

HOW TO TALK TO AN UNBELIEVER

Wednesday Night Q&A Study

Key Text: 1 Peter 3:15 — “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:”

Introduction: Our Goal Is a Conversation, Not a Confrontation

Many believers want to witness but feel unsure about how to begin. We may know the Gospel, yet struggle with how to move an ordinary conversation toward spiritual things without sounding forced or argumentative.

The goal is not merely to win an argument. The goal is to lovingly bring a person face-to-face with the truth of the Gospel. A good Gospel conversation combines courage with kindness, truth with grace, and speaking with listening.

We should never be ashamed of the Gospel, but we also don't need to make the conversation awkward. Jesus often dealt with people personally, asked questions, listened, and then brought the conversation to the truth they most needed.

1. PRAY BEFORE YOU SPEAK

Evangelism begins before the conversation begins. Pray for opportunities, discernment, boldness, wisdom, and for the heart of the person you may speak with.

Prayer reminds us that we cannot save anyone. We are witnesses; God must work in the heart.

Colossians 4:3 — “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ...”

2. TAKE THE INITIATIVE — BUT BE NATURAL

Do not always wait for an unbeliever to bring up God. Be willing to begin the conversation, introduce yourself, show genuine friendliness, and take an interest in the person.

A spiritual conversation does not have to begin with a spiritual sentence. Ordinary conversation can become the bridge to an eternal conversation.

Look for natural openings involving family, work, background, difficulties, hopes, current events, church experiences, or questions about life.

3. FIND COMMON GROUND

People are more willing to talk when they know we are genuinely interested in them rather than merely trying to deliver a speech.

Common ground is not compromise. Paul could understand his audience without surrendering truth. Learn something about the person and begin where they are.

Colossians 4:6 — “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.”

4. ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

Questions can make a Gospel conversation less threatening. They allow the other person to talk, reveal what the person actually believes, lower defenses, and naturally create opportunities for deeper questions.

Do not interrogate them. One or two sincere questions followed by careful listening are often better than a memorized list fired one after another.

Useful everyday questions include: What was church like for you growing up? What is most important to you right now? What do you think gives life meaning? If you could ask God one question, what would it be?

5. MOVE FROM THE NATURAL TO THE SPIRITUAL

At some point, the conversation must move beyond general friendliness. We are not merely trying to be liked; we want to point people to Christ.

A simple transition can be: “Do you have any spiritual beliefs?” Another is: “Did you grow up going to church?” Or: “Can I ask you a spiritual question?”

The transition does not have to be clever. It needs to be sincere.

6. LISTEN BEFORE YOU CORRECT

Let the person explain what they believe and why they believe it.

You do not have to correct every inaccurate statement immediately. Chasing every side issue can turn a Gospel conversation into a debate about secondary matters and prevent you from ever reaching Christ.

James 1:19 — “...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath.”

Listening does not mean agreement. It means you care enough to understand the person before answering them.

7. ASK QUESTIONS THAT REVEAL THEIR SPIRITUAL CONDITION

These questions can help move a conversation toward the Gospel:

- Do you have any spiritual beliefs?
- Who is Jesus Christ to you?
- Do you believe in Heaven and Hell?
- If you died today, where do you believe you would go?

- Why do you believe God would let you into Heaven?
- If what you believe is not true, would you want to know?

Their answers help you understand whether they are trusting Christ, trusting religion, trusting their own goodness, or rejecting spiritual truth altogether.

8. DO NOT GET SIDETRACKED INTO AN ARGUMENT

You may hear statements about evolution, suffering, hypocrites, other religions, politics, church scandals, or difficult Bible passages. Some questions deserve an answer, but not every objection must be settled before the Gospel can be presented.

You can say, “That is a good question, and I would be glad to talk about it. But could I first show you what the Bible says about how a person can know they are saved?”

2 Timothy 2:24–25 teaches that the servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle, patient, and able to teach.

9. SHARE YOUR TESTIMONY — BUT GET TO CHRIST

A personal testimony can build a bridge because it tells what Christ has done in your life. Keep the focus on Jesus rather than making yourself the hero of the story.

A simple testimony can follow three parts: What I was before Christ; how I came to understand and trust the Gospel; what Christ has done in my life since.

Your testimony is a bridge to the Gospel, not a substitute for the Gospel.

