



7 THINGS THAT WILL HELP YOU SHARE YOUR FAITH

(without feeling like a goof)

**But in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as
holy, always being prepared to make a defense to
anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is
in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,**

- 1 Peter 3:15

Let's be honest,

too many Christians are hesitant to speak with others about their beliefs. Some of the reasons are:

- They don't know how to start the conversation in a way that's not awkward.
- They're afraid they might be asked a question they can't answer.
- They think they have to "close the deal."
- They might look like a "goof" or weirdo!

So, instead of browbeating or shaming you (which doesn't ever help) we wanted to share 7 thoughts, suggestions really, that should make it more natural and effective for you to talk with people about God, Jesus, the Bible or pretty much any meaningful spiritual topic.

Even though this is written like it's by one person, it's actually input from the whole Debunked Team at Reasons for Hope (rforh). We employ these methods nearly every day, so we know that it's possible to have effective, open and honest conversations about Christianity even with those who disagree with us. If we can do it, you can do it.

So without further ado, here are the

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If you're serious about sharing your faith and engaging in eternal and important conversations, then you need to make prayer a habit. We know that prayer is powerful (James 5:16), that as Christians we should be consistently doing it (1 Thess 5:17), that it is effective for evangelism (Matthew 9:38), that Jesus modeled it (Luke 5:16, Luke 11:1), and that it helps in very general

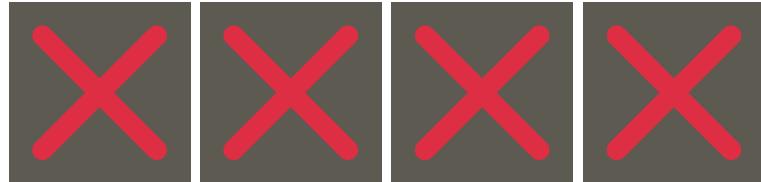
and specific ways (2 Cor 1:11, Phil 1:9). So, make it a daily prayer that God will prepare your heart and mind and providentially arrange "Gospel" conversations that you will faithfully engage in when prompted.



PRAY.

2 KNOW THE GOAL.

A lot of “spiritual conversations” go wrong for 4 main reasons:



1 You are trying to win an argument instead of winning a soul.

2 You are more concerned about you than the other person.

3 You think you have to lead every person you talk with to a full and complete understanding of the Gospel so they fall down and repent right there on the spot. In other words, you think you need to “close the deal” with every conversation.

4 You lose your cool.

If you do any of the above, it's likely you've lost sight of THE GOAL. “What is the goal?” I'm glad you asked. The goal for a Christian should be to always represent Christ in “word and deed (Col 3:17, 1 John 3:18).”



TIP: If you find yourself “losing your cool” or getting frustrated, that's an indicator you're losing sight of the goal. Take a breath and say a quick (inaudible) prayer to refocus.

There's a lot to that, but in our context, when it comes to talking with people about our faith, it mostly means: it's not about us (Phil 2:3-4), winning an argument for our egos, or showing off (Prov 27:1-2). Rather, it's about faithfully, respectfully, rationally, and compassionately planting and watering (1 Cor 3:5-11, 1 Pet 3:15-16). That means every conversation is likely to be different with varying starts and endings, and that's ok.

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ASK QUESTIONS AND LISTEN.

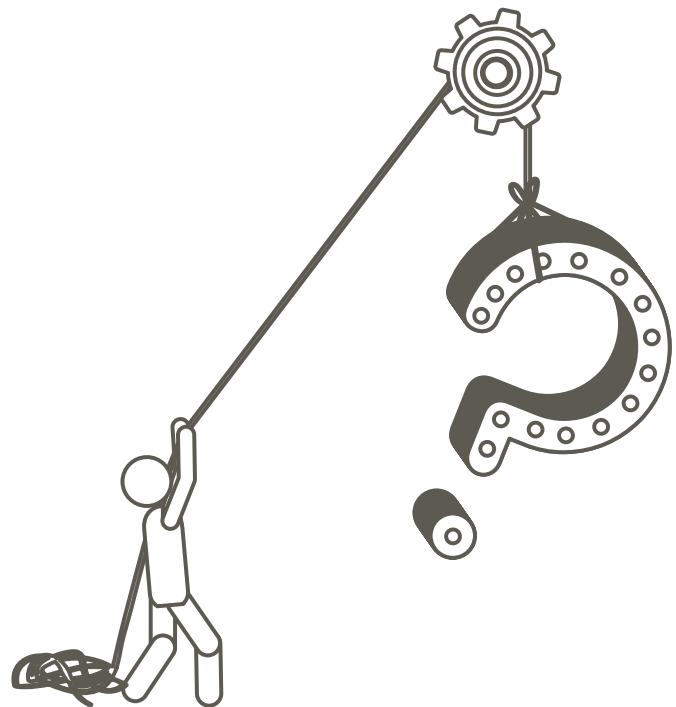
It can be intimidating to think that you have to do all the talking when you are "witnessing" to someone.

