



LINKS PLAYERS DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Links Players

Starting The Conversation

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” (Luke 10:36) ...“But who do you say I am? (Luke 9:20) ...” “What things?” (Luke 24:19) ...” “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” ... (Matthew 7:13) ...” “What do you want me to do for you?” (Matthew 20:32) (NIV).

The recent “Notes from Ireland” Friday Devotional series encourages us to “Get in the game” and engage our friends, family, and neighbors by sharing the gospel with them.

During the weekly discussions that centered on this theme and over the years, I frequently heard a common question: “Ole, I understand that I need to share the gospel with others, BUT HOW DO I DO THAT WITHOUT ALIENATING THAT PERSON OR LOSING OR RUINING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH THEM?”

There is a reticence, maybe even a fear, of something untoward happening to a relationship if we try to share the Good News.

How does one start the conversation in a way that reduces the risk of losing a friend or endangering a relationship? Consider beginning the conversation with a non-threatening question. Try asking a question about golf, sports, movies, books, the culture, or any item you have in common as long as it is a “safe” topic.

Once the conversation starts, slowly shift the focus to gathering information, much like pro golfers do with their caddies. If you have listened closely to one of their conversations when the television microphone has gotten close to the action, you have likely heard a myriad of questions being asked:

What’s the distance to the hole? What’s the carry distance over a bunker? Which way is the wind blowing? A hard nine-iron or a soft eight? What’s my target? The golfer uses open-ended questions designed to gather information.

Jesus provides a wonderful example of this technique, which will enable us to approach relationship evangelism and reduce the fear of failure. The four gospels contain over 300 questions that Jesus asked during his ministry. In the gospel passages at the start of this devotional, Jesus uses open-ended questions that start with a “W-word” (Who, What, When, Why, Where).

We can use these same types of questions to engage others in our evangelism efforts. They can serve as a useful tool to get conversations started and put the person at ease. They can show others that we are genuinely interested in what they have to say and what they believe.

At the same time, questions can provide valuable information about a person's particular worldview. These open-ended questions are designed to allow the other person to talk in sentences rather than give one-word answers. Later, questions we might ask can cause the person to examine their beliefs more closely.

Greg Koukl, in his book TACTICS, provides a wonderful framework for crafting and asking important questions. Among them are:

---What do you mean by _____? (ask them to define and clarify any terms that they are using)

---How did you come to that conclusion?

---How do you know that to be true?

---Why do you believe that is right?

---Where did you get your information?

---What happens if you are wrong?

Equally important as the type of questions you ask is the manner and style in which you ask them in the dialogue. Peter tells us that we need to be prepared to give an answer for the hope we have in a gentle and respectful manner (1 Peter 3:15).

Lee Strobel suggests that we need to come from a place of humility, honesty, authenticity, integrity, and empathy. Our goal ought to be to approach the dialogue with a loving and truthful attitude.

Now that you have started the conversation, what's next? Join me next month as we explore the virtues of good listening habits and patience.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give me the courage and the guidance I need to start a conversation with my friends, family, and neighbors so that I can share the gospel message with them without any fear that my relationships with them will be damaged.

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