

How to Begin Witnessing

by R.A. Torrey

To begin witnessing, pray for God to lead you to someone, look for opportunities, and be ready to meet providential openings.

Scripture: Matthew 28:19, John 3:36, John 4:7, John 5:24, Acts 10:43, Acts 13:39

Topics: "Evangelism", "Witnessing"

Description

R.A. Torrey emphasizes the importance of beginning the process of witnessing, highlighting the need to find individuals to engage with and to pray for divine guidance. He suggests starting conversations with direct questions about faith and salvation, using tact and kindness to open doors for deeper discussions. Torrey encourages witnessing as a continuous practice, learning from experiences, and ultimately leading individuals to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. He also stresses the importance of showing new believers from Scripture that they have forgiveness and eternal life, and guiding them in their new Christian journey.

Transcript

One of the most difficult points in personal work

is beginning. It is comparatively easy to go on

after one has got an opening.

I. FIND THE ONE TO DEAL WITH.

The first thing is to find the one to deal with.

As has already been said, we should pray God to

lead us to some one, or some one to us. When we go

to church, or when we walk the street, when we are

in the park, or on the train, or calling; in a

word, whenever we have time that is not demanded

by other duties we should look up to God and definitely ask Him to lead us to the one with whom we are to speak, if it is His will that we employ that time in work for Him. Further than this, we should be on the lookout for opportunities. A fisherman cultivates a keen eye for opportunities to catch fish; and a soul-winner should cultivate a keen eye for opportunities for soul-winning. Whenever we are thrown into the company of a man or woman, the great probability is that it is a providential opening, and we should be ready to meet it as such. It is said of one of the most distinguished Sunday school workers in this country that he makes it a point whenever he is alone with any individual to speak to him about his soul. The story is told of Uncle John Vassar, that being left alone in a hotel parlor with a strange lady, he at once approached her and began to speak to her about her soul. After he had gone, the woman's husband returned, and she told him what had happened. The husband was in a great rage, and said, "If I had been here, I would have sent him about his business." His wife replied, "If you had been here, you would have thought he was about his business." We ought to make soul-winning our business, and improve every possible opportunity. {29}

II. CONVERSATION.

Having found your man, begin a conversation. How shall that be done? In the inquiry room, by asking at once a few leading questions to find out just where the man stands, for example: "Are you a Christian?" "Are you saved?" "Have you been born again?" "Upon what do you base your hope of eternal life?" "Are you confessing Christ openly before the world?" "Have you surrendered all you have and are to Christ?" Sometimes it is well to begin in this direct way even when you meet some one casually. The question "Are you saved?" is as a general rule a better one to ask than "Are you a Christian?" It is more likely to set one to thinking. It is more definite and pointed. Many will take the asking of such a question as an impertinence, but that will not prove that the question has not done good. Not a few people who have become angry at a stranger putting a question like this to them have afterward been converted in consequence of it. There are many other questions that one may ask that will set men to thinking and open the way for further conversation. For example, you can ask a man, "Do you think that life is worth living?" and after you have engaged him in conversation on this point you can lead him on and tell of the life that really is worth

living. Or you can ask an utter stranger, "How do you think a man can get the most real satisfaction out of life, that is, of course, by accepting Jesus Christ as a Savior." Or you can say to a man, "I have learned the great secret of happiness," and when he asks you what it is, you can tell him. Of course these are offered only as suggestions of ways in which to begin a conversation.

A good way to begin is by handing the person with whom you wish to deal, a well-chosen tract to read. When he has finished the tract, you can ask him what he thinks about it, and thus the way is opened to a conversation on the great subject. It is often well to begin by engaging the person in a general conversation, perhaps on subjects quite remote from religion, and gradually working around to the point. It was thus that Christ engaged the woman of Samaria, making a very simple request of her, that she would give Him a drink (John 4:7), but before long, He was telling her of the living water. If the person with whom you wish to deal is {30} older than yourself, you might begin by saying, "There is a subject in which I am deeply interested, and I am trying to get all the light upon it that I can; you are much older than I, and perhaps you can help me; the subject is 'How to Be

Saved."

Showing people little kindnesses very often opens the way for a conversation on the great subject.

For example, in a crowded car one can move along and invite some one who is standing to a seat by his side. It is the most natural thing in the

world then to get into conversation, and the favor of the person who has been standing is gained. and it will be very easy to lead on to the great

subject. When one is riding, and sees some one else walking, an invitation to the walker to ride

will afford a splendid opportunity for approaching him on the subject of his soul's salvation. Mr.