The good news is: you DON'T!

In fact, you can make it a much better experience for both sides if you ask questions and let the other person do most of the talking. Remember, God tells us to be quick to listen and slow to speak. (James 1:19) There's a reason for that. Most people shut down when they perceive they're being "preached at" anyway. After all, it's not the normal way most of us speak to each other on a day-to-day basis.



TIP: When the person you're speaking with says something that seems like an open door, an ENTRY POINT, instead of jumping in or interrupting, ask them more questions for clarity. Consider what the Apostle Paul wrote: "Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person." (Colossians 4:5-6 ESV).



Since most people tend to love talking about themselves, use that dynamic to learn about them. As you listen and ask questions about what they care about, they will see that you actually care about them. Asking questions allows you to get valuable information about a person, their thoughts and beliefs. By asking good, clear questions you will learn about the person and be able to more effectively communicate with them. As you attentively listen to their answers (this is very important), you will better understand their life, cares, concerns, interests, hurts, and overall worldview. This information will help you know how or even IF you should proceed with the conversation.

USE EVERYDAY CONVERSATIONS.

"How was your weekend?"(Or, as they asked when I lived in Chicago, "How you doin'?)

When people ask you this question, you should share something about your weekend by including what should be a highlight of our weekend— time with God and other believers in a small group or church, and/or your time in God's Word.



You could share specifically about the sermon you heard or something you learned from Scriptures or something that someone said in your group. You could share a point that was made or how you were personally challenged by what was said or what you read. Be authentic! Most importantly, once you've finished your answer (and keep it brief), you "should" ask them the same question. Then listen. Don't try to plan out everything you think you should say while they're talking. That would mean you are more concerned about your "plan" than simply listening to the person and responding with wisdom. Remember, it's a person you are talking to, made in the image of God. You need to show them respect and love, not beat them over the head with your agenda.



Tip: If you're in a church where you're NOT being challenged or growing in your faith, God may be speaking to you. Either, get more involved and help turn the "spiritual thermometer" up or find a place that's going to help you grow in your faith so that you can be even more effective. If you're NOT in a church, find a good one and plug in.

"How about them Chiefs?" (or any other sports team, preferably the Vikings or Cubbies)?

A lot of people love to talk about sports. I'll never forget a church that I spoke at in Alabama. For an hour before service began I was walking around and talking to the men in the lobby. All I heard them talk about was the local college football team! (Side note: be careful to not let sports become an idol!).

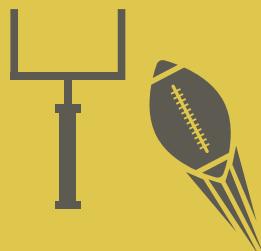
You have to admit that this is a topic that men in general spend a lot of time focusing on, so you should take advantage of it. If this isn't a passion of yours, you could consider taking a little time just to learn which athletes/coaches on your local teams are committed Christians or by reading up on some sports highlights. It's very natural to talk sports and then shift gears and share how encouraged you are by an athlete like _____

who is a committed Christian. There are lots of them. It's also worth mentioning that there are a lot of parallels between sports and Christianity. If you think about it, I'm sure you could find some clever ENTRY POINTS here.

Red..

42...

Hut. Hut.



TIP: Don't glorify or worship the men, worship and glorify the one who created them. LIVE humbly! Romans 12:16!

"I can't believe this is happening to me!"

