

Introductory notes for “Making Personal Evangelism Personal

The outlines that follow are a discussion for individual or group study on how to share one’s faith in a personal way with those you are closest to, your family and your friends. I am still developing these notes, with plans to expand upon them and to publish soon a book by the same name. You are invited to use them, reproduce them, and share them around as long as you include the title page with the accompanying contact information. Your input would be appreciated. Please comment on what you find to be helpful and on improvements you would like to see added to the work.

The eight pages of text can normally be covered in four one-hour sessions (two pages each.) However, you may break the pages into smaller units (although pages 3 and 5 are best done in their entirety in their respective session.) In many instances a single sentence in these lessons will later be expanded into multiple paragraphs of discussion when the work is completed. A good example is in the sub-section called “Don’t Get Hooked In The Book”, p.6. Special care should be taken here so as to avoid misunderstanding. This author is fully committed to the inherent power of God’s word and its sole effectiveness in soul winning. The point being made in this section, however, is to avoid the inclination to “preach” your faith rather than to “share” it.

Scripture references that are both in **bold** print and underlined should be committed to memory or, at least, marked in your Bible for quick access to be shown to the one you are trying to reach. Other passages should be familiar and understood well enough that you can express their essential message in your own words.

Again, your evaluation and suggestions will be very welcomed. Please email me, using as your subject line “MPEP” [sailingservant@minister.com] Lord bless you and those who study these pages with you! *David A. Goodrum*

Print the pages that follow. The cover should be one-sided but you may elect to print the others front-and-back (i.e./ page 1 with page 2, page 3 with page 4, and so forth)

Making Personal Evangelism Personal



Sharing your faith with family and friends

By **David A. Goodrum**
(missionary, evangelist, pastor, teacher)

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Personal Evangelism Is 'Personal'

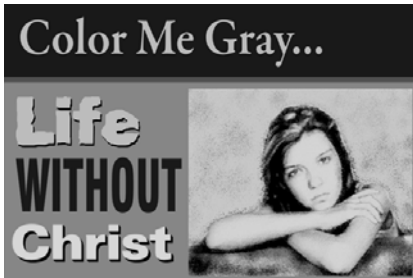
Here, let me show you the 'Roman Road'...

Whenever you read a book or attend a seminar on 'personal evangelism' you are often given a collection of clever questions to ask or a set of what I call rapid-fire proof-text scriptures. And they do sometimes work. But sharing one's faith should be from the heart, abounding in generous sincerity - it is, after all, the most important conversation you will ever have with someone! They are now where we once were...and we know the "way out"! More than that, we know the One who is the "Way"! That is why we should be confident to step out and speak up!

When you die and stand at heaven's gate and Peter asks, 'Why should I let you in?'...



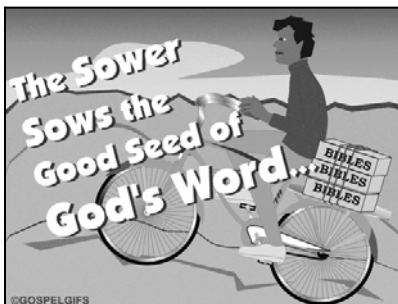
But isn't someone's "soul" too personal to talk about?



It is a personal matter...but that's why your attitude and your approach must reflect a genuine respect and God-given love for them. Helping to restore others is a fulfillment of the "Law Of Christ" (see Gal 6:1,2) James wrote in his book that when one converts a sinner he "*shall save a soul from death*"(5:19,20) Now, that's very personal! Honestly, if I was drowning at sea and someone offered to rescue me I most certainly would be thankful that they got 'personally' involved and 'personally' helped me out!!

Some believers shy away from sharing their faith because they fear they will be considered 'judgmental' [a misunderstanding of Mat 7:1] or they fret about their own 'imperfections' [but Paul said we are not the message, Jesus is - see 2 Cor 4:5] So what...you're not perfect... Christ is!! Don't try to hide or disguise your faults [the best policy is honesty]. People still need to hear what you have to say! Remember what Isaiah wrote, "*...the Lord God hath given me the tongue...to speak a word in season to him that is weary.*"(50:4) Your testimony about what Jesus did for you is the solution to most people's struggles! Share it!!

