

Five Step Process for One-to-One Evangelization

This process is intended as a casual “kitchen table” talk between trusted friends. By the same token, it happens best when done with intention, following some simple steps:

1. **Listening** – God is already speaking to each of us through the ups and downs of our lives. Life generates questions and we all need to search for answers, find meaning and respond. For that reason, evangelization is not about advising as much as it is about helping someone who is discerning their own way. A good listener is the best evangelizer. Listening is non-judgmental and patient. While no one knows what the other is really going through, we can all be sympathetic. We sympathize best when we can reflect a full understanding of what the speaker has experienced, how they feel about it, and how it has affected that person - the consequences or implications of their situation.

2. **Sharing Your Story** – At some point a good listener can relate to the situation of another person. We naturally align with the feelings of the other person. This draws us into their situation and reminds us of similar situations from our own lives. Draw an analogy to a similar experience in your own life. Respond by sharing, “A similar situation in which I found myself was when... and I found real consolation in my faith at that time...” Share the story. Include how you felt and how you relied on God or were supported by good people in a time of need. Many people never stop to consider the spiritual impact of their own experiences until they hear another person share it about themselves. You might share:
 - a. about a time of great anxiety and the peace that you obtained in prayer
 - b. hearing a Gospel, a homily or a testimony that spoke to your situation and gave you some hope or direction
 - c. coming across a photo or other memento that caused you to reflect on difficulty in the past and caused you to wonder how you ever got through it and how God was there (e.g. as in the poem *Footprints in the Sand* by Mary Stevenson)
 - d. a moment of awe (e.g. holding an infant or standing on a mountain top) and wondering about the One who created the great mystery of life
 - e. a gesture of appreciation from a teenager who had been difficult to raise, which assured you that your efforts were not in vain or unnoticed by God
 - f. reconciliation with a person whose heart you thought would never be softened toward you and how that gave you a glimpse of how much God forgives you when you have been difficult for another person.

3. **Sharing the Gospel** – The memorable stories of our lives can take us to spiritual depths. They move us to wonder about the goodness of God and evoke questions in us. Connect your story with a Gospel story. What did Jesus say or do in a similar circumstance? What does Jesus offer to those facing similar highs and lows in life. Share what these experiences have taught you about the grace of our God, reveal about life for Christians or assure us about the presence of the Holy Spirit. How did Jesus face the same kind of test? This depth of sharing can sometimes move a person’s heart to want more from life and even want a closer relationship with Jesus.

4. **Invitation** – Invite the person to take one small step in response. Perhaps the person desires to meet others facing the same struggle, or return to the church for the sacraments. They may have a talent and want to contribute in some way (singing with the choir at church). They may want to learn more about their faith and be open to attend a course or read a book on Catholicism or the Bible. If the person is an inactive Catholic you might simply accompany them to attend Mass and introduce them to the priest if they are interested. Many inactive Catholics are unhappy being separated from the church and would welcome an opportunity to reconnect in a non-threatening way.
5. **Integration into Community** - Inactive Catholics often report the importance of being warmly welcomed upon their return. Some drifted away due to life circumstances and need just a few smiles and greetings to feel at home again. Others may have been hurt by someone in the church. Those who feel injured or abandoned may need to express the pain or frustration that caused their absence. Many will not remain if they are unable to form friendships within the first few weeks. It is the responsibility of the entire parish to welcome newcomers and returning Catholics.

This process is adapted from one included in *Reclaim the Fire: A Parish Guide to Evangelization* (ACTA Publ. 2009) by Rev. Martin Pable who adapted it from Susan Blum's booklet *The Ministry of Evangelization* (Liturgical Press, 1988). Used with permission.