

How You Can Turn a Perfect Stranger Into a Friend in Minutes!

*I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full
Understanding of every good thing we have in Christ (Philemon 1:6)*

Sharing the Gospel with a perfect stranger is not easy, but in Mexico where we lived for ten years, it is not so hard. For instance, I handed out hundreds of Gospel tracts to strangers while on my jogging route, and I vaguely remember being even turned down. But in America, it can be quite unnerving like what happened to me not long after I moved back to the States (Pennsylvania). Upon seeing three African-American park workers in my new running route, I went to them (after a quick prayer) to start small talk. They were cordial but none of them were willing to receive a tract from me. But I continued making conversation while putting back the tracts in my pocket but without thinking, I pulled out another one. A few seconds later, the man in the middle, a Muslim, asked to see that tract, which surprised me since he had rejected it before. The reason was that this tract had an African-American man on the cover who looked like his friend. The Muslim man then asked whether he could give it to him. "Of course," I said, hoping that this man as well as his friend would read the message entitled, "There is Hope." As I resumed jogging, I wondered whether the Lord orchestrated this brief encounter to speak to this man through this Christian literature.

Yes, while sharing the Gospel is not easy in America, I do think that sometimes God places strangers in our paths, then allowing a situation where we "naturally" get to share the Gospel, "making the most of every opportunity" (Eph. 5:16). I learned that lesson from an incident that happened to me awhile back. On this day, I went for a physical and as I entered the waiting room, I noticed a middle-aged couple sitting there: a professional looking woman and a weather-beaten looking man who I presumed was her husband. Not having paid much attention to them, I left the doctor's office after the examination to get my prescription medicine. Now, I could have gone to any number of pharmacies, but I ended up at Rite-Aid. After handing in my prescription, I proceeded to the waiting room when a man approached me, saying, "Hey you are the guy we saw at the doctor's office." Looking up, I saw that it was that weather-beaten man whom I saw earlier. This rather loud man then told me that he was going to get a new knee because as a truck driver he couldn't continue with his present knee. When I asked what was wrong with his knee, he answered, "It is f_____ed up." He then asked me what I did for a living. Upon hearing "Minister," he got quite embarrassed and then apologized. His wife who overheard us said, "Please tell my husband that he is going to hell for breaking the Ten Commandments."

Now, if that sort of situation isn't tailored made for witnessing, then I don't know what is. So I calmly said to him, "Neither uttering profanity nor using the Lord's name in vain has any bearing on whether you are going to hell or not. It boils down to what you will do with Jesus Christ. The breaking of the commandments actually shows us the need for God to forgive us. It is not about how good we are in order to go to heaven; it is whom we believe in. The way it should

work is that as a result of believing in Christ, one should no longer feel the need to cuss."

Then the man said, "Yes, I am a Lutheran; my wife also knows all about that because she used to be a Reformed." Then the wife said rather sheepishly, "Yes, it is by grace we are saved." After talking for a few more minutes, the couple asked me to pray for their needs: the wife was just fired from the bank where she had worked for the past 30 years and the husband was not going to work for awhile after the surgery. They also asked me to visit them on the day of his surgery, which I did with my daughter. We prayed there too! I truly believed that God had orchestrated this encounter so that this couple could turn to the Lord. Sharing is not easy but pray and look for divine appointments around where you live, work or even exercise! Remember what Paul said to Philemon: "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith."

Further Reflection

1. In Acts 8:26-40, read about a divine appointment that resulted in the salvation of a high ranking government officer.
2. In Acts 16:11-16, read about another divine appointment that became the catalyst for the establishment of the first church in Ephesus.

Bible Reading

Wednesday: Proverbs 3 & Judges 3

Thursday: Proverbs 4 & Judges 4