

LESSON 12

Sharing Your Faith Naturally

You don't have to win an argument or have every answer. You just have to tell the truth about what Jesus has done for you.

You don't need all the answers, just faithfulness.

WATCH BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Scan to watch the Lesson 12 teaching video – a 12-minute companion to this lesson.

CORE SCRIPTURE

but in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. Yet do this with gentleness and reverence, keeping a clear conscience, so that when you are accused, those who disparage your good conduct in Christ will be put to shame.

—1 Peter 3:15-16

The Conversation You're Dreading

For many new Christians, few words create more anxiety than “evangelism.” You picture a doorstep, a stranger, a list of questions you can't answer, and the hot panic of getting cornered about something you've believed for just a few months. So, you quietly decide that sharing your faith is for other people. The bold ones. The ones who went to Bible college and can explain the Trinity without sweating.

If that's where you are, take a breath. That picture of evangelism, the debate you're destined to lose, was never the assignment. Somewhere along the way, we got the idea that telling people about Jesus means becoming a salesman or a lawyer, closing the deal or winning the case. Most of us are neither, and we know it, so we say nothing.

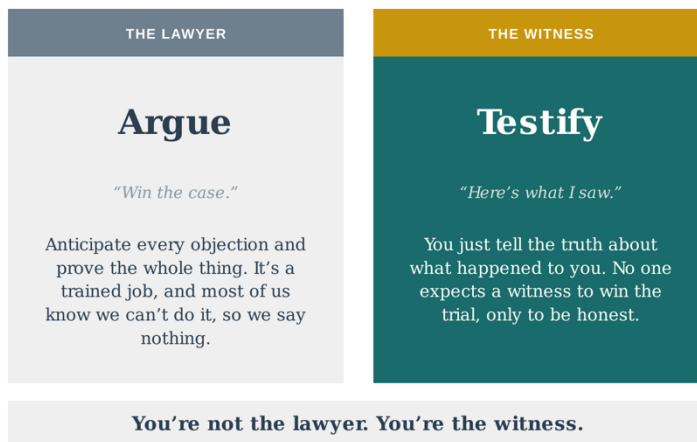
But the New Testament asks for something far smaller and far more doable than the thing you're dreading. It doesn't ask you to have all the answers. It asks you to be honest about what you've found.

DISCUSSION: When you hear "share your faith," what's the scenario that makes you anxious? Where did that picture of evangelism come from?

You're a Witness, not a Lawyer

FIGURE 12.1

Witness or Lawyer?



Lesson 12 · 1 Peter 3:15

Peter wrote: "In your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Notice what you're asked to give. Not a defense of every doctrine, but a reason for your hope.

Think about the difference between a witness and a lawyer in a courtroom. The lawyer argues the case and anticipates the objections. That's a trained job, and most people in the room couldn't do it. The witness has a

much simpler task. The witness just says what they saw. Nobody expects a witness to win the trial. They expect the witness to tell the truth about what happened.

You are not the lawyer in this. You're the witness. You don't have to argue someone into the kingdom or out-debate their hardest question. You only have to tell the truth about what you've seen and what you've become. That, you can do.

DISCUSSION: Does it change anything to think of yourself as a witness rather than a defense attorney? What's the difference in pressure between the two?

One Thing I Know

FIGURE 12.2

The One Thing You Know



There's a man in John's Gospel who shows you how this works. Jesus had healed him of blindness, and the religious authorities hauled him in to interrogate him, trying to trap him into saying the wrong thing about Jesus. They were experts. He was a beggar who had been blind his whole life. It was not a fair fight.

And watch how he handles it. When they press him with theological questions, he doesn't pretend to know more than he does. "Whether or not he's a sinner, I don't know," he says.

Then he plants his feet on the one thing he's sure of: "One thing I do know: I was blind, and now I can see!" (John 9:25).

That's it. That's the whole testimony, and the experts couldn't do a thing with it. They could argue theology all day, but they could not argue with his eyes. Nobody can argue you out of your own story. You may not be able to answer every objection about suffering, or about the parts of the Bible that trouble people. You can always say, with total honesty, here's what I was like, and here's what Jesus has done. That sentence is yours, and it's unanswerable.

DISCUSSION: What's your version of "I was blind, and now I can see"? In a sentence or two, what were you like before, and what has Jesus done?

