

## Session 2 - Opening Our Mouths in Evangelism

*“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have...” (1 Peter 3:15)*

### Introduction and Overview

*Peter tells us that we should be prepared to answer people when they ask us about our hope as Christians. This means that we need to spend time thinking about how we might answer some of the big questions that people have about Christianity. Often evangelism is so scary because we don't know what to say or we are scared that we will say the wrong thing. The aim of tonight's session is to learn a few basic principles for answering people's questions and then to spend time practising answering these questions in the safety of a home group environment.*

*Every conversation is unique and we can never predict how a conversation will go, but if we have spent some time thinking about how we might answer people's questions then we will be better prepared should these questions arise in conversation.*

*The principles that Paul Williams is encouraging us to follow are not guaranteed silver bullets (there is no such thing in evangelism!) Instead they're godly, biblical principles for us to apply in our own way.*

*I suggest that you give as much time as possible to practicing the principles and to prayer. Don't spend too much time explaining and discussing the principles because people can read about these in the book. Although there are 3 principles in the book I suggest that we spend most of our time practising the 1st principle 'Take People to Jesus' as the other two principles are harder to prepare for because of the uniqueness of every conversation.*

### Understanding The Principles

There are 3 key principles in the book;

#### Principle #1 - Take People to Jesus

*On p41 there is a quote from John Stott that sums up this principle. You might want to begin by reading this quote. You can also point people to the Figure 1 on p46 which attempts to depict this approach. Then you can ask;*

1. **“What do you think are some of the good things about this approach?”**

*As Paul Williams says on p42 the gospel is about Jesus. He is the one person that everyone needs to know about. He is the way we can know God and have eternal life so we want to be talking about him. Paul also makes the point that by answering a question from the lips of Jesus it means that if people don't like our answer then there problem is really with Jesus and not with us. By starting with Jesus it also makes it more natural for us to continue referring to Jesus as the conversation goes on.*

*Figure 2 on p49 depicts what many of us often do. Instead of going to Jesus to answer the question we go to archaeological or historical evidence or we try to give a philosophical answer. Paul Williams gives an example of this on p56. When someone asked him 'How do you know that God exists?' Paul's answer was to point to nature.*

## **2. What is good about this approach to answering people's questions?**

*There are many good things about this answer and the approach. He's answering the question rather than dodging it. He's giving a short simple answer rather than a long and complex answer. He's also giving an answer that is biblical (Psalm 19 and Romans 1:20.)*

## **3. What might be some of the problems with this approach?**

*As Paul acknowledges in the book the problem with an answer that focuses on nature and creation is that it will probably lead the conversation towards the origins of the universe and the big bang and a discussion of Genesis instead of moving the conversation towards Jesus. This isn't a disaster but it also isn't the best use of the opportunity. If the conversation moves towards the origins of the universe then Christians can quickly feel out of their depth especially if we're talking with someone who has a particular interest in science. Another problem is that "having started down that track, it felt like an unnatural crunching of the gears to then try and talk about Jesus."<sup>1</sup>*

## **Principle #2 Take the Initiative with a question**

*When someone asks us a question about our faith it can put us on the defensive. We can often feel like we are not allowed to ask them a question in response. We need to remember that this is a conversation and not an interrogation. In an interrogation only one person is allowed to ask questions and the other person must answer. In a conversation both people can ask each other questions.*

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<sup>1</sup> Intentional by Paul Williams, p49.

**4. What do you think are some of the advantages of asking questions? What makes a good question?**

*Questions can help us to clarify and understand the question that we are being asked and the motives and thoughts behind the question. Responding with a question shows that we care and that we're interested in the person's question. Questions also slow down the conversation. They give you time to think, they stop you from talking endlessly (this can be a problem for some of us.) Paul Williams also makes the point that by asking questions we are also imitating the Lord Jesus (see p47-48.)*

*A good question is one that is going to encourage the conversation to flow. It's also going to be a question that helps the conversation move towards Jesus and his death and resurrection.*

**Principle #3 Take them to the Cross**

*It's always good to remember our aim in an evangelistic conversation. As Paul Williams says "My aim is not to enlarge their general knowledge. I want to show them their need of Christ."<sup>2</sup> This may not always be easy to do but it's important that we are clear on our desired destination. We want to naturally but purposefully move the conversation towards the speaking about Jesus and explaining his death and resurrection if possible.*

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<sup>2</sup> p48.

## **Practicing the Principles**

*We want to give as much time in the session to practising the principle of answering people's questions by taking people to Jesus. In the book Paul Williams gives examples of how to answer some of the common questions people have by going to Jesus. I will leave it up to you which questions you decide to have a go at answering. Whichever questions you choose I suggest you follow the following pattern;*

- 1. How could you answer this question from the life or the lips of Jesus?** (Do this all together as a group.)
- 2. How might you try and move the conversation on towards the cross?** (Again do this all together.)
- 3. In 2s or 3s have a go at answering the question in your own words.** (Give each person 2 or 3 minutes to give an answer and then swap over.)

*In chapters 8-9 of the book Paul gives examples of answering the following questions;*

*How do you know God exists?*

*You get to heaven by being good, don't you?*

*What about other religions?*

*Hasn't science disproved Christianity?*

*You can either use his suggested passages or you and your group might be able to think of others that you can use. That is absolutely fine, the important thing is that we're trying to take people to Jesus as we answer the question.*

*Other big questions that you might want to try and answer include;*

- How can we be sure that there's life after death? (This would be a nice easy question to start with because it quickly gets us to the resurrection of Jesus.)*
- Why does God send people to hell?*
- If there is a God then why is there so much suffering in the world?*
- If God is there, then why doesn't he make himself clearer by doing a miracle?*

*Paul Williams has written another book for Christianity Explored called, "If you could ask God one Question?" In that book he gives some examples of how you could answer these questions by pointing people to Jesus. There is a copy on the church bookstall or you can borrow my copy.*

*As I say it is entirely up to you which questions you have a go at answering. Similarly it is entirely up to you how many you practice answering. Just make sure that you leave plenty of time for prayer at the end.*

## **Prayer**

*As with last week it is really important that we give a good amount of time to prayer. Learning an evangelistic approach is good but it will produce no fruit unless God is at work. Spend time praying for ourselves as we continue to practice and prepare to answer questions. Pray especially that we would have opportunities in the coming weeks to answer people's questions and point people to Jesus.*