

“Ready to Give a Defense”

Answering Our Friends’ Religious Questions

Lesson One - Attitudes and Objectives

Introduction. (I Peter 3:12-16). Peter urges Christians, through the Holy Spirit to be “ready to give a defense for the hope” that lies within them. Jesus taught that those who follow Him must let their light “shine before men” so that they will see us and glorify God (Matthew 5:16). The Apostles were charged to “make disciples of all the nations” (Matthew 28:19, 20). Christians today must carry on this work as we try to teach our friends, neighbors and family. In this lesson we will consider the proper attitudes and objectives we should have in carrying out this task.

I. Our Attitude Toward Teaching Our Friends.

A. What is our attitude toward ourselves as we teach our friends?

1. “First remove the plank from your own eye” (Luke 6:41,42). Jesus teaches in this text that we can only see accurately to help others come to the truth when we are willing to look first at our own shortcomings. If we fail to do this we may come across to others as arrogant or self-righteous. Jesus warned that the one who approaches God self-righteously is not acceptable to Him (Luke 18:9-14). Further, if we have sin in our lives it may damage our credibility with our friends. We must show our friends that our gratitude to God for His mercy motivates our desire to teach them.

B. What is our attitude toward our friends as we teach them?

1. “Making a distinction” (Jude 22,23). Jude, through the Holy Spirit instructs two ways to approach teaching others. First, “On some have compassion” and Second, “others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” Jesus displayed this same distinction in His ministry. He was very sharp and firm in his rebuke of the stubborn self-righteous attitudes of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:29-33) but gentle and compassionate to the souls ignorant of the truth (John 4:19-24) or brokenhearted over their own sin (Luke 7:37-47). In teaching others we must seek to make this same distinction. While some will only be moved by a sharp rebuke, others are ignorant of the truth and require honest, gentle and compassionate instruction.
2. “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now” (John 16:12). Jesus recognized when teaching His apostles that they could not receive everything at one time that they needed to learn about the gospel. Often in trying to teach someone we feel as if we must give them everything the Bible teaches on an issue all at once. While we must never be afraid to declare the “whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27), we must recognize that people are limited in what they can absorb in one sitting. Planting the seed and giving it some time to germinate and grow.

II. The Objective of Teaching Our Friends.

A. What is our goal in teaching our friends?

1. “The end of your faith – the salvation of your souls” (I Peter 1:6-9). The goal of faith, and thus the goal of evangelism is the salvation of the soul. It is not winning an argument. It is not self-exaltation. It is leading the soul of person who is lost in sin out of this perilous condition of eternal condemnation into a saving relationship with God unto eternal life with Him in the age to come. We must keep this objective in our minds in all that we say and do in teaching the lost.

B. The Problem of Sin.

1. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). A good starting point in talking with our friends is to focus on the problem of sin. The reason that Jesus died was because of our sin. The reason that people will be lost is sin. The reason that we all need salvation is sin. The reason that it is important to act within the authority of Scripture is because failing to do so is sin.

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2. "Sin is lawlessness" (I John 3:4-8). To understand the problem of sin we must first understand how sin is defined. Sin is not just feeling bad about something. We might feel bad about things that don't matter to God. Sin is not just making someone else feel bad. Sometimes people may want things that God does not. Sin is the violation of God's law. In this age God's law is embodied in the New Covenant or "Law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1,2). All people everywhere are accountable to the this Law (I Corinthians 9:19-22).
3. "To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). Sin not only involves doing things which God prohibits but failing to do what He expects us to do. This remains true whether we are talking about personal conduct, how we treat our families, how we behave at work or how we worship God. Until we can lead someone to recognize that doing what is unauthorized is sin, a careful study of what the Bible teaches in these areas will not mean as much to a person.

Conclusion. There is nothing that demonstrates love for another person more than teaching them the truth. We must be diligent to do this whenever we have the opportunity so that souls will be saved and the kingdom of our Lord will grow.