



TC's Thoughts for Discussion

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You've probably heard that timing is everything. That isn't just an empty cliché; it's true and it's practical. It's not only true and practical; it's also scriptural:

> "To every [thing there is] a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up [that which is] planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; a time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace." —Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

Verse 7b, there, is pertinent to this learning opportunity: "...a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." **Knowing the right time to speak** is clearly a good thing, but **knowing what to say** when that perfect timing has arrived may be at least equal to that in importance.

A bit longer than two years ago, an older teenaged reader emailed these questions to me:

"If someone asked you why you're a Christian, what would you say and why would that person need to be one, too? A few times I've had people ask me why I believe what I do. But I never could answer it because it's just what I've grown up on. It's a hard question. I could say some great things about being a Christian. I'm forgiven, I'm loved, I learn such great knowledge from what he put for me, I have an eternal home and a living God I praise. But why? Some people that aren't Christians wonder how we get here and what's the point of staying in that type of belief. But how exactly would you explain that to someone who doesn't even know where to begin? Or why on earth we even believe what we do? It sounds crazy, but its like a[n] [East] Indian who'd grown up on something different. Maybe we're curious on why they believe what they believe and where's [the] proof. I can't prepare myself for people like that with questions, so when they ask, how am I supposed to get them anywhere?"

This is how I responded:

"No matter what the religion, almost NO ONE would be able to come up with an effective answer for those who ask. It's a universal dilemma...not unique to Christian believers. Here's a remarkable observation: 'In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination.' —Mark Twain

"Here's a pertinent scripture that I've never heard from any pulpit: '...[be] ready always to [give] an answer to every man that ASKETH you a reason of the hope that is in you...' --1 Peter 3:15 (Emphasis via capitalization is mine.)

"I think the reason why most preachers skip over that scripture is because they prefer to teach their followers to share the gospel message even when people DON'T ask. They call it 'witnessing,' but that's a classic oxymoron! (In court, do people go to the witness stand to "witness" or to answer questions about what they have previously witnessed?) First of all, sharing the gospel message with others who *haven't* asked is 'pushy.' 'Pushy' is what high-pressure salespeople are. Second, it's horribly inefficient—a waste of time for BOTH parties. That's because, until a person ASKS, they don't have what Jesus called 'ears to hear:' Jesus NEVER shared any of the really important stuff with anyone until after they had clearly demonstrated 'ears to hear.'

"The fact that you're aware and concerned that people who ask deserve credible answers is evidence that you've ALREADY distinguished yourself from at least 95% of the world's religious adult population. I think you can build your own standard response by following the apparent pattern of Jesus' first disciples and apostles:

- 1 They cited the Hebrew [i.e.: Old Testament] scriptures that foretold the coming of the Messiah.
- 2 They shared critical stories about the birth, life and ministry of Jesus.
- 3 They talked about his capture, mock trials, scourging, crucifixion and resurrection.
- 4 They spoke of 'The Great Commission.'
- 5 **IF** they thought the other person/people STILL had "ears to hear," they shared the plan of salvation. For us, that might include John 3:16,17.

I was a successful Bible teacher for a LOT of years—big sanctuary classes.

I knew what my denomination believed and that's what I taught.

Yes, I should've checked it out to make sure it was true.

So why didn't I do that? Well, maybe I didn't do that for the same reason that you haven't really checked out what your denomination teaches. "In religion and politics, people's beliefs and convictions are in almost every case gotten at second hand, and without examination." —Mark Twain



"All this will require some short-term and long-term study and practice on your part, but I'm confident that you can master this skill. And, yes, it is a SKILL...to be improved with much practice, as in sports. So, I encourage to find at least one other person who also perceives the value of learning and polishing that critical Discipleship skill and start practicing, pronto!"

I received the following response:

"Thank you for all that information! I'll be going over it and going to the Bible. I figured that I should wait 'til a person asks me, because I wouldn't like to be told or pushed into something like that without wanting to know in the first place; that is, if I were someone else. When someone asked me recently, I just all of a sudden had that question. And I've never heard that scripture, either, come to think of it. I'll definitely have to do some studying on this subject too! Thanks so much!"

Might you have responded differently? If so, how?

It's true! Jesus never shared any of the important stuff with anyone until after they had demonstrated "ears to hear." Why? Because he had just three years to accomplish his mission. If he had shared the important stuff with everyone – most of whom *wouldn't* have had "ears to hear" – it might've taken him 3,000 years to complete his assignment! Clearly, the efficiency of his sharing was as important as his message! So, how did he know when a person had acquired "ears to hear?" This is how:

Meteorologists forecast stormy weather when barometric pressures fall. The lower the barometric pressure, the more intense the storm. That's because **nature abhors a vacuum**. Adjacent areas of higher air pressure rush frantically into the low-pressure area, in an effort to equalize the pressure. That causes wind and other familiar weather phenomena.

When a person gets really, really curious about something he/she starts asking questions...questions that appear to arise from a *burning* way down deep inside. That's because **human nature abhors a vacuum**. When those kinds of questions emerged from a person, Jesus knew he wouldn't be wasting his valuable time in sharing critical information with them—because the *timing* was right; i.e.: that person's *listening efficiency* was at its very highest point.

There were some notable occasions when Jesus used a brilliant technique for purposely YIELDING a piqued listening efficiency in people who didn't already have "ears to hear." His intentional encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well is an excellent example of why and how he did that.

That **High-Vacuum Ministry Technique**^(SM) can be taught, coached, practiced and mastered. Shouldn't that sort of discipleship skill-building replace the currently observable emphasis on *worshiptainment* in the visible church? Shouldn't "To be like Jesus," be much more than the poignant words of a song? Shouldn't believers be learning the methods and techniques Jesus used and mastering the skills he demonstrated for building the Kingdom? Isn't our time also short?

- > "Let your speech [be] always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to ANSWER every man."
—Paul, at Colossians 4:3-6

Here's a pertinent and brilliant quote from Chaplain Dave Sparks, Riverside, CA (Truckstop Ministries, Inc.), posted to Facebook on October 18, 2013:

- > "The problem with evangelism vs. discipleship is that evangelism is only a subset of full discipleship. Evangelism, by itself, leaves the church with a lot of infant, milk-drinking Christians. And then, to compound things, these same immature believers are 'trained' in evangelism. It's like multi-level 'pyramid' marketing where you become a distributor to sign up more distributors. The 'product' (if any) is secondary. Not all believers are called to be evangelists, but we're all called to be disciple-makers which is much broader than just evangelism. The 'product,' if any, is seldom more than 'fire insurance'—keeping people out of hell. As important as that is, it's far from being God's total will for us! And taking immature believers with a VARIETY of gifts and trying to provide rudimentary training in becoming 'junior evangelists' falls so far short of God's intentions for us."

You? Do you have "ears to hear?" Then submit your questions, comments and scriptural rebuttals. Those are always welcome.

—T. C. Newsome 

PS: Post a comment or question or just read what others are saying: www.DYPK.org/apps/blog.

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