind of a younger, you do that when you're younger and you want to do apologetics all the time.

But now I think apologetics needs to be situated within Jesus' simplicity. So I had two times last week a nice sit down with a person and we did a lot of apologetic talk, this person wrestling with whether or not they were going to believe in Christ.

[21 : 51] But what I wanted to do was just to say, look, here's the preposterous claim that I'm claiming is true and historical, and that's that Jesus Christ is God and He rose from the dead.

And I put it out very quickly in the conversation and just said, that's the claim. That's what we've got to wrestle with. And we did come around to historical questions, we came back to Old Testament issues, the problem of evil.

We talked through a lot of that kind of stuff, but I kept just kind of saying, but the real issue is Christ and whether or not He is God.

So I just think, yeah, I think the big thing here is you don't need to be that well-schooled in apologetics because of Jesus' simplicity.

I think that that releases you from the necessity of being able to talk about, you know, Greco Roman accounts of what constitutes history relative to post-enlightenment accounts of what constitutes history or whatever.

[22 : 55] I mean, yeah, I'm just saying exactly, exactly, right? Like you don't need that. You can just keep coming back to the question.

Now I know we're running out of time. One more thing. It is worth, I think, having apologetic chops surrounding that question, the Jesus question, the resurrection of Christ.

Because immediately if you put that claim out there, that enormous claim that for a secular humanist is very difficult to accept, that Jesus Christ, the man is God, come from heaven to earth and that He rose from the dead.

I do think that that is where you want to focus your apologetic training. So questions of why is the resurrection so compelling as a historical narrative?

That kind of a question. Why did the gospel transform the Roman world so quickly within a century in ways that no other religion had ever done?

[24 : 01] So I do think if you're going to focus on apologetics, that is the place to go. Yeah, so. Good. Okay, last question and then we'll invite the occurs up.

Is evangelism a gift that is especially given to some as in Ephesians 4 verse 11? And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, shepherds, teachers to equip the saints for the works of ministry.

And what does that mean for the rest of us? I would argue, yes, there is a gift of evangelism and it's a gift from God and some people have it.

But I don't think that excuses everyone else from not being evangelist just as hospitality is a gift and generosity and giving is a gift, but for some, but all of us are commanded to do these things.

So I think, yes, it is, there is a specific gift of evangelism, which we know some people have, clearly. But if it's a gift, you can ask for it.

[25 : 11] There's no reason why God can't give you it. And so we can ask for the gift of evangelism. God might not give you it, but we're still commanded then to be evangelists. But clearly, my understanding of scripture and of reality is that that would be the case.

Yeah, I agree. I think people go wrong on this. I've heard this defended, especially in the States a lot, but where the only people that need to do evangelism are those who have been gifted by the Holy Spirit to do it in obvious particular ways and then have been set apart by the church.

But that, I think that there are those people, yes, but that the Holy Spirit does give specific gifts to Christians. However, like you said exactly, however, we know that every single gift while each of us has a particular gift from the Holy Spirit, we also know that the whole ministry is for everyone.

So next to evangelism, like you said, he lists generosity. And there are people who God has blessed with the gift of generosity, and yet every Christian is commanded to give.

And so in the same way that God gives some men to teach and therefore should be ordained to be a teaching elder of the church, God calls everybody to teach the scriptures in some capacity in their life to somebody, right?

[26 : 28] And so every person, the whole ministry is for everybody. And at the same time, there are particular gifts. I think, I hope you won't mind me saying this, I think Robin Sillson has the gift of evangelism.

That's just from my personal observation. But Robin is an incredible evangelist, I've noticed. He just drops little evangelism bombs with random people all the time and walks away and I've watched it in person.

And I've been like, I can't believe you just did that. But then felt guilty because of how he did it. So yeah, I think he's won.

So he'll find out I said that. I hope he's not upset. I'm sure he's not. What do you think that asks us going to all the world until people? Is everyone around you that are being that and doing it?

Absolutely. So you're agreeing with us? We're agreeing with you? Yeah, I agree. So because I think it's a special gift, I think it's a responsibility. Every Christian. Oh, it is, but it does give some to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers.

[27 : 33] We're not all these things, all of us. It's both and. It's both and. Yeah, it's both and. It's everybody's job and God does, I think. I think the New Testament does say that God blesses particular individuals with a particular ability.

So that they're going to be better at it than me. Like I think Robin is. But at the same time, it's my job to write so I can absolutely never say no.

Yeah, so. But we will all have gifts that come from each other. So someone might be better at it actually evangelizing. Someone might be better at opening their home where the evangelist is beside them for dinner and they do that bit.

And so that's why it's good to do together. Yeah, but absolutely. I mean, complete agreement. I'm just going to go.

I want it done.