

Breaking through Four Barriers to Evangelism

Evangelism in Europe is often slow and many believers have never personally led anyone to Christ. Yet in this same difficult environment, it is possible to significantly increase evangelistic fruit. Most evangelism gets blocked at one of four typical barriers. Learning to break through these barriers can radically increase the effectiveness of evangelism and exponentially increase fruit. This seminar will equip you to recognize and cross these barriers, and equip others to do the same.

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Background

Shortly before Jesus called the four to become fishers of men, he traveled with his disciples from Jerusalem to Galilee (John 4). Along the way they stopped for lunch at the town of Sychar, in Samaria. His disciples headed into the village to buy food, and then were ready to move on. Jesus started talking to a woman at the well, led her to faith, and sparked a revival in the town. The traveling band had to interrupt their trip and stay another day in Samaria to respond to the unexpected fruit.

Jesus and his disciples were in the same situation, with the same people, experiencing the same weariness. Christ was profoundly fruitful; the disciples would have just bought lunch and missed it all. In what ways was Jesus' approach different than that of his disciples? Understanding this difference is key to increasing evangelistic fruit. Are you missing key opportunities to spark revival around you?

We will start half way through the story, and then go back to the beginning.

I. Jesus saw things they didn't see (John 4:30-38)

1. He saw refreshment on the path of service – John 4:30-34
2. He saw a ripe harvest where they saw only preparation – John 4:35
 - a. What keeps us from seeing the ripe harvest? What makes us wait?
 - b. How would you act if you really believed the harvest was ripe?

3. He saw other workers they would join – John 4:36-38
 - i. How would seeing the other workers in the harvest help you to engage more quickly and boldly in evangelism?

II. **Jesus stepped over barriers that stopped others**

Now let's go back to the beginning of the story. In the course of a short conversation, Jesus takes this woman from cautious disinterest to living faith. This happens because he steps over four barriers that often stop us.

1. **Jesus stepped into relationship** – John 4:1-9

- i. How could you be better at stepping into relationship with strangers?

2. **Jesus stepped into spiritual conversation** – John 4:10-12

- i. What are practical ways we can step quickly into spiritual conversation?
- ii. Why is it important not to wait?
- iii. What kind of response can we expect from others when we shift from the physical to the spiritual?

3. **Jesus stepped into the gospel** – John 4:10-26

- i. Why do we often stop short of actually sharing the gospel?
- ii. How could you step over the barrier into the gospel?

As the conversation continues, we see four main thoughts that Jesus shares. These are the four key truths that you need to pass on if you want to be faithful at sharing the gospel.

The four “Big Ideas” of the gospel

A. **You were created by God, for God, and without him you will be thirsty** (John 4:13-15)

- i. Why do you think it is important to start here?

B. You are sinful and separated from God (John 4:16-18)

At this point the Samaritan woman takes a rabbit trail. This will almost always happen at some point when you are sharing the gospel with someone. No matter how clearly you are speaking, your words will go through the filter of previous information or experiences and they will hear something different than what you are saying. Most people only know two competing gospels, the **gospel of religion** and the **gospel of good works**. Many will be resistant to the message because they hear it through the filter of one of these other gospels, and don't really understand what you are saying. You need to be ready to address their questions, showing them these competing gospels will not get you to God.

- i. Look at John 4:19-24. Where do you see the competing gospel of religion?
- ii. Where do you see the competing gospel of good works?
- iii. How does Jesus' answer take her back to the true gospel?

C. Jesus died for our sins, opening the way for us to have a relationship with God – John 4:25-26

- i. What can we learn from the way Jesus shared this third “big idea” of the gospel?

D. We receive this gift through repentance and faith – John 4:39-42

Since our record of the conversation ends with v. 26, we don't see this last point until later, when the villagers talk about what she had shared with them.

- i. What do you learn about repentance and faith from what they said in vs 39-42?
- ii. Why is the gospel incomplete without this fourth “big idea”

Now let's go back to the last of the four barriers Jesus stepped over.

4. Jesus stepped into a challenge – John 4:7, 4:10, 4:16, 4:21

- i. Read the following verses and make some observations about how Jesus challenged the Samaritan woman at various points in the conversation. John 4:7, 4:10, 4:16, 4:21
- ii. What keeps you from challenging people to respond?

iii. Why is it important to do?

In many ways these barriers function like police tape at the scene of a crime. To cross that barrier feels wrong, like we are violating some kind of unwritten law. But in reality, the barrier can be easily passed, just like you could grab police tape and quickly duck under it. Those who have the proper authority move right past it without giving a second thought – those who don't tend to wait at the tape.

You need to realize that you have authority to go into these areas that may seem at first like they are off limits. You have authority because you have been sent by the King of Kings on a rescue mission. You are under direct orders from him. All authority has been given to Christ, and he is sending you (Matt 28:18-19). Show your badge and step over the line!