Just Do Your Job! When we go forth to "sow" the Gospel "seed" it is important to remember that we are only called upon to do our part; that for which we are prepared to do and that which the Lord has positioned us to do. Do your job - not the other guy's!



1Cor 3:4-9 says "...God gave the increase...we are laborers together with God" Jesus declared, "*Without me you can do nothing*" (Jn 15:5). The opposite of that is - 'with me you can do everything!' (see Phil 4:13) It is with His Spirit, through His Spirit, that we become His "witnesses". What we say and how we say it should be entirely decided by Him. ["...it is not you...but the Spirit...which speaketh..." (Mat 10:19,20) and "(the Comforter) shall bring to remembrance whatsoever I have said to you." (John 14:26) Depend upon the Holy Spirit - He will give you the words to say!!

In summary, there is no one set formula for sharing your faith. Everyone is different and so are their needs. Trying to use a 'rigid' evangelism plan (one designed to follow a certain 'path' using certain scriptures) assumes that they will be willing to follow you to where you want to go, rather than where they need to go. Sometimes you've got to go their way, to where they are first! A good counselor is a good listener. As a witness you need to know something about the person you are trying to reach - what they know, what they understand - so you can steer the journey from that point forward. Knowing many scriptures, and many approaches to personal evangelism, enables you to 'custom fit' what you share with them. Most of all, being sensitive to them and fully yielded to the Holy Spirit is the only way to ensure their heart will be touched, their eyes opened, and (Lord willing) their life changed!

People Need The Lord

WHY DO PEOPLE NEED THE LORD? The most common understanding is “to go to heaven when this life is over.” Nobody wants to go to that ‘other place’ - that is, if they really think about it. But then, nobody is really thinking about it, are they? At least not right now when there are so many other more ‘important things’ to worry about! But that’s the point: those ‘things’ are also reasons why people need the Lord right now! There is too much to face alone—we all need God’s help...today!



MAN IS IN ALL KINDS OF TROUBLE!! He must be if the Son of God Himself had to leave heaven to come to his rescue. When Jesus announced the beginning of his ministry to his “home church” (see Lk 4:16-21) he read from **Isaiah 61:1-3** which tells us that, to ‘save us’, Jesus would not only proclaim “*the acceptable year of the Lord*” [that salvation has come] and “*the day of vengeance of our God*” [so will punishment to those who refuse to repent] but that he also came to:

preach good tidings *Open prisons of the bound*
Proclaim liberty to captives *Give beauty for ashes* *Joy for mourning*
Praise for the spirit of heaviness

Now that is meeting a lot of needs! And all this so that we “...might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.” What God wants for us is best for us - but most people don’t even know it. Why? Well, consider the following:

“THREE STRIKES AND YOU’RE OUT!!” Three reasons why people usually don’t see things God’s way:

First and foremost is that sin separates us from God, like a partition or wall. Put a high enough fence between you and your neighbor and you can eventually ‘forget’ they are there! But what about the time when you need your neighbor’s help? God tells us in Isaiah 59:1,2 that He can ‘hear’ us and ‘help’ us but that He must ‘hide’ His face from us because of our sins. God hates sin (though He still loves sinners) and that’s why He won’t look upon us while we are covered in that awful stuff. We need to turn to him - we need the wall torn down - so we can find “*help in time of need.*” (Heb 4:16)

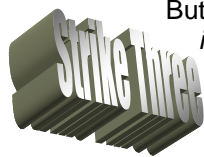


Did you know: Some people are angry with God because He didn’t answer some prayer of theirs, even though they will admit their life is not ‘right’ with Him. This scripture in Isaiah explains why God has to ‘chase’ not to answer. However, sometimes God will answer a prayer from someone who would otherwise not ‘deserve’ it just so that, by showing His goodness, He may lead them to repentance (Rom 2:4)

What makes matters worse - sin blinds sinners! (2 Cor 4:3) They can’t even see that wall that separates them or any of the other problems caused by the accumulation of evil through the passing of years. They can’t even change if they wanted to because of their continual war with the flesh’ (see Rom 7:18-25) Without the Lord people are in darkness, in prison, and fighting a war with themselves!!