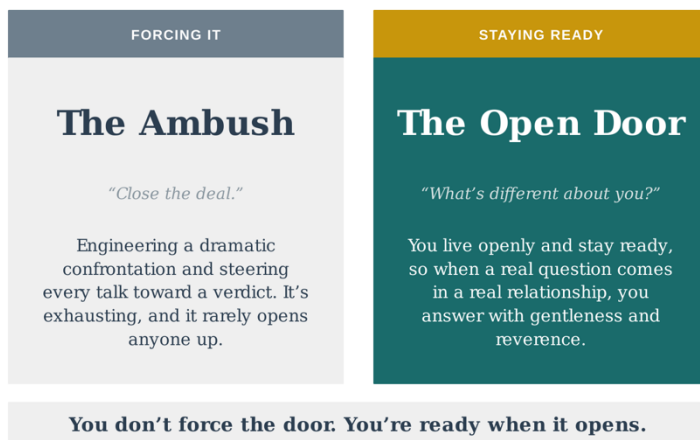
With Gentleness and Reverence

So, sharing your faith isn't a sales pitch. But Peter adds something that protects it from becoming an argument, too. Give your reason, he says, "with gentleness and reverence" (1 Peter 3:16). The goal was never to win. It was to love someone enough to tell them the truth, kindly.

That's also where the word *natural* comes in. Look again at how Peter frames it: be ready to answer "anyone who asks you." Much of the time, sharing your faith isn't you launching an ambush. It's you being ready when a real question comes up in a real relationship, because your life has made someone

FIGURE 12.3

The Ambush or the Open Door



Lesson 12 · 1 Peter 3:15-16

DISCUSSION: Who in your life might already be a little curious about the change in you? What would it look like to simply be ready when they ask?

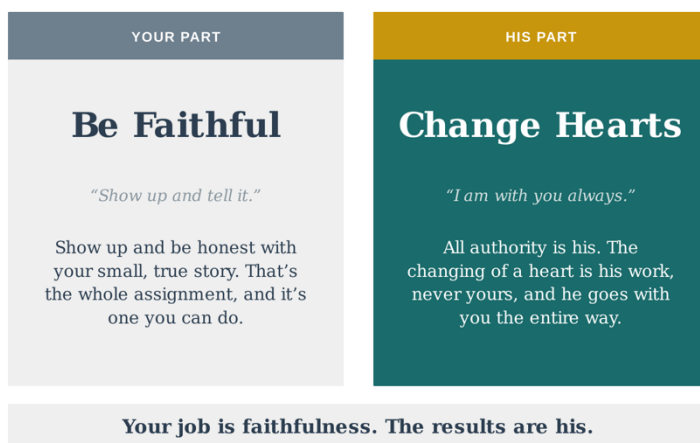
curious. You don't have to force every conversation toward a verdict. You live openly, you stay ready, and when someone asks what's different about you, you tell them.

That takes the pressure off in a way new Christians need to hear. You are not responsible for engineering dramatic gospel confrontations. You're responsible to be honest and kind when the door opens. Often it opens more naturally than you'd expect.

Go, and He Goes with You

FIGURE 12.4

Whose Job Is It?



Lesson 12 · Matthew 28:18-20

There's one more reason the pressure is off, and it's the biggest one. The job was never yours to pull off alone. When Jesus sent his followers out, he bracketed the command with two promises. "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth," he began. Then, "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations." And he ended with this: "And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18–20).

Read the order. His authority comes first. Going comes second. And his

presence wraps around the whole thing. You are not a salesperson working on commission, responsible for the results. The outcome belongs to the One with all authority. The actual changing of a heart is his

work, never yours. Your job is to show up and be faithful with your small, true story. His job is everything that happens after.

So, you can let go of the weight you were never meant to carry. You don't have to be impressive. You don't have to close the deal. You only have to be a faithful witness to what Jesus has done in you and trust him to do what only he can. Remember the story you started writing back in Lesson 1? That's where this began, and it's still enough.

DISCUSSION: What would change this week if you believed the results were God's responsibility, and only the faithfulness was yours?

Looking to Jesus

If you ever doubt that your story is enough, listen to the assignment Jesus once gave a man who had nothing else to offer.

The man had been living among the tombs, out of his mind, tormented by a legion of demons, until Jesus set him free. Healed and clothed and in his right mind for the first time in years, he begged to climb in the boat and follow. It's a reasonable request from someone that grateful. But Jesus told him no, and handed him a different job instead: "Go home to your own people, and report to them how much the Lord has done for you and how he has had mercy on you" (Mark 5:19).

Notice what Jesus did not give him. No training, no script of arguments for skeptical neighbors. The man had been a follower of Jesus for all of about an hour, and his entire qualification was a before and an after. Jesus looked at that and said, that's plenty. Go tell it.

And he did. "So he went out and began to proclaim in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him, and they were all amazed" (Mark 5:20). One man, one story, ten towns left amazed. He didn't explain the kingdom of God. He told people what Jesus had done for him, and that was enough to turn heads across a whole region.

That's the assignment you've been given, too. Not to have all the answers, but to report, simply and gladly, how much the Lord has done for you. If Jesus trusted a man freed an hour ago with his story, he trusts you with yours.

REFLECTION: Jesus told a brand-new believer to go report what God had done for him. Who are "your own people," the ones most likely to hear your story, and what has the Lord done for you that you could tell them?

DON'T FORGET

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