

Personal Evangelism 101: Confront Sin

Scripture: John 4:16–18

Code: B130603

One of the main problems with weak evangelistic methods is the risk of leading people to false conversions. Many sinners are thrilled to learn that “God has a wonderful plan” for their lives and are eager to tap into all the blessings that entails. It stands to reason if you evangelize solely on the basis of God’s gifts, everybody will sign up.

But there is a significant difference between simply wanting the benefits of believing in Christ and actually turning to Him for salvation in biblical faith and repentance. False assurance of faith is a deadly spiritual danger—confidence in shallow belief actually *hardens* a person to the truth of God’s Word. We have a responsibility to lost men and women to preach the gospel thoroughly and accurately, and to steer them away from empty professions of faith and shallow biblical understanding.

Often the key to breaking through the fog of false faith is confronting sin. Until a person understands the depth and weight of his sin, he can’t fully appreciate his need for a Savior. In fact, it’s usually not until a person learns to see his sin the way God sees it that he is able to truly repent and believe.

That was the case for the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4. In verse 15, she seems ready to receive the benefits of the living water Jesus mercifully offered her. But Christ knew the true state of her heart and the sin she harbored. He graciously yet directly exposed her sin with a simple, abrupt command:

He said to her, “Go, call your husband and come here.” The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You have correctly said, ‘I have no husband’; for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; this you have said truly.” (John 4:16-18)

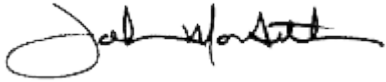
Samaritans practiced a distorted, corrupted version of Judaism (we’ll look closer at their religious system next time). But they did accept the Pentateuch, so this woman would have been aware of God’s commandment against adultery (Exodus 20:14) and that the penalty for adulterers was death. Moreover, she would have inherently known she was living a sinful lifestyle (Romans 2:14-15). And as we’ve previously discussed, her pattern of immorality had made her an outcast within her own community.

But it’s not until she sees her sin in relation to the merciful blessings of God that she begins to understand its full weight. And it’s here that the nature and content of their conversation radically shifts. There’s no more talk of mercy, satisfaction, and blessing. This initially indifferent, ignorant, careless sinner has had her wretched immorality laid bare, and she must be brought to conviction and repentance over her condition before she can enjoy the living water Christ has offered.

It’s wonderful to present to the sinner all the glories of the gospel—all the soul-satisfying blessings of

an eternity in the intimate presence of God. But it's not enough to stop there. If all you do is spill out the tremendous benefits of knowing God and then ask for a response, you're likely to lead him to a false conversion, deceiving him about the true nature of his heart.

It's critical to bring the sinner face to face with the guilt of his sin—to lead him to measure himself against the holy law of God and feel the weight of divine judgment on his corrupt life. How else will he ever come to true repentance and faith?

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John MacArthur". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

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