But worst of all: a person in sin is at war with God!! (*and He is someone you really don’t want to pick a fight with!*) Check out these scriptures:



James 4:4 “...*a friend of the world is an enemy of God*”

Phil 3:18,19 “...*some are enemies of the cross cause their belly is their god*”

Col 1:21 “...*you were enemies - but now He hath reconciled you...*”

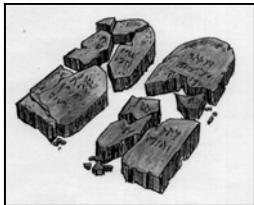
And just how did Jesus do that? He did it “...through the blood of his cross” (v.20) with “his flesh through death” (v. 22) But don’t forget - it only works if we “...continue in the faith...” (v.23)

COULD IT GET ANY WORSE THAT THIS? Yes, it can!! The Bible says that everybody who sins ‘sells’ themselves into ‘slavery’, that they become the ‘prisoners’ of Satan, bound to serve him (whether they know it or not - whether they want to or not.) Jesus said, “*Whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin*” (**John 8:34**) but he also promised that “*if the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed!*” (**v.36**) People today deny that they are in bondage just like the religious leaders Jesus was speaking to did back then (v.33) The fact is, we all serve either one kingdom or the other [study Rom 6:16-18] You are either on God’s side or the side that is against Him - there is no middle ground! [read Mat 12:30 & Luke 16:13] But what about those who are just trying to ‘straddle the fence’? Well, **Revelations 3:15,16** says that God is going to ‘spit out’ all who are ‘lukewarm’!



Justice For All (or, "Help is on the way!")

Man's predicament is not a good one. The Bible says, "*There is none righteous, no not one*" (Rom 3:10) and "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*" (**Rom 3:23**) Sin is like snowflakes - just one seems insignificant, but keep adding to it and soon you can stop all traffic on a major highway. 'Payday' is coming but nobody is going to want to cash their 'check' (**Rom 6:23**) Man needs a miracle and that miracle is in a man - Christ Jesus.



Once broken, God's Law needs to be avenged. If not, then God himself will be guilty of violating His own righteousness. A judge, no matter how compassionate he wants to be, cannot just dismiss a criminal's crime without doing an injustice to the laws he is sworn to keep. Even our own conscience has a sense of 'justice'. This is why a concept of right and wrong is universal, found in every culture of the world! We always want the 'bad guy' to get caught in the end, don't we?

Just in case, ask any skeptic who challenges your faith, "Do you really think that you and Hitler should spend eternity in the same place rather than one in heaven, the other in hell?" Just remind anyone of the horrible atrocities of that man, or of any mass murderer, rapists, child abuser, etc., then ask, "Should your fate in the next life be the same as theirs?" They can't bring themselves to believe that because their spirit knows the truth, even if their mind [because of modern culture's influence] tries to deny it. And what about reward for people like Mother Theresa, who sacrificed so much to help the impoverished in India. Should she get nothing more than any common criminal? Justice, and consequent 'judgment', are very much a part of our nature. [Study Romans 2:11-16 about conscience!!]



Yes...the only Answer, just as he said of himself, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father but by me.*" (**John 14:6**) Only through His perfect life could He be for us the perfect sacrifice: to pay for our sins and buy us back [**redemption** - Gal 4:4,5], satisfying the requirements of the Law [**propitiation** - 1 John 2:2 & 4:10] taking our place in punishment [**substitution** - Isaiah 53:4-6] and thereby breaking down the wall that separated us from God [**reconciliation** - 2Cor 5:18,19] With the penalty paid, the prisoner can be set free !!



If the whole thing seems like a neat little gift package...well...it is a 'gift', but there was nothing 'neat' about it: "*Despised and rejected...a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief...as a lamb to the slaughter*" (Isaiah 53:3,7) Yet Jesus did it "*...for the joy that was set before him...*" (Heb 12:2) What was that joy? It was seeing the day when you, me, and all those we help to bring to made "new creatures in passed away, all things of Jesus' joy is when the sheep (Luke 15:3-7) and son come home (Luke