Hopefully, as Christians, we are all living our lives in such a way that we're standing out in the places where we spend the majority of our waking hours, like at work or school. In the course of everyday conversations with your work/school mates it's not uncommon for your peers to share their



TIP: God has uniquely prepared you to reach someone that might never listen to me. He's also uniquely prepared me to reach someone who might never listen to you. As a faithful Christian, don't be ashamed of who you were, rejoice in who you ARE in Christ and what He's done for you. People are looking for hope and you have it. His name is Jesus! REMEMBER who you are! 1 Peter 2:9-10

troubles. Especially if you're living a life consistent with God's Word. When they've finished sharing, as a minimum you can offer to pray for them and their situation. Don't be deceived into thinking that praying for someone or even offering to pray for them isn't going to have an impact. God's Word indicates prayer is powerful (James 5:16).

I can't tell you how many waitresses have started to cry just because I said something like, "We're going to pray and give thanks for our food, is there anything that we can pray about for you?" When folks open up to you you can reference what God's Word has to say about the issue they're faced with and share how He has carried you through similar circumstances (if that's the case). You CAN and should offer words of encouragement and HOPE. If you notice that someone is sad or withdrawn, you should initiate a conversation. You could ask something like, "How you doin'?" (Sorry, that's only if you're in Chicago or New York.) Seriously though, you could say something like, "You seem upset, is there anything I can do to help?" "Are you ok?" It's amazing how something as simple as this opens the door to sincere conversations.



"Did you hear what happened in ----- (natural disasters in the news)?"

Disasters or difficult events that happen around the world like earthquakes, tsunamis, etc. provide us with an opportunity to speak about what the Bible says about these things, what it will be like at the End Times, and the signs that we should pay attention to. By becoming familiar with Matthew 24-25 and Luke 21, you can easily reference these teachings of Christ and show how much of what's happening in our world today is absolutely consistent with what God's Word has to say on the topic.

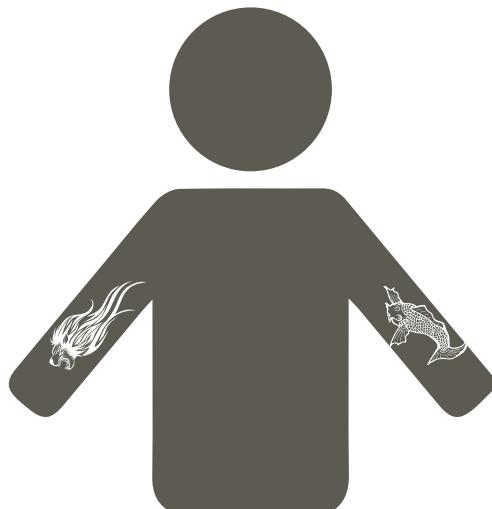


TIP: The key is to keep your eyes open to what's going on in the world and then asking the Lord to give you wisdom in transitioning from the "Good weather we're having, isn't it?" to a more spiritual conversation about things that will last for eternity. OFFER hope!

Romans 12:9-15

"What's your story?" or "Tell me about your tat!"

Yes, tattoo's (even though I don't have one and never want one) have started some amazing conversations. There's typically a meaning to what someone puts on their body. If not, I've joked with them about that as well. These really are a couple of powerful questions that you can ask someone to start to get to know them.



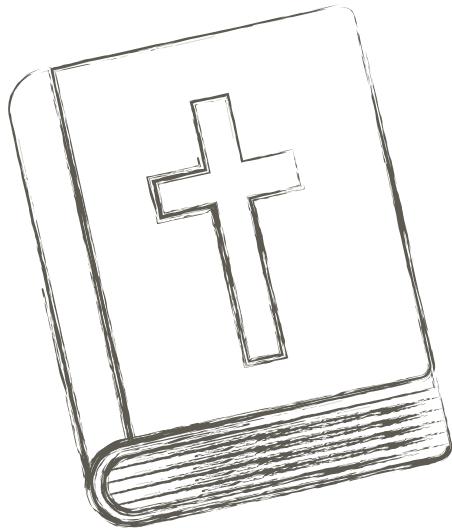
People will typically share something about themselves when asked. I remember waiting for an airplane and noticing a young man who only had one arm. His other arm didn't extend much below his elbow. I really wanted to speak with him but I didn't want him to think I was weird so I didn't approach him. Well guess what, the Lord made sure that we sat right next to each other on the plane! So, I knew God was making it clear that I needed to talk with this young man. So, I just said to him, "I'm not trying to be weird here, but can you tell me your story?" We had a GREAT conversation! It turns out that this young man was a VERY accomplished basketball player. As a matter of fact, he was on his way to try out for a professional team in Europe!

