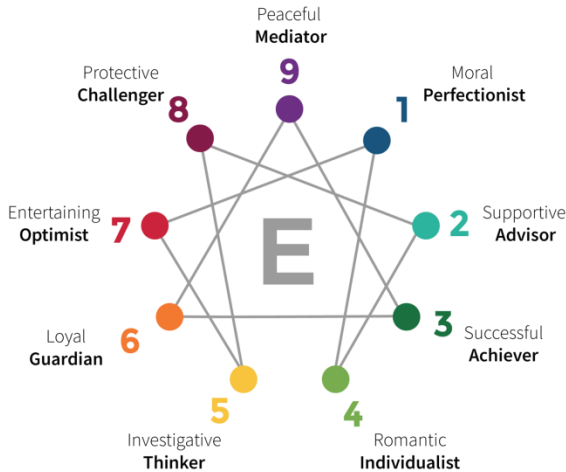


Session 4: Communicating Like Jesus did

Starting with a bit of fun...

People Types

Enneagram: (type on chat what personality type you are)



Myers Briggs

16 PERSONALITY TYPES
by Myers-Briggs, Keirsey classification
by Mark and Anna Vital

supervisor ESTJ enforcing	inspector ISTJ certifying	provider ESFJ supplying	protector ISFJ securing
promoter ESTP persuading	crafter ISTP instrumenting	performer ESFP demonstrating	composer ISFP synthesizing
teacher ENFJ educating	counselor INFJ guiding	champion ENFP motivating	healer INFP conciliating
fieldmarshal ENTJ mobilizing	mastermind INTJ entailing	inventor ENTP devising	architect INTP designing

E / I - extraversion/introversion; S / N - sensing/intuition; F / T - feeling/thinking; P / J - perceiving/judging

What is a Christian personality type, is there one?

Some years ago before I came to ABC I invited another minister to lead our church weekend away and he started by asking us this question – is there a Christian personality type?

To help us he listed out two sets of personality traits – 20 in one list and 20 in the other and asked us which one we thought to be the more Christian.

One list included words like decisive, active, strong, logical and the other list included words like, caring, healing, thoughtful, vulnerable. Of course people said that the second list sounded more Christian. Then the big reveal. John, who led the weekend, revealed the fact

that the two lists were the male and female attributes listed in **Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus**.

Q1: What type of personality are you and how does that affect your witness?

Today we are going to think about how we communicate faith. And especially look at examples from the Gospels as to how Jesus communicated faith.

So what was Jesus' personality type?

- All those times away by himself, conversing with his heavenly Father. Leaving the crowd behind and then falling asleep in the boat – clearly exhausted from all that human interaction. Surely an introvert.
- But what about the parties, the public speaking, the crowds – feeding the 5,000, over-turning the tables, parading into Jerusalem. Surely an extrovert. Perhaps Jesus is rather difficult to put onto a box!

Whatever his Myers Briggs personality type what we can be confident about is that Jesus was deeply personal in his approach and he cared about people.

So I think that when it comes to communicating faith today we need three things:

- **A true message**
- **A true attitude**
- **A true understanding of our audience**

And this week we will major on the last two aspects of sharing faith.

When I came to ABC I was under a *degree* of pressure to come up with ABC's new mission. I received a word from God at that time which was very kind of God in buying me some time in working out what that vision should be. It was Proverbs 20:21

**An inheritance claimed too soon
will not be blessed at the end.**

Now the vision of God based on the Greatest Commandment and Great Commission was not in doubt, but what how we would do that here. How would we fulfil that? I felt God was calling us to missional communities – extended small groups of faith which would look after each other, grow in discipleship and share faith with others.

Now I *wouldn't* 'go to the stake' for Missional Communities (mass sigh of relief) But I would go to the stake for personal witness. (If you cut me in half I hope somewhere in the blood and gore you would be able to read... **witness**.)

That means I *Ashley, Paul, Hardingham* demonstrate and verbalise the faith I have in Jesus Christ to those I meet.

