

A Reasonable Faith

12

How Do I Share My Faith?

In this module, we have explored the most important questions that can be asked by a sincere person wanting to know whether Christianity is true or false. We have not exhausted the possible objections people might raise against the Christian message (not by a long shot), but almost any other kind of question that is raised by an unbeliever will fall into one of these ten categories:

- The existence of God
- The authority of the Bible
- The problem of evil and suffering
- The issue of the supernatural
- The historicity of Christ
- The claims of Christ
- The death and resurrection of Christ
- The issue of life after death
- The claim of unique salvation

We launched this module by making a startling declaration: The Christian faith is a *reasonable* faith. And as we have progressed through this module, we have shown that there is *good reason* to put our faith in Christ.

Yet having answered ten key questions asked by unbelievers, there still remains one more question. If there is such good reason to believe the Gospel, *why do so many people still balk at committing their life to Christ?* In order to understand the answer to this question, we must first understand the nature of man's problem as described in the Bible.

Is the Christian Faith Rational?

Does God Exist?

Is the Bible God's Word?

Do Science and Scripture Agree?

Why is There Evil in the World?

Do Miracles Really Happen?

Who is the Real Jesus?

What Should We Think of Jesus?

Did Jesus Die and Rise Again?

Is There a Heaven and Hell?

Is There No Other Way of Salvation?

▶ **How Do I Share My Faith?** ◀

Coming to a Knowledge of the Truth

Read 1 Timothy 2:4

This verse tells us clearly that God “wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (read also **2 Peter 3:9**). This not only describes God's

specific intent; it also lets us know that it is *actually possible* for a person to come to a knowledge of the truth!

This is very important for us to understand. The postmodernist position has so infiltrated the thinking of the common man that most people today believe that it is impossible to know what the objective truth is, since all truth is subjective. As we have seen, there is a “different strokes for different folks” attitude toward the search for spiritual truth. But the Gospel declares to us in no uncertain terms that it is not only *possible* to know the truth; it is *imperative* from God’s perspective.

Read Romans 1:18-32

In this passage (which we will investigate further in the next module), we see the progressive decline of the human race as it slips further and further into what Paul calls “a depraved mind” (**verse 28**) where “their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened” (**verse 21**). In **Ephesians 4:18**, Paul further describes this wretched condition:

“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

John describes the cause of this blindness in **1 John 2:11**:

“But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, *because the darkness has blinded him.*”

There is a spiritual darkness that blinds the mind of unregenerate man. And unless this spiritual darkness is taken into account, no amount of intellectual argument will ever win a person over to Christ.

How does spiritual blindness work? J. Warwick Montgomery tells this parable:

“Once upon a time there was a man who thought he was dead. His concerned wife and friends sent him to the friendly neighborhood psychiatrist. The psychiatrist determined to cure him by convincing him of one fact that contradicted his belief that he was dead. The psychiatrist decided to use the simple truth that dead men do not bleed. He put his patient to work reading medical texts, observing autopsies, etc. After weeks of effort the patient finally said: ‘All right, all right! You’ve convinced me. Dead men do not bleed.’ Whereupon the psychiatrist struck him in the arm with a needle, and the blood flowed. The man looked down with a contorted, ashen face and cried: ‘Good Lord! Dead men bleed after all!’”¹

This humorous parable reveals the nature of the spiritual blindness that can cloak even the most intelligent of minds. No amount of rhetoric, no amount of argument, will convince *anyone* of the truth of Christ unless the spirit of that person is open to the voice of God. Only the Holy Spirit can dispel that spiritual darkness through the light of revelation. When that happens, a person experiences that

life-changing moment when “the light goes on.”