As people share their stories there is usually a topic or two that comes up that we can use to connect to God. How He is with us in our most difficult times, how He's that loving father we never had, or how He cares about justice and will remedy the wrongs/abuses we've suffered, etc. You get the idea.



• **TIP: All of us want to have a purpose and want our lives to matter. GIVE rest to the weary!**
Matthew 11:28

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. - Matthew 11:28



5

DO YOUR "HOMEWORK" BE PREPARED.

In order to share your faith, you need to know your faith. Please hear me clearly on this point. I'm NOT saying that you have to be a Bible "expert" before sharing your faith and engaging others in conversations. If that were the case, 99% of us would never be able to do it. But, we are commanded to "study" so that we know why we believe what we say we believe (2 Timothy 2:15). The Bible contains doctrines, history,

geography, and many other types of information. If we're going to share what the Bible teaches to others, we should be learning what it is teaching.

God's Word is authoritative, we are not. So, in order to share His Word authoritatively, we need to know His Word. Let me illustrate it this way. I have a friend who is a former MMA Champion. I love talking with him because he's very interesting and knowledgeable of the sport. On one occasion I asked him how much time he trained to prepare for his fights. He did the math and said, "If you count everything that I do in preparing for a fight, it works out to be 8 hours of training for every one minute of the scheduled fight." Think about that: 8 hours of training, for every minute he's scheduled to fight. How about us? How much time do we spend preparing for the spiritual battle that we're in each day? So, we need to prepare ourselves.



TIP: Train. Spend time each day in the Word. Take your time and take notes. It's also a good idea to get some books that will help train and prepare you. We recommend: "Tactics" by Greg Koukl; "I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist," by Frank Turek and Norm Geisler, and "More Than A Carpenter," by Josh McDowell.

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6

KNOW YOUR ROLE.

Don't go into conversations with a goal of "converting" someone. Hold on, don't panic! Let me explain. Of course, we want to see that person surrender to God and place their faith in Christ. I hope that goes without saying. But that transformative, restorative and redemptive work can only be done by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are NOT the Holy Spirit. Remember, our job is to plant/water, but God gives the growth (1 Cor 3:5-11). No matter how hard we try or how bad we want it to happen, we cannot force someone to repent and follow Jesus.



TIP: Don't get discouraged if the person you're talking with doesn't do what you want them to do or what you hoped they would do. Be obedient to the Lord - he will bless and reward it His way. TRUST God! Isaiah 41:10

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything,

but only God who gives the growth.

1 Corinthians 3:7

Knowing this, don't become overzealous in an effort to force or in any other way manipulate a response just to satisfy your desires. If you do, one of two things usually happens: 1) You reap "artificial fruit" which may seem real on the outside, but is not genuine and doesn't last; or 2) you hinder the Gospel by letting an emotional response be the emphasis and not the Gospel itself. God will save people when it pleases Him, not when it pleases us. It is our job to be a faithful ambassador and trust the work of the Holy Spirit both in and through us. That should give us a lot of peace in every conversation.



OWN WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW.

As people with finite minds, we're limited in our knowledge on any given topic. Even if you're passionate about knowing the Bible, you will not be able to know it all or absolutely comprehend every passage. So when you're asked a question or challenged on a given topic, if you don't know the answer, just own it.

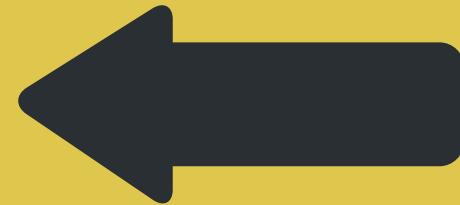
The one thing I dislike the most about what I do is "Q&A" time. I'm not comfortable because I KNOW how much I DON'T know. Many times I'll start Q&A off with something like...



"I'm so smart that I can answer every question that's going to be asked today in 3 languages! It's the truth, I can. And that's because I know how to say, 'I don't know!' in 3 languages!"

