

Let Your Life Speak #1

Overview:

Sharing our faith is a core component of the Christian life and one aspect of God's redemption of all of creation. Yet, the idea of sharing Christ at work may give even the most faithful professional pause. This 2-part series explores principles of relational evangelism and provides practical skills to encourage spiritually-rich conversations with colleagues.

Discussion:

Is anyone in the group a gardener? Ask them to describe the process that goes into producing a crop of vegetables or flowers. How do steps like preparing the soil or weeding affect the plants' growth?

Read Luke 8:4-15

In this parable, Jesus describes four types of soil, which represent factors that can hinder our spiritual growth—both on our journey toward Christ and on the road to spiritual maturity.

Discussion Question: Describe the four types of soils identified in this passage. How do they represent various states of a person's spiritual life?

Think in terms of the people you rub shoulders with at work (colleagues or clients.) How do you see these "soil types" reflected in their lives? How do these conditions affect their ability to: understand the gospel, respond to Christ, or grow in their faith?

As today's article discussed, everyone we meet is on a spiritual journey. Understanding the types of soil (or spiritual conditions) in people's lives helps you know how to connect with them—at whatever point they are on their journey—and respectfully dialogue about spiritual things.

2 key factors affect the soils' ability to support plant life—the quality of the soil and threats to the plant's growth.

Quality of the Soil

- Arid – too dry for a plant to germinate
- Infertile – lacks sufficient nutrients for a seedling to grow

How's the soil? For a plant to thrive, it needs rich, fertile soil. In the same way, each person has spiritual "soil"—their worldview, perception of truth, or openness to spiritual things. Taking time to examine the soil helps you know where a person is on their spiritual journey and how to meet them *where they are at* with the gospel.

For example: A person may be utterly content with life the way it is. They have typical day-to-day frustrations, but overall they see no need to change. They may seem uninterested in spiritual things, because they see no need for a higher power in their life. The most effective way to encourage this person's spiritual growth is to pray for them—that God would create a sense of need or a spiritual hunger in their life.

On the other hand, someone may be spiritually curious, but have no pre-existing knowledge of Christianity. Taking time to gauge their current level of understanding reveals ways you can come alongside that person to enrich the soil or plant spiritual seeds in their life. For example, a person may have heard of Christ but know virtually nothing about him. You could come alongside them to provide resources and encourage this curiosity.

Discussion question: What beliefs, passions, or indicators would you look for to gauge the spiritual soil of a person's life? Questions to consider:

- *How open is this person to spiritual things?*
- *What are their current spiritual beliefs?*
- *What do they consider to be reliable sources of truth?*
- *What does this person love most in life? What's their top value or goal?*
- *Has this person been exposed to Christian concepts before?*

Threats to a plant's growth:

- Weeds – Choke out new growth, plant never matures
- Exposure – Birds take away seeds before they can sprout
- Rocks – Leave only shallow soil, stunting a plant's root system

Everyone has obstacles that hinder our understanding of God or issues that hold us back on our spiritual journey. Recognizing those obstacles in others' lives helps you know how to best connect with someone to talk about Christ. Remember, your role is not to aggressively root out rocks and weeds, but to spot those obstacles and graciously partner with God to clear away false perceptions, challenge assumptions, or respond to a person's objections.

Jesus models ways to address the spiritual obstacles in people's lives throughout the gospels:

Read: John 4:1-26 (Samaritan Woman) and **Mark 10:17-23** (Rich young man)

Discussion Question: What obstacles stood in the way of each person's journey to God? How did Jesus respond to these obstacles?

What are the most common obstacles you observe in others' lives? What obstacles are prevalent in your company, industry, or community?

Common obstacles:

- *A person doesn't regard the Bible as a source of truth*
- *A person rejects the exclusivity of Christ's claims – many roads lead to God*
- *Social issues – A person may resist Christ because they disagree with what they believe to be the Church's teachings on sexuality, gender roles.*
- *Past experiences – someone may have been hurt by previous interactions with Christians)*

Application: Spend time praying for people in your workplace. Ask the Lord to heighten their spiritual need. Pray for courage and discernment as you invest in these relationships.

Additional Resources:

Speaking of Jesus: The Art of Not-Evangelism by Carl Medearis

“Jesus Stories” video by Carl Medearis <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=chcaJDqPbw4>