

“How Shall We Sing the Lord’s Song In a Foreign Land?”

Christian Liberty

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Psalm 137:1-4

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Sig: Heavenly Father, gracious God, grant that I may rely on Your wisdom and not mine, as I share what You have taught me. I know that without You I have nothing, and that all that I do have is from You. Bless this time that we have together, as we discuss bringing Your good news to the least, the last and the lost, for the sake of Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. Amen.

Men: Amen.

Sig: Gentlemen, this is a daunting task for me, to come before you and attempt to teach, sitting at Bruce’s feet for so many years, and most recently with Ted Wood and Don Maurer and Carl Jones and Tom Hans, and recently with Jonathan Watt, Mark Robinson, and Dick Jenkins and Bishop Rodgers. I mean it’s hard for me to be in that club. And I’m not in that club. I want to make that clear from the beginning.

I’m not here to teach about theology. I’m here to teach what God has shared with me and prepared me for that I hope would be of value to you. And that’s about sharing your faith, about talking to others about Christ.

Although I am not qualified to teach theology, I have enrolled at Trinity School for Ministry. (*Applause.*) Because my desire is to learn more. Thank you, thank you. Actually, I just started last week. I’m taking a course on the diaconate, which is training to be a deacon in the Anglican tradition, and it’s wonderful! I mean I could share with you what I learned in the first week from the Old Testament that just blows me away. It just blows me away!

At the end of his first lecture, this professor says, “You know how some people say that the Old Testament points forward to Christ?” This Old Testament book, which is very thick, is a summary, a survey of every book in the Old Testament. And so at the end of the introduction it says that there are evangelicals, and they look forward to and they point to Christ. Well, this young teacher, Brian Hughes, a priest in the Anglican Church, says that he took challenge with that. He didn’t agree with that. He said that the Bible in the Old Testament was sufficient for Paul and all the others to reveal the whole God, to reveal the Father, the Holy Spirit and Christ. It doesn’t point to Christ. It shows Christ and God and everything from Genesis to Malachi. It was the book they used. And Paul says to Timothy that the Scriptures are sufficient for salvation. And he didn’t have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. He didn’t have the book of Acts. He didn’t have all of Paul’s letters, much less Revelation.

And I thought, “What a wonderful insight!” It’s not that the Old Testament is pointing to Christ. I would say, “Yes. I understand that.” No, he’s saying that it has! It is Christ. The Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost were together before the Old Testament was written. And in the Old Testament the full nature of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit is revealed. I said, “Amen! I can’t wait to learn more! “But anyway, that’s just one of the many things.

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I’m discerning a call, if you will, to the ministry, although I don’t see myself as a parish priest so much. And I will share with you one of the opportunities that have been presented to me later, if I have time.

In the meantime, what God has taught me is how to talk about my faith with others. Most of the time I sort of stumble through it. I embarrass my wife a lot, and even myself, if you can believe that. (*Laughter.*) I don’t try to force Jesus into every conversation. But I do like to talk about Him. And so I bring it up. I bring it up as a natural way of telling people about this Bible study. A lot of my unbelieving friends are sort of amazed that any of you would get up this early on a Friday morning. And if I told them that you’re coming to hear me speak, they’d be shocked! (*Laughter.*)

Anyway, I found myself in an awkward position. My professional career has been in sales and marketing for over thirty years. And I know how to make a presentation. I know how to talk about features and benefits. I know how to make a sales call. I know how to close the deal, so to speak.

But for a while there it crept into my thinking that this is how you tell people about Jesus! Then I began to realize this. It doesn’t work, Sig. Jesus isn’t a product. He’s not features and benefits. He’s not something to sell. He’s much bigger than that, much more dynamic than that, much more powerful.

If you’ve never read C. S. Lewis’s “The Weight of Glory,” I suggest that you do, because it really changed my way of thinking. He would say that it’s not that Christians think too big. It’s that they don’t think big enough.

So, even though he never met Joel Osteen, he would say, “It’s not that your best life couldn’t be now. It’s that your best life is better than you ever imagined.” “The Weight of Glory” is a sermon he actually gave during World War II, and it’s a powerful talk. And it really changed my perspective on what’s important and what Christ is about, and how I should present it.

So what I’ve learned then is that I felt this awkwardness. As many of you have, I’ve learned that Christ is not the solution to my marriage. He’s not going to fix my problems with my 29-year-old son who’s belligerent. God love him! I hope and pray that he comes into the Kingdom. Nor is He going to give me the full health, wealth and happiness that I long for, that many of us desire and certainly what our non-Christian friends look for. That’s not what Christ is about.

