



SHARING YOUR FAITH IN THE WORKPLACE

SESSION THREE HOW YOU TALK

In 1 Peter 3:15, we are instructed “Always **be prepared to give an answer** to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...” We need to know why we believe what we believe. If we can't explain why we believe we will appear irrational to those we share with. We don't need to have all the answers but it helps to be able to show that we have seriously considered our faith. For example, people often ask about creation/evolution because they think evolution removes the foundation for believing in God. If we haven't formed a view on whether creation absolutely had to have been 6 literal days, or that maybe God could have used the process of evolution to make everything, then it's ok to say so. However, since the underlying issue at stake is the basis of faith, don't stop there; segue into discussing what the basis of our faith is instead. E.g. the basis of my faith is the experience of God's grace. But it is good to have done some thinking / reading about some of the common questions that non-Christians raise (Timothy Keller's *The Reason for God* is a good starting place).

When answering questions from non-Christians it usually is counter-productive to say, “because the Bible says so...” The authority of the bible rests on the authority of God. If they don't believe in God then they will not believe in the authority of the bible. Fundamentally, they want to know why we believe in God, if we say because the bible says so, then our argument will appear circular. **If talking about something the bible says, we need to connect it up to experience.** That way they will see that what the bible says works in our lives, and then may come to believe it has some relevance for them too.

We also need to be careful to **engage people where they are.** We live in a postmodern culture that does not believe in absolute truth. Postmodernity is suspicious of anyone who claims to have absolute truth because it is seen to silence everyone else. The issue postmodernism has with truth is not so much the idea that truth exists, but that as humans with our limited capabilities can we really claim to fully know the truth? Many people throughout history who have claimed to have the truth have used it to justify violence and oppression of others. We do not need to be afraid of postmodernity; the gospel is still the gospel regardless of the prevailing worldview. What we do need to do, however, is learn to discuss the gospel in ways that will be heard within our postmodern culture. One way of doing this is to avoid the whole discussion of whether something is absolutely true or not, but rather share our experience. **Nobody can argue with our stories.** Talk about how God has been at work in our life. Talk about what it feels like to be in relationship with Christ. Talk about how the Holy Spirit has shaped and changed who we are.

Along these same lines, we need to be careful about inviting people to church. Many people have had bad experiences of church and have been deeply hurt. We do them an injustice when we just want them to get over it. Part of the postmodern suspicion of absolute truth claims also includes a suspicion of power and authority. The church has exercised a lot of power over the last 2000 years, and hasn't always used it for good.

We should not let anger at the church be a reason why people don't get to meet Christ. The point of sharing our faith is to make disciples, sometimes church will be a barrier to that. We need to let people talk about their negative experiences of church. Jesus was always very angry with religious people who made it difficult for people to know God. We have an opportunity to reconcile people to God by telling them how Jesus felt about those religious people, and how much compassion He has for how they have been hurt. Sometimes we will just need to walk with people while they heal, before they will be ready for church.

QUESTIONS

1. What sort of questions have you been asked by non-Christians about faith? Have these stumped you?
2. Have you had experiences of talking about what the bible says, and found that the door is then closed to further discussion? What experiences have you had when they were open to discussing it?
3. What are some experiences you have had that illustrate biblical principles or ideas? If it came up, how could you share those stories in a way that was helpful, but that wouldn't leave the person feeling forced to a particular conclusion?
4. Have you had any discussions with anyone who has said, “That's great for you, but it's not my truth”? What are some possible approaches to responding to that statement that will not leave the person feeling that you are trying to force them to go along with you without hearing them?
5. Have you had any discussions with people who have been hurt by the church? Have you had any discussions with people about God that have gone really well until you invited them to church, after which they were no longer open? What could you do differently?