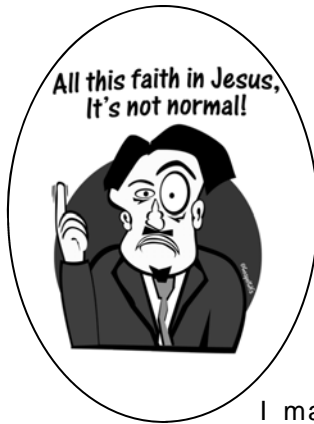


that we, too, were like sheep gone astray and have returned to the "Shepherd" of our "with joy" we can "draw water out of the That is the invitation that Jesus gives to thirst, let him come unto me..." (John me all ye that labor and are heavy rest...learn of me...and ye shall find rest for your souls." (**Mat 11:28-30**)

him are transformed by his grace, Christ" (**2 Cor 5:17**), old things made new!! The best illustration good shepherd found his lost when the father had his prodical 15:11-32). The Apostle Peter says but now are healed by his stripes "souls" (1Peter 2:24-25) So, now wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3) all when He says, "*If any man 7:37,38*) and also, "*Come unto laden, and I will give you*

Helpful Hint: Share one or both of the two stories above from Luke 15, using yourself as the 'lost' character.

Saving Faith



Contrary to what some people think, having faith is a very 'normal' thing. We all use it everyday. Like when you came in for this session. I'm sure you just sat down on your chair without first inspecting it to see if someone had removed its screws or sawed its legs. And if you brought a beverage with you it's not likely that you first had a chemist test it for 'foreign substances'. Neither did you look under the hood of your car to see if the motor was still there before turning the key and driving away. Faith, placing our trust in something or someone, is a matter of life. Everybody uses it whether they think about it or not.

But remember: faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed! I may believe with all my heart that I can flap my arms and fly, but I will find out quickly enough that my faith is in the 'wrong thing' as soon as I step off a tall building. However, it's not the 'fall' but the 'landing' that hurts!! Many people follow false beliefs (and are happy for now) but one day there will be a 'landing'! [**Pro 14:12** and **16:25**]

“Grace is getting that which we don't deserve - Mercy is not getting what we do deserve”

The greatest statement of the role of faith in salvation is in **Ephesians 2:8,9**. It is God's grace and God's gift, but He does it for us because we are willing to trust Him! **Titus 3:5** says that it is “*not by works of righteousness...but by his mercy*” that he saves us!



“Well? Why won't works work??” Most people ask that question and the answer is simple: no matter how hard you try you can never be good enough!! Sorry, I know you're probably trying real hard, but “dig” all you want, a chest of gold is not under all that “dirt”. Why call it dirt? Because the Bible tells us that (compared to God) “*all our righteousness is as filthy rags*” (**Isa 64:6**) It goes like this: God is watching not just our 'act' but our 'attitude'. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, gave several examples including the almsgivers who only gave to be “*seen of men*” (Mat 6:1-5) to which He explains “*they have their rewards*” Some of the most charitable giving around

has at its roots some selfish motive (such as popularity - consider the warning in Mat 7:20-23!) Another problem: even if you're doing pretty good keeping most of the commandments, it says in James 2:10,11 that if you break one, all is broken! [A cup with a broken handle may still hold coffee but that doesn't change the fact that it is still a 'broken cup']

“Ok, so...I believe...is that it?” Well, I would first ask, “Believe what?” Remember, believing that God exists is not what we are talking about [“*the devils also believe and tremble*” James 2:19,20] It does not take faith to know God exists [Psa 19:1-3 ; Rom 1:16-23] Even Jesus, his life and death, are a matter of historical record with overwhelming evidence. What requires “faith” is trusting that in the end He will accept us, not for our own righteousness, but for the righteousness of Christ in whose hands we have placed our lives.

- **Phil 3:9** “*not mine own righteousness...but...of God by faith*” (see also v.7,8,10)
- **Rom 10:9,10** Why? Because “*Christ is the end of the law...to every one that believeth*” v.4)
- **I John 1:9** Consider v.6-10, how we must be honest with ourselves in order to ‘confess our sins’ but then afterwards how the Lord will ‘continue to cleanse’ us if we ‘continue’ walking in His light.