So I feel awkward being in Christ and being in this world, but not of this world. And I feel that tension when I start to talk to people about Christ who don’t know Him, because I want to make it seem like yeah! You’ll be happy! You’ll be healthy! It’s great! But that’s not the case. And we can’t sell Jesus that way. He’s not a product to be sold. He’s not a gimmick. He’s not a remedy. He’s not an ointment.

So especially when we attempt to communicate what we’ve learned from here in the barn to our friends outside of here, what do we do? How do we do it? And my objective today is to provide you with a strategy, that is, to provide you with a bridge to going from here to out there with all the great things that Bruce and the other teachers, as I mentioned, have shared with us.

We no longer want the same things that we wanted when we were non-Christians. Maybe that separates us in some ways from our old friends. We certainly have learned a new language, haven’t we? Not only are we saved, but we know words like *propitiation* and *sanctification* and *justification*, much less *salvation*, and what they all mean. We’ve

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read new books. Besides the Bible, we’ve got a table of books that are wonderful, and written by some of you men. Two in particular have books on this table, besides Bruce’s books. And if you come here next Friday, Ted Wood promises to bring some of his great books from his seminary training. You’re not done with them though, Ted. You’ve just absorbed them all, right?

Ted: I’ve absorbed everything they gave away for free. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Excellent, excellent! So there’s more to learn there. Thank you. So we have this whole library of good books to help us make sense of what God is doing in our lives.

In some ways we are seeing the world we live in now and we see it differently. So, in fact, I discussed with Ted about my talk today, because I need professional help to do this. And he suggested and actually came up with the title. And I wanted to share this with Ted.

Ted, I have a CD for you. Sinead O’Connor put Psalm 137 to music. If you don’t know who Sinead O’Connor is, she is an Irish rock ‘n’ roll star. She has a CD out called “Theology.” And it’s all these Old Testament themes that she’s singing about, and they’re powerful. But one of them is Psalm 137. So let me read that for you. It’s in your handout.

*“By the rivers of Babylon,
There we sat down; yea, we wept
When we remembered Zion.
We hung our harps
Upon the willows in the midst of it.
For there those who carried us away captive
Asked of us a song.
And those who plundered us requested mirth, saying,
‘Sing us one of the songs of Zion.’
How shall we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land?”*

So that’s my question of us today. As I said, my plan is to give you a strategy for singing the Lord’s song in a foreign land.

We live in a ghetto in many ways. You know, one of Webster’s definitions of a ghetto—I mean the Christian community being a ghetto—is that we’re isolated. You know, that’s a good term. *Ghetto* is a good way to understand that in our community we’re isolated. People outside the church tend to know us for what we’re against. We’re against abortion. We’re against gay marriage. We’re against sleeping or living with somebody before you’re married. We’re against drinking, dancing, and going out with girls who chew. *(Laughter.)*

So there are a lot of things that we’re against. Some of us don’t even know each other. I’m sorry. Some of us don’t even like each other within the Christian community.

I mean, look at us Anglicans and Episcopalians. Our dioceses split. The Lutherans have split. The PCA doesn’t like the PCUSA. Even the Roman Catholic Church has factions in it. As one scholar put it, “We tend not to like those who sin differently than we do.”

So let’s keep in mind that there are, in a second way, not only people outside the church as one group who don’t know Christ, but there’s a second group of Christian brothers and sisters who may not know the full gospel. Some may still think, as Dick Clouser reports, about friends who are on the margins of the faith. If someone was

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questioned about him being a Christian, they would say, “Oh, of course he’s a Christian! He went to North Catholic!” (*Laughter.*) You know, like that’s the way to get in. So how are we to share the good news of Christ with a third group that we hardly interact with in the first place, people we really don’t know?

So we’ve got those who are outside the church who don’t know Christ, those within the church who have a sense of what the gospel is about, and then there’s the third group that we see occasionally that we maybe really don’t know well. But they come across our path. And God may present an opportunity for us to share our faith. So what do we do? How do we bridge that? How do we get into a conversation that has some meaning and depth?

And, as Bruce has taught us, what are you going to do with what you’ve just learned? That’s one of the wonderful Bickelisms, as well as “ministry is who you are, where you are,” and the third one being that we share our faith with whoever God brings across our path. I mean, we all know these. We can all recite these. And they’re important. So today that’s my objective—to try and help you with something. I’m just going to touch on the surface of it. Now we can talk about it in great depth another time. But I just wanted to give you something to start with, something that’s easy and not intimidating. And certainly it would break the ice and not put the burden on you to explain the Resurrection, to explain the inerrancy of the Bible, and to answer all the tough questions that our non-Christian friends or any of these three groups would throw at us.

