

Smoky Mountain Reflections

December 2013

Greetings in Christ, What I hope to do in this article is give you some easy pointers on how to share the Gospel in a way that is non-confrontational and lets you trust in God to do the heavy lifting. We do not have to be afraid to share our faith with others if we come at it from a well thought out simple process, so here we go.

1. **Follow the golden rule**, if you treat others as you would like to be treated, then you are well on your way to sharing your faith. If you seek to love others (friends, neighbors, classmates, and/or coworkers) by being kind, caring, concerned, helpful, and respectful, you are laying a firm foundation for building relationships that will make you more comfortable sharing and your friends, neighbors, classmates, and/or coworkers more willing to listen. It really is that simple. Good relationships with others create a positive environment for God's word and the Holy Spirit to do their faith creating work. God does not need you. He simply gives you the opportunity to be a part of spreading His good news.

80% of the people who join churches do so because they were invited by a friend or family member. And 80% of our neighbors do not go to church. The field is ripe for harvest. We just need to be serious about living out our faith in the presence of others.

2. **Three simple questions**, There is no reason for you to try to evangelize someone who goes to a Trinitarian Christian church. So, the **first** question should be "Do you go to church?" If the answer is yes and they know the name of their pastor, the conversation can be one of comparing the basics of Christian faith, the 10 commandments, the Creeds, the Lord's prayer, Baptism, the Lords Supper, and Confession and Absolution. If the answer is no that leads to the **second** question, "What do you believe?" this can be asked in a kind and curious way, and be ready to listen....most people are ready to tell you what they believe. Once you have heard their explanation of what they believe, move to the **third** question "Would you mind if I shared with you what I believe and why I believe it?"

3. **Do not argue**. You cannot argue people into heaven. Arguing often leads to one or both of you becoming defensive, uncooperative, or stubborn, not to mention the possibility of hurt feelings and unloving comments. (see #1 above) This does not mean you cannot be passionate and enthusiastic about what you believe but remember your body language or voice inflection reveal how you feel more than you realize. So, if you hear yourself getting loud make sure it is out of love and concern and not anger and hostility.

4. **Know what you believe**. You do not have to be an expert, but you should be able to clearly explain what you believe. God being all powerful reveals to us clearly all we need to know in His word, the 66 books of the Holy Bible. For example, possibly citing a text like "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness*" (2 Tim 3:16) would be helpful. Simple truths like the fact that we are all sinners and have fallen short (Rom 3:23) is another example. And certainly, the fact that Jesus redeemed all of mankind on the Cross (John 3:16) can explain the basics of our Christian faith. We know the Holy Spirit is the one who does the work of creating faith through God's word (Isaiah 55:11) but He blesses us to be the feet that carry our mouths to speak that good news. Do not be afraid that you will be asked a question you cannot answer. Carry a pocket-sized bible or a bible app on your phone and be ready to look it up together. If you are still stumped you have 24/7 access to a trained theologian, your pastor, who is always ready to help you find biblical answers to difficult questions.

5. **Pray**. We all know that sharing our faith is easier said than done however if we take a few small steps we can be ready. "*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*" (1 Peter 3:15) Besides having a few scripture texts ready to go, the best thing to always do before deliberately attempting to share your faith is pray. Pray to the author and perfecter of your faith that you might help him create faith in those to whom He has called you to witness. Any time is a great time to invite those you know who do not go to church to come and worship with you and see and hear all the great things God wants to give us all in His service. Also prepare them for what will happen to avoid awkward surprises, you know what to expect in worship they do not.

In Christ, Pastor Portier