Week 7

So far we have looked at how we might help to make more disciples by various ways of sharing our faith, such as saying something positive about our beliefs or our church, or passing on a book we’ve found helpful.

Suppose now that you set out wanting to share your faith with someone. Where do you begin? Look at how Jesus conversed with people in the gospel stories. In brief, he started where they were, with what they were most busy with or concerned about.

For instance, in John’s gospel, in chapter 2 we read about Jesus turning water into wine. Why? To run out of wine at a wedding was the ultimate social disgrace. Jesus began with the issue the guests were all talking about. We don’t know what conversations followed – no doubt there were many!

In chapter 3 Nicodemus came to Jesus clearly searching for the truth about him, so Jesus launched straight in with theology.

In chapter 4, Jesus met the woman at the well. Drawing water was her task at that point, so he asked for a drink.

In chapter 5, Jesus met a paralysed man lying by a pool, and tackled the key issue of his health -‘Do you want to get well?’

One of the best examples is in Luke chapter 24. Here Jesus talks to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. ‘What are you talking about?’ he asked. They responded that he must be the only person who didn’t know what things had happened in Jerusalem, so he asked again ‘What things?’

No doubt Jesus knew what they were talking about, but he wanted to draw out what was in their hearts. Sometimes he had to go through some ‘stuff’ before getting to the heart of the matter, as with the woman at the well.

Can we do what Jesus did, and start where people are?

First, we need to pray for God’s guidance – a few seconds of silent prayer are enough when you meet someone unexpectedly.

Second listen carefully, and listen between the words, looking for signs such as body language.

Third, be prepared to go through some ‘stuff’ before getting to the key issue.

Fourth, resist the temptation to pitch in with the answer until you’ve heard the problem. You may get it wrong! Even if you never get to say anything, the person will value your listening.

Fifth, don’t reproach yourself for saying nothing or saying it wrong. God can use what you said and your silence.

Give it a go this week!

*Produced by Daphne and John Wilkins on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne and John Wilkins).  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme on the Sheffield Methodist Circuit website and also the Sheffield Methodist Circuit Facebook page.*