The best statement of true saving faith, of one who has put himself wholly upon the ‘mercy seat’ of God, resting in his ‘blessed assurance’, is by Paul in 2Tim 1:12: “*I know in whom I believe...*” [Not religion – but relationship] “*and am persuaded*” [My mind is made up – ‘I am committed’] “*that he is able*” [Heb 11:6 “...must first believe that He is...(God Almighty)”] “*to keep that which I have committed unto him*” [Heb 7:25 “...to the uttermost...”] Having “saving faith” is not just that you believe in God, but that you know God believes in you, that He wants you, loves you, and plans to keep you.

JESUS ONE-ON-ONE

Although Jesus did spend much of his time addressing crowds there were occasions when he took time-out to speak to individuals, addressing their personal needs, meeting them where they are, and bringing the Gospel into their life situations. Jesus did not wait for people to come to him - he put himself into their path, making his opportunities. This is the goal of scriptures such as Luke 14:23 (“...go into the highways and hedges”) and Acts 1:8 (“...be witnesses...unto the uttermost part”). Those who need Jesus are everywhere, you won't have far to go!! Consider these examples of Jesus ministering “one-on-one” from the Gospel of John and see how you can apply their lessons to your witnessing efforts:



“A Guy In A Garden” [John 3]



- Go to **where** they are (sometimes risky...this garden was a place thieves frequented)
- Know **who** they are (Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin, a rabbi and a scholar)
- Sow **what** they need (this time straight to the Gospel, John 3:16, but with others use wisdom and always the leading of the Holy Spirit. [Your testimony will not change lives but it will encourage them. Tell them that they need to be and can be changed.]

‘Beating around the bush will only knock off the leaves’ - Get to the heart, speak with enthusiasm & conviction

“The Woman At The Well” [John 4]

Though hungry and weary, Jesus was still culture, and social standing. He began with (needing a drink of water). But he guided in her life. People want someone with to help them to ‘bear their burdens’. trust in the present nor help to change their



ready to minister to this woman of a different race, a circumstance they both shared in common her to look inward at the more important need whom they can bear their soul, who is willing Condemnation of their past will not win their future. Love like Christ - forgive and forget!

Give respect to their ‘religious questions’ even if it is just a guise or ruse - they may have read but not understood!

“People By The Pool” [John 5]

This man's greatest need was that he was lost [didn't know the Messiah] but Jesus allowed him to tell his story first. Then he met the man's physical need so that it would open the door to his spiritual one. Also, don't get too busy at the “feast” to take time to help the “least”!!



“A Lady Who Was Lost” [John 8]

This was a good example of “think before you speak”! (Jesus wrote in the sand - maybe to clear his own thoughts, maybe to let them clear theirs) Saying to ourselves, “If not for God's grace there go I” will help keep us from being judgmental.



Biblical repentance means “go and sin no more” (Jn 8:11) Just being ‘sorry’ isn't enough - change your lifestyle!

“The Man Blind From Birth” [John 9]

Once again, first things first: Jesus met the man's physical need before he could “see” his spiritual one. The Lord later showed compassion by finding him after he was ‘cast out’. Empathy for other people's troubles will win their trust and open their hearts (see Rom 12:15) Avoid the ‘blame game’ as well as “useless excuses” v.1-3. What matters is how to fix what's broken (v.6,7) and to save a lost soul (v.35-38)



“Soothing The Sorrowful Sisters” [John 11]

Jesus went on to Judea even though it would be taking a risk (v.7-11). Some times it takes a ‘risk’ to win the lost!! It was the Lord's open display of emotion that said more than his words (v.32-36) Sometimes just a look of concern, a gentle touch, a shared tear, will do the most good until a ‘better time’ comes. Ours is a gospel of compassion about a loving Father in heaven.



“Having Patience With The Pilates” [John 18]



Everyone deserves a chance (even our “worst enemies” ...see Mat 5:44 and Rom 12:20,21) Often the treatment we receive is really their attempt to get at the ‘Jesus’ in us! (Read John 15:18 with Mat 5:11,12) Darkness hates light - to them we're just “too bright”! Even though Pilate was sarcastic and confrontational Jesus calmly explained who he was and why he was here (v.33-37). Read 19:8-16. Pilate came under conviction until the crowd changed his mind. Do not let the opinion of others or a concern about other things disrupt or distract. Keep the focus on Jesus and stay on course! Most of all, remember that the best way to deal with an “enemy” is to make him a “brother” in Christ.

