

Individual Evangelism, Part II

By Victor Beshir

Evangelism Style

Each individual has a unique personality, which reflects the characters God created in the person and other characters the person gained over the years. As a result, we are different, and these differences manifest in our approach to everything in life. This uniqueness is very important in evangelism and in the service of God. God created different personalities with different qualities to deal with certain situations, communities, and individuals. In brief, God created you the way you are because He has a specific plan for you. Do not say, "I am a shy person and I will not be good at evangelism. People who evangelize have the outgoing personalities that I do not have." There is a misconception that every person on this planet likes the outgoing type of personality. In fact, each person likes certain types of people. Therefore, it does not **matter what type of personality you have; there are lots of work waiting for you in evangelism - if you pray and ask for God's directions.**

Although, I previously gave general approaches to evangelism, do not think of them as engraved in stones, but use them in harmony with your personality. For example, in a previous lesson, I said, 'say one verse or one idea or one spiritual conclusion at a time.' Adding the flavor of your personality to this phrase may result in a different output. For example, there are people who can keep a conversation for a long time without losing the other person's attention and interest. These people can then quote one or more verses and can move freely from one idea to another. While others can quote only one verse or one spiritual thought at a time from the depth of his/her heart in a manner that greatly impacts the listener for sometime.

There are evangelism workers who can gather people around them and deliver an effective message, while others are very good in talking to individuals in a quiet setting, and of course, there are people who can do both. What you can do is really based on your personality and on God's work inside you. Do not say you do not have this or that. Use what you have now. In the future, the Spirit of God may change what you have now to do other things. The bottom line is feel content because God needs to use you as you are now.

Only One Chance

The approach that I talked about so far is to evangelize to friends, coworkers, classmates, or those who you meet on a regular basis. Therefore, you can use the long approach that I described in part 1 of this lesson. However, there are many situations in which you meet someone only one time and therefore you have no other chances to evangelize to this person again. Sure, you need to pray and you need to lead the person to God. Make sure that you leave a greater impact on the person. However, this does not mean you forget about the general rules I mentioned before. Forgetting these rules may shut down every door and hinder your evangelism dramatically. Therefore, follow the rules, pray and put your words in the best possible approach in the most interesting way. Then ask questions to know where your listener is. Be ready to stop if you see the person getting bored.

Another approach in these cases is to try to establish a relationship with the person. This usually comes through by talking casually to find out an important thing the person is looking for or needs. Then ask for his or her e-mail address to send them something related to this important thing. Or you may combine both approaches by mentioning a spiritual thought while having the casual conversation.

I know some evangelizers who listen to the person first and once they discover the main hobby or interest of the person, they start talking about famous people who have the same hobby and how they found Christ in their lives and how they are spreading the word. This last approach is very effective and attractive; it catches the eyes of people because they admire those famous people and they like to hear about them. Have you heard about the "People" magazine and its great success? Have you asked yourself, why People magazine has this great success? The reason is very simple: those people mentioned in the magazine are considered significant for the readers. In other words, the readers admire and adore them, they like to hear anything about them, and even like to imitate them.

When talking with youth, I sometimes use this approach by mentioning Michael Jackson's name. Once I mention the name, all ears open widely to listen to me. Then I say that Michael in his last marriage, he dated a girl (I hear the youth mentioning her name) for three years, then got married. This marriage lasted only for six months. Then I start talking about how breaking God's commandments before marriage leads to failure of marriage. From there I say that sexual relationship before marriage is a sin and I continue to explain what we need to do.

Snares of the Devil

As I speak about individual evangelism, I like you to not ignore the spiritual rules set up by our holy fathers. Simply, in individual evangelism, let women evangelize to women and men evangelize to men. There are many reasons as why we should follow this rule. First, individual evangelism takes a long time, which means as we establish a long relationship with individuals, the devil can interfere with us in order to steer us away from our original purpose to evangelize. Second, most of this talk would be in private, which could spell troubles for both individuals if they are of different gender. Third, people usually get emotionally attached to people who have done something great in their lives; which means the person could get emotionally attached to you after that person's life has changed - surely, you don't need this to happen. This rule not only applies to the youth, but to people of all ages. We need to remember our salvation while we try to get others to their salvation, otherwise, both the evangelizer and the other person could perish.

