

How Can My Words Convince Anyone of God's Truth?

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Sometimes we don't tell others about Christ because we doubt that our words could be effective. Or we worry that we might injure a friendship.

Martin Luther offers encouragement when discussing the Samaritan woman mentioned in John 4. This woman is like many people we know. She came from a long line of people who didn't know the true God or listen to His Word, or who had a generic faith and a hazy view of Bible teaching. The Samaritans were drowning in the false beliefs of their culture.

Luther says, "But look how gently the Lord deals with her! He does not break off talking to her." Jesus was *gentle* and *patient*. Emphasizing Jesus' words, "God is seeking such to worship Him," Luther explains that Jesus is saying, "I am seeking you Samaritans." Jesus did not dismiss, but welcome.

This teaches us to: (1) Deal Gently with People As Those Whom God Wants.

The Lord isn't gentle with sin, but He is gentle with sinners. Emphasize the tender love of God for sinners, that He wants to pull them close. This is why we, too, can deal gently with them.

God chooses humble instruments, like us, to speak His Word. Luther says: "When God wants to speak and deal with us, He does not avail Himself of an angel but of parents, of the pastor, or of my neighbor. A poor speaker may speak the Word of God just as well as he who is endowed with eloquence. . . . There is no difference between the Word when uttered by a schoolboy and when uttered by the angel Gabriel. . . . This ought to be a comfort to us."

This teaches us to: (2) Trust That God Will Work Through the Words You Speak.

God will work through a pastor's human flaws to create and preserve faith in the hearers, through the preaching of His Word. The same is true in the home: Has God given you children? He's made you the one to teach His Word to them. The same is true in your community: The friends you have? God's made you the one who can speak His Word to them when they need to hear it, knowing what is going on in their lives.

Luther said that "a schoolboy" can do this just as powerfully as the angel Gabriel spoke God's words to the virgin Mary, because the power and the promise come from God! It isn't our skill in speaking that matters, but how the Holy Spirit blesses the Word of God that we speak, which is powerful enough to reach

the person, soften stubborn hearts, and create faith. (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Matthew 10:19-20; Romans 10:17)

What the Samaritan woman did next offers us further encouragement. She spoke to her townspeople about Jesus. She wasn't specially gifted. She didn't have a great résumé. She had multiple divorces and was currently living with a man, unmarried. Why would her townspeople listen to her? She knew very little about Jesus except what His words told her.

But she had *evidence* that Jesus knew everything about her, which showed that He was God who knows all things. And she had *Jesus' words*, in response to her statement about waiting for the Messiah to come, "*I Am*—the very one who is speaking to you."

This average person, laden with sins but now cleansed in her conscience, became an evangelist simply by echoing Jesus' own words. They "believed in Him because of the woman's testimony."

This teaches us to: (3) Simply Speak to Others the Words of Christ That Comfort Our Own Troubled Hearts.

The Samaritan woman's strength as an evangelist is that she was *a troubled sinner who found comfort in the words of Jesus*. She doesn't pretend to know all the answers, but she models the right question: "Could this be the Christ?" She sends people to Jesus, and His words do all the work.

They replied, "We no longer believe because of what you said. Now we have heard for ourselves. And we know that this really is the Savior of the world."

Instead of letting our misgivings silence what we would say, we can let others know that we don't have all the answers. But Jesus does. Scripture does. We aren't perfect Christians either; we are sinners who need forgiveness and comfort for our troubled hearts. So we give others the words and the truths with which Jesus comforts and blesses us in our troubles. God promises us that His Word will do the saving work.

As Luther said, "This ought to be a comfort to us!"

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Quotations of Martin Luther are from *Luther's Works: American Edition*, vol. 22 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 525–29.