



Community Group Discussion Guide

The Story We Share – May 5, 2019

This week, we've been asked to work on our sharing of "The Story." However, I would like to expand a little on our discussion last week. It's not always necessary and sometimes it may not even be the correct time for that person to hear the *entire* Story of the Good News all in one sitting. You may actually be given just one small part of helping to lead that person to Christ. In fact, your "part" may actually involve telling no part of The Story but rather, for example, you might be called upon to share His love so that the person can see a difference in our lives and start to open their hearts to Him.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 that *"⁵After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. ⁶I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow."*

Paul is saying that we each have our part to do in helping lead others to Christ and helping them grow. We should seek God's guidance for knowing which part He would have us do and *when*. It is important that each part occurs at its appropriate time and place. Consequently, we should be sensitive to this as we go to share The Story. Seek the Holy Spirit's guidance before speaking a word. If we attempt to push it faster than God's perfect timing is paced then we risk doing more damage than good.

Lets' turn to Matthew where Jesus teaches the parable of the farmer scattering seed:

Matthew 13:19 – *¹⁹The seed that fell on the footpath represents those who hear the message about the Kingdom and don't understand it. Then the evil one comes and snatches away the seed that was planted in their hearts.*

This part of the parable contains a warning to us to be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit for when it's the right time to present each part of the Gospel. Think about this. Why was the seed that fell on the footpath so easily snatched away?

Our job may be to help prepare the ground, to soften it so that it's ready to receive the Seed that's to be planted. Or, we might plant the seed but that seed might need time to grow. From there, you might be the one that nurtures the growth of that seed but never see when it's finally harvested.

When it comes to witnessing to others, I can think of no better example than to look at how Jesus shared with others. Let's read in John 4 about the woman at the well.

John 4:1-8 – *Jesus knew the Pharisees had heard that he was baptizing and making more disciples than John ² (though Jesus himself didn't baptize them—his disciples did). ³ So he left Judea and returned to Galilee.*

⁴ He had to go through Samaria on the way. ⁵ Eventually he came to the Samaritan village of Sychar, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. ⁶ Jacob's well was there; and Jesus, tired from the long walk, sat wearily beside the well about noontime. ⁷ Soon a Samaritan woman came to draw water, and

Jesus said to her, "Please give me a drink."⁸ He was alone at the time because his disciples had gone into the village to buy some food.

Be ready! You never know when God will give you the opportunity to witness. This particular opportunity for Jesus came at the end of a long, tiring walk that left him exhausted. Not only that, but Jews didn't normally speak with Samaritans because they had intermarried with Gentiles and they were considered to be "unclean" by the Jews. It would be somewhat analogous to the reluctance we might have in striking up a conversation with a dirty, homeless, drunk vagrant who's talking to himself. But, that didn't stop Jesus. He just saw this woman's need and responded to it.

So, what did he do? Did he immediately start preaching at her? No, he created an opportunity by giving her a chance to help him which showed that he didn't feel she was beneath him.

John 4:9-10 – ⁹*The woman was surprised, for Jews refuse to have anything to do with Samaritans. She said to Jesus, "You are a Jew, and I am a Samaritan woman. Why are you asking me for a drink?"*

¹⁰*Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water."*

He got her attention and she responded with a question for Jesus. The first step in witnessing is to create a connection and get people engaged and asking questions. What did Jesus do next? Did he now start preaching to her? No, he planted a small seed in her mind to generate curiosity. He responded to her question with something that would prompt more questions from her.

John 4:11-14 – ¹¹*"But sir, you don't have a rope or a bucket," she said, "and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water?"* ¹²*And besides, do you think you're greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?"*

¹³*Jesus replied, "Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. ¹⁴But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life."*

¹⁵*"Please, sir," the woman said, "give me this water! Then I'll never be thirsty again, and I won't have to come here to get water."*

She's really intrigued now. She's asking him how she can get some of this magical, bubbly stuff! And, just like that, he has captured her full attention. He's spurred an interest in her that has her hanging on his every word. She's obviously thinking of some type of tangible, physical substance while Jesus is speaking metaphorically. But, that's okay. We must seek ways to relate the Gospel, which might be a foreign concept to the lost, to something that makes sense to them and to which they can relate.

Jesus then makes a slight shift in the conversation.

John 4:16-18 – ¹⁶*"Go and get your husband," Jesus told her.*

¹⁷*"I don't have a husband," the woman replied.*

Jesus said, “You’re right! You don’t have a husband—¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and you aren’t even married to the man you’re living with now. You certainly spoke the truth!”

Jesus shifts the conversation to bring out an awareness of her sin. He didn’t condemn her for that wasn’t needed here. He didn’t look down his nose at her or condemned her. He just simply called it for what it is. It’s important that we check our attitudes at the door when ministering to others. It’s not our job to be their judge. It’s our job to help arrange the introduction to the one Who is!