The first thing we want to do is to realize that this takes time. We need to slow it down. In my world of sales and marketing, when I was growing up, boy, I went like lightning! I didn’t want to slow anything down. If I sensed or got a hint that there was a sale to be made, I was on top of it. And I usually offended people and pissed them off and lost the deal, you know? (*Laughter. Unknown remark.*) I heard that! I heard that! (*Laughter.*)

Participant: I’m sorry.

Sig: That’s all right. So someone taught me. In fact, it was a wonderful man here in Pittsburgh who taught me about being a salesman in a whole different way. His name is John Rosso. He runs a company called Peek Performance. In fact, Brian Whittington, who is a member of our group, used to work for him. And I think others of you might have been exposed to Peek Performance and the things that John teaches. He’s a Christian brother, too. He’s a wonderful man.

So that’s one thing. Slow it down. I mean, slow it way down to the point where you realize, and hopefully the people you’re talking to realize that they’re friends and not projects. People can sense that.

I used to hitchhike a lot in the days when it was safe to hitchhike. You know, when you didn’t get your throat slit, or you weren’t robbed? And so that was the way to go for all of us who grew up in the ‘60s, right? That was my truck, my van, right here. It was this. (*He shows a picture.*) And I’d get picked up all the time.

So I had a summer job at an auto body shop. And this engineer from United States Steel would pick me up on a regular basis. And he’d take me home.

And of course, being a zealous young Christian, I had to tell him about Jesus, right? And so I did. Every day he’d pick me up. That’s all we talked about. That’s all I talked about, right? He was a very nice man, an older man.

It got to the point where he said to me one day, “Sig, you believe in Jesus, right?”

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“Oh, absolutely!” I mean, here he gave me a chance. “Yes indeed!”

And he said to me, “Well why are you trying to convince me of it?”

And it was like I stopped dead. I didn’t know what to say. That’s exactly what I was doing! I was trying to convince him. I didn’t ask him where he was, what faith background he had. Maybe he already believed in Christ. He never gave me a hint of that. But it’s like all of a sudden, with one statement, I’m dead in my tracks. I’m exposed.

And I thought, “What do I do?” I didn’t have a comeback. I didn’t know what to do after that.

My point in sharing that story with you is that we don’t want to get to that point. We want people to tell us what they think of Christ and what they think of God and how they make sense out of the world. What’s their world view? And hopefully that’s what I’ll be able to share with you today.

So as we slow this down, we need a strategy. I’ll start you off. How about this one? I didn’t put this one in the outline. How about this one? Matthew 10:16, where Jesus is speaking to His disciples, to the Twelve, as He is sending them out on an evangelistic mission. I’m quoting from the NIV. *“I’m sending you out like sheep among wolves. Therefore, be as shrewd as snakes, and as innocent as doves.”*

Not bad. Pretty good. Most people whom I’ve shared this quote with that aren’t Christians, they’re shocked that Jesus would be that shrewd, if you will, or give that kind of advice.

“Evangelism Explosion,” which I went through with my brothers here—Frank Melnick and Ron Fontennasi—did wonderful things. In fact, a very special couple, a husband and wife team that Ron and I shared our faith with, came to know Christ and are very involved in the church to this day. That was a long time ago. That was when Ron’s hair was black and mine was blonde. And I was skinny. But they were wonderful people. And Christ worked through us that day in spite of our stumbling, and it does work.

So I don’t mean to say that this is better than that. I’m just saying that this is different. EE, as we called it, had its place in time. But I think we’re in a different world now. The younger people growing up may not sit still for a presentation where we do all the talking. They need to tell us where they are. And we need to listen. So my challenge with EE is that we didn’t have much time to listen.

And a lot of times people would tell you what you wanted to hear to end the conversation. You know, I found that out with people that we witnessed to. I don’t know if you remember. Ron and I were at this gentleman’s house. And boy, he was saying yes to everything. And I couldn’t believe it. We went through it. He wanted to pray the sinner’s prayer. So I followed up with him the next day. He didn’t return my call. He’s busy. Next day after that? No return; voice mail. And it went on for weeks. And then it went on for months. I even went back to his house and knocked on the door again. And it was like I think this guy had moved. I think he packed up and left town because he knew we were coming back. *(Laughter.)*

But you know, we ran into things like that. Some days it worked, some days it didn’t. By the grace of God people came to know Christ. But all I’m saying is that it’s different today. So I want to show you a strategy of how to build this bridge, as I said in point b. in the outline. How do we build this bridge?

