

# Respond to Opportunities to Speak about Jesus

by TOvermiller April 11, 2018 0 comment



Praying for opportunities to speak about Jesus is an important step in being an effective gospel witness (Col 4:2-4). And living in a way that anticipates such opportunities is another important step (Col 4:5). But when you take these steps, you need to be prepared to speak when opportunities come your way (Col 4:6). Perhaps it is appropriate to call this responsive evangelism, that is, learning how to respond when unplanned witnessing opportunities occur. To this end, Paul gives valuable advice.

## A Gracious Answer

When your Christian behavior prompts nonbelievers to ask questions, you should answer with grace and with salt. What does this mean? Grace refers to speaking in a gracious manner. In another place, Paul describes this demeanor in more detail (2 Tim 2:24-25). It features gentleness, thoughtful explanations, patience, and humility. As such, the believer should refrain from verbal arguments and heated debates. As a believer, you have a wonderful opportunity not only to speak to nonbelievers about Christ in this way, but you have the opportunity to consciously depend on Christ to enable you with genuine graciousness that comes from him.

*The gospel is offensive, but you don't have to be! And you don't have to be dull, either.*

Believers also need to answer with *salt*. Just as salt enhances the flavor of a food, making it more interesting and palatable to eat, so believers need to speak in an interesting and engaging way. On one hand, even though the gospel is good news (indeed, the best news of all time), it is also an offensive message. In fact, Paul describes the message of the cross as “foolishness to those who are perishing” (1 Cor 1:18). Yes, the gospel is offensive, but you don't have to be! And you don't have to be dull, either. Bad manners. Boring language. Christian jargon. Avoid these things by speaking in an interesting and helpful way. Though you should never alter the content of the gospel or entertain people with the gospel, you should do what you can to speak about Christ in a captivating way.

## A Suitable Answer

When you answer questions about Christ from nonbelievers, you also need to answer each one in a suitable way. Paul says “that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” As you can tell, he emphasizes *each one*. By doing this, he teaches us to be sensitive to every situation. Not every person and not every question requires the same response. The same gospel? Yes. But the identical presentation? No.

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To know how to respond to a situation, you need to both pray for wisdom and observe the situation at hand. Is the person asking the question a skeptic or a seeker? Is it the first time they have heard about Christ, or do they know a lot of things already? Do they have extended time available to talk or are they in a rush to get somewhere? These factors and more will determine how you shape your answer. Not every situation will be the same.

A prison guard once asked Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). He answered, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31). At another time, some philosophers asked him, “May we know what this new doctrine is of which you speak?” (Acts 17:19). He responded by making a thoughtful comparison of the gospel of Christ to the popular religions and philosophies that they preferred (Acts 17:22-31). By observing these two scenarios, you can see what Paul meant when he said, “That you may know how you ought to answer every one.” In fact, no witnessing scenario in the New Testament is identical to another.

*Don't be a “gospel-breathing robot” that spits out a mechanical gospel presentation to every question that comes your way.*

When opportunities arise to speak about Jesus because people ask you questions, answer them the way that Paul describes. Be gracious like Jesus and speak in an interesting way that understands the situation and responds accordingly. Don't be a “gospel-breathing robot” that spits out a mechanical gospel presentation to every question that comes your way. Instead, answer in a thoughtful and engaging way that is observant and sensitive to the Holy Spirit.