



Jesus is All About Life!

Jesus said "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." (John 10:10)

ALLC Personal Evangelism Series Session 3 – Being a Witnesses

Focus of today's session: 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 Pet.3:15)

3.1 Introduction

As Christ's witnesses, we testify to what God has done for us through our Lord, Jesus Christ. Testifying is *not* "bashing someone over the head with a Bible," but presenting the truth of an experience, *our* experience, with the living Christ. In the process of discussing our faith with someone, it is natural that questions will be raised. Mostly, the enquirer will be seeking a satisfactory answer to a genuine need for information. Sometimes, it is true, that an enquirer will be responding from cynicism, but if we respond with sincerity and honesty to both, the first group will gain our respect, and the second will minimally have received information that the Holy Spirit can use to convict them of their need for Christ.

In our session today, we will review some of the common questions that people raise about the Gospel.

3.2 But don't all religions lead to God?

Naturally, proponents of all religions claim that theirs is the only true religion, which inevitably means that many if not most people are sincerely wrong in their faith! But only three, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, claim to provide the adherent with some kind of relationship with the one true God.

The faith of *Islam* is based on the Qur'an (Koran) which states that all Muslims must believe in God (Allah), and follow the "pillars" of Islam (prayers, alms, etc.), which differ somewhat between the two main sects. The Qur'an indicates that there is a bodily resurrection at some time after death, which will be followed by the gathering of mankind, culminating in their judgment by Allah, at which time each person's ultimate fate will be decided. The Qur'an lists several sins that can condemn a person to hell at that judgement, such as disbelief, usury and dishonesty.

Judaism is the covenantal relationship between the Children of Israel (later, the Jewish nation) and God. Judaism is primarily focussed on life here and now rather than on the afterlife, and does not have much dogma about the latter, nor certainty about one's ultimate destiny. It is possible for an Orthodox Jew to believe that the souls of the righteous dead go to a place similar to the Christian heaven, or that they are reincarnated through many lifetimes, or that they simply wait in limbo (Sheol) until the coming of the Messiah. Conversion to Judaism is rare since the coming of Jesus Christ, because His claim to have fulfilled the requirements of Judaism, and to have ushered in a new covenant with God, has been accepted by virtually all truth-seekers.

Christianity is based in a personal faith in Jesus Christ, who proclaimed that he was the Son of God, and the only way to God: He said "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John.14:6, see also Acts 4:12). Christianity proclaims a bodily resurrection followed by eternal life with God in heaven for those who have come to God through Christ.

Any enquirer should be encouraged to check out our claims for him/herself – to read the NT, especially the Gospels and/or Romans, and come to a personal, rational conclusion. *But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet.3:15)*

3.3 Is Jesus really the Son of God?

C.S. Lewis pointed out that if Jesus is not the Son of God then he must be either a liar or a lunatic. If Jesus believed that He was the Son of God (in addition to the other claims He made), and was not, then He would have to have been a lunatic. No one in his or her right mind would make the claims He did and risk death for no gain. Moreover, if we look at the records of Jesus life, we find that He was very wise. Lunacy is the opposite of wisdom!

One can find a lunatic in just about any asylum who sincerely believes that he is the son of God (or is God!). It is a well-known complex and sufferers tend to have the following traits: egotism, narcissism, inflexibility, dullness and inability to understand and love others as they really are, and to creatively relate to others. Does that sound like the personality of Jesus as revealed in the many records of Him?

Could Jesus have been a liar? If so, He would have known that what He was saying about Himself was untrue. He would have deceived His followers on purpose. If He could not have fulfilled His claims, and knew it, then He was totally evil. As we examine the life of Jesus, we see that He was not evil, but morally impeccable. In addition, He would have been a fool because it was His claims (lies???) that resulted in His death by crucifixion. He could easily have avoided that death if he had confessed before Pilate that what he said was less than true.

