

## **Conversations with God about Conversations with People**

Matt 9:35-38; 2 Cor 4:3-6; 1 Peter 2:11-15; Col 4:2-6; Eph 6:18-20; 1 John 1:5-10

### **Introduction**

- Acts 8:1-4 ff. Persecution resulted in the church scattering. Apostles stayed behind, while ‘non-professionals’ scattered from Jerusalem speaking about Jesus wherever they went. : a ‘lay movement’ of evangelism. There are those with particular gifts in the realm of evangelism, but God’s method is to use all of us to *Live & Tell* the good news.
- The truth is: We feel unprepared and inadequate. And we are. *Unless the Lord builds the house, all our labours are in vain* (Ps 127:1) Prayer is the tangible expression of right humility about how we represent Christ.
- Develop a ‘*Five in Focus*’ list.

### **What do we pray for? For us, as well as them**

#### **1. For our love & compassion to grow. Matt 9:35-38**

Jesus tells his disciples to pray for workers to help reap a spiritual harvest. But what kind of workers? Workers that reflect Jesus’ compassion for them: Their lives, circumstances, burdens, challenges; but also...their situation before God – for, without Christ, they are separated from God. Therefore, ask God to give you this kind of compassion and concern for people. Jesus had compassion.

The biggest challenge today facing a large number of Christians in the UK is their lack of deep connectedness with non-believing people around them.

#### **2. For God to shine his light in their hearts. 2 Cor 4:4-6**

Since Satan blinds eyes – we pray for God to open them.

#### **3. For us: integrity and proactive service. 1 Peter 2:12,15**

The media, the world is looking for any chance to ‘pounce’ on followers of Jesus. However, Peter encourages us towards not just good, moral behaviour - but proactive loving initiatives.

We should ask God to reveal areas where our behaviour is a stumbling block to those around us.

#### **4. For us: Courage. Eph 6:19-20**

Courage – that when God opens a door and provides an opportunity – we take it. Paul needed to pray for courage, like just we do. Courage not just so that we can make the occasional ‘big statement’ about God, but to ask a simple question that helps people think about their lives before God.

#### **5. For Open doors to speak about Christ. Col 4:2,3**

Christ has promised us that He is ruling the nations and our lives – for the sake of the Gospel. So we can have confidence that he will answer our prayers to open a door through which our relative, friend or acquaintance will be able to hear the gospel – as we do our part in prayerfully building relationship bridges with people.

Therefore, while God is delighted when we speak for Christ, we are not called to force the gospel on a family member, friend or acquaintance who is not ready to listen;

manipulating, twisting conversation, especially when a direct open invitation has been turned down. 1 Thess 2:3 *For our appeal does not come through error, or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you.*

#### 6. **To know what to say and how to say it. Col 4:3,4**

What is the right thing to say? The right things to talk about? The right questions to ask? The right way to talk about our own experience of Christ? What topics can we talk about that will help us grow closer and more confident and trusting of one another? Preparing us to be trusting of one another in conversations about God? How to talk about God, matters of life, death? How to speak with grace. A matter of learning, listening, trial and error; but specially a matter of prayer.

#### 7. **For an up-to-date experience of God's grace. 1 John 1:5-10**

As we pray for our friend or relative to discover God's love, how excited are we about that love ourselves?

Trying to maintain a goodness of my own – or thankful for his goodness working out in me? How do we respond to sin? Try and ignore or deny it? Or confess it? Confession is the way that God *updates* our experience of forgiveness.

Three things to confess / agree with God when he shows us that something is wrong:

- I am wrong & he is right
- I am forgiven through the death of Jesus on the cross
- I can repent knowing His Spirit is enabling me, not my remorse.

As you ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the glory of God in the face of Christ to your relative or acquaintance - ask God to doing the same for you!

#### **How to pray**

Perseveringly (Ephesians 6:18). Keep going. If you stop praying for people, you'll be overcome with legalism, disillusionment, discouragement & guilt. Bridges take time to build.

On your own – during your own times with God – as you walk, drive, when you can't get to sleep at night.

With others – help one another to make this sort of prayer a part of your life: a friend. In your One-2-one bible partnership; With your home, fellowship or church team.

#### **Conclusion**

Every Christian is to *live and tell* the Gospel.

We are, and feel, ill-prepared and equipped for the task. But we can pray!

Put a name and a face to your prayers

Seven things to pray – some for them; some for you.

Don't give up; pray on your own and with others