

Simply Sharing Your Faith

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(this sheet can downloaded for free at: www.commonconfession.net)

Guidelines for “Talking Faith” with Others:

- Get Personal... About Yourself!
 - sharing your faith means communicating the message of what Jesus means to you [John 4:29]
 - don't be afraid to speak in subjective terms (not only is it genuine, but less threatening)
- Share Faith, Not Religion
 - faith has to do with the trust of our hearts, not a list of rules to follow to be saved [Eph 2:8-9]
 - God's goal is not to create "good religious people" -- but people who trust in Jesus Christ
- Give, Don't Take
 - in sharing your faith, think of yourself as one who is giving something: the 'good news' [1 Cor 15:1]
 - your goal is not to "win" or to "get something out of them" (agreement, proper response, etc.)
- Don't Be Defensive (or Offensive)
 - don't assume a position of superiority ("I know better"), it closes off real conversation [Rom. 12:3]
 - keep the conversation open, don't be afraid to let the other person say what they think
 - don't feel you need to defend God (or God's reputation); God is able to defend himself
- Ask Questions: Try to Understand Why They Believe What They Do
 - most people's theology is not based on reasoned thought, but on emotional experience [John 1:50]
 - you must go to the place where they are at, if you want to tell them where you are at
- Be Honest and Consistent
 - what you say you believe ought to match your real life; faith without works is dead [James 2:17]
 - be honest about your own struggles, and where your faith has addressed your real life
- Get to the Bottom Line
 - strip away fancy words and get to what really counts -- where does our hope rest? [1 Cor 2:1]
 - as ambassadors for Christ [2 Cor 5:20], it is essential to name the name of Jesus Christ

Things to Listen For as They Speak:

- Where Their View is Based on Human Merit
 - all false belief systems rest ultimate hope on what we do to bring about our well-being/salvation
- Where What They Say is Inconsistent with Itself
 - many people hold several contradictory (and mutually exclusive) beliefs at the same time
- Where Their View Eliminates God from the Picture
 - any spiritual perspective that does not account for God's central and active presence is flawed

Responses Which Express Disagreement in a Respectful Way:

- "Speaking for myself, I would find it hard to get any strength from that . . ."
 - couched in subjective terms, it allows you to express the lack of hope outside of Christ
- "Personally, I've never found that to be helpful . . ."
 - allows you to address their position based on personal experience (ie. 'been there, tried that')
- "The way that I've come to understand God's work in my life is . . ."
 - allows you the opportunity for personal testimony, with the use of examples or anecdotes

Some Key Christian Concepts to Keep in Mind As You Talk:

- We Are Saved by Christ Alone
 - In Biblical Terms: We are saved by Christ alone, not by human works, decisions, or cooperation
 - In Secular Terms: We can't make it in life on our own, we need something outside of ourselves
- Human Sin is a Reality
 - In Biblical Terms: We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves
 - In Secular Terms: Coming to terms with a problem requires acknowledging the problem's power
- God is the Source of Truth
 - In Biblical Terms: What we know of God comes only through what God has revealed in his Word
 - In Secular Terms: A self-made belief system is only as real as our human imagination
- God Works through Natural Means
 - In Biblical Terms: God uses real, physical instruments (like us) to get his work done in the world
 - In Secular Terms: We live in a real world, beliefs have meaning 'where the rubber hits the road'
- Faith is Trust
 - In Biblical Terms: True faith is resting our hope Christ alone for grace, mercy, and salvation
 - In Secular Terms: Everybody looks to something for well-being/security, the question is what

Suggested Scripture for Those Asking Questions of Faith:

- Old Testament: The Book of Psalms
 - shows a wide variety of emotions and experiences reflected in the lives of people of faith: from the confession of physical and spiritual need, to the joy of praise and thanksgiving
- New Testament: The Gospel of John
 - shows a number examples of people's reactions to Jesus: faith, unbelief, doubt, skepticism, etc. yet John clearly communicates Jesus as the divine Savior of the world (as in John 3:16)