10. SHARE THE GOSPEL CLEARLY AND SIMPLY

Eventually, we must explain the message itself. Do not assume a person understands words such as saved, grace, repentance, or born again.

A clear Gospel presentation should explain:

- Our Sin — Romans 3:23
- Sin’s Penalty — Romans 6:23
- God’s Love and Christ’s Death — Romans 5:8
- Christ’s Death, Burial, and Resurrection — 1 Corinthians 15:3–4
- Salvation Is by Grace, Not Works — Ephesians 2:8–9
- The Need to Personally Believe on Christ — Romans 10:9–13; Acts 16:31

Keep bringing the conversation back to the Person and work of Jesus Christ.

11. ANSWER QUESTIONS HONESTLY

If they ask something you do not know, do not bluff. It is perfectly acceptable to say, “I don’t know, but I would like to find the answer and talk with you again.”

That kind of honesty can build credibility and provide an opportunity for another conversation.

When answering, let Scripture carry the authority. Our confidence is not in having a clever response to everything; it is in the truth of God’s Word.

12. RESPECT THEIR RESPONSE AND TRUST GOD WITH THE RESULTS

Some will believe. Some will want more time. Some will reject what you say. Our responsibility is faithfulness, not forcing a decision.

Do not pressure someone merely to repeat words. Make sure they understand the Gospel and are responding to Christ.

1 Corinthians 3:6 — “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.”

A conversation that does not end in conversion is not necessarily a failed conversation. You may have planted a seed that God will use later.

13. LIVE IN A WAY THAT SUPPORTS WHAT YOU SAY

Our life does not replace verbal witness, but our conduct can either reinforce or undermine it.

People who know us will watch how we handle pressure, how we treat others, how we speak, and whether the Christ we proclaim appears to make a difference in us.

Matthew 5:16 — “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

A Simple Conversation Flow

1. Start friendly — talk to the person, not at the person.
2. Ask about them — background, family, interests, church experience.
3. Listen carefully — learn what they actually believe.
4. Transition — “Can I ask you a spiritual question?”
5. Diagnose — ask about Jesus, Heaven, salvation, or what they are trusting.
6. Share — give your testimony briefly and present the Gospel clearly from Scripture.
7. Invite a response — ask what they think and whether they are ready to trust Christ.

8. Leave the door open — whether they believe immediately or not, remain gracious and willing to talk again.

Q&A: Common Concerns

Q: What if I am afraid I will say the wrong thing?

A: Know the Gospel, pray, and speak with humility. You do not have to be an expert. Your job is to faithfully point them to Christ.

Q: What if they ask a question I cannot answer?

A: Admit that you do not know. Write the question down, study it, and return to the conversation.

Q: What if they become argumentative?

A: Do not match their spirit. Stay calm, gracious, and focused on Christ. A heated argument rarely makes the Gospel clearer.

Q: What if they say they are already a Christian?

A: Ask gracious questions: “Tell me how you came to know Christ,” or “What are you trusting in to get you to Heaven?” Their answer may reveal whether they understand biblical salvation.

Q: Should I build a relationship first or share the Gospel immediately?

A: There is no single formula. Some opportunities are brief and call for immediate clarity; others develop through a relationship. Do not use relationship-building as an excuse never to speak, and do not use urgency as an excuse to treat people impersonally.

Q: What if they reject me?

A: Their response is ultimately to the message, not your worth. Remain kind, pray for them, and leave the door open for another conversation.

Five Questions Worth Remembering

- Do you have any spiritual beliefs?
- Who is Jesus Christ to you?
- Do you believe in Heaven and Hell?
- If you died today, where do you believe you would go — and why?
- If what you believe is not true, would you want to know?

Closing Challenge

Talking to an unbeliever is not about having a perfect script. It is about caring enough to speak, listening enough to understand, knowing the Gospel well enough to explain it, and trusting God enough to leave the results with Him. We should never be ashamed of the truth, but we should always carry that truth with

grace. Ask questions. Listen carefully. Avoid needless arguments. Open the Scriptures. Point them to Christ. Then trust God to give the increase.

Sources:

LifeWay Research — “8 Steps to Deeper Conversations With Non-Christians”

Wholeheartedly Messy — “A Step-by-Step Guide to Sharing Jesus with Nonbelievers.”

Always Be Ready — “Starting Conversations with Nonbelievers | Evangelism Basics.”

Scripture quotations in this study are from the King James Version (KJV).