**HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**COURSE:** Relational Evangelism

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**HOW TO EARN THE RIGHT TO BE HEARD**

How to GO.

Hey, it isn’t easy. Jesus didn’t say it would be. But so what. It is possible. It can be done. Many are doing it.

I’ve been told that the actual translation of the Great Commission is not GO, but AS YOU GO. That means as you go about your daily life, be alert to the people around you. Few of us will ever be missionaries and GO to another country. That is not the idea here. While some must GO to other places, the vast majority need to know how to love and reach out AS THEY ARE GOING ABOUT THEIR DAILY LIVES RIGHT WHERE THEY LIVE.

I was in a conversation with a Christian leader in which they said, “I don’t go into relationships with an agenda.” Later in the conversation I returned to that point and said, “I go into all relationships with an agenda. I’m an ambassador for Christ. He gives me an agenda. It is my job to find out if the other person is in Christ or not. If they aren’t in Christ I have a calling and an obligation to at least make an offer to let them know why they need Jesus and how they can become a disciple. If they are IN Christ, then my responsibility is to help them grow in Christ. There are no exceptions. That is LOVE in action. While I’m far from perfect in carrying this out, it is my agenda.” Without that I’d be living “Churchianity” rather than Christianity.

We are called to be alert to all those around us as we go about life. Our job, calling, command, and mission as we go about daily life is to be alert and look for opportunities to share the Good News with those who are living in darkness. It is our responsibility as ambassadors (II Corinthians 5:18-20) to show interest in others, look for the way and time in which we can find out if they are in Jesus, and if not, how to offer to share that information with them. It is our job to attempt to plant the seed of the Gospel.

There are some basic issues we must be conscious of to be effective in this. First we must prepare ourselves. If we aren’t prepared, we won’t be looking or sharing. We will be passing by most people like ships in the night.

We need to pray that God will show us those around us who need to hear about Jesus. Actually that would be EVERYONE who is not IN Christ. I don’t pick and chose who I want to get involved with.

We need to look for opportunities to befriend people.

Paul told us we are to make the most of every opportunity.

Why has Jesus not come back? There is ONE reason. He wants to see more saved. It would only seem logical then that we should be busy doing what our King has asked for.

So here are some basic ideas as to how to find people. This should be an ongoing, intentional activity in the life of every Christian.

Look in your own back yard. There are all kinds of people around us that we don’t even think about reaching out to.

Most of what follows here is something I had to learn. Growing up I was:

* Quiet
* Shy
* Timid
* Fearful
* Insecure

And I got the dry heaves whenever I went into new situations or had to meet someone new, etc. Fortunately after I became a Christian, God gave me some great models of people who were great in befriending other people.

For me it started at the beginning with a desire to share Jesus with others and a strong interest to be more open and less fearful even though that was my basic nature. I’ve had to force myself to look at people, smile, and be willing to start a conversation with them. I’m still learning. It is not my natural personality. But I’m learning and I guess you could say I have trained and pushed myself to go beyond my comfort zone in this area.

As we live our lives we must do the following, let me repeat: Be prepared to share the Good News. Pray for opportunities and EYES to see those around us.

When you leave the house realize you are on a mission. You don’t have to go to Haiti to go on a mission trip, you can go on one every time you leave the house. Actually it might start with someone who is living in the house.

You aren’t going to share Jesus with every person every time you go out, but you can work at building relationships that can lead to that with many people.

As you go about the neighborhood, office, mall, grocery store, etc., look at people. Most people go about life NOT looking at others they meet along the way or cross paths with. We avoid eye contact. Stop that. You have to be careful in the way you do this. Be prudent, but start showing interest in the people you meet along the way.

Look at people. Acknowledge they are there, that they are alive and actually exist. Now you obviously need to be careful and not look with flirtatious looks.

SMILE. It is amazing what a smile does. It breaks barriers. Look, smile, just a simple smile, not a Cheshire cat giant smile, nor flirtatious, but just a nice smile, as opposed to a frown.

SPEAK UP. It is so easy to say hi. Or hello. This just acknowledges the other person’s existence. Some might not respond. Do it anyway.

TALK. Depending on the situation, you might have the opportunity to say something more. There are a million possibilities, and it depends on the situation. But it could be, “Hi, neighbor, how are you today?”