John 4:19-20 – ¹⁹ *“Sir,” the woman said, “you must be a prophet. ²⁰ So tell me, why is it that you Jews insist that Jerusalem is the only place of worship, while we Samaritans claim it is here at Mount Gerizim, where our ancestors worshiped?”*

You’ll notice that she’s letting her guard down a bit more since Jesus hasn’t condemned her. She asks Jesus about one of the differences in the Jews and Samaritans. Getting the other side to be curious and start asking questions is *very* important to the process of ministering! They *must* be engaged and not feel threatened or judged by us. They’ll feel enough conviction from the Holy Spirit!

John 4:21-24 – ²¹ *Jesus replied, “Believe me, dear woman, the time is coming when it will no longer matter whether you worship the Father on this mountain or in Jerusalem. ²² You Samaritans know very little about the one you worship, while we Jews know all about him, for salvation comes through the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—indeed it’s here now—when true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. The Father is looking for those who will worship him that way. ²⁴ For God is Spirit, so those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth.”*

Jesus starts to lay some heavy truth on her. What do you think would have happened if he had started out with that statement when she first walked up to the well?

John 4:25-26 – ²⁵ *The woman said, “I know the Messiah is coming—the one who is called Christ. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.”*

²⁶ *Then Jesus told her, “I AM the Messiah!”*

Boom! What a revelation! Now, of course, we couldn’t make that statement ourselves but we can say that we know the Messiah *personally*! But, bold statements like that often take time to be properly framed. Said the wrong way, making statements of how we’ve been redeemed can come across as haughty or self-righteous.

John 4:27 – ²⁷ *Just then his disciples came back. They were shocked to find him talking to a woman, but none of them had the nerve to ask, “What do you want with her?” or “Why are you talking to her?”*

Take heed of the subtle warning in this verse! There could be those fellow Christians who look down on your efforts to reach some. They may see some as unfitworthy or unfit of our efforts to minister to them. But guess what! We’re *all* unworthy! That’s the point! Someone might be the most horrible, dirty, rotten scoundrel in the world to you but you should still be concerned about their immortal soul. You might be the only chance they have to hear about Jesus. It’d be pretty arrogant to think you couldn’t possibly be like them if you had walked this life in their shoes and experienced this life like they had.

John 4:28-30 – ²⁸ *The woman left her water jar beside the well and ran back to the village, telling everyone,* ²⁹ *“Come and see a man who told me everything I ever did! Could he possibly be the Messiah?”* ³⁰ *So the people came streaming from the village to see him.*

Not only did Jesus reach the woman but thanks to the way that Jesus approached her, she caused the whole village to come out to seek him. What do you think would have happened if he had walked into the village and loudly proclaimed, “You are all sinners and I am the Messiah. Come to me and repent!” It’s all about the appropriate presentation and timing.

Also, take note of the woman. She’s become a minister herself... “Come and see...!”

You might be thinking at this point, “I know Jesus and I’m no Jesus! I wouldn’t know what to say, how to say it or even when!” You’re right, no one is as good and as smart as Jesus. However, John has an answer for us on this point.

1 John 2:26-27 – ²⁶ *I am writing these things to warn you about those who want to lead you astray.* ²⁷ *But you have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you don’t need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you everything you need to know, and what he teaches is true—it is not a lie. So just as he has taught you, remain in fellowship with Christ.*

This verse may not be referring strictly to the point at hand but it still is very applicable. When the opportunity to minister arises, reach out in a quick prayer and ask the Holy Spirit to guide and help you.

Let’s review the steps for witnessing from Jesus’s example above:

1. Pray for help and guidance. It’s not a solo flight! Although this step wasn’t specifically mentioned above, it’s best to start *everything* we attempt in this life with prayer.
2. Make a connection with the person. You must care for the person and then find a way to convey to them that you do.
3. Evaluate your audience. People are vastly different, not only in their personalities but also in their culture. For example, what may be the norm in the conservative deep south might be completely ludicrous to a northern Yankee.
4. Engage them. Ask them questions about themselves and *really* listen to their answers *without* judgement.
5. Try to phrase your statements in a way that will prompt them to ask you questions. Don’t be a firehose!
6. Do *not* force or rush it! Let the conversation flow. If it doesn’t fall naturally then don’t push it. With some, it may take only moments but with others it might take days, months or even years to get to a deep enough level that you can discuss spiritual matters.
7. Finally, don’t be afraid you won’t be able to handle the situation where it leads. Trust in God and the Holy Spirit. If you don’t know something, admit it. Tell them you’ll find out the answers or help connect them to someone who does. Remember, you don’t have to do it *all*. You might

just be the one who tills the soil.

Questions For Discussion:

1. What are some of the fears you have when you consider sharing the Gospel with someone?
2. Discuss unorthodox ways in which we can witness and share the love of God with others?
3. In what ways do we need to be careful how we share?
4. Share with the class some of your experiences with witnessing, good or bad.