Now let’s first keep in mind, unlike the ways I did it—and I don’t mean to say that you’re like me; I can’t imagine you being as abrasive and as zealous or as obnoxious.

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Well, not all of you. Maybe some of you were obnoxious. But anyway, let’s listen to 1 Peter 3:15 and 16, where he says, *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.”*

And later, in Colossians 4:5-6, in point #2, *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.”*

So we know what we need to do. We need to be prepared in advance to give answers with wisdom of what we believe and why we believe it. But my point in all this is to say, not so fast. As they say in the world of sales, don’t spill all your candy in the lobby. Don’t tell your prospect everything you know about your product the first day you meet him. Slow it way down. You don’t have to give any answer. You don’t even know if he’s qualified as a prospect, let alone a suspect, right?

And the same may be true of a person you meet with whom you want to share your faith in Christ. So let’s slow it way down. Let’s build a bridge with our friend, or any of those three groups that I mentioned, and discover where they are and what they believe, not being so quick to give them all our knowledge and show off, which I’ve been guilty of many times, showing off. “Oh, let me tell you! Oh, you believe that God is dead? Well, I’ll go into twenty minutes of why He’s not, and why He’s alive.”

And I think that what we can do is to ask them a question. Back up. “Oh, you think God is dead? Tell me more about that. How did you come to that conclusion?” And I’ll get into that in a minute.

But I want you to remember to talk about questions. That’s the idea of asking questions. You know the old rule of thumb. God gave us two ears and one mouth. You understand the proportion there. You listen twice as much as you speak. You got that concept? Well that’s the idea. Let’s listen twice as much.

So let’s apply 2 and 3 above from Peter and Paul, answering with gentleness and respect, with grace seasoned with salt, so we know how to answer each one.

Now I wanted to make a point about gardeners and harvesters. Dr. Francis Schaeffer wrote a wonderful book, and it had a great cover. On the cover there was a church, and the church was on this pedestal of land that had been sort of eroded. And there was a big gap of space between the church and the rest of the land. And it was a book all about evangelism. And his point was that we need to do more pre-evangelism. We need to get to know people. We need to get to know who they are, where they are, what they’re about. We need to be a friend to them. We need to engage them before we come to the point of sharing Christ with them.

Now as Bruce would famously say, “This is what I’m not saying.” God can give us an opportunity where you’ve got thirty seconds, and it’s important to you to tell them who Christ is. And that happens. I know that happens. You know that happens. What I’m saying is that people like our neighbors, literally the guy that lives next door, or someone we work with, or someone we know, maybe in our church—and you’ve heard him say things. And you realize, as someone once said to me, as I was sharing some of my thinking about passages in the Bible. In fact, it was Earl Taylor’s son, Eric Taylor, who is now a minister at a church over in Moon Township.

And, you know, I grew up in the ‘60s, so I thought I really had some insight into this passage. And he said to me, “Sig, you need to reform your theology.” It was another one

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of those. What? But we all grew up thinking that when the rich young ruler came to Christ, and he went away sad because Jesus told him to obey all the commandments.

“Oh, I’ve done that since I was a kid,” right?

He said, “Okay. Go sell everything you have.” Jesus is telling us to sell everything we have! And join the group! Let’s have a commune somewhere! Come on, guys! You read it right there! What else could He be saying?

Jim Fitzgerald knows this because he grew up around the same time I did. Most of you might be a little older than Jim and me. Well, not really. But you know what I mean. We had that kind of concept in the ‘60s. Let’s give everything away. Until we started to make money, and then we realized that hey, making money is nice! What do you mean, give it away? *(Laughter.)*

But anyway, one time Eric Taylor said to me one day, “You need to reform your theology.” It was one of those things that stopped me again in my tracks—that I needed to change my way of thinking.

So what I’m trying to say is that there are gardeners and there are harvesters. And Francis Schaeffer pointed that out in his book when he talked about pre-evangelism.

The idea between gardeners and harvesters is that most of us will be gardeners. It’s very rare. As Bruce has said, “How many people have you saved?” And he says, “None that I know of.” And people might be shocked by that and say, “What do you mean? A man like you with your education?”

