

Evangelizing to Friends

Objective

To learn the right way to witness to our friends about Our Lord

References

Holy Scriptures

Scriptural Verse

“And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Lesson Outline

This lesson is modeled around the relationship between Philip and Nathanael - John 1:43-51

Philip’s Encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:43)

- Philip had an encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ and accepted His offer.
- We can’t give away something we don’t have. We must practice our faith and be filled with the Holy Spirit in a real, practical, evident way.
- Our actions, our love, and our discipleship to the Lord Jesus Christ IS what makes us Christians...not just reciting doctrine.

Philip’s Response (John 1:45)

- Philip shared what he experienced with Nathanael.
- He FOUND Nathanael. He sought him out.
- Enthusiasm: He was excited about what happened to him and didn’t want to keep it to himself.
- Love: He demonstrated love and caring for his friend by wanting to share this good news (the Gospel) with him.
- Rooted in Truth: He spoke of the truth and the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ to Nathanael.

Nathanael’s Skepticism (John 1:45:46)

- Skepticism is almost the inevitable initial response to evangelism.
- What makes us different than the Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Mormons, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Baptists, that all claim to understand and preach the truth?
- Nazareth was a small obscure town.
- Nathanael might ponder:
 - What are the odds the Messiah would come from there
 - What are the odds that He would come during my lifetime
 - How likely is He the person that Philip is talking about?
- Today people will ask themselves the same thing. What are the odds that this Christ is the one true way and one True God?

Philip's Faith (John 1:45:46)

- Philip did not argue. Do you think this was a good idea?
- He had already mentioned that He knew Christ was coming based on the Law of Moses. He didn't say much more.
- Instead, he invited Nathanael to see for himself.
- He knew Nathanael well and knew how he would respond.
- The Lord Jesus Christ is a person, not an object. He desires and works to reveal Himself to those who seek Him.
- Philip knew that for Nathanael to believe he must see and experience the Lord Jesus Christ Himself.
- We can't make people believe
- He said, "Come and see," not "Go and see." He made the effort.

Nathanael Goes to See for Himself (John 1:45:47)

- the Lord Jesus Christ greeted him with a compliment! He was not being flattering, but instead knew the character of Nathanael.
- We should also look at the strong points in other people and make them feel accepted and even wanted as part of the body of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- There should be a balance between preaching condemnation vs. Grace based on wisdom and the character of the person and our relationship with them.

Nathanael is Intrigued (John 1:45:48)

- Nathanael was intrigued and curious.
- Asking questions is a sign of interest.
- That's when we need to be available to answer them.
- That means we have to know what we are talking about, why we believe what we do, be practicing what we believe, and be enthusiastic.

God Reveals Himself (John 1:45:48)

- The Lord Jesus Jesus demonstrated His omniscience to Nathanael.
- This is what we should pray for and even expect God to do when people come to Him with a sincere heart.
- God is showing that He knows Nathanael personally and cares about the details of his life

Nathanael Believes (John 1:45:49)

- Nathanael believes and is excited all because of such a simple encounter with God.
- This was an effect that Philip would have never been able to produce in Nathanael on his own.

God Offers Even More (John 1:45:50-51)

- God has no limit on how much He is willing to offer us
- The story started with a relationship between Philip and Nathanael, and ended with one between Nathanael and God. This is the goal of evangelism.
- Evangelizing will be effective when we are genuinely interested in the salvation and well-being of those we evangelize to AND we are grounded in our own faith and beliefs.
- If either aspect is missing, evangelism will fail and can result in the following:
 - Nothing – I don't believe it myself, nothing for me to do.
 - Negligence – I'm too busy now.
 - Compassion only – I care, good luck.
 - Nagging – Are you a Christian yet? [Duty focused rather than human-focused]
 - Despair/Apathy– Nothing I do or say will make a difference.
 - Impatience – I tried for a while and it didn't work.

Some Things To Consider

- Treat the person with respect
- Make an effort to understand where they are coming from: Ask yourself the question, "If I were born in another faith, would I be Orthodox today?"
- Entrenched belief – Sometimes we believe simply because we have been raised with it. We don't necessarily question things and just accept them by faith. People with other faiths need more than, "It's true because God said so." They need proof and they are skeptical when it is given. That doesn't mean that they may not reach a point where they must accept things as it is until God reveals its meaning to them. Otherwise, they will reject things that are not clear and obvious or accepted by their mind.

Conclusion

- God has a desire to bring all His children to Himself: "...How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37)
- So when we evangelize we are doing God's work and we can be sure that He will help us.
- God is the center of the work. We should simply direct people to come and see Him the same way that Philip did with Nathanael.

Activities/Discussion Points

1. How can we prepare ourselves to be witnesses to the Lord Jesus Christ?
2. What are ways that we can witness to the Lord Jesus Christ