Just be honest with people. They can tell when we're blowing smoke at them anyway, and God doesn't want us to lie. So, don't make something up. False information is more destructive than no information! So, if you don't have an answer, just admit it. You can respond with something like, "Good question. I don't know about that right now, but I can look into it and get back to you on it." But PLEASE...make sure that if you say that, you do the research and get back to them in a timely manner. (In fact, this could be something the Lord did so that another conversation is scheduled. Who knows what God will do between the two meetings).

I can't tell you how many times I've gotten back to folks and they're blown out of the water. They've told me, "Wow! I've never had anyone follow up before." On more than one occasion I've heard, "You really care!" YES, I do care. But, I also know who I am apart from God and that I can only do anything worth anything if He's the one doing it. KNOW He works through us! (2 Corinthians 12:9)



BACK

**But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you,
for my power is made perfect in weakness."
Therefore I will boast all the more
gladly of my weaknesses,
so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**

- 2 Corinthians 12:9



TIP: Reasons for Hope has developed many sharable videos and other resources that can help you answer popular questions about God, the Bible, Jesus and the Christian Worldview. Between meetings you could watch or read the content and share it with the other person. You could say something like, "Hey, I like the way these guys quickly and accurately address this subject. It's made me research and think of some other things to share with you. Can't wait to meet again."

THIS IS NOT A SUGGESTION, IT'S A MUST-HAVE!

CARE TO SHARE.



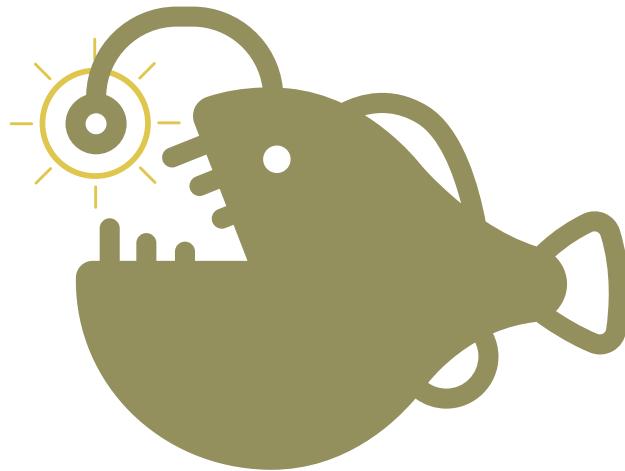
The thing you need the most of in order to start an effective and godly conversation about Jesus (or any other important spiritual topic) is a caring heart.

As a Christian, you have been given a new heart because you are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17). As such, your heart should be aligning with the heart of Christ the more you walk with him. That means, like Jesus, you'll want to talk with people about important and eternal truths.

Not only that, the world that we live in today is becoming increasingly crude, mean and just plain dark. Be the light!

If you've ever been in a cave when all the lights go out, you know it's one of the darkest places ever. In that darkness, it only takes a very small light to make a difference. Think of the Anglerfish. There are over 200 species of this ugly, yet amazing fish. Most of them live in the deep ocean, some in depths of up to a mile! That's also a very dark place. The female Anglerfish has an amazing design feature to help them survive.

A piece of their dorsal spine extends out directly above their mouths. It looks just like a fishing pole (you probably remember a fish like this in "Finding Dory"). But, instead of having a worm at the tip, they have a piece of flesh that lights up. This tiny light is seen for quite a distance and attracts their dinner. Now, I'm not saying that we should look at people as if they're dinner. But, I am saying that in a culture of meanness, someone who truly cares about people, will stand out!



It's impossible not to if the joy of Christ is in you and you're living your life for Him.

The truth is, you're going to attract some because they're looking for something beyond what they're experiencing in their everyday lives. They're looking for HOPE!

On the other hand, by standing out, you will attract some who want to destroy that light. That's o. When God is the one shining, there's NOTHING that can be done to turn that light off.

If you truly care about the lost and know that they will spend an eternity separated from a loving God if they reject Him, it won't matter if they reject you. If you're mocked, rejected or abused, remember that Christ loves you so much that He was mocked, rejected and abused for you and wasn't ashamed. He took abuse for our sake, so we can take it for His. God's promise is the same today and carries the same power as it did when He first wrote, "And surely I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). He IS with you and He WILL carry you through the challenge.

So, standout, and don't be afraid of looking like a goof! SHINE for Jesus!
Matthew 5:15-16

Stay Bold!
The Debunked Team



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