Read 2 Timothy 2:25-26

Although Paul is teaching Timothy how to deal with those in his church who had been led astray by deceptive teaching, his instruction also applies to our witness to unbelievers. Notice Paul’s wording:

- ☞ **“...gently instruct”** – This must be the attitude and method of all Christian witness. We must never rail arrogantly against the philosophies of this world. As Peter admonishes in **1 Peter 3:15**: “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*, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”
- ☞ **“...in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth”** – Do you see what causes a person to discover the knowledge of the truth? Yes, it is repentance, but even more than that, it is a repentance that *God himself* grants the unbeliever! In other words, even the act of repentance is evidence of God’s grace at work in a person’s life. It is “in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth” that we bear witness to others.
- ☞ **“...that they will come to their senses”** – This statement is reminiscent of Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son, where the Lord relates that the younger son “came to his senses” (**Luke 15:17**). For a similar verse, read **1 Corinthians 15:34**, and note how Paul equates “com[ing] back to your senses” with a leaving of two things: sin and an ignorance of God.
- ☞ **“...and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will”** – We must remember that the condition of spiritual darkness is likened to a trap. Every trap combines two things – a lure (something that entices the unsuspecting animal in) and a snare (something that then prevents the animal’s escape). Satan’s devices are no different. The condition of spiritual darkness appears like wisdom to those who are caught in its grip. This worldly wisdom entices a person in deeper, which in turn blinds his mind so that he cannot see the way out. That is why it is necessary for unbelievers to “come to their senses.”

Read 2 Corinthians 4:4

This verse reveals the spiritual condition of the masses that are outside Christ. The *New Living Translation* expresses Paul’s diagnosis with these words:

“Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don’t understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.”

The Message phrases it in this way:

“If our Message is obscure to anyone, it’s not because we’re holding back in any way. No, it’s because these other people are looking or going the wrong way and refuse to give it serious attention. All they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness. They think he can give them what they want, and that they won’t have to bother believing a Truth they can’t see. They’re stone-blind to the dayspring brightness of the Message that shines with Christ, who gives us the best picture of God we’ll ever get.”

Paul explains in the simplest of terms why unregenerate man cannot understand the truth of God. He writes that the “god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” This is the problem you face when you seek to share your faith with someone who has not yet experienced that faith. If you seek to rely solely on convincing arguments, you will quickly come face to face with the harsh reality that spiritual blindness produces crippled reasoning.

Satan has woven a complex web of lies – lies that are by their very nature enticing and “rational.” When you share your faith with an unbeliever, you can sometimes find that those lies become stickier and more entwined the deeper you go. It is important to understand this underlying problem in order to comprehend (and cooperate with) God’s solution to the problem.

So if spiritual blindness is the diagnosis, what is the cure? In **2 Corinthians 4:6** (NKJV), Paul goes on to provide God’s solution to the problem:

“For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone *in our hearts* to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

Do you notice where it is that God shines the light of the knowledge of the glory of God? It is not in our minds, but in our hearts! This verse shows God’s simple three-step strategy for dealing with spiritual blindness.

1. Bypass the mind
2. Target the heart
3. Renew the mind

This three-step process lies at the heart of the Holy Spirit’s regenerative work, and is also the key to Christian witness. When people raise objections to the Gospel, we must “gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,” yet we must also remember that God is not aiming at the mind. In fact, the Bible explicitly describes the unregenerate mind as “puff[ed]...up with idle notions” (**Colossians 2:18**) and “hostile to God” (**Romans 8:7**). Paul describes the unbelieving masses in no softer terms than being “alienated from God and...enemies in [their] minds because of [their] evil behavior” (**Colossians 1:21**).

In **1 Timothy 6:4-5**, Paul warns Timothy against those who have “an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth...” And he does this for a reason. For he knows how easy it is for the unsuspecting Christian to get caught in the whirlpool of endless arguments, trying repeatedly to address a mind that is darkened against the knowledge of God.

And so, in summary, we see how God’s solution is ideally matched to the problem:

- **Problem** – The *mind* of the unbeliever is blinded by the “god of this world” (NIV) or the “god of this age” (KJV).
- **Solution** – God shines the light of the revelation of the Gospel into the *heart* of the unbeliever.

So that leaves us with an important question: How do you get around the problem of a blinded mind? The answer? The same way that God does. You aim not at the mind, but at the heart. When you do this, you fall into step with the work of the Holy Spirit, who has been sent to convict the heart of the unbeliever. And you will find that as you cooperate with the Holy Spirit, the task of witness becomes so much easier.

But guess what! The story doesn’t end here. You will soon find that the moment you aim for the heart of the unbeliever (the core issues of his life and his estranged relationship with God) a smoke screen is thrown up. This smoke screen is better known as “the intellectual objection.”

