

The Art of Conversation

TEN RULES

1. Don't multitask
2. Don't pontificate
3. Use open-ended questions
4. Go with the flow
5. If you don't know something, don't pretend to - James 5:12
6. Don't equate your experience with someone else's
7. Try not to repeat yourself
8. Stay out of the weeds
9. LISTEN – James 1:19
10. Be brief

SEVEN CONVERSATION SINS

1. Gossip - Proverbs 18:21, Leviticus 19:16
2. Judging - Luke 6:37
3. Negativity - Philippians 4:8
4. Complaining - 1 Corinthians 10:10
5. Excuses
6. Exaggeration
7. Dogmatism

HAIL

hail²

VERB

2. Call out to (someone) to attract attention.
3. Praise (someone or something) enthusiastically.

Archaic Expressing greeting or acclaim.

Honesty

Authenticity

Integrity

Love

The key: Be genuinely interested in people.

HOW DID JESUS CONVERSE WITH OTHERS?

In nine cases, Jesus initiated the conversations. Examples:

- a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42)
- a crippled beggar (John 5:1-15)

In 25 instances, it was the other party who started the discussion. Jesus responded to other people's inquiries. Examples:

- a rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-30)
- a demoniac (Mark 5:1-20)
- Jairus, a synagogue ruler (Mark 5:21-43)
- a hemorrhaging woman (Mark 5:24-34)

Other conversations were triggered by third parties. Examples:

- tax collectors and other “sinners,” invited to a party by Matthew (Matt. 9:9-13)
- Herod, introduced by Pilate (Luke 23:6-16)
- Nathaniel, invited by Philip (John 1:45-51)
- an adulterous woman brought by the scribes (John 8:1-11)

Where did the conversation take place?

The majority of Jesus’ interactions occurred in the workplace. Examples:

- with James and John (Matt. 4:21-22)
- with a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-42)
- with a lame man (John 5:1-15)

Many took place in homes. Examples:

- at Peter’s house with his mother-in-law (Mark 1:29-31)
- with a Syro-Phoenician woman (Mark 7:24-30)
- at Zacchaeus’ house (Luke 19:1-10)

Few were in religious settings. Instead, Jesus talked with people about spiritual issues where they were most familiar. He did not need a special environment or control over the circumstances to discuss things of eternal significance.

What was discussed?

Jesus asked questions in more than half of the conversations He had. This is similar to God’s first response to the first sinners in history, when He asked four questions of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:9, 11, 13). Examples:

- an adulterous woman (John 8:1-11)
- the scribes (Luke 5:17-26)
- His mother and brothers (Matt. 12:46-50)
- the Pharisees (Luke 6:6-11)

He connected with people's thoughts and feelings. He understood that new ideas need to be connected with existing frames of reference if they are to last. He seldom pressed for "closure" or a decision. Instead, He understood that time is required for ideas to simmer and for people to own them before they act on them.

What can we learn from Jesus' example?

- Jesus knew how to take initiative.
- Jesus responded to the initiatives of others.
- Jesus left room in his schedule for interruptions by friends and others enlisting his help.
- Jesus usually met people on their own turf.
- Jesus was interested in establishing common ground with others.