



SAINT PAUL
Evangelization Institute

Basic Evangelization Training

Course 4: Basic Evangelization Strategies

Introduction: The Call to Evangelize and Overcome Fear

Hello friends! You're watching Lesson 4 of Module 1 of the online Basic Evangelization Training.

In this lesson, we will be discovering some basic evangelization strategies that you can use right away in every day situations. But before we talk about strategies, we need to talk about overcoming fear. Many times we prevent ourselves from evangelizing because of our own fears. What will happen if I step out and talk to this person? What if I offend them? What if I embarrass myself? What if I don't have the answers to their questions?

These fearful questions can stop us in our tracks before we even get started as evangelists. So how do we overcome the fear of evangelization? The first step is to NAME what's happening in your heart. Recognize the fear you are experiencing so that you can pray through it with Jesus. The second step is to PRAY. There is no one formula for praying against fear, but here are some examples that have worked for me.

Tell Jesus exactly what you are feeling or thinking, and ask for his help. "Jesus, I'm afraid of what to say to this person. Please give me the words." Make an act of faith or trust in Him. "Jesus, I trust in you. You are greater than my fears." Renounce the lie and declare the truth. "In the name of Jesus, I renounce the lie that I can't evangelize and I declare the truth that I can be a great evangelist with God's help."

Once we have NAMED the fear and PRAYED against it, the third step is to ACT. This is where it helps a lot to have friends who are evangelizing with us. Jesus sent the disciples out two by two because he knew we needed each other's encouragement. But even if you ARE by yourself, you can still step out and start a conversation that leads to Christ.

What are some good conversation starters?

What are some good ways to start that conversation? If you are just meeting the person, one of the best approaches is to start with natural, everyday questions like, "How are you today?" I love to exchange names with the person as soon as I can. This helps create trust and shows the person that we really care about them.

Another way to start a conversation is to give a gift. When approaching people with Miraculous Medals or Rosaries, I like to say, "This medal is for YOU!" or "This Rosary is for YOU!" That statement communicates our personal love for that individual. They are not just another face in the crowd who happens to be passing by. They are personally and uniquely loved by God – and we want to do our best to communicate that love right away.

Sometimes it helps to start the conversation by acknowledging the awkwardness of the encounter. You might begin by saying, "Excuse me, this might seem a little weird, but...I want to give you this Miraculous Medal."

How do we move the conversation forward?

Now that we've begun the conversation, how do we move it forward? In the four Gospels, Jesus asked hundreds of questions. And we can follow his lead by asking the right questions of the person we are evangelizing.

One of my favorite questions is: “How’s your relationship with God?” This is a very open-ended question that helps the person to share their story without feeling like we are judging them. This question often leads to follow up questions like, “Do you have a church home?” or “Have you ever heard the Gospel?”

Another great approach is to say, “We love to bless people and pray for them. Can we pray for you?” If you are giving away a Miraculous Medal, you can ask, “Do you need a miracle in your life?”

Our hope is that the conversation eventually leads to the proclamation of the Gospel, either in full or in part. The conversation might focus primarily on God’s love, or the reality of sin and death, or the power of the Holy Spirit, or the truth of the Catholic Church.

However, the most important proclamation is the person of Jesus Christ – the salvation he is offering and what it means for that person. You might also include your personal testimony as a way to help the person see how real and life-changing Jesus Christ is for you!

How do we transition to proclaiming the gospel?

Once you've reached the part of the conversation where the proclamation of the gospel is appropriate, you can either proclaim the gospel in its fullness, or in parts, depending on the nature of the conversation. The gospel in its fullness is that God loves you, but sin has separated us from God, and the consequence of that is eternal death in hell. The good news is that Jesus Christ has come to save us from death and to give us eternal life. And now, it's up to you to choose: do you want that life that Jesus offers? And then specifically talking about life in the Church that he offers, in the Christian community.

Now, you might not have time to go through all of those steps. You might just focus on God's love -- the depth of God's love for a particular person, especially if they are struggling with forgiving themselves, or God's mercy. Another topic is simply discussing the truth of the Catholic Church. Many people are Christians and believe in God, but they don't actually know that Christ's Church is the Catholic Church. So you can pick a particular topic or part of the gospel depending on where you're at in the conversation.

How do we make an invitation?

Once you have proclaimed Christ, there is one more step to take: invite the person to take the next step in their life towards God. This invitation will look different depending on the person.

If he doesn’t believe in God, perhaps you invite the person to ask God to reveal Himself to them. If he isn’t Catholic, you might invite the person to explore a particular aspect of the faith. If he’s Catholic but doesn’t go to church, you might invite the person to come to your local parish.

It might even be appropriate to exchange contact information and invite the person to lunch or coffee to talk further.

How do we pray with people?

If you haven’t already prayed at this point, one of the best ways to end the conversation is with prayer. Obviously, this prayer could take many forms, but here’s a few tips:

If it’s appropriate, you can place your hand on the person’s shoulder as you begin to pray. There is something about human touch that communicates the love of God. You can ask the Holy Spirit to fill the person with God’s love, peace, and joy. That can be a very powerful prayer on its own. You can also make the prayer specific to the person and their life

circumstances, rather than simply a general blessing. If needed, this is a great opportunity to pray for healing. And finally, always end the prayer in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus has power in itself to bring about God's transforming presence. Prayer is ultimately an encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus.

How do we use tracts and other resources to overcome obstacles?

Here at St. Paul Evangelization, rosaries and miraculous medals are two of our most common tools. But there's also other resources that we have to help overcome obstacles in evangelization. There are numerous types of pamphlets on our website that cover almost every major Catholic topic. So, if somebody has a particular question about an issue in the Church, or something related to the faith, there's likely a pamphlet that goes along with it that you can hand out to them.

Another powerful tool are holy cards. Sometimes people are drawn to a specific image of Jesus, like the Sacred Heart, or Jesus crucified. We have these holy cards as well, including a number of Catholic saints who are very popular, such as Our Lady of Guadalupe, or Mother Teresa. So we encourage you think about how could you take these individual resources on particular topics, or holy cards, and apply them in different circumstances. You'll be amazed at how God will lead a conversation and bring out these particular resources.

Final Thoughts

Here's a final word of encouragement for you. When I first started evangelizing, I was terrified. I didn't know who to approach, I didn't know what to do. But over time, God gave me more confidence, and I guarantee He is going to do the same for you as you begin to practice these things. So let's pray for that confidence. In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Lord, we thank You for the gift of Your confidence and courage. We ask that Your Holy Spirit would fill us with boldness and the same courage that filled the first disciples. We pray this in Jesus's Name. Amen.

Practical Activity

Here's your practical activity. Choose one of the conversation starters that we've talked about -- whether it's handing out a miraculous medal, giving someone a rosary, or a particular holy card or tract. And then choose three people that you're going to try out this conversation starter on. See how that goes, and I guarantee God will bless it. Good luck.