What to Say?

Is It My Words Or His Words?

I have seen servants of the Lord who can easily say, "the words are not mine but His words." These servants walk in the Spirit and are lead by the Spirit. Under His guidance, they know where to go and with whom to talk to. When they start to talk, the words flow naturally with a great power that inflames the hearts of their listeners. As they finish, they wonder, as the two disciples of Emmaus said in the past, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (Lu 24:32) While they talk to others, they feel this beautiful spiritual fire burning inside them that touches their most inner place in their souls. They are not the only ones who feel the holy fire, but others are also attracted by this holy fire. These servants believe that the words are never their words but His words and the whole job is not theirs but His.

For a weak servant like me, I need to go to my room, close the door, get down on my knees, confess my sins, put my life into His hands, and cry to Him to lead me to the souls He needs me to meet. I ask Him to give me the right words that touch their hearts and my heart. I will ask that the words to be His words and never be my words.

Types of Objections

What to say in individual evangelism largely depends upon the person you are talking to and the objections the person makes. When you invite people to come back to God or to come to the church, most people will try to stop you by giving you some excuses or arguing with you to prevent you from approaching the real reason behind their flee from God or church.

The **argument** approach was used by the Samaritan woman in her dialogue with Jesus (John 4). We need to know how to handle arguments by gently avoiding the trap of the argument and get back to the main topic. The person would try to get you into the argument again and again, but you need to avoid this trap repeatedly. You can approach the argument with something like, 'this is a good topic, but it will take long time to examine. Let us get to it later.' or 'this is a good topic but it I need to ask about it (or read about it) before I can give you a precise answer.' or softly say, 'believe me, it is not matter of this (their argument), but actually it is actually bigger than this (their argument), it is ...". This is exactly what our Lord used with the Samaritan woman:

The Samaritan woman: "Our fathers worshiped on this mountain and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship."

Jesus: "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father... will worship the Father in spirit and truth. For the Father is seeking such to worship Him."(John 4:20-24)

When they Object:

In psychology, there is a term called "defense mechanism," which means people come up with something to say or to do to stop others from convincing them to do a specific thing. The objection usually sounds logical and acceptable, but when you think about in the light of God's word, it is not well-grounded. It is only a strong shield to defer you from proceeding. After a little bit, you will discover that the whole objection was just a smoke and the person knows that but it is his/her only way to stop you.

As a result, we need to know how to handle objections softly and nicely in a way that would allow us to reveal the truth without embarrassing or sound condescending toward the person. Then we need to encourage the person to accept the truth and follow it. As you handle objections, have a hearty prayer while you are talking to the

person. The person will try to avoid the truth many times, and you need to gently get him/her back to the core of the topic. Different people use different tactics like telling long stories about his family or friends. You just need to keep focusing on the main message.

How to Handle Objections?

First: Establish the authority of the word of God

Since God created us and He is unlimited, He is the source of our wisdom. He knows what is better to man. This is why we need to go back to ask for His eternal wisdom, after all, we will be judged on the last day according to His wisdom and not according to our words or the opinions of others. The Bible says, **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."** (2 Timothy 3:16)

Second: Use the Bible Effectively to Handle Objections

Now, it is time to use the Bible as your reference. You need to not just mention the Bible's verses, but to also explain them. Let the verses flow naturally in the conversation with conviction power. In individual evangelism, use your normal speaking voice and speak respectfully all the times, without shouting.

Below is a list of some objections you might face and the verses you may respond with. Keep in mind that you will not just mention the verses, but to also explain them. Of course you do not need to mention all of them, but use those that are more suitable to the situation.