And he said, “Well, I don’t know.” But most of us have been in the business of sharing our faith—of gardening, of tilling the soil, of pulling out the weeds, putting in manure, watering it.

You know, we used to have a saying in the sales world that was really derogatory. Maybe some of you men in sales know this. You know how you make clients grow, right? They’re like mushrooms. You put them in a dark place, where they don’t know anything. You heap manure on them, and they grow. *(Laughter.)* Of course they had a few choicer words in there. *(Laughter.)* But that was the mentality. Don’t tell them anything. Keep them in the dark. Put lots of b-s on them, and they’ll grow.

Well, you know, it doesn’t work like that. People are smarter than that. So that’s the same thing with gardening and harvesting, although with gardening we want to take a much better tact at that. We know what gardens do and what they require. They require time and patience and love and care. So some of us, more of us, will probably be like that.

I use the NIV again. Actually, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 3:4-6 that, “*For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another ‘I follow Apollos,’ are you not mere humans? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it. But God has been making it grow.*” And that’s my point in pre-evangelism.

There’s also a wonderful story in John 4 when the gardeners and the harvesters, or the sowers and the reapers are glad together. And this young man I met is one who I think is on the same track with what John Rosso taught me from Peek Performance. His name is Greg Koukl. He has a radio show. He’s based in southern California. His organization is called Stand To Reason.

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And my brother Jay over here introduced me to a recent talk that Greg Koukl gave at the Ligonier Ministries National Conference this past year. And he summarized John 4:1-43.

It’s a wonderful passage, because again, not knowing the Scriptures deeply enough, I always read it completely differently, or didn’t really understand what it was saying at all. And what happens here is that this is where Christ is meeting the woman at the well, and not just any ordinary woman. It’s a Samaritan woman, who Jews didn’t hang out with. She’s in a town called Sychar. Did I say that right, Don?

Don: Mm-hmm.

Sig: And Jesus tells her about living water. And she says, “What do you mean by living water? You don’t even have anything to draw the water with, and it’s a deep well. How would you get any water out of here?”

And He said, “I will give you water so that you’ll never thirst again.”

And she’s blown away by that. She said, “Well, we’ve been looking for the Messiah.”

And Jesus says to her, “I am He.” And of course they go through her whole background. Jesus points out to her that “yes, you’re right. The man you’re living with now is not your husband and you’ve had five before him.” And she’s amazed that He knows her that well.

So she goes off into her town of Sychar to go and tell her friends. “I think I’ve met the Messiah. Come out and meet Him.”

Well, while she’s gone, the disciples return. They were out getting food for Christ. They return and offer Jesus some food. And He said, “No, I’m not hungry. I have food the Father gives Me and I’m fine.”

And they’re like “did someone come back while we were gone and feed Him? What’s going on here?”

He said, “Men, the fields are ripe for harvest.”

What is He talking about? I mean I get the idea in general. But Greg Koukl, in his exposition of this, says in fact that the New King James Version says that “*the fields are white for harvest.*” And Greg interprets it in a way that I think is really wonderful. The woman has gone back to this town. And by the time the disciples return and they talk, the people are coming toward them through the fields. And they might have white robes on or lighter colored linens. And Jesus is referring to these people coming back.

Jesus did the hard work of laying it on the line with her about who He is, where she is in her sin, and what needs to happen for her to be saved. And now the harvest can happen. Jesus has sown the seeds. Here are His disciples and here are these people coming toward them who are ready to hear the good news of Christ. The sower and the reaper will be glad together at that moment, because you know that it take six months and then you harvest, right? And Jesus quotes that saying to them. It takes four months and then you harvest. But it happened right there on the same day.

And wouldn’t that be wonderful if we could be a part of those opportunities? And why not? Why can’t we do that? With God anything is possible.

So our goal today is to advance the conversation. As we advance the conversation, we need to be up front with people, and honest with them as well. We need to let them know where we stand. You know, my life has been changed by Christ. We don’t need to necessarily give them fifteen or twenty minutes of our testimony. But we need to let them know where we stand and that Christ has changed our lives.

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We want to find out the truth. We want to go for clarity. We want to know what they believe and why they believe it. So we get clarity. We discover the truth.

I don’t know if you remember Tony Randall. He’s a well-known actor, famous for “The Odd Couple” and many other plays and movies. Well Tony Randall was on Johnny Carson one night. And Johnny is interviewing him. And they’re talking about assuming.

