



Personal Evangelism Training Resource:
*Introduction and Commitment in
the Conversion Process*

2. Process Conversion: Introduction and Commitment

Personal Evangelism Training Resource

John Teter - Evangelism Team Leader of the Evangelical Covenant Church

Introduction

The meeting of Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) is one of the Apostle John's greatest gifts to Christians. His account of the Lord meeting with THE teacher of Israel teaches us so much about the new birth. This is in the only chapter of scripture, which highlights the term "born again." I personally believe it is also the fulfillment of a seeker's lifelong quest for the life that only Jesus possesses. Might Nicodemus, the esteemed elder, have been present as a young man in Luke 2, when Jesus taught and amazed the teachers in the temple? Eighteen years later, Nicodemus comes at night to hear from Jesus.

In his conversation with Jesus, Nicodemus does not ask why people need the new birth. He asks "how" does this process of conversion happen. I am consistently convicted that evangelism leadership is far more about *how* than *why*. I have attended too many conferences where plenary speakers give an impassioned argument about why evangelism is important to a room full of self-identified evangelists. All Christians, and especially evangelists, know why evangelism is important, but I believe that they must also know *how* people come to faith. With knowledge of the process of conversion, any willing Christian in your church can become a fruitful evangelist. Fruitful evangelism can be trained!

This training article highlights the triangle process of conversion and defines two central ministry skills of leading non-Christians to become disciples of Jesus.

It All Begins with Relationships

The prologue of John teaches us that God sends people to other people to win them to faith. Once the Son of God has been introduced, the Apostle John informs us that God sent John the Baptist to bear witness in Jerusalem that all might believe (John 1:7). It is striking that the focus shifts from Jesus, the eternal second person of the Trinity, to John, a mere man living in the city of Jerusalem. God sends representatives of his son to declare the good news.

With this understanding of relationships, Christians do not have one relationship that is outside the careful eye and the sovereign hand of God. It is through friendships that people come to faith. In my church Fountain of Life Covenant Church, God has used personal friendships to introduce almost every one of our converts to the process of faith. It is within friendships that the dynamic triangle of transformation emerges. As those who are lost become friends with the "72," they will have people praying for them.

They will experience of the Kingdom. They will be taught God's word, and at an appropriate time, they will learn to believe in Jesus.

We have identified three central roles in the conversion process of those we love. We pray. We introduce Jesus. And we call for commitment to a lifetime of discipleship.

Evangelism Ministry Skill Development: Introductions

As you begin with relationship at the top of the funnel, it is important to keep track of all of the people that God is bringing into your life. Writing out the four quadrants of relationships can help manage these growing spiritual friendships. (For more information, please see the "Ask the Lord of the Harvest" prayer brochure. We have found that asking the Lord of the Harvest for direction and breakthrough is imperative at this early stage. (See Article 1: Prayer and the Conversion Process). The primary skill set in the top of the triangle is befriending new people, or with existing friendships, introducing Jesus. As you take your relationships from "secular to sacred," here are seven practical ideas:

Experience	Definition
Prayer	Most non-Christians have a value for prayer. Many are fascinated by prayer and are open to praying with us. I am often surprised at the effect that praying with non-Christians has on their understanding of God. They are shocked they we speak to God as if he were a real person. They are moved by authentic prayer and gain a large amount of respect for the praying Christian. Pray with your friend. It is a great experience in their process of conversion.
Your Story	Your non-Christian friend needs to know how God has made a difference in your life. They need to know what you would be like if the Holy Spirit were not present and active within you. Using the Woman at the Well (John 4) as a model, take time to write a one-page testimony of how you have met Jesus. Once they see the difference he has made, your life might become the first well that they drink from.
The Bible	Your non-Christian friend likely knows very little about the Bible. They probably have pre-conceived notions and prejudices. They need to meet Jesus face to face in the primary texts. Please develop the ministry skill of effectively teaching a few key passages of the Bible to the unchurched. The deposit truth early in the process will bless them as they convert. Where is the best place to become a Christian: in a Bible study!
Questions	Most non-Christians have deep questions about God. As you run the top of the triangle, learn their questions and give them answers that satisfy their mind and their souls.
The Gospel	Most of your non-Christian friends live their lives with a series of small stories. For many, the big story has let them down. They need a larger story that cannot be broken. Develop the ministry of teaching the gospel. Tell the story in such a way that those who listen will understand the gospel and want to convert. Please go to covchurch.org/72 for this training resource.
Money	Before I became a Christian, I worked as a waiter at The Olive Garden. The one shift no one wanted was Sunday afternoon because the waiters knew that those who eat after church often left very small tips. Jesus teaches us in Luke 16 to make friends with unrighteous mammon. He encourages us to use our money to recruit out friends for the Kingdom of God. Show them your love by opening your wallet.
Deeds of Faith	Hypocrisy is one of the largest stumbling blocks your non-Christian friends will need to overcome. The endless stories of church hypocrisy act as a firewall to the Word of God. Take your friend with you as you live out the Word. As they see you fight sin, love mercy, care for the sick, and sacrifice for others, they will move closer to God's Kingdom.

Evangelism Ministry Skill Development: Calling for Commitment

As your friend deepens in relationship with you, and they begin to experience the Kingdom of God, a desire for commitment will grow in them. Sometimes it is hard for us to recognize, and they will likely feel the need for commitment more than you might. As the Word of God begins to grow in their soul, a spiritual gravity will lead them down the twist of transformation towards conversion. At this stage, church is becoming more comfortable. Thirst for the Word is growing. And a genuine love for God is developing. Those living the “72” will sense that it is time to change gears. It is time for commitment. Here are four ministry skills you will need to develop to help your friend as they commit to becoming a lifelong disciple of Jesus.

Element of Commitment	Description
Interpretation	As you friend begins to experience spiritual gravity and deepen in their process of conversion they need an interpretation of what they are experiencing. They need an objective voice to connect the dots for them. They need to be told, “God loves you and is pursuing you.” They need to understand that their experiences and their growing hunger for God is the evidence that God has indeed sent the “hound of heaven” after them. Develop the skill of reflective thinking and put together the pieces for your friend. This is an encouraging and breakthrough conversation in their lives.
Counting the Cost	Unbelievers need to know what God does and does not expect from them. Your friend needs to count the cost. They must know the details of their commitment to God. He does not want them to be partial disciples. Rather, he wants all of them that he might heal all of them. I personally use Mark 2:17 and the doctor analogy for this conversation. I clearly state that Jesus is the doctor and we are the patients. The disciple of Jesus has faith in the doctor by obeying his prescription for faith. No one who disobeys a doctor’s orders can ever claim to have faith in that doctor. We are not committing a new set of abstract philosophies, but we are banking our very souls on the Word of God. It is interesting how many times Jesus tells would be followers to not follow him yet, but to count the cost. Once they have understood His terms of discipleship, they are ready to follow.
Church	The final ministry skill of the “72” evangelist is to make sure that their new friend is connected to the local church. We must be the interpreter who introduces them to the new language and church lingo that they will encounter: Bible, sermons, discipleship, offering, missions, worship, etc. It can all be overwhelming. Help them commit to a foundations class, have many meals with mature Christians, learn to study the Bible with friends in the church, and help them give their testimony before the congregation.

No Longer Because of You

As you have lead your friend through the triangle process of conversion, at least three things will happen. First, you will be filled with joy that God partnered with you to bring home a beloved lost son or daughter. Second, you will have more spiritual authority and a deeper longing to see many more become disciples. Work harder on the skill set and bear more fruit. And lastly, your worship will increase. Like the woman at the well, you will realize that it is no longer because of your testimony that they believe. But it is because they have seen Jesus. They have seen the One who makes God known.

May this fuel your worship and empower your “72” mission all the days of your life.