

## THE OR SERIES 10: A STATEMENT OR A CONVERSATION?

*“When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say.” (Luke 12:11-12, NIV)*

**M**Y HOME COURSE IS A LOT LIKE YOURS. There are holes that make me uncomfortable, especially off the tee.

In a tournament a week ago, my partner and I were assigned to start on one of those holes. OB stakes closely line the left side and large trees stand within that boundary. This forces the golfer to play to the right, where another line of trees with low hanging branches invites trouble of a different kind. It simply doesn't fit my eye.

In a normal round, this hole is not so troubling. It's the seventeenth. By then, you know full well what is working and what isn't for that day. You can shape your shot accordingly. But to come to this hole cold, with no idea how the ball will come off the driver that first swing of the day? Not easy.

The same is true when we sit down with someone with intention to evangelize—that is, to share the good news about life in Christ. We can come with all our well-laid plans, but until we get a sense of the person's reception, we have no guarantees about how the conversation will develop.

This shouldn't be so frightening. For all our cognitive rehearsing, many conversations don't go as we plan, from the incidental to the life-changing. But isn't this why we are given the Holy Spirit?

When Jesus spoke to the disciples about the Holy Spirit giving them the words they would need to say, he set the context as predictable but difficult. They would find themselves in contentious, power-stressed environments, speaking with people who were likely to oppose them. We might think in such a circumstance that the preparation we most need is intellectual—have we done our theological homework? Jesus was saying that the preparation we most need is spiritual—are we following the lead of the Holy Spirit?

A good golfer comes to the round with a plan, but if the actualities of the day call for an adjustment, the golfer makes it. The same goes for good evangelistic conversation; we come with a plan, but we move with the Spirit's leading. In this way our evangelism goes from a canned speech to an inviting dialogue.

**Opening questions** How many holes do you have to play before you feel like you know what you've got for that day? • When it comes to sharing your faith in Christ, what concerns you most?

**READING** Luke 12:11-12 & John 16:12-15; Acts 25:23-26:29

**Listening and speaking (Luke 12 & John 16)**  
From these passages, what can we say about the Spirit's role in giving us knowledge and helping us convey this knowledge?

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**A prime example (Acts 25-26)**  
Under what circumstances was Paul brought to see Agrippa? How did Paul move this conversation beyond a legal matter?

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What level of receptivity did Agrippa offer Paul? Did he come to belief?

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How much should your testimony be woven into your evangelism?

Written by Jeff Hopper ©2017 Links Players International. An introductory video for this study is available here: <https://youtu.be/fk-VYL476sE>