3.4 Christians are hypocrites, so why should I become a Christian?

Real Christians do not claim to be perfect, but imperfect people forgiven through faith in Christ. Your enquirer may have heard that we "shall not," "do not," or "should not" and expect each of us to meet that standard every time. We cannot – any of us will let them down from time to time, but Jesus will not. Christianity is about a relationship with Christ not with a group of people.

However, it is possible that your enquirer has had a bad or hurtful experience with some person who claimed to be a Christian. That calls for a sympathetic listening ear, not a defence of the accused. It is our job in such cases to follow the example of Jesus, who came to “bind up the brokenhearted.”

3.5 I always do good/ try my best/ follow the Ten Commandments. Isn't that enough?

Who is qualified to set the standard of “goodness” or of achievement in living an acceptable life? God has said, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:10-11,23)

The Ten Commandments were given to the Jewish people to define the standard of uprightness before God. They are spelled out in Exodus 20:1-17. Read them. Has any of us ever followed them in their entirety? *But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet.3:15)*

God, the One who is qualified to set the standard of "goodness" has defined what He requires: "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8,9)

3.6 If Jesus is the only way to God, what about those who have never heard about Him?

Everyone has received some information about God: “For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.” (Romans 1:20, but see Rom.1:18 to 2:16). God is just, and will hold each of us responsible to act on the knowledge we have. The point is that the hearer *has* heard, therefore the question does not apply to him/her. *But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet.3:15)*

3.7 But hasn't science disproved God?

This kind of question usually arises out of an awareness that there is a “creationist” position, and an “evolutionist” position, with the latter being seen as the scientifically respectable one – we live in the scientific age, and the phrase “more scientific than” is usually taken to mean “superior to.” Unfortunately, the discussion is dominated by the extreme (and shrill) proponents of both positions, with the media being most unhelpful, as it merely presents that which it expects to sell well. Becoming involved in argument about alternative theories of the development of the universe or of living things will only lead us farther from the real issue, which is the eternal destiny of your friend. Ultimately, the issue really resolves to the *origin* of life, for which science has no satisfactory explanation. *But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet.3:15)*

3.8 I don't believe in God!

But God believes in you – cf John 3:16. The statement usually means that the respondent would find it more comfortable if there were no God! But do this with gentleness and respect.

(1 Pet.3:15)

3.9 I am an atheist

Not the same as the previous position. If the respondent is seriously making this claim, he/she is presenting a philosophical position that he/she has found no evidence for the existence of a deity or deities. Arising from such a position are ethical philosophies that affirm the dignity of humankind, based on the ability to rationally determine right and wrong, without appealing to supernatural or the divine authority. They claim that truth and morality are discovered through human investigation; as such, the nature of truth, or views on morals, can change when new knowledge or information is discovered. Hence, the life stance of an atheist is based on human reason, ethics, and justice, and rejects the supernatural and spiritual. Faith as we know it is regarded as superstition.

It is entirely possible for an atheist to live as morally acceptable a life as a Christian. However, the Christian position can be argued to be logically preferable (*But do this with gentleness and respect. (1 Pet.3:15)*):

Christian: I believe in God, and accept that He has revealed Himself through Jesus Christ: I enjoy His support in living a morally acceptable life now, with the promise of eternal life with God when I die. If I am right, my life now is enhanced by my relationship with God, and I enjoy paradise hereafter. If am wrong, my life now is enhanced by my relationship with God, and I die like a dog. Result: win/win outcome.

Atheist: I believe there is no supreme being, and I believe in the dignity of mankind, and in our ability to live good and successful lives based on the ethical and philosophical precepts we discover. If I am right, I live a happy and successful life, and die like a dog. If I am wrong, I live a happy and successful life, die, and spend eternity in the hell the Christians warn about. Result: win/lose outcome.

3.10 The ultimate weapon!

Finally, make good use of the “Sword of the Spirit” – make use of direct quotations from Scripture wherever possible. It is the Word of God, which is “living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” (Hebrews 4:12)