

FAQ for Foundations of Relational Evangelism Training (John 4)

To equip trainers to use as needed.

“Why is Evangelism so important to our church?”

Good evangelism is central to our calling: we seek to be a flourishing church that makes disciples of Jesus.. A vital part of making disciples is our longing to see people in our communities fall in love with Jesus and trust him with their entire lives.

“What’s the difference between an awkward evangelistic conversation and an inappropriate conversation?”

Evangelism can often lead you into uncomfortable situations.

Awkwardness is fine when:

- you are being stretched in your skills.
- spiritual conversations are new for you and your friend.
- a friend or stranger shares a surprisingly vulnerable insight about themselves.
- a friend or stranger asks a question that surprises you or you don’t know the answer to.
- your friend or a stranger has pushback to a topic or question, or a sudden flare up of emotion.

We need to make the above feelings of awkwardness normal and part of the growth process.

Awkwardness is not ok when:

- Their pushback turns into a personal attack or you feel threatened.
- You move the conversation toward more vulnerability but they shift to romantic or sexual innuendo.
- You find yourself trying to persuade someone who is clearly not interested in the conversation (If you’re unsure about their level of engagement, try saying, “This is intriguing to me. Do you have a few minutes to talk about this?”)

“Is Evangelism inherently colonizing?”

Colonizing is erasing someone’s background, and replacing it with my culture and my faith traditions. There have been centuries of evangelism that has indeed been colonizing. We must not perpetuate this evil legacy.

What then does Jesus have in mind in Matthew 28 when he commands his followers to go and make disciples of all nations?

In good evangelism, we invite everyone to worship Jesus, but we expect this to look different depending on their context. For example, in the Native American context, they often use a Native drum, because that is attractive among most tribes. (see this [video from Courtland Hopkins](#), Area Director, Four Corners)

“Since we are committed to friendship evangelism, should we ever do contact evangelism?”

It is important to be friendly to both strangers and friends. The process of friendship evangelism might well begin in the stands at a sports game or at a dinner party. The key is that we keep the relationship growing and conversation going. By the way, we prefer the term “conversational evangelism” instead of contact evangelism. Conversations are good with everybody.

“What do you do when you are stumped by a response?”

People WILL ask us things we have not thought about before. Embrace it. Don’t get defensive. Try this type of response.

- “Great question. I have no idea.”
- “God is using you in my life to help me think better about these things.”
- “I will look into this question, and get back to you next week.”
 - Be sure to actually look into the question and get back to them. Ask fellow church leaders to help.

“How do you avoid a debate or argument?”

Sometimes our spiritual conversations with friends devolve into endless questions and debates. Here are three steps to re-frame the conversation in a more helpful direction.

State the common ground: move the conversation away from who has the right answers and instead affirm that finding answers to life’s big questions are important to you both. “I

think we can both agree that this topic is important and relevant to our lives. You are obviously a good thinker.”

Help them feel seen and heard: share what you have learned about your friend during this conversation, and affirm their pursuit of important topics and questions. “Thank you for passionately expressing your thoughts. I have learned this is more than just a theoretical topic for you, you have done some deep thinking and work in this area.”

Invite them to have a different conversation: “Jesus has been really helpful to me on this subject. I would like your help going deeper on this. Would you like to discuss this story from Jesus, and see what might be relevant to people today?” (If they aren’t interested, tell them you can respect that.)

“What should I do when someone asks me an apparently evasive or insincere question?”

Sometimes non-Christians use questions to take control of the conversation. They may ask an evasive question, “Do all dogs go to heaven?” The problem with this question is that they don’t care about the answer. Some may ask insincere questions, “Can God make a rock so big that God cannot lift it?” These questions can easily make us lose sight of the conversation we would like to have. We might be tempted to follow their lead down a dead end.

Take a moment to regroup: “That is a really important question to me. I’d love to talk about it. Would you like to have a conversation about that?” In this way, you are treating it as a sincere question, honoring the person, and allowing this question to hopefully lead to a better, more honest conversation. (Don’t be surprised if a more honest question comes out as you regroup.)