

Let Your Life Speak

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The beloved Saint Francis is remembered for saying “Preach the gospel at all times. If necessary, use words.” It’s an appealing thought. What if we never had to risk talking to a friend or colleague about Christ, but instead “let our lives speak” to communicate the gospel message?

Unfortunately, there’s no evidence that St. Francis ever said such a thing. In fact, during his ministry **Francis was known as much for his bold preaching as for his lifestyle.**

The appeal of this simple saying captures the tension many of us feel when it comes to talking about Christ. We understand that Jesus instructs us to share the good news of his Kingdom (Matthew 28:18-20) but knowing how to start spiritual conversations with friends or neighbors can feel paralyzing. **Add the complications of company policies and the perceived stigma of bringing up religion in a professional context and sharing your faith at work seems like an impossible task.** You may wonder:

- What’s appropriate to talk about in the workplace? Will sharing your faith get you in trouble with HR?
- Will talking about Christ complicate reporting relationships? Maybe you manage a team and worry that your direct reports would feel their professional advancement depends on how they respond to a spiritual conversation.
- How do you talk about Christ with someone who has no interest in spiritual things? To say that transitioning from talking about the Broncos’ game to discussing a person’s eternal destiny is an awkward shift would be an understatement.

These concerns are valid, but if you’re willing to move through these fears, you will discover that your workplace is a natural place to “let your life speak” in both word *and* deed.

3 Principles to Let Your Life Speak

Here are three principles that shape a relational approach to workplace evangelism and will help you develop skills to engage in respectful, spiritually-rich conversations.

1. Strive for gracious intentionality and prayerful readiness.

One of the reasons the St. Francis quote is so appealing is that it promotes a passive approach to sharing your faith. Sure, we all want people to know Christ’s love, but isn’t living a vibrant life of faith enough? Eventually, someone is bound to ask, “What is the reason for the hope that you have?” (1 Peter 3:15)

It’s been known to happen but adopting a reactive rather than proactive approach to talking about faith ignores the example set by Christ. While Jesus’ distinct way of life piqued the crowds’ curiosity, he also initiated conversations with individuals, asking questions aimed at each person’s specific issues and needs. Christ models a gracious intentionality rooted in relationship.

The most powerful way to begin a spiritual dialogue is to build an authentic relationship, taking the initiative to genuinely connect and learn more about a person’s life as you pray for opportunities to talk about spiritual things.

2. Recognize that everyone is on a spiritual journey.

Traditional approaches to evangelism focus on the point of decision when a person responds to the gospel. If this is the standard by which you measure “successful” evangelism, you’ll miss innumerable opportunities to interact with people about Christ.

“Your job in any given situation is to play exactly and only the role the Holy Spirit wants you to play in that situation,” pastor Bill Hybels^[1] explains, “If you define evangelistic success as articulating the gospel and praying the ‘prayer of surrender’ for someone to receive Christ, if you don’t get all that done on a flight between here and Chicago, you’ll be a failure.”

In contrast, **relational evangelism acknowledges that every person is on a spiritual journey with its own path and pace.** Your role is to connect with people at whatever point they are at on the journey, engage issues or questions they face at that time, and pray that God will use your interaction to move people closer to him.

Consider this (unscientific) scale that illustrates various stages of a person’s spiritual journey.

Nicodemus’ life is a beautiful picture of this process. We meet the Jewish leader at night, when he uses the cover of darkness to ask Jesus probing questions about the Kingdom (John 3:1-21.) During that brief interaction, Jesus challenges his thinking, but then Nicodemus disappears from the narrative. Who knows what he observed or what questions he wrestled with on his journey of faith? All we know is that he reappears in John 19, preparing Christ’s body for burial. In the time between these two scenes, Nicodemus had come to faith in Christ.

How freeing – and exciting – to realize that every one of your coworkers is on a spiritual journey. You can’t control the timing or direction of their journey, but you can be present and engage with them along the way. Instead of focusing on a formula for sharing your faith, ask God to do what only he can do – spark curiosity their hearts, help them see their need for God, or give them hearts that are responsive to him.

3. Think like a farmer.

A farmer who spends the summer watching Netflix can’t expect the fields to be ripe for harvest in September. Rather, the best farmers spend the summer in their fields – preparing the soil, planting seeds, plucking weeds, and watering the crops to produce a harvest. They know that effective farming requires cultivation – slow, attentive work that nurtures a plant’s growth.

In the same way, engaging your colleagues in spiritual conversations is a form of cultivation. You don’t just show up one day expecting someone to ask how they can know Christ. Not likely! Thinking like a farmer means you join God in the gradual work he’s doing in a person’s life – planting seeds of the gospel, clearing objections (or rocks) that stand in the way of them understanding Christ, and watering the soil to encourage a person’s growth.

Sharing your faith at work requires discernment and respect but can be incredibly exciting. Would your employer object to you distributing evangelistic tracts to your coworkers? Probably. Would your employer object to you having relationally-rich conversations colleagues over your lunch hour? Probably not.