

# Laying the Foundation of Sharing Our Faith

## Personal Evangelism 101: Part 1

### Student Guide

**Discussion Question: What do you personally believe are the greatest obstacles to people today coming to know Christ and have a relationship with him? (Note: This is purely opinion-based, there is no correct answer. But come ready to discuss on Sunday!)**

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A readiness to defend and discuss our faith isn't just important, it's a Bible command. **1 Peter 3:15** tells us, "But in your hearts regard Christ the Lord as holy, ready at any time to give a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." In a world that is continually searching for meaning and purpose, we must be ready and willing to shine our lights and seek to show people the truth.

This task, of course, is easier said than done. There are numerous challenges that the Christian faces when discussing their faith, challenges that can change and shift completely depending on the person that we're talking to and their underlying beliefs. As Gregory Koukl states in his book *Tactics: A Gameplan for Discussing Your Christian Convictions*, there are three components to representing Christianity well. These three components are knowledge (the possession of the answers to the challenges), wisdom (the ability to properly apply and use that knowledge), and character (a testimony that supports the beliefs we proclaim). This series will seek to help you grow in all three, with the main emphasis being on the first two (knowledge and wisdom).

In today's lesson, we will start by laying the foundation for these discussions through a few simple principles. Without these principles, we risk learning the later tactics and skills in vain, for without these principles the rest of the principles we learn won't do us any good.

**Principle #1: The Goal is to Win the \_\_\_\_\_, Not the \_\_\_\_\_**

1. We must always remember that the goal of discussing our faith is to lovingly bring people to a knowledge of the truth, not prove that we're smarter or more skilled.
  - a. The goal of learning these skills is not to learn how to twist someone's arm into agreeing with you, but to help us identify flawed thinking and then lovingly attempt to guide the other person to the same conclusion.

- b. We could have the greatest message in the world (we do!) but that message won't matter to others if they are turned off by our demeanor.
- 2. And this goes beyond simple kindness. Part of learning these skills is learning how to frame our message in a way that is relevant to our listener.
  - a. This doesn't mean changing our message, simply learning how to emphasize certain aspects that make it more impactful to the hearer.
    - i. An example might be that an academic would be more interested in knowing the historical, factual validity of Christianity while a social worker might be more interested in hearing about a loving Father.
    - ii. These differing angles don't change the message; they simply emphasize different aspects in a way that seeks to more directly meet the needs of the listener. They want to know, "Why does this matter for me?"

**Principle #2: Don't Feel \_\_\_\_\_ to Always "\_\_\_\_\_ the Deal"**

- 1. Another temptation we will inevitably face is to have the unrealistic goal of trying to convert everyone that we engage in this manner. This not only sets us up for failure but places the burden of results on our shoulders instead of leaving it to the Lord.
  - a. **1 Corinthians 3:5-6 reminds us**, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul? They are servants through whom you believed, and each has the role the Lord has given. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth."
  - b. The simple truth is that it is our job to be obedient in sharing our faith. Whether or not someone accepts that truth is between them and the Lord, not us. We must always remember that the Lord is the only one who can work in a person's heart, draw them to salvation, and change their life forever.
- 2. But if conversions/salvations aren't the goal, what is? What is the goal of learning how to discuss, defend, and share our faith?
  - a. As Koukl states in his book, the goal is to "put a rock in someone's shoe." That is, plant a seed in their minds that will get them thinking and, hopefully, grow into something more.
  - b. Friend, we have no idea during what part of the process we might meet someone whether that's sowing the seed, watering the sapling, or harvesting the ripe fruit. But whatever part of the process God allows us to be a part of, embrace it!

**Discussion Question: What is the danger of making our only measure of success whether or not a person gets saved? How does this perspective affect the way we share our faith?**

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### **Principle #3: Sharing Our Faith is Often More About** \_\_\_\_\_ **than** \_\_\_\_\_

1. This one may sound a bit strange, but it is of vital importance. How do I share my faith if the focus is on listening instead of speaking?
  - a. We must ask ourselves: what are we trying to accomplish? This person has one or multiple needs in their life that we believe Jesus can fill in their lives. How can we expect to try and help that person if we don't first listen intently to fully understand exactly what it is that they need?
  - b. The way in which we listen is just as important. There are those who only listen to a person long enough to figure out what they will say in response. We must learn to listen to understand, not merely formulate an answer.
  - c. It is also of great importance that we understand that not every person that we talk to will want us to try and fix their problems. Some of them will legitimately just want us to sit with them and listen. We must always exercise discernment and learn not only *how* to share our faith but also *when* to share our faith.
    - i. We must learn to simply love people without any sort of hidden agenda. Sometimes, the best way that we can love them is by simply sitting to them and listening to what they have to say.
2. This is a subject we will cover in much greater detail throughout the rest of this course but is a foundational piece to be tied in with everything else we will learn.