I would like to think I am pretty solid ground with regards to this.

The Gospels record Jesus having 150 personal engagements with people regarding faith. Which means he is **not** sat in-doors contemplating, he's not ensconced in a palace away from people, he doesn't reside in a synagogue or in the Temple distanced from those u like him, and nor is he some divine figure who floats in the sky, 6 feet above contradiction.

And it is this personal witness which I want us to explore.

The book identifies eight different aspects of how Jesus witnessed – I'm going to pare it down to just 3.

And I have chosen these ones because they are the ones I think which are most pertinent to us, they might challenge our current or inherited approach and we don't have time for the others.

1. Jesus related differently to different kinds of people

Some years ago a Christian writer called Pete Ward penned an article called, 'Why doesn't Jesus just preach the Gospel?'

There were a couple of points he was making. 1. If we think, or have been taught, that there is a simple formula of words which form the Gospel and sharing faith is about repeating that formula (something which TBH has been a mainstay of much of my church experience) that cannot be backed up by the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels. 2. And therefore **Jesus related differently to different people.**

In the article he wrote:

'Sometimes it is very difficult to reconcile the different things that Jesus says to people. But what is very clear is that he varied his messages and actions to take account of the different people he met. In fact Jesus seems to be very much aware of what it meant to be poor, or powerful, or religious or a sinner, and he acts and speaks in the light of this knowledge. In short, the 'Gospel' as displayed in the ministry of Jesus is not a static set of ideas, but a relationship.'

One implication of this, of course, is that sharing faith is not something to be done to people, but with them. It's giving the person our full attention.

So let me get you to do some donkey work here; back in your groups.

Q2: Think about Jesus' engagement with people – are there regular consistent messages which he gives? How does he witness to those he meets?

2. Jesus starts from a place of love and his conversations were full of grace

Matthew 9:36

36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.

36 Ἴδων δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἔσπλαγχνίσθη περὶ αὐτῶν ὅτι ἦσαν ἐσκυλμένοι καὶ ἐρριμμένοι ὡσεὶ πρόβατα μὴ ἔχοντα ποιμένα.

The word in blue is the Greek work translated ‘compassion’ and literally means ‘feeling it in one’s guts’.

And of course Jesus’ attitude of love was not just towards the crowd, but towards the individual as well.

Mark 10:21 – rich young ruler

Jesus, looking at him, and loved him...

An update on my Buddy-Walking friend Brian

We met today at 10 – in fact we met last week as well – I didn’t think that the idea that I might be on holiday and therefore have a week off would compute in Brian’s world. In fact we didn’t meet at 10, we met at quarter past. I had texted a reminder first thing as normal, but he hadn’t replied. Oh well, I still rolled up by Broomwood Community Centre on time, but Brian wasn’t there. A whole lot of possibilities crossed my mind, including the fact that he may not wish to meet anymore. I thought to myself, I’ll give it until five past. But as I waited anticipating all the other things that I might get done on my to do list for the day, by gaining an extra hour, it dawned on me that waiting to five past simply wasn’t good enough. So I gave him a call. The phone rang and rang and then he picked up. He’d overslept, apologies, and he had just made himself a cuppa that he wasn’t going to leave, ‘I’ll see you in 10 minutes.’

Sometimes we just love someone; sometimes we have to learn to love someone – which means going through the motions until the emotions eventually follow.

I thought it was going to be an hour, it ended up being an hour and twenty minutes and it was one of the walks where he just rants and doesn’t let me get an word in edgeways – he’s definitely kissed the blarney stone.

And at times during his raging on life I wondered what possible benefit I was to him at which point, and this may have been God, the thought struck me that perhaps the point today was that this was for my benefit and it was teaching me patience.

And for love to be the grounds of our witness, this will require vulnerability and listening. With my walking buddy we meet on his turf – to use a term from my Essex roots we meet on ‘his manor’ not ‘my manor’ and I really don’t want to listen to an extended diatribe

about how racist Asians are towards whites – but that was where some of the conversation was up to today. Really promising stuff eh?

