**Have you ever heard of relational evangelism? How would you define it?**

I would define it as being intentional within your pre-existing relationships or seeking to create new ones to spread the gospel to people who don’t know Christ.

Some people who place too much emphasis on initiative or contact evangelism with strangers may claim that relational evangelism is just a cop out to get someone off the hook for sharing the gospel. This isn’t true of all relational evangelism but I fear that it certainly may be true for many people. However, when done well and with intentionality this method of evangelism is by far one of the most effective!

**Can you think of any examples in the bible of people using this form of evangelism?**

One of the best examples is the story of the Samaritan woman at the well. Let's read John 4:1-26, 28-30, 39-42

First, we see how Jesus engages the woman by using her current circumstances to share the good news of the kingdom with her. He highlights her need for water and shows her that in him she could have rivers of living water. So first, we see that Jesus contextualizes his message to her. This is pretty important, especially for learning to share the gospel in the midst of conversation. We can’t just have one way of sharing the gospel. We need to be so familiar with it that we are able to apply it to all the parts of our lives and then be able to share the gospel using the current conversation we are having with people. There is nothing more awkward than someone really twisting a comment to make it fit into a segway into a stock gospel presentation.

**After Jesus shares with this woman that he is the Messiah, what do we see her do?**

Answer: She goes and shares with the people in her community about what Jesus has just done.

This is relational evangelism!! And it is remarkably simple. She has an experience with Jesus. Then she goes back to her community and tells them about it “He told me everything I ever did.” And we see that many people believe just because of her testimony and then many more believe because of their own experience with Jesus.

This is the crux of relational evangelism. We simply need to experience a deep relationship with Jesus and then seek to share that with others that we are already in relationship with. Then once we introduce others to Jesus we can bring those that are interested to a place where they can experience Jesus for themselves. This is also most likely the way that you will be doing evangelism for the majority of your adult life so it is crucial that you learn this skill now.

The real question is how can we effectively share Jesus in the context of our existing relationships. Because we don’t want to be the obnoxious Christians that are just interjecting Jesus into every conversation. So here’s what I think is a better framework for bringing the gospel into your current relationships.

**First**, you need to be praying for the people in your life and for the conversations you are going to be having throughout the day. We can accomplish nothing in ministry without the Holy Spirit first working in the hearts of the people we are ministering to. This seems to be the easiest step but it is by far the most important!!! You need God to work or else nothing can come from your evangelism.

**Second**, you need to live a godly life. This may seem obvious as well but if you are not walking the walk your talking will lose a lot of its impact. This certainly doesn’t mean you need to be perfect. That isn’t the gospel. It means you need to own your failures and ask for forgiveness from the people you wrong as well as forgive the people that wrong you. Remember, the gospel does not teach us that we need to be good enough for God, but rather that God has made a way for us who are not good enough to be made right in God’s eyes. Along with living a godly life we can be praying that people would see the fruit of our lives and be curious about why we are the way we are. Peter talks about this in 1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” So, it is not enough to simply lead good lives. People cannot understand the full gospel and be saved by merely observing our behavior. The often misquoted quote that says we must preach the gospel always and use words when necessary does not give us the full picture. We certainly should live in a way that shows others the goodness of the gospel and glorifies God but we also need to be ready to share the gospel in a way that is winsome and appropriate to the context. It is only through words that the full gospel can be known and someone can come to a saving faith. Just as Peter commands us we must always be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us.

**Third**, we need to be intentional about asking questions of our friends to understand their spiritual life and needs. We can gauge a person’s interest in spiritual things and appropriately share the gospel with those that are interested. This will help you tailor your conversation to fit the person’s level of interest. If a person is antagonistic to Christians you may not want to continue repeating the 4 points of the KGP to them. You may want to instead understand their specific objections to Christians and work through those first.

But if you have a friend that does believe in God and is searching for truth it would be very appropriate to share the gospel in a straightforward way. So you need to ask the questions that will help you understand where each person is at in their spiritual journey. This requires that you be intentional in your conversations, asking God to open doors into spiritual conversations and to give you the courage to take the conversations to those places. Some ways to start these conversations are:

What do you believe about God?

What do you think is your main purpose in life?

What has your spiritual journey looked like up to this point in your life?

Would you describe yourself as religious or spiritual?

A direct question could be: If you died and stood before God and He asked you why He should let you into Heaven what would be your response? How sure are you that it would be sufficient to gain entrance?

Can I tell you about how God has changed my life?

Where is your source of truth? How do you decide between right and wrong?

What do you find most attractive about Christianity/the person of Christ? What do you find least attractive about Christianity/the person of Christ?

Have your views on religion changed since you started college? How?

Why do you think Christianity isn’t relevant to your life?

In your opinion, how does one become a Christian?

In a conversation with someone who has never heard about God, what would you say about God from your experience?

The reason why I believe this form of evangelism is so incredibly effective is that when you have an established relationship with someone who comes to faith you can easily transition to a discipleship relationship. You can naturally teach them how to grow in their faith as well as help them get involved in a local church.

**So why should we work to share the gospel with our friends and family?**

The reality of our world is that all humans are sinful and are under condemnation if we do not repent and place our faith in Jesus. It is also commanded by God that we go to all nations and make disciples. In our current situation we are bombarded by messaging from every angle and messages from unknown sources can lose their authority. However, when you have a relationship with someone you have earned the right to speak into the other person's life in a way that can be life changing. And last but certainly not least the joy in seeing someone you love dearly, step from darkness to light is one of the most amazing and joyful experiences in this life! It requires risk but it is so worth it!!

Another reason why this form of evangelism is so incredibly effective is that when you have already established a relationship with someone you can easily transition to a discipleship relationship. You can naturally teach them how to grow in their faith as well as help them get involved in a local church. This will help you grow closer in your relationship as well as help both of you grow in your relationship with God.

Next Steps:

**Who are you going to start praying for specifically that doesn’t know Christ? Think of 3 people to start praying for.**

**From what you already know about their spiritual lives how could you tailor your approach to fit them well?**

**What are some of the questions you want to ask them to understand their beliefs more?**

**Is there any research you need to do to be able to understand their worldview better?**