“What brings you to the seminar?” On a plane, “Hi, how are you today? Are you leaving home or going home?” “Have you been working all day?” with a clerk, waiter, etc. If I end up sitting with some new person at a meal, or for coffee, etc., and we have some time, I have used a thousand times FORM as a guide for my conversation. I explain the FORM a few paragraphs below.

Asking questions can open doors. It is a great way to show interest without being too nosey. It helps break the ice. It helps earn the right to be heard by them in return. It takes the pressure off feeling like I have to start preaching to them and witness to them on the spot.

Once we have connected, I just ask them questions (FORM) about the following areas - I want to avoid very personal issues or things that could be embarrassing or awkward for them. I just follow the FORM. This eliminates me having to fret over what to talk about.

**F-family**. Start asking questions related to them and their family, such as:

* How long have you lived here?
* Where did you or your family come from?
* Do you have many relatives living near you?
* Do you come from a big family?
* (If I know they are married) How did you two meet?

**O-occupation**. Then you can move onto questions related to their work:

* What line of work are you in?
* Are you going to school? What are you studying?
* How did you get into this line of work?
* How do you like it? What do you do?
* That is interesting, what exactly do you do in that job?
* RELATED TO THIS ARE AREAS OF INTEREST OR HOBBIES.
* That would be if you found out someone is really into:
	+ Sports, music, dogs, a special kind of help group, etc.
	+ How did you get started in that?
	+ How long have you done it?
	+ What do you do?

**R-religious background**, You can later move into this area:

* You know I’m curious, do you have any kind of religious background?
* (If yes) How long have you been involved in that? Would you consider yourself an active participant in it?
* What exactly does that faith/church/religion teach or practice? What are the key elements of it? It could be atheism. It doesn’t matter. Just ask about it.
* There have been times when I have been with someone I had known for a long time, and I brought up the subject this way: “We have known each other for some time (or all your life if it is a relative) but I have never heard you talk about being involved in some kind of religion or faith …”
* There are many other questions you can use here. The idea is just to get a conversation going. It is not to confront, challenge, or tell them how they are wrong.
* What does your religion/philosophy/atheism teach about life after death? What do you have to do to get that life?
* What do you do weekly or monthly as a practitioner in your faith? What’s it like? What’s it involve? How do you practice it in your daily life?
* We are JUST asking, not attacking.
* Listen and show sincere interest.

I most often will ask the following questions at some point. You have to be gentle, not attacking in doing this, but it is very interesting and opens a huge door for me to go on to the M of FORM. If done properly, people will not have a negative reaction to this. I’ve asked it of hundreds and never had anyone get upset or angry.

“I’d like to ask you a question in light of your (religious) background that I’ve asked a number of people and the answers are always interesting. It is a deep question and it makes you stop and think. Here it is: **Have you come to the place in your life where you could say for sure that if you were to die today, that you would go to heaven?”** Then you wait for their answer. Most all say “NO.” or “I don’t know.”

If that is the case, I then go on to M of FORM.

Now, moving on to M.

**M-message**. This is getting to my making them an offer based on their answer to R. My response is often something like this: “You know if you would be interested, I would be glad to get together with you and share with you four presentations called ‘It’s All About Relationship.’ They show us what we need to do to be sure that when we die we will go to heaven. The Bible shows us that God does not want us to live out our life not knowing what is going to happen with we die. He wants us to live in peace and have confidence about that subject. Each lesson is about 35 minutes long. We can do it at your place or whereever. Would that be of interest to you?” Then you wait. If they are interested, you set up a time for the first lesson. I don’t try and convert people on the spot. That is not very effective. If they aren’t interested, I let them know that if they ever are, they can let me know and I’ll be glad to do it with them.

You can offer these lessons I have developed called “It’s All About Relationship” to all kinds of people:

* Family
* Friends
* Neighbors
* Professionals, doctor, dentist, chiropractor, etc.
* Work associates
* School associates
* Club associates
* Team members
* Service people, waiters, barbers, yard service, computer repair, car repair, house repair, pool service, mail man, grocery clerks.

Who are the people you see on a regular basis? They are often OFF OUR RADAR because we don’t know what to do. Get trained. Put them on your radar. Love them, care about them, and make the offer to them.