**1. Motivate**

How might you respond if someone asked, “Why should I believe in God?”

* Jesus said He was the way and the truth and the life, the only way
* God loves you, He sent His Son, Jesus to live, die, and rise again to give you eternal life
* Quote John 3:16
* God is the Creator of all things
* God will judge our sins, but has provided a way out
* Jesus came that you might have abundant life

**2. Transition**

Today we consider why we need to be able to answer the tough questions about Christianity.

We will be learning that such questions might not be so tough to answer.

**3. Bible Study**

3.1 Prepare to Give the Reasons

Listen for how to be prepared.

1 Peter 3:14b-16 (NIV) "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened." 15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 16 keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Why do you think Peter thought it was important to be ready to be able to respond to inquirers about hope?

* it’s part of the Great Commission
* our lives are meant to point people to Christ
* how we live should demonstrate the change that salvation can make in the way we live
* we also need to be able to verbalize what we believe and why
* not all of us are expert apologists, but we can share the basic Truth of the Good News of salvation

What relevance does this have for contemporary believers?

* many people in our culture have little or no exposure to the Gospel message
* if you grew up in the church, the salvation story is part of your mindset, but many other people don’t have that basis of beliefs
* the world view of life is contrary to the Biblical view

How do we begin to understand and to prepare to explain your hope in Christ?

* give thought to what you believe, write it out
* read and study God’s Word
* take a class in witnessing
* practice

Consider these four categories of American non-Christian beliefs

* **Relativist** – Familiar with Christian spiritual truths but reject the exclusiveness (e.g., hold positions such as "There is no absolute truth," "Your truth works for you but not for me,” etc.)
* **Antagonistic** – Reject all spiritual truths as false (atheist) or have other religious backgrounds (Muslim, Hindu, etc.)
* **Apathetic** - May be familiar with Christian spiritual truths but don’t see the relevance of these truths in their lives (e.g., responses like “Whatever”)
* **Unfamiliar** - Know little, if anything, about Christian spiritual truths

Conversation example:

*You give your personal testimony to your co-worker or relative, and they reply, “Well, I’m glad you had that experience. It might be true for you, but it’s not true for me. I believe in a different truth.”*

How would a combination of apologetics, evangelism, and discipleship help you respond?

* having studied your Bible, you know what is Truth and what is not
* you know and have practiced a good method of presenting the way of salvation
* you know some basic answers to typical questions or objections of an unbeliever
* the person who has an ongoing close relationship with the Lord will be able to relate what they have personally experienced

Why might the use of Scripture not be useful in “pre-evangelism”?

* a person might have no understanding of what the Bible is
* if they do know what it is, they might believe it is authoritative or think it is full of contradictions, it is not credible, not relevant
* they might have negative biases due to personal experiences
* can be more effective to start with reason, history, science, philosophy, or personal testimony—things they might already trust

That said, Scripture is always powerful, and the Holy Spirit can use it at any time.

* The key is knowing when and how to introduce it effectively

3.2 Prepare the Unbeliever to Hear the Gospel

Listen for curiosity expressed.

Acts 17:17-20 (NIV) So he reasoned in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. 18 A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to dispute with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. 19 Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? 20 You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we want to know what they mean."

What evidence does the passage that people wanted to hear what Paul had to say?

* the were willing to debate with him
* they took him to a meeting of the Areopagus
* they asked to know more about this new teaching
* what you are saying is strange to us, we want to know what it means

What indicates that they might not have been all that sincere about really knowing

* the passage states they liked to present and hear new ideas
* they just liked to hear about new things
* they ridiculed him, called him a “babbler” or “seed picker”

What are some questions or issues that might come up when you talk about Jesus to some of the groups we looked at?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Relativist | Antagonist | Apathetic |
| * *only* way to heaven?
* why your definition of what is right and wrong
* what about people who have never heard of Jesus
 | * religion is a crutch
* Bible full of contradictions
* why would wipe out a whole people group?
* I’m a \_\_\_, I have my own God
 | * why should I care
* don’t want to decide right now
 |

Can debating religious ideas ever be an effective way to witness about Jesus?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Yes | No |
| * the Gospel has a logical basis
* it can be successfully debated
* even if not everyone is convinced, the basic salvation message gets presented
* people who listen will hear the Gospel
 | * people who do this debating pretty much have their minds made up
* God's Holy Spirit has to do the convincing/convicting – not our fancy arguments
* the adversarial context may cause people to miss the peace and joy that comes with finding Jesus
 |

3.3 Preparing the Next Generation

Listen for implications for the future.

2 Timothy 1:13, 2:1-2 (NIV) What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. … You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.

What was Paul’s plan for ensuring the spread of the gospel?

* Timothy was to disciple people in the church
* teach them spiritual Truth
* train them to be teachers also
* teach them how to train others to be teachers
* Timothy was to replicate himself, in a sense

What is the point of training others … why is this not just “passing the buck?”

* it’s the principle of multiplication or exponential growth
* if I can train two people to live for Jesus and they in turn can each train two and so on, we end up doubling the kingdom in every cycle
* in 10 cycles/repetitions of this process, 1 person on fire for God can grow to more than 1000 such people (210 = 1024)

How can sharing apologetic topics with new believers strengthen their walk with Christ?

* It can be an important part of their discipleship.
* they can gain understanding of key doctrines and grow more confident in sharing their faith,

Give some examples of questions your preteen, high school, or college-aged (grand)child has asked about the Christian faith

* Do you believe in evolution?
* How old is the earth?
* Did God really create the world in seven literal days?
* What do you believe about gender identity issues?

How can we respond – especially if you don’t know the answer?

* look at what God’s Word actually says
* admit it when you don’t know the answer
* determine you will find out
* pray for the young person who is truly seeking or maybe on the edge of giving up religion

Application

* List names of people that you know who you think fall into the relativist, antagonistic, apathetic, and unfamiliar categories**.**
* Think about the questions they might ask. Study those topics so you are "prepared" to respond with "gentleness and respect."
* Pray about starting spiritual conversations with them based on where they are.

 Crossword





You can make more sense of these clues if you open your Bible to
Acts 17:17 – 20 (NIV)

Call Melvis if you get stuck