



One of the greatest spectacles in sport is when a batter gets up to the plate, and with a mighty swing, sends the victimized pitcher's best pitch screaming out of the park and over the fence deep in center field. The crowd goes crazy! And, if the bases are loaded when it happens, the whole stadium feels like it's going to come apart. From the first time a kid steps into the batter's box, that's what they want to do; they want to blast one over the wall, take a half speed victory lap around the bases, and hear the crowd chanting their name.

Then, as we get older, the tee gets taken away. The pitches get faster and start to do weird stuff. It gets harder to just *hit* the ball let alone hit a home run. Many people get frustrated and don't even want to get in the batter's box anymore. They see guys continue to blast homers out of the park and it's not them. Because the player who hit the home run scores in a dramatic way, and they *aren't* scoring in a dramatic way, they can quickly become unmotivated and never get in the batter's box at all.

I was that kid, like many others. I wasn't a great batter, and I certainly was never going to hit a home run. I felt like I had to make every pitch count, and if I wiffed on the first pitch, I might as well have struck out. So, I usually got in the batter's box already defeated. I usually just barely made the team anyway, so, at some point, it stopped being worth my time to try.

I carried this mentality into my spiritual life as well. The Great Commission says we are to "go out and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:16-20). Just like seeing every pitch as needing to be a home run, I felt like every time I talked to someone about Christianity, they needed to have that "come to Jesus" moment or I was a failure. I thought the way you got people to believe in Jesus was to go door to door, or stand in a public area and hand out flyers. I could never do that. So I rarely talked about my convictions - unless I knew someone was claiming to be a Christian anyway.

Baseball is More Base Hits Than Home Runs

According to [an article in the Washington Post](#), only 14.2 percent of all hits are home runs. That's actually higher than it's been in decades - even higher than the Long Ball Era in the 90s (11.8). So, that means that over 85 percent of hits WERE NOT home runs. Baseball is largely a game of small moves around the board. A single here, a double there, a guy gets walked, and then he comes home. A batter going all the way around the bases on one at bat is the exception and not the rule. It's more likely that a batter will hit a single, steal second, take third on another hit, and then get batted in on yet another. That takes a lot of *other* batters to move him or her all the way home. It's quite possible someone even laid down a bunt and got thrown out at first just to get the runners already in play to move around the bases. That batter got out, but the other runners are in a better scoring position. Even the



case of a Grand Slam - the greatest event in baseball - requires 3 other runners to be on the base before the home run hitter can bring them all home. The batter who hit the grand slam didn't get the other 3 runners on base - *other* batters did.

Sharing the Good News of the Gospel is the same way. If someone has opposition to Christianity, chances of you hitting a home run and getting them to the foot of the Cross on the first conversation are slim to none. Now, some people may be able to do that every once in a while. You may be in the crowd when a speaker gives a very moving speech that gets the non-believer to believe. But, chances are, that's the finished product and not the beginning of the journey. The new believer was likely already on third base when they got batted in.

Every conversation you have with someone is like getting up to bat. Sometimes you strike out. But, more often than you probably realize, you get a hit. We can never really know a person's true relationship with God, so it's hard to tell sometimes if our conversations are effective or not. We likely don't get to know what base they are on. You may have a conversation with a total stranger waiting in line for a ride in Disneyland (you'll have plenty of time for conversation *there*; trust me!). After the ride is over, you may never see that person again. But, maybe you told them some little thing they had been waiting to hear to get them to the next base. Or even to get them home. You never know. And you should never feel pressure to get them home. The game is never on the line when we get up to bat. We aren't the ones who ultimately get a person to submit - God is. He just uses us to get the person around the bases before He knocks them home.

Jesus didn't play baseball, but He gave this message in terms that the First century Jews could understand. In John 4:35-38 he compares the work we are to do (in our example, a baseball game) to the harvesting of crops. He says:

³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest'? Look, I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. ³⁶ Already the one who reaps is receiving wages and gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.'" (ESV)

In this passage, Jesus is talking to the apostles and telling them to go out and "reap the harvest". But, he remind them, they didn't do all the work. Someone tilled the soil, someone



How Talking About Christianity Is Like Playing Baseball

planted the seed, and someone else tended the crops until they were ready to harvest. If the apostles got someone else to follow Jesus, they didn't do it all on their own. Other people had already been at work.

When I was younger, I felt a lot of pressure and weight on my shoulders to get people to follow Jesus. I felt like if I didn't get that person at that moment to come to church with me the next Sunday and be moved to become a Christian, that conversation was a failure. I'm not a closer, or a home run hitter, so I didn't try. But, once I realized that ultimately it's not *me* that gets someone to trust in God, it took a tremendous weight off of me. It has allowed me to relax and have much more natural conversations about the Christian world view. I don't feel like I'm selling anything, or being pushy. My goal is just to give a person something to think about. I'm happy just getting in the batter's box now. Baseball games are won on small moves; not home runs.