Where To Start - When To Stop



Sometimes soul-winning is like looking for that one lost sheep; sometimes like casting a net while fishing for men ('catch what you can') Whatever you do, do so because of the Lord's love and because of the Lord's leading. Don't force the situation. Trying to "plant seed" in ground not "properly prepared" is poor farming! Timing is important!! And never forget that sharing one's faith should be a natural experience, including how we present ourselves and how we present our message. So be yourself (not your favorite preacher!!)



Know Before You Sow (test the "soil")

The Parable of the Sower (Mat 13:3-23) tells us what happens when good seed falls on bad ground. For our application, let's just say we're talking about someone you want to share Jesus with but that they have "*already heard all this before.*" Maybe they did [maybe they did not] - but that just means you have to start where they are! Consider the three conditions Jesus describes in this parable:

- Seed by the wayside [*did not understand*] - Never assume a clear message was "delivered"
- Seed upon a rock [*did not have time to grow*] - Never assume they were "discipled"
- Seed among the thorns [*did not escape the world*] - Never assume they weren't "deceived"

Remember the rule: **start where they are.** Jesus got one of His out of a tree, went home with him, met his friends, had dinner with him, and gently led him into a brand new life!! Some He met at work along the shore, some collecting taxes, others just along the way - but never did Jesus miss an opportunity when it presented itself. Always have Christ on your mind and his message in your mouth! [see 1Pe 3:15]



Don't Get 'Hooked' In The Book

Now this may seem contradictory to **Romans 10:17** which says, "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" but you will need more than just a few of your favorite memory verses to have a meaningful conversation with someone about your faith. Your words (your own story) accompanied with a sincere tone of voice, a patient manner, even a touch or hug at the right moment, can make all the difference [we are social beings in need of human contact] Don't just read scriptures, read their faces [do they understand, do they agree, are you hitting home?] Let them ask questions, let them challenge you - if you don't have an answer tell them so! Write down the "tough" ones and say you'll "get back to them" (you'll learn something new and they'll better respect you.) Remember, you're not the 'investigating officer', just a witness at the scene. By all means: **avoid the temptation to show off what you know!!** You may win the arguments but loose the souls. In Proverbs it says that a lot of words can mean a lot of trouble [10:19 , 18:13 , and 29:11]



People have heard enough preaching. This time give them something they will believe ... your story!

K. I. S. S. ("Keep It Salvation, Saints"!!)

Remember the example that Jesus gave us in his conversation with Nicodemus. Stay on the central message: God sent his Son so that we may live with Him forever! Apostle Paul said, "*I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.*" (1Cor 2:2) Why? Because the "*gospel of Christ...is the power of God unto salvation*" (**Rom 1:16**) And don't try to do the Holy Spirit's job for him. It is his responsibility to convict the world of sin - not yours!! (John 16:8-11)

So...when do you 'stop'? (When they hear the 'knock'!!)



Jesus said in **Revelations 3:20** that he will be at the door of their heart knocking. Show them the verse - ask them to open the door and invite him in. You will know when they've heard the 'knock' because you've been studying them, you've been praying for them. Tell them to "believe with their heart" and "confess with their mouth" (**Rom 10:9,10**), that all God is asking them to do is to turn ("repent" - Ac 3:19) from their old life and accept His new one (**2 Cor 5:17**) Just feeling bad about their sins is not enough, they must forsake them (2 Cor 7:10) Tell them to just be sincere and that the Lord promised that, if they "seek" Him with "all their heart", He will be "found" (Jer 29:12,13)

Pray, pray, or pray! Pray with them if they are ready. A great '*sinner's prayer*' is **Psa 51:1-4, 10-12** (I've read it to hundreds over the years.) If they say they're not "ready yet" ask them if you can still pray for them [and make it a *good* one!!] If they just walk away - pray anyway (loud but lovingly!) Encourage new believers with **1John 1: 7 & 3:1-3** ; **James 1:12** ; **Psalms 23** ...and keep in touch!

I've bought land I haven't seen yet



I have new oxen
I need to inspect

I just got married!!

Excuses That Last A Lifetime*

(* They're only good until this life is over, then comes judgment day!)