The Nature of Objections

Have you ever begun to share the Gospel with someone, only to be met by the response, “Yes, but...”? The unbeliever raises an objection, an argument designed to disarm the power of the Gospel message. In fact, the fear of facing such objections is what keeps many Christians from sharing their faith with others.

Let’s take a look at some of these objections:

- **“But the Church is full of hypocrites”** – This is a common objection and, of course, a blanket statement and unfair generalization. The sad fact is that there *are* hypocrites in the Church, just as there are hypocrites in the world. But full of hypocrites? Hardly. There are many ways this can be answered, but one of the best is to ask a question in return: “Do you think I am a hypocrite?” The answer (almost always) is, “No.” Another response is: “Come to church with me, and meet the real people – people just like you and me – who meet together there. Give us six months, then tell me honestly whether our church is full of hypocrites.” (Of course, it’s important, if you say this, to be certain that hypocrisy is *not* common in your church!).

- **“But if the Bible is true, where did Cain get his wife?”** – This strange objection still rears its head every now and again (and there are many variations on this theme). In our supplementary article, “Where did Cain get his wife?” (<http://www.online-bible-college.com/articles/cain.htm>) we provide a simple answer to this question.
- **“Yes, but if God is a God of love, what about all the starving children in Somalia?”** – In **ES108-05**, we address the question of how God can allow evil and suffering to exist in the world. But the simplest way to answer any objection like this is to refocus the question on the unbeliever. “Yes, but have *you* done anything to help the starving children in Somalia?” Regardless of whether the answer to this counter-question is yes or no, bring the conversation back to the issue of a broken relationship with God.

As any seasoned evangelist will tell you, it doesn’t take long before you begin to notice something that most of these objections have in common: They usually don’t have anything to do with the real issues, the *personal* issues, of the unbeliever’s life! Almost invariably they are about something “out there” in the world, not “in here” in the unbeliever’s own life. Why is this, you might ask? The answer is very simple. Most objections are a defense mechanism. The unbeliever is often not even wanting an answer to his question, but rather an excuse for not placing his faith in Christ.

Josh McDowell tells this story:

“A student in a New England university said he had an intellectual problem with Christianity and therefore just could not accept Christ as Savior. ‘Why can’t you believe?’ I asked. He replied, ‘The New Testament is not reliable.’ I then asked, ‘If I demonstrate to you that the New Testament is one of the most reliable pieces of literature of antiquity, would you believe?’ He retorted, ‘No!’ ‘You don’t have a problem with your mind, but with your will,’ I answered.”²

In the majority of cases, arguments are deployed by the unbeliever as an intellectual shield, what Paul Little calls a “moral smoke screen.” When a person wants to avoid coming to terms with Christ, he or she will raise an argument. Whether intentionally or not, this argument is designed to do two things:

- **Confuse the issue** – an intellectual objection can muddy the water and drain power from the force of the Gospel challenge. If unanswered, that objection then becomes an excuse not to believe.
- **Deflect the conversation** – by raising an intellectual argument, the unbeliever often seeks to deflect the conversation away from the challenge that the Gospel brings to him – the challenge to repent.

Understood in this way, we can see that many so-called “intellectual” objections to the Gospel are simply coping mechanisms, ways to avoid the challenge that the Gospel brings. Whenever any person comes face to face with Christ, his life comes

under the scrutiny of the Holy Spirit. He is in “the hot seat” with God. And so the unbeliever naturally looks for a way of escape – a way to get out from under the uncomfortable light that the Gospel shines on his heart. The easiest way out is to raise an objection.

Remember how Jesus himself described the condition of men’s hearts? In **John 3:19-21**, Jesus explained to Nicodemus:

“This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”

The unbeliever squirms in discomfort when confronted by the Gospel. This is understandable. He is suddenly aware that his life has come under the powerful spotlight of God’s Spirit. And the instinctive reaction is to shift the focus from the unbeliever himself to the world “out there.”

This does not mean, of course, that there aren’t sincere objections that should be answered. Some people cannot put their faith in Christ because they have a genuine difficulty in reconciling the facts in their mind. As Charles Pinnock observes:

“The heart cannot delight in what the mind rejects as false.”³

But