

Principle #14

Lifestyle Evangelism

looking for teachable moments



Principles of Discipleship

It is clear from the Great Commission that every Christian is to be involved in the process of inviting others into the kingdom of God. But how does that happen? Should the average believer become an itinerant preacher, or go door-to-door each day? Obviously these are valid methods, yet we see many instances in Scripture of "divine appointments" which arise out of natural situations. Often people will walk into the kingdom across bridges that have been built through friendship and commonality. We should always be on the lookout for these teachable relationships, expecting that God will use us as servants of the New Covenant.

"Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."
2 Corinthians 3:4,5

^{4:1} The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, ² although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. ³ When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

^{4:4} Now he had to go through Samaria. ⁵ So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

^{4:7} When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" ⁸ (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

^{4:9} The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

^{4:10} Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

^{4:11} "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and

Main Passage: John 4

Trace the course of this amazing conversation through the various questions that are asked and the topics that are brought up. How would you outline it? (Mark the Scripture passage on the left, or use a separate sheet of paper.)



Why does it say that Jesus "had to go" through Samaria (verse 4)? (see a map of Israel)

What time would the "sixth hour" be (verse 7)? Is this the ideal time to draw water?

Look up "Samaritan" in a Bible dictionary. What was their history, and why did the Jews of Jesus' day despise them?

his flocks and herds?"

^{4:13} Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

^{4:15} The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

^{4:16} He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

^{4:17} "I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. ¹⁸ The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true."

^{4:19} "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

^{4:21} Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. ²⁴ God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

^{4:25} The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

^{4:26} Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

What would be a modern-day equivalent of the relationship between these two groups of people?

What parable did Jesus tell that highlighted this Jew-Samaritan animosity, and criticized the Jews in the process (hint: see Luke 10:30-36)?

Did all Samaritan villages receive Jesus as warmly as this one eventually did? (See Luke 9:51-56)

In what sense is this a "cross-cultural" encounter? (What would be a modern-day equivalent for you?)

What do you notice about Jesus' style of interaction? Does he force the conversation? Does he steer it? Does he listen well?

How does Jesus deal with religious differences which could easily become a "rabbit-trail"? (see verses 19 and following)

Give a personal example of a "religious rabbit-trail" that has sidetracked a conversation you've actually had with someone.

^{4:27} Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

^{4:28} Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?"

³⁰ They came out of the town and made their way toward him.

^{4:31} Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

^{4:32} But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

^{4:33} Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

^{4:34} "My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. ³⁵ Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. ³⁶ Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. ³⁷ Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

^{4:39} Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. ⁴¹ And because of his words many more became believers.

^{4:42} They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

◆ Now read the "rest of the story":

How did the **disciples** react to Jesus' encounter? What do you think they learned through this experience?

What does the **woman** do?

What do the **townspeople** do?

Footnote: An interesting development happens sometime later in Acts 8:4-17. How is it linked with this encounter between Jesus and the woman at the well?

Have you had a similar experience, where you had an initial conversation with someone, and then years later someone else came along and finished the process of leading that person to Christ?

How does 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 speak to this issue?

◆ 3 Other Passages

(Although none of these are "normal" situations, what are some principles you can glean from them to apply to your own life?)

John 3

Acts 8:26-40

Acts 16:1-15



“Seventeen years ago I moved into a lovely apartment with a load of dreams. My dental student husband was in his senior year and we had decided to treat ourselves to luxuries – a swimming pool and a dishwasher – for the last few months before his graduation. I dreamed of soon quitting my secretarial job and starting a family. But all my dreams exploded just a few weeks later when my husband moved out and filed for a divorce. When the rent was due that month, I revealed my tragedy to the managers of the apartment only because we had rented it on a special discount for dental students and the dental student was gone. The managers happened to be a couple, a seminary student and a schoolteacher, named Joe and Ruthe Aldrich.

Ruthe empathized with the heartache and loneliness I felt; she genuinely seemed to care. She told me that she believed her own marriage worked because she and Joe put Christ at the center of it. I didn’t understand but it sure sounded good.

Ruthe stopped by often to check on me, and over the next days and weeks, she and Joe began to take me out to dinner and have me over for meals. As they opened their lives to me, I knew I had found some very special friends, unlike any I’d ever known. They always seemed to care and have time to listen to me and even cry with me. From the close vantage point they gave me with their lives, I knew there was something about them and their marriage that I truly wanted. The books and Bible verses they gave me were wrapped in their constant love. Eventually I asked them about their personal relationship to Christ. It was so simple and clear for me when they came to *Revelation 3:20* that I had no doubt what my response was to be. That night I invited Christ into my life.

Though I had hoped that my problems would be over the next day, they weren’t. My marriage never mended and I struggled over my future. But I knew I was a new creature and had been given a fresh start in life by Christ. The constant support and encouragement of Ruthe and Joe kept me going. As they helped me discover what was

happening to me, I began to see God’s Spirit at work in my life and I wanted to share what I’d found with others. As I studied and learned how to do just that, I also knew that I needed to get involved in people’s lives and learn to love and care for them – just like the Aldriches had loved and cared for me.

That spring and summer, around the swimming pool, the three of us spent time getting better acquainted with our neighbors. People opened up to us with questions about our personal faith when we took the time to invite them over for hamburgers. Several made quiet commitments to Christ during the course of the Bible study Joe taught at my apartment. I could go on and on. I am now married to a wonderful Christian man and have a six-year-old son. Our thirteen-year marriage has not been problem-free, but God has helped us work through the difficulties as I’ve practiced Joe and Ruthe’s plan – putting Christ at the center of our marriage. As we have learned to communicate this reality of our faith to others, God continues to bring us back to the same costly kind of evangelism Ruthe and Joe used to minister to me: mixing the Good News with genuine love, care, and friendship.”

SCRIPTURE

Which verses significantly impacted you and why?



ARTICLE

What did you personally glean from this article?



PRINCIPLE

Summarize the truth you've learned in a concise statement:



LIFE APPLICATION

1. *What makes the concept of lifestyle evangelism attractive or unattractive to you?*

2. *Jot down the names of 3 people whom you could imagine God using you to influence spiritually this year.*

