

Excuses of Discouragement

Often sincere, these people just want answers to resolve a conflict that makes it difficult for them to take the first step towards Christ, which they would otherwise be willing to do. But then, these same excuses can also become convenient 'crutches' for consciences that never find 'rest'. Ask yourself, "What's really behind their question...what are they sincerely concerned or are they just trying to find something to hide behind?"

- **"But there is so much hypocrisy in the church."** There is a difference between people who are disillusioned with church and those who are disillusioned with God. What some people are really 'turned off' about is other Christians. God didn't let them down, even if some believers did. Discuss why we worship and study together [we are imperfect people spending our time with a perfect God so he can help our imperfections.] You wouldn't say that people who go to Alcoholics Anonymous are hypocrites because they are trying to quit drinking and think that everyone else should as well. No, they know better than most the real danger of alcohol just as we know what sin can do to one's life. Not everyone stays away from church for the wrong reason, just as not everyone goes to church for the right one! Still, you'll find better people there than in a stadium full of the lost. Remember: preach Christ - not church!
- **"Don't Christians have the same problems as the rest of us?"** We grow through our difficulties! James 1:2-4 says that trials build our patience and that patience makes us 'complete'. Paul says in 2 Cor 12:9,10 that we are made stronger and understand God's grace better by our hardships. The Lord promises us that he will not let us go through anything that is too big for us to handle and that He will be with us all the way – **I Cor 10:13** (also Heb 13:5 with Mat 28:20.) Our confidence comes from this promise: **Rom 8:28**
- **"I have so many things I want to do first"** Ask, "Are any of those things ones for which you would be ashamed some day when you stand naked before God's judgment seat? If not, then why do you think He might not let you do it anyway? And if you would be ashamed then why do it at all?" Discuss James 4:13-17 & Luke 12:15-21 with them. The only assurance you have is right now. Jesus said 'Don't think about tomorrow when you've got sin in your life today' (**Mat 6:34**) Besides, the rest of your life will be much more wonderful with Jesus in it!

Excuses of Despair

Nearly always sincere, these questions usually come after you have poured your heart out, presenting to them the unarguable Gospel. These are a 'last resort' - the one thing holding them back. This is where you get close and personal. Believe they want what you have and that the Holy Spirit has already shown them that He wants them, too! Let the scriptures speak - have the person read the passages for themselves.

- **"It would be too difficult for me to live the Christian life"**
Phil 4:13,19 "I can do all things...my God shall supply all your needs..."
Rom 8:31,32 "...spared not own son...with him freely give your all..."
Heb 4:15,16 "...we have a high priest...come boldly to throne of grace..."
Psa 46:1 "God is our refuge and strength...help in trouble."
Heb 7:25 "...Able to save to the uttermost...makes intercession for them."
Jude 24,25 "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling..."
- **"I tried once and failed. Now God would never want me again."**
John 6:37 "All the father gives...I will in no wise cast out"
:44 "No man can come to me except the Father...draw him..."

Share the story of Peter's backsliding and recovery (Lk 5:1-11) and how Jesus knew he would do it again (Lk 22:31-34). But Peter was now more useful than ever because he knew better than anyone what the grace of God could do. So, Jesus puts him back to work (John 21:15-17)

- **"I have sinned too much and God wouldn't want me"**
2 Pe 3:9 "Not willing that any should perish..."
Rom 10:13 "Whosoever shall call...shall be saved."

If God didn't want them He wouldn't 'call' them. If someone is concerned that they may have sinned the "unpardonable sin" - they haven't! Those who have would never care again. The fact that the Holy Spirit is 'convicting' them is proof that He hasn't given up on them. God is calling - they need to come home!

A final thought: Often it requires more than one 'sharing' to persuade most people of the Gospel message. They may want time to consider. They may return with additional questions. They may just want to study you for a while to see if you 'live up to' your claims. Don't delay! Get out and 'sow'. It could be that the Holy Spirit has already been working and they're just waiting on you. "Trust and Obey - for there's no other way"