Moody made a constant practice of inviting those with whom he wished to deal to go riding with him.

As he drew near to some quiet spot, he would speak to them of what was upon his heart, and then stop the horse and have a season of prayer. No one can

tell how many were thus led to Christ. Sometimes it is well to show the people that you would lead

to Christ kindness for days and weeks, and even years, waiting for your opportunity to say a word.

A devoted missionary to China who had made great sacrifices to go to that land was received by the people with bitterest hatred, but he simply gave himself up to live among them and live for them.

One by one opportunities came of showing them

kindnesses, and after years of self-sacrificing living, he had so won their confidence that it was an easy matter for him to lead them to Christ. But he had to begin by showing them the most ordinary, everyday kindnesses, far away, apparently, from the subject that was closest to his heart.

Sometimes a person's face will tell the story of discontent, unhappiness or unrest. In such a case it is easy to ask the person if he is happy, and when he says no, tell him you can tell him of One who can make him happy if only he will take Him. Tact in beginning will come with experience, but it is better to begin awkwardly than not to begin at all. I do not think that any one could begin more awkwardly in this work than I did with the first person I led to Christ. I felt that God wanted me to speak to this young man and I called on him for that purpose, but {31} when I met him I had not the slightest idea what to say. I talked on and on waiting for an opportunity, and at last blundered out awkwardly what I had come for. God blessed the awkward but honest effort, and the young man was saved, and has become a very active and efficient worker for Christ.

The best way to learn how to do personal work is by doing it, gaining wisdom from your mistakes.

III. FIND OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE WHERE THE PERSON

WITH WHOM YOU ARE DEALING STANDS.

Having begun the conversation, find out as soon as possible where the person with whom you are dealing stands. In order to treat a case intelligently, you need just as much as a physician to know just where the man is at present. But how can we find out to what class any person belongs?

1. First of all, BY ASKING HIM QUESTIONS, such questions as "Are you saved?" "Have you eternal life?" "Have you been born again?" "Do you know that you are a great sinner before God?" "Do you know that your sins are forgiven?" Or you can ask a person directly, "Where do you stand, what do you believe?" He may answer these questions untruthfully, either from ignorance or a desire to mislead you; nevertheless the answers and his manner of giving them will show you a great deal about his real state.

2. BY WATCHING THE INQUIRER'S FACE. A man's face will often reveal that which his words try to conceal. Any one who cultivates a study of the faces of those with whom he deals, will soon be able to tell in many instances their exact state irrespective of anything they may say.

3. BY OBSERVING HIS TONE AND MANNER. A man's tone or his manner often tells more than his words. A

man who is not saved will very likely tell you that he is, but his tone and manner will reveal plainly that he is not. If one gets angry at you for asking these questions, that of itself reveals an uneasy conscience.

4. BY THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Holy Spirit, if we look to Him to do it, will often flash into our minds a view of the man's position, and just the Scripture that he needs. {32}

IV. LEAD HIM AS DIRECTLY AS YOU CAN TO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS A PERSONAL SAVIOR, AND TO SURRENDER TO HIM AS LORD AN MASTER.

When we have learned where the person with whom we are dealing stands, the next thing to do is to lead him as directly as we can to accept Jesus Christ as a personal Savior, and to surrender to Him as his Lord and Master. We must always bear in mind that the primary purpose of our work is not to get people to join the church, or to give up their bad habits, or to do anything else than this, to accept Jesus Christ as their Savior, the one who bore their sins in His own body on the tree, and the one through whom they can have immediate and entire forgiveness, and as their Master to whom they surrender absolutely the guidance of their thoughts, purposes, feelings and actions.

V. SHOW HIM FROM GOD'S WORD THAT HE HAS
FORGIVENESS OF SINS AND ETERNAL LIFE.

Having led any one to thus accept Christ, the next step will be to show him from God's Word that he has forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Acts 10:43; 13:39; John 3:36; 5:24 will answer for this purpose.

VI. SHOW HIM HOW TO MAKE A SUCCESS OF THE
CHRISTIAN LIFE UPON WHICH HE HAS ENTERED.

The next step will be to show him how to make a success of the Christian life upon which he has entered.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/ra-torrey/how-to-begin-witnessing/>

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