

Talking Begins With Your Ears

Do you remember the adage about having two ears and just one mouth? That certainly applies to opportunities to share your faith with others. If you talk *before* you listen you are guessing what approach would be helpful to the person you seek to encourage. Listening will give you clues about what is important in their life. What are their concerns and needs? Where are they on their faith journey? Speaking first may be like the guy on the street corner, yelling and holding signs saying, “The end is near; repent!” The “speak-first” approach will cause many people to run or at least turn away.

So, if an opportunity comes up, how do we approach someone, encouraging them in the faith?

Listening to the other person is critical. Give the other person your undivided attention. Establish a general conversation first as you get to know them. Find out what is important to them and say something like, “I can relate to that.” Look for things you have in common but be careful not to take over the conversation by expounding on your experiences. This will help you connect with them. Listen for their readiness before moving on in the process.

Only after you have a rapport with the person are you ready to move on. Now, the listening roles can be reversed and they are tuned into you. The door is now open for you to ***share your story.***

- Talk about what you were like before you came to Christ. This will help them see that your relationship with Jesus was important and perhaps life-changing for you. They may wish for this, too.
- Secondly, you can tell them how you felt at the time you came to Christ. The other person may wish to have that uplifting feeling.
- Thirdly, you can describe how being a follower of Christ has enriched your life ever since. The hope is that people may desire an enriched life through faith, too.

Now you can share God’s word with them. If you quote Bible verses before people are ready they may shut down or their eyes may glaze over. Guiding them gently with some well-chosen Bible references will show them that the Bible has wisdom for them, too. Utilize simple, short, easy to understand verses. There are all kinds of inexpensive pocket reference books that show verses by topics and the internet can provide verses relating to specific topics. Here is a general progression of Bible references to show a role God can play in their life.

- ***God’s love is for us all, including them.*** (*John 3:16, 1 John 4:19*)
- Humans are sinful by nature and have challenges in their lives. (*Romans 5:8, Luke 19:10, Romans 8:1*)
- ***God responded*** to human brokenness by sending His son, Jesus Christ, to die for us, including you and me. (*1 John 4:10, Psalm 34:18, Psalm 147:3, Luke 2:11*)
- ***Receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.*** He will give us peace. (*1 Corinthians 13:13, John 16:33, 1 Peter 5:7, Philippians 4:7, Psalm 29:11*)

Are you concerned that you might be out of your comfort zone when talking with others about their faith? Are you afraid you don’t have all the answers? You have nothing to fear. Just be yourself and be sincere. The Holy Spirit will be with you and will help you to select the words to use. Trusting God’s guidance and your sincerity is enough to be helpful. The connection you make will help others to connect to Jesus.

It all boils down to three simple steps: Listen, Connect and then Help.

Scripture: “When you are brought before synagogues, rulers and authorities, do not worry about how you will defend yourselves or what you will say, for the Holy Spirit will teach you at that time what you should say”(Luke 12:11-12).

Question: Whom would you like to help strengthen in their faith? Do you trust that God will help you as you encourage others in the faith?

Prayer: Heavenly Father. We don’t need to have all the answers to the questions people might ask. Be with and guide us whenever we have the opportunity to help others grow in their faith. Amen.

For more information: The steps in this devotion come from a workshop attended at the US Mission Network conference, in a session lead by “cru,” formerly the Campus Crusade for Christ. There are many worthwhile materials available to you through their website, www.cru.org.