

# God's Word in Evangelism

*Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. ... we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God ... by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*

## 2 Corinthians 4:1-3 (NIV)

**Aim:** to give Christians confidence in the power of the Word to bring people to new life in Christ and practical instruction on how to use the Word in evangelism.

## Summary of talk by Niv Lobo

*Below is a summary of what the talk covers. Please see the corresponding leader's guide for guidance on structuring a complete training session.*

In evangelism, we often seek the perfect tool or technique to guarantee results, but God has already given us what we need: his Word. The Bible shows that God creates and saves through speaking. His words have power, bringing people to life in Christ (1 Peter 1:23, Romans 1:16). Even Jesus relied on God's Word, knowing it draws both rejection and saving faith (John 6:63, 6:68).

This truth transforms how we share the gospel. It takes the pressure off us — our effectiveness isn't about eloquence but about letting Jesus speak for himself.

The Samaritan woman's testimony led many to believe, but Jesus' words secured their faith (John 4:39-41). Our task is to set forth the truth plainly, without shame or deception (2 Corinthians 4:2), knowing God will shine the light of the gospel in darkened hearts by his Word (4:6).

In sharing Jesus, nothing could be more important than getting the person we're sharing him with to hear his words. Three ways we can do this:

- **Plant small seeds** in conversation — introducing biblical truths naturally.
- **Share how Scripture has shaped our lives** showing its relevance.
- **Invite people to read a Gospel**, allowing them to encounter Jesus directly.

Since God's Word never returns empty (Isaiah 55:11), we trust him to do the work. Our role is simple — get people to hear Jesus' words and let God's power change hearts.

# God's Word in Evangelism

## Transcript of talk by Niv Lobo

*You are free to use and adapt the content of this talk to suit your context.*

Hello, I'm Niv Lobo, and this video is about God's Word in evangelism.

What one thing do you think will help you most in your personal witness of Christ? What is your go-to resource when sharing the Gospel?

When watching videos on the internet, there's one thing I'm dying to see: the SKIP button, so I can get past the adverts. Premium users might be able to avoid ads completely, but the rest of us have to endure the 4 or 5 seconds before the SKIP button appears. And whoever is on the screen, they know they've only got that long to try to reel me in. And so they give it everything they've got.

I'm sure you know what I am talking about... 'STOP what you're doing' or 'THIS ONE trick will make you thousands of pounds a year', or 'DOCTORS DON'T WANT YOU TO KNOW about...' It's human nature to be curious when people put it like that. They're promising you a silver bullet—the thing that will always work, the secret nobody else knows about, the technique that will guarantee results.

And when it comes to sharing Jesus, we're desperate for something like that, too - tools, resources, tips, techniques. When someone promises something that will help, they've got our attention. And, if you're like me, we won't even hit SKIP, because we're desperate for anything that can get those kind of results. But we shouldn't be. God has already given us all we need, because God has given us his Word. How does God create? By speaking. How does God save? By speaking through his Word, Jesus Christ, and the gospel message about Him. It's a theme that runs through the whole Bible, particularly in the New Testament. And it is the main point we are going to consider in this video: **God works powerfully through God's Word**

For example, here's what the Apostle Peter says in his first letter. 1 Peter 1:23: *For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.*

When we share the gospel, all of us will feel inexperienced and ineffective. But God has given us his Word, and his Word brings about new spiritual life!

And when he puts it on our lips, we have the privilege of speaking the message that is, as Romans 1:16 puts it: *The power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.*

That's what Christians have always experienced. In fact, that's what JESUS experienced. There's a remarkable moment in John's Gospel. Those who have been following Him find His teaching hard. And Jesus doesn't water down what He says or compromise it. He doubles down. John 6:63: *The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you – they are full of the Spirit and life.*

That's astonishing: the life-giving Spirit of God is accessible to anyone who listens to Jesus' WORDS. That's why, even though some walked away from Jesus at this point, it's also the moment

# God's Word in Evangelism

where Peter gets it. He says, in John 6:68: *Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.*

Jesus' words do his work: his work in drawing out hard-hearted rejection, but also drawing out saving faith and eternal life in those who believe. Maybe my favourite example of this is when that Samaritan woman Jesus meets at the well, in John 4. She encounters Jesus, discovers that He is the Messiah, and races back to her village.

John 4:39-41: *Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I've ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers.*

Be honest. What do you think God's Word can do in a person's life? What are your expectations when it comes to the words of Jesus?

John is writing so that we realise where the power is. Not in us, what we can do or say. But in what God has to say, through the Spirit-filled words of Jesus.

That's how it's always been—even when people were face to face with the incarnate Jesus, it's 'because of his words' that 'many...became believers'. I love the DIFFERENCE this makes to the way we witness to Jesus. It takes the pressure off us. I love how this Samaritan woman shares Jesus. Her weakness becomes her witness, as she talks about 'everything I've ever done.' Which, in her village, refers to that past she wanted to hide from Jesus, which no doubt invited all kinds of gossip and rumours. And - even better - Jesus speaks for Himself. That's what we're after.

Not even the most gifted speaker, with the best presentation skills and every other advantage you could name, would ever be as compelling as Jesus is on His own terms. He speaks for himself! That's the thing I found so fascinating and arresting when, as an atheist teenager, I read the Gospel of John for myself. I couldn't be an atheist for much longer after that. Jesus didn't leave me that option! It takes the pressure off us: we can rely on Jesus speaking for Himself. And it makes things simple for us. As Paul puts it in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2: *Therefore, since through God's mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart. Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God.*

No need to lose heart, because we have God's word to proclaim, through which he does his work. No need for secret or shameful ways, or deception. No need to distort his Word. That clears things up wonderfully. Again, this isn't a silver bullet or tool we control. Paul talks about rejection: the gospel, veiled to those who are perishing. But the gospel he proclaims is the message through which God '*shines in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of God's glory in the face of Christ.*' That's from 2 Corinthians 4:6.