And so Tony Randall says, “no, no, no, no, Johnny. No, you can’t make assumptions.” This was the first time I’d heard this. This is now commonplace. But the first time I heard this, Tony Randall said to Johnny Carson, “What happens is that when you assume, you can visualize how it’s spelled.” (I don’t think I have this in the handout.) When you assume, you make an ass—a-s-s—out of you (u) and me. That’s how you spell assume. *(Laughter.)*

So when we make assumptions, in the sales world we call them mutual mystifications. *(Laughter.)* In other words, I ask somebody a question and they give me a vague answer. I think, “Oh! He’s going to buy something in six months. I can tell!” You know, that’s mutual mystification. I never clarified with him or her. Do you have a budget? Do you plan to buy? Or in the hope of our faith, what does that mean to you? What does Christ mean to you? You get some sense that it’s important to them. But you’re not sure. So you ask more questions.

In fact, as I talk about the mutual mystification, we want to go through it with gentleness and grace and salt as we ask questions, because when you ask those questions, when you get the hint that something might be there that’s worth talking deeper about, you need to be careful because questions can be abrasive. So we nurture. We fall back, even to the point where someone might say that they really want to know about Christ.

And I say, “But not now.”

“Oh, yeah! Really, I’d like to right now.”

“You mean like today?”

You know, I’m not playing a game with them. I just want to sense where they are. Is this genuine, or are you just trying to end the conversation? But if you fall back and you slow it down, you might find the truth.

I was going to try this out with Don, but I’m not sure I want to risk it because I’ll screw it up, not Don. But there’s a rule of three when you ask questions. The first question is kind of general. You know, like “Where are you from?” Or maybe I will try it out with you, Don. Where are you from?

Don: Pittsburgh. Coraopolis.

Sig: Pittsburgh. And you’ve lived there all your life?

Don: Yes.

Sig: But where were you born?

Don: North Side.

Sig: North Side?

Don: Yes.

Sig: So we went from Pittsburgh/Coraopolis to the North Side. How long did you live on the North Side?

Don: Oh, I don’t remember actually, but probably around two years.

Sig: And then you moved?

Don: To Crafton.

Sig: Okay.

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Don: And then to Ross Township, and then to Moon Township.

Sig: So it took a little while to go from North Side to Coraopolis, where you live now.

Don: Yes.

Sig: Yeah. Now see, that’s a simple example. That’s about three or four questions. But I said, “Don, where do you live?”

“Coraopolis.”

Whatever the circumstances are, I can say, “Oh, this guy’s in my neighborhood, in my territory.” But what I really found out is that he’s got a background on the North Side. And then where was it after the North Side?

Don: Well actually, they tell me that we went to Jacksonville when my father was stationed in the Navy. We went back to the North Side. Then we moved to Crafton.

Sig: See all this good information? We’re just asking simple questions. But you don’t know what you’re going to uncover. And here I think he lives in Coraopolis. I remember, now that you say that, Don, that in fact your dad worked with Ron Fontennasi.

Don: Exactly.

Sig: Why, you’re all over the place, Ron!

Ron: I started there. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Something like that. *(Laughter.)* But all I’m trying to say is that when we got a little bit below the surface and started to ask the second question, or the third question, all of a sudden, if they’re willing to talk, you get more information. And even if they’re not willing to talk, you can ask a question that lets them off the hook too. Like, “Oh, don’t worry about that.” You know, you want to slow it down. You want to be kind, gentle, like Paul was instructing us—seasoned with salt.

Participant: Sig?

Sig: Yes, Ted?

Ted: Would you lead into that conversation with God and faith? How would you lead then into God and faith. Or are you saying that’s not important right away?

Sig: No, no. My point in that was just how asking questions gets you more information. I mean it could be, if we did the role play about your faith. I don’t know, Did you want to try that out, Don?

Don: Sure.

Sig: But you’ve got to pretend that you don’t know Christ. See, that’s going to be hard.

Don: Yes, it is.

Sig: So Don won’t go there with me.

Don: Go ahead.

Ted: Why don’t you ask Bill McCoy? *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Why don’t I ask Bill McCoy? Oh, no, no, no!

Bill: He’s gonna die laughing.

Sig: He’s gonna die laughing. He’s going to remember that for a month. *(Laughter.)* But my point in giving you an example of asking questions was that on the surface people will tell you anything. And it’s probably vague and general and broad. But you want to find out more. So the second question needs to go a little deeper, but not annoying. And maybe the third. “Oh, I see. Well I used to live on the North Side.” In this case we’re just finding out where you live. It could be who you believe in or what you believe in and

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why you believe that. I don’t know if that answers your question. Maybe we’ll have time for more examples.