1- I Am Busy Today, Let's Find Another Time:

- ❖ "Choose for yourself today." (Josh 24:15)
- ❖ "How long will you hesitate?" (1 Kings 18:21)
- ❖ "Don't boast about tomorrow." (Prov 27:1)
- ❖ "Seek the Lord while He may be found." (Isa 55:6)
- ❖ "Son of Man coming at an hour that you do not think He will." (Mt 24:44)
- ❖ "This very night your soul is required of you." (Lk 12:19-20)
- ❖ "Now why do you delay?" (Acts 22:16)
- ❖ "Now is the acceptable time." (2 Cor 6:2)

2- It Is Too Late For Me:

- ❖ "When the wicked turns from his wickedness and does what is lawful and right, he shall live."(Ezek 33:19)
- ❖ "Why have been standing here idle all day along?"(Mt 20:6)
- ❖ "The one who comes to me I will certainly not cast out."(Jn 6:37)
- ❖ "Whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved."(Rom 10:13)

3- I Tried Once and Failed:

- ❖ "He is able to deliver us."(Dan 3:17)
- ❖ "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."(Phil 4:13)
- ❖ "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work."(2 Cor 9:8)
- ❖ "Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand"(Rom 14:4)
- ❖ "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and all over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."(Lk 10:19)
- ❖ "I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."(2 Tim 1:12)

4- Too Many Unexplained Things Happened to Me:

- ❖ "The secret things belong to the Lord our God."(Deut 29:29)
- ❖ "You shall understand hereafter."(Jn 13:7)
- ❖ "It is not for you to know."(Acts 1:7)
- ❖ "Now we see in a mirror dimly."(1 Cor 13:12)

5- I Don't Need God or a Savior:

- ❖ "He who does not believe has been judged already."(Jn 3:18)

- ❖ "He who does not obey the Son ... the wrath of God abides on him."(Jn 3:36)
- ❖ "The wage of sin is death."(Rom 6:23)
- ❖ "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?"(Heb 2:3)

6- **God Is Love, There Is No Danger:**

- ❖ "For if God did not spare the natural branches, he may not spare you either."(Rom11:21)
- ❖ "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment."(2 Pet 2:4)
- ❖ "Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."(Rom 2:4-5)

7- **Too Many Hypocrites in the Church:**

- ❖ "Do not judge lest you be judged."(Mt 22:13)
- ❖ "Each one of us shall give account of himself."(Rom 14:12)
- ❖ "Above all keep fervent in your love for one another."(1 Pet 4:8)

8- **Will Cost Me Too Much to Follow God:**

- ❖ "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits?"(Ps 116:12)
- ❖ "What does it profit a man to gain the world and forfeit his soul?"(Mk 8:36)
- ❖ "There is no one who has left .. who shall not receive many times as much"(Lk 18:29-30)
- ❖ "He Himself ... bore our sins in His body on the cross."(1 Pet 2:24)

9- I Cannot Leave My Old Companion:

- ❖ "You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil."(Ex 23:2)
- ❖ "Don't bound together with unbelievers."(2 Cor 6:14)
- ❖ "Bad company corrupts good morals."(1 Cor 15:33+
- ❖ "Blessed *is* the man, Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; But his delight *is* in the law of the LORD, And in His law he meditates day and night."(Ps 1:1-2)

10- I Am Not Religious:

- ❖ "Choose for yourself this day whom you shall serve."(Jo24:15)
- ❖ "and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose." (2 Co 5:15)

These are only a few examples. You can add to them as time goes on. It is a good idea to have a list of Bible verses to help you effectively answer questions and handle objections. I suggest that we prepare a list of verses that talks about our faith in the Orthodox Church. Then keep it handy.

In conclusion, when you evangelize, know that God has chosen you because of your personality. He sees that your personality would be the best way to help a particular person to come back to Him. Use what you have and the Holy Spirit will speak through you. Keep that Bible verses list handy at all times.