This is not a process we are supposed to master. We do not always know what God intends for this or that moment in which we share His word. It's why Jesus uses that seed language: once sown, his Word goes beneath the surface of what we can see, into people's hearts, so that God is responsible for growth and life.

# God's Word in Evangelism

Or, to use another kind of Bible language, the Word of God is like rain. In Isaiah 55:10-11, God declares: *As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.*

It will accomplish what HE purposes for it. Not what we purpose for it. But with that reality in mind, this should change everything for us. In sharing Jesus, nothing could be more important for me than getting the person I'm sharing him with to hear his words!

So, here are three ways we can do just that:

Number one, **sow little seeds in your conversations** I remember talking to a friend once about money troubles. Both of us were having them. I said to him, 'That's the problem with money. It's a brilliant servant, but a terrible master.' He said, 'That's such a good way of putting it!' I said, 'Well, I can't take credit for that! It's what Jesus says about money. He was always pointing out the way we want it to serve us, but end up serving it instead. Why do you think that is?' And we went on to have a good conversation.

Are there little seeds you can sow? That is, are there truths from God's Word that you can drop into your everyday conversations? When people are far back from understanding the gospel, this often feels like a good first step. I've lost count of the number of times I've said, "Someone once said, 'The truth will set you free'. Do you agree with that?" And then begun unpacking how Jesus was the one who said it, and what He meant by it. Sometimes, Jesus asks extraordinarily searching questions. Again, being able to ask them, or paraphrase them and put them as a question, is another way to sow a little seed. "But really—is it worth it if you gain everything you wanted, even the whole world—but forfeit your soul?"

Number two, **share how God's word has affected your own life** This is one of the best things for an unbeliever to see: not just that you are a Christian, but what it looks like for Jesus to get to work in your life through His word. The more comfortable we become with talking naturally about what God is saying to us in the Bible, the more of a window we offer into the Christian life for someone looking in. I think of the lovely moment in that book, *Life of Pi*. Pi, the young seeker, meets a priest. He hears the gospel. Then he says, "I asked for another story, one that I might find more satisfying. Surely this religion had more than one story in its bag—religions abound with stories. But Father Martin made me understand that the stories that came before it—and there were many—were simply prologue to the Christians. Their religion had one Story, and to it they came back again and again, over and over. It was story enough for them."

I wonder if we can show people that. That the Jesus story is story enough for us, and story enough for them. Because it is the true story of everything. Well, one way we can do that is to share how this story has been enough for us in the different circumstances of life.

John 11 is very precious to me. When suffering went from being a theoretical puzzle to a painful experience, Jesus met me in my needs as I read the things he says and does in that chapter. I read John 11 at the funeral of a close friend of mine, who died in our final year of university. It's still astonishing to me to realise that in Jesus, God had been EXACTLY where I was then, weeping at the

# God's Word in Evangelism

tomb of a friend. When people ask how God speaks into our suffering, it's become natural to say, 'That's a big question, and there's lots I could say. But can I share with you something Jesus does in the Bible that has helped me face suffering?' Or, sometimes, when people have been curious about God, I've said, 'Listen, instead of me just going on. Could we read a story Jesus tells? It's one of the most famous stories anyone's ever told—and it just gets to the heart of things better than I ever could.' And then open up Luke 15, and read the parable of the lost sons with them.

This gospel is the story that is enough for us. Because God's grace in Jesus is more than enough for us.

Number three, **invite a friend to read a Gospel with you** I think this is one of the most enjoyable, exciting and effective ways of giving people a glimpse of Jesus. Because as we read a gospel with someone, we can let Jesus speak for Himself. We can let the Holy Spirit do the heavy lifting, as we look at the words he has inspired and preserved in scripture. We can move from the confrontational setting, you vs me, and cut to the chase. There's no earlier historical evidence for Jesus, and no better source of information about him, than the New Testament.

I particularly love reading John's Gospel with people, giving them the opportunity to come to Jesus and see for themselves. Being in listener mode, rather than lecturing them. Getting out of the way, as it were, so they can see Jesus for themselves. But still reading it with them, so that they can see ME sitting under God's word, so they can see my limits: all the things I don't fully understand, all the righteousness I'm still growing towards.

And it doesn't just have to be a 1-1 thing. I love inviting people to events where they can hear God's word—church, or a course like Christianity Explored. Not only can people see God's work in MY life—they can start seeing how Jesus forms a COMMUNITY, and be drawn into it. So why don't try doing that? You never know, you might even find yourself having something like the Samaritan woman's experience, which you can read about in John chapter 4. This is what her village, having responded to Jesus, said to her. It's in v42: *We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Saviour of the world.* Wouldn't it be wonderful if, in glory, we had friends who could say that to us?

We don't need to look for the latest evangelism tool, resource, tip or technique. These things can be useful, and they may well have their place in our evangelism strategy, but ultimately, they all rely on the one thing God himself has given us - his Word.

So, in your everyday conversations, look for opportunities to sow little seeds from God's Word, share how God's Word has affected your life, and maybe even consider inviting a friend to read a gospel with you.

Let's make sure that God's Word is our number one go-to resource in our personal witness of Christ.

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A video of this talk is available to subscribers at [apassionforlife.org.uk/witness](https://apassionforlife.org.uk/witness)

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