In the book, Hannah Steele says that she often prays silently when in conversation with someone, *‘Lord show this person that you love them and that you are their good shepherd.’*

To the woman with the flow of water Jesus called her ‘daughter’.

To the man born blind in John 9, Jesus makes it crystal clear that his illness is not his fault.

Hannah Steele recounts the story of hearing a famous evangelist speak about how to disciple new believers, one to one. He was asked what was key to making new believers strong in their faith and Hannah thought that the answer was pretty obvious – Bible reading and prayer. But the evangelist said ‘Grace, grace and then more grace.’

Q3. Do we agree that love is the foundation for engagement? Are there other attitudes which we should/shouldn't have?

3. Jesus listened and allowed himself to be interrupted

I used to think that the purpose of listening, when sharing faith, was to give you time to think of the next point you were going to make and to give the appearance that you were actually listening. After all, I have this thing, this Gospel message I need to pass from me to the person.

But when we turn to the pages of the Gospels, Jesus seems to be a much better listener than I have been.

In Mark 10 we read this:

46 They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. 47 When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, ‘Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!’ 48 Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, ‘Son of David, have mercy on me!’

It sounds like Jesus had bionic hearing – or was it simply that he was always listening and attentive to the voice around him. You get that impression with Jesus, don't you? The impression that he didn't miss a thing, he picked up everything – he was always listening.

49 Jesus stood still and said, ‘Call him here.’ And they called the blind man, saying to him, ‘Take heart; get up, he is calling you.’ 50 So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. 51 Then Jesus said to him, ‘What do you want me to do for you?’

Listening delivers us from thinking we know what the person wants.

On holiday many years ago in Minorca – we stayed in a chalet around a pool – other British families around us and next door were a Geordie family, the husband was called Billy. And we get chatting and he's asking stuff about us and I'm actually being really evasive and trying to avoid saying what I do. Not because I am ashamed of it, not at all, but because of the assumptions which might be made about me. I wanted him to get to know me, before he tarred me with the 'god-botherer' brush.

How important is it therefore for us to listen to people, and really listen to them to understand who they are, what is important to them and what their questions are about faith – to then be able to truly answers those questions as best we can.

Interruptions...

The story of Jesus healing the woman with a flow of blood is a story which starts with an interruption. It wasn't that Jesus was going about his business and was interrupted, but rather the text tells us that Jesus absolutely had a task to fulfil was *en route* to do it – heal Jairus' daughter. But even though this was the case, Jesus showed extraordinary attention to the individual and the moment; no 'Excuse me, I hardly have the time?' or 'I would love to talk to you, but you'll have to book a time with my p.a.' Jesus stopped and gave his full attention to the moment.

Giving time to people is increasingly counter-cultural and it is enormously appreciated by those on the receiving end.

Q4: What does listening do to the person being heard?

In closing:

You may be fed up to the back teeth by now of me talking about inclusion (and I certainly didn't choose this book because it is about inclusion) but I simply cannot avoid this repeated theme in the Gospels. Hannah ends her chapter with these words:

Jesus of course has words of judgement and condemnation also, but it is vital to note that his words of inclusion were often for those who were excluded, and his words of exclusion were for those who presumed that they were included. It is once again the topsy-turvy nature of the kingdom of God that subverts our ideas about who gets to be in or out.

And just an aside, I've been intrigued by the fact that this chapter in the books contains references to many of the Bible passages which we have looked at on Sunday mornings since Christmas:

- **Luke 15 – Prodigal Son (3rd Jan)**
- **Matthew 11 – Jesus attends parties (24th Jan)**
- **Luke 7 – Jesus at a Banquet (7th Feb)**
- **John 5 – Lame man at the pool of Bethesda (14th Feb)**
- **Mark 5 - The woman with the flow of blood/Jairus' daughter (21st Feb)**

These *are* the ways which Jesus engages with people. **Prayer**