Jesus has heard them all: good sounding ones and some pretty lame ones, too (like these three guys from Luke 14:16-24...see also Luke 9:57-62) Most people are "right" in their own eyes but God knows all hearts, motives, and secrets. That's why excuses will not work when this life is over!! Truth is, many people just love darkness rather than light [read John 3:14-21] But not everyone!! There are those who are really seeking answers. You need to assume the best about everyone and the objections they may raise (because, unlike Jesus, you don't know what's in every heart - John 2:25). I've divided many of the common arguments (or "excuses") that people raise into four groups - some are sincere, some are not.

Excuses of Denial: Almost always insincere, usually just "intellectual muscle-flexing" (the kind of frivolous things that Paul warned Timothy and Titus about - 1Tim 1:4 & 6:4-5 ; 2Tim 2:23 & Titus 3:8) intended to throw you a "curve ball" or to frustrate you.

- **"How do we know we even exist?"** A philosopher once said, "I think – therefore I am." Poke them with your finger and ask, "Did you feel that? I did, too! That answers that question!!"
- **"How do you know God exists?"** How do they know He doesn't? For someone to say that they 'know' God doesn't exist they would have to be a 'god' themselves, knowing all that could be known in the whole universe. Remember **Psa 19:1-3** & Rom 1:20. One has to work hard not to believe God is there. Most folks are really saying, "If He's out there, He doesn't care (especially not about me.)" A common complaint is, "If there is a God then why does he let so many children suffer in this world?" One reply is to ask them, "If you were God what would you do about it?" The only solution to ending all suffering, all crime, all bad behavior and its consequences, is to take away all 'choice'. It was risky to give mankind a free will. We blew it...not God!!
- **"All religion is just an opiate of the masses"** [a quote by Karl Marx, father of communism] The New Age idea is that people make up a religion to suit their fancy, to satisfy their superstitions or to remedy their needs. If so, wouldn't Christianity have been more appealing if it let everybody do anything they wanted to? Rather than tell me what's wrong with me, why doesn't the Bible just tell me that everything is right about me, and that everybody gets to have a happy life hereafter? Christianity is unique among all the world's religions in that it alone defines man's problem perfectly and delivers the perfect solution for it – the cross of Jesus Christ. Our faith is more than religion...it is a relationship with the Almighty (the difference between being just 'neighbors' and being God's 'family'.) It satisfies us because it fills the God-sized void in us. We feel 'good' because Jesus makes us 'good'.

Excuses of Delusion: Sometimes sincere, but many times not. Patiently work through them!

- **"All religions lead to the same place."** Such a person obviously doesn't know much about major religions such as Hinduism with its thousands of Gods and Animism where even rocks and other inanimate objects have spirits. Some 'truth' can be found in all world religions (after all, we do have a common ancestry in Adam.) It is not whatever 'truth' other religions may have but their conclusions about that truth that is wrong. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life..." (**Jn14:6**) {illustration: Blind men and the elephant}
- **"It doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere"** What that really means is, 'There is no god so just make up anything you want'. Remember: we studied that faith is only as valid as the object in which it is placed? Believing something doesn't make it true!
- **"There are no absolutes"** -or- **"That's your truth, I have mine"** (very similar to above) Ask, "What color are my eyes? If I were to ask every person on the earth the same question will they give me the same answer? Then that must absolutely be the color of my eyes!"
- **"I don't believe in God, I believe in evolution."** Ask them, "Did you know that Darwin believed in God? That his studies were intended to show how God 'did it'?" Even most evolutionists are still stuck needing a 'god' (whom they normally refer to as 'Mother Nature' or 'Mother Earth'.) Ask, "So you believe that nothing left alone long enough will become something?" Did you know that the chances of evolution happening, based on all of the genetic changes and spontaneous mutations that would have been necessary, is at least a trillion-to-1? But the odds that "*In the beginning God created*" are only 2-to-1 (either He did or He didn't) By the way, Jesus (who lived two thousand years ago) has a "family tree" that goes straight back to Adam (the first man) Just check out his genealogy in Matthew 1 & Luke 3 (proof the human race is only 6,000 years old!!)

Excuses of Discouragement

Often sincere, these people just want answers to resolve a conflict(s) that makes it difficult for them to take the first step towards Christ (which they may 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 – **1 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"