



“Conversations” Month March 2023

A 2022 study from Lifeway Research reveals a dichotomy. Most Christians in America (65%) agree “sharing with a nonbeliever how to become a Christian is the most loving thing they can do for them.” Yet, most (52%) also say “encouraging someone to change their religious beliefs is offensive and disrespectful.” And fear threatens almost half of American Christians, with 42% saying that “sharing with a non-believer how they can become a Christian is scary.”

In another study, 56% of Protestant churchgoers pray at least once a week for opportunities to tell others about Jesus. Yet, 55% hadn’t shared with someone how to become a Christian even once over a six-month period.

It appears that despite a deep concern for co-workers, neighbors, and the nation, most churchgoers feel frozen—unable to engage in spiritual conversations.

Yet Christians all over our nation are overcoming the fear and fretting related to sharing good news conversations with others. One lady stated what changed her in this area, “When I realized God is bigger than my fears, I experienced such freedom. This helped me make it through one conversation, and then another, and another.”

Let us consider three insights:

- 1. Trusting God is always worth it.** This leads us to becoming an open and willing vessel in God’s hands. It is interesting to note that in the same research, 51% of Americans, including 60% of religiously unaffiliated, say they’re curious why people are so devoted to their faith. This means they are open to conversations. Many even welcome them.
- 2. The conversation usually starts small.** Begin with a basic conversation. Ask someone how they’re doing, where they’re from, or if you can pray for them about anything. Sometimes, people are closed off. But we can still pray for that person from afar. Sometimes, the conversation leads to a gospel presentation.
- 3. The results belong to God.** Jesus is Lord of the harvest, and we are co-laborers with Him. He works in us and He’s with us. We can see meaningful conversations as outpourings from the work God is doing within us and through us.

Matt Queen, professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, makes further comments. He believes evangelism is a spiritual discipline believers must intentionally practice and plan for. He mentions misconceptions about evangelistic conversations: 1) “I don’t have the gift of evangelism.” He states that is OK. Spiritual gifts are given for the primary benefit of the church. Evangelism primarily benefits the unchurched. 2) “If I invite somebody to church, that’s evangelism.” But just because you invite someone to church doesn’t mean they know about their sin and Jesus’s death, burial, and resurrection. 3) “I should live a moral lifestyle, and if I live holy enough, somebody will see me, and they’ll say, ‘Oh, there’s something

different about you!” He states that the New Testament shows that words are necessary to share the gospel.

He further states that there are helpful ways to prompt a consistent rhythm of evangelism. One of them is to have a quantitative goal. For example: “I’m going to endeavor to share the gospel once a day/week.” Don’t put guilt on yourself, but if we don’t plan time for evangelism, we’ll fail to find time for evangelism. Another principle is the Holy Spirit principle. Evangelize when you get that impression from the Holy Spirit. The five-minute principle is to evangelize to someone when you’re with them for five minutes or more and don’t know about their salvation. The homestead principle is to evangelize when somebody comes to your home or place of work. Finally, the detour principle is to evangelize whenever you have an interruption in your day. All these help us to have spiritual conversations with others.

Gregory Koukl gives us a core tactic in spiritual conversations. He calls it the Columbo Tactic, from the TV detective who always asked questions. It is “carefully selected questions for an inoffensive offense.” 1) **Gather information**; “*What do you mean by that?*” This helps us to know WHAT the person thinks and immediately engages the nonbeliever. There is no pressure in the question and it puts you in the driver’s seat. 2) **Reverse the burden of proof**; “*How did you come to that conclusion?*” This puts the responsibility on them and keeps us from the bad habit of having to refute everything. This helps us to know HOW the person thinks. 3) **Know the point you want to make**; Know the solution and how to get to your point. The best way to do this is to get the person to affirm pieces leading to your point. He says “anticipate, reflect, practice!”

Conversation Starters:

- How can I pray for you today? (Especially good with restaurant servers)
- When you attend church, where do you attend?
- What’s the best thing going on in your life right now?
- What’s been the thing you lean on when life gets hard?
- What role would you say faith plays in your life?
- If it turned out that God did exist, and you had an opportunity to ask God any question and get an immediate answer, what would it be?
- What single thing would you like to make certain you do (if at all possible) during your lifetime?
- What are you reading that is not an assignment or required by your work?
- In your opinion, how does one become a Christian?
- Why do people do what they do? What are the assumptions you make about people?
- Has anything ever happened to you that was dramatic, personal, or spectacular enough to cause you to be certain there is a God who is both infinite and personally caring?
- What is the key to maintaining balance in your life?
- What are 2 or 3 major truths upon which you have based your decision-making?
- In your opinion, who was/is Jesus Christ?
- If you could know God personally, would you be interested?
- Have you ever read the Bible?
- If Jesus was who He claimed to be, how would that affect your life?