Don: I believe in factory whistles. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Okay. Good. *(Laughter.)* You should, Don. From where you grew up I can understand that.

Don: Oh, absolutely! That was like a TV show to me.

Sig: Yeah, exactly.

Don: Yeah, it was.

Sig: I’m running out of time. So let me get through a few more of these points here. I had to cut him off somehow, huh, Jay? *(Laughter.)*

Anyway, the example I wanted to give you, one of the examples that Greg Koukl uses, and also, curiously enough, that John Rosso from Peek Performance uses as an example for you to get how this concept works, is that you act like Colombo. You remember Colombo from the TV series, the detective with the disheveled look and the raincoat that probably never got washed? He’d always smoke cigars and he’d even have a tablet with no pencil. And he’s always struggling.

That’s another thing. You want to struggle. You don’t want to be slick. You don’t want to be smooth. You want to be a friend. You want to be real, right? So Colombo would always struggle when he asked what he thought was the perp as they say, or the murderer. He’d ask them questions. And he’d come back. “Well, just one more question.” And he’d keep coming back, and he’d keep coming back.

And the negative side of that is that sometimes he would be annoying, and he’d get kicked out. But he always found the bad guy, didn’t he? The questions always uncovered what the truth was.

So some of the questions I wanted to give you as examples in your handout that are under point c.—advancing the conversation—are these. Obviously, the first thing that you want to do is that you don’t want to ask a question that could be answered by “yes” or “no.” You want people to be able to think about it. You want them to say things like a leading question to gather more information, such as “tell me more.”

Participant: No. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Why would you say that? But see, I can play with you. Do you want to role play?

Participant: That’s good.

Sig: Well why would you say that, Ted?

Ted: I don’t know. I’m just finding this a little irritating.

Sig: But what’s irritating? Me or the question?

Ted: I don’t know. It’s irritating and awkward to be asked all these questions.

Sig: Well, would you prefer to ask me a question?

Ted: Yes. What the heck are you doing here? *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Well, I thought you invited me over.

Ted: I don’t do that. *(Laughter.)*

Sig: Annoying little rascal, isn’t he? *(Laughter.)* It’s those Anglicans! *(Laughter.)*

Participant: You said it, I didn’t.

Sig: Yeah, right, right, I know. I’ll pay for that. *(Laughter.)*

Participant: What’s so funny about that?

Sig: Yeah, what’s so funny about that? Right. *(Laughter.)* But see, the thing that you have to be careful of is that Ted and I work together. And I know that he’s smooth on his

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feet. And people can be annoyed with questions. That’s why you do want to fall back, and that’s what I was trying to do. He doesn’t like my questions. Okay, I’m not going to keep asking him questions, although I did ask him questions, right? He didn’t see it as a question because I was going backwards, saying, “Well, do you want to ask me a question?”

And I’m just trying to gather information. That’s what a gardener does, right? We want to gather information. We want to know where people stand.

And the questions I gave you, like “Tell me more,” or as you’re in the middle of talking, you can say, “And?” just to keep the conversation going. And as they say things, you could say something like “Well that’s interesting. How did you come to that point?” Or a real crucial question is when they tell you or give you their belief. “You know, I happen to be a Buddhist.”

My sister and I talk about this a lot. She’s about fifty-six years old and she believes in the universe. And every time we talk about that, by three questions she can’t defend her position. I would say, “Charlotte, what does that mean?” And she’ll go on to some vagary.

And I said, “How did you come to that conclusion?” She has no basis. She has no evidence. She has nothing to point to to say, “I know it’s true.” “Well, it’s like, well that’s my experience.” That’s what she’ll say. Or “that’s what I believe.”

“But how did you know that? How did you reach that conclusion?” My point is not to embarrass her. Usually this is just one on one. You also want to be very comfortable if you’re talking in a group. The idea is not to embarrass anybody, and not to get into a fight. If you get into a fight or an argument, we lose. The whole idea is not to wrestle with somebody, not to challenge them and tell them why they’re wrong. “Well this is the Resurrection. This is why it really happened. And if you don’t believe it, you’re damned to hell!” Our point is not to wrestle them to the ground and win. There’s no winning in that. We’re planting seeds. Some seeds take a long time to grow. So be patient.

And the other thing that I also want you to be aware of that I put in the handout is that you don’t want to answer their questions. They could say, as I mentioned earlier, “Well God is dead.”

“Oh no! Let me tell you why He’s not dead. I even watched the movie ‘God Is Not Dead.’ I can tell you why. I’ve gone to The Truth Project. I can tell you why He’s not dead.” No, we don’t want to do that. We want to ask them. We want to take the burden off of us and let them defend their position. There will be a time for us to share our faith in depth. But you have to be patient for that. Who needs for us to bulldoze them over and convince them of how powerful and bright we are? They won’t come back. They certainly won’t see you as a friend.

In fact, there’s a wonderful story. Don, you’ll have to help me with this woman’s last name. Joanie Butterfield?

Don: Rosario Butterfield.

Sig: Rosario Butterfield. She was a gay woman, steeped in her lesbian lifestyle. She was an English professor at the university level. And she met someone who I want to say was a Reformed Presbyterian minister.

Participant: Yes.

Sig: And he treated her as a person and became her friend.

Participant: Not a project.

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Sig: Not a project. Exactly, Ted, exactly! And she saw the difference. They invited her over to their house. They had meals with her. This took time. And she spoke here at Christ Church at a seminar back in April. It’s a wonderful story. And it’s about her becoming real with a faithful husband and wife who believe in Christ, and know that we have a God of eternity, not a God of a sales quota and an agenda that has to be reached by Tuesday. Yes, Don?

Don: She ended up marrying another Reformed Presbyterian minister.

Sig: She didn’t become an Anglican?

Don: No. Sorry about that.

Participant: Interesting.

Sig: I didn’t know that part. Thank you. Yes, Jim?

Jim: Sig, you know, I think part of what goes on is that so much of what has been taught and talked about in terms of evangelism basically has to do with what can make me happy, as opposed to God is sovereign and you can trust Him to work in any situation.

Sig: Amen.

Jim: Versus trying to manipulate people because you think you need to force them or coerce them.

Sig: Jim, you are a gift from God, because my last point was thoughts about evangelism in today’s culture.

And again, to my brother Jay. He doesn’t have a library here on the table. But this man is a wealth of information. He reads consistently and has introduced me to many books.

But to your point, Jim, J.I. Packer has written a book called *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. Did you know when that book was written?

Jay Batch: ’61.

Sig: Is that unbelievable? It’s unbelievable! He wrote this book in 1961! Jay introduced me to this book. But it’s to your point, Jim. I want to quote.

“Evangelism is a task appointed to all God’s people everywhere. It is the task of communicating a message from the Creator to rebel mankind. The message begins with information and ends with an invitation. The information concerns God’s work of making His Son a perfect Savior for sinners. The invitation is God’s summons to mankind generally to come to the Savior and find life. God commands all men everywhere to repent, and promises forgiveness and restoration to all who do. The Christian is sent into the world as God’s herald and Christ’s ambassador to broadcast this message as widely as he can. This is both his duty because God commands it and love to our neighbor requires it, and his privilege, because it is a great thing to speak for God and to take to our neighbor the remedy, the only remedy that can save him from terrors of spiritual death. Our job then is to go to our fellow men and tell them the gospel of Christ, and try to be the means to make it clear to them, to remove as best we can any difficulties they may find in it.” That’s what I mean by asking questions. “To impress them with its seriousness, and to urge them to respond to it. This is our abiding responsibility. It is the basic part of our Christian calling.” Amen and Amen.

The clock on the wall tells me it’s time to wrap up, so I’d like to—Yes, Jim?

Jim: With the fact that we’re older, many of our relationships are already formed, you know. We’ve got services for Christians who have been Christians for a long time. But it

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seems to me that we’ve got to keep our antennae open to those opportunities where we do interact with people—maybe briefly, maybe in circumstances we wouldn’t normally be thinking of, but looking at almost any interaction as a potential opportunity for evangelism.

Sig: Amen.

Jim: Build a relationship maybe you can say something.

Sig: Very good. I’d ask you more questions, but I’m supposed to pray right now. *(Laughter.)* Thank you, Jim. Thank you very much. He’s an evangelist, too. My friend Jim has taught me a lot about evangelism and sharing my faith in a natural way, in a wonderful way.

Let’s pray. Heavenly Father, gracious God, Redeemer of our souls, send us now into the world in peace, so that we may love and serve You with gladness and singleness of heart. Thank You for giving us Your Son, our Savior Jesus Christ, so that we can bring Your salvation to those You bring across our path with Your grace and kindness. And thank You for bringing us to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to Your city, with thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to Your church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. Thank You for bringing us to You, the Judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God forever and ever. And all the Brave Men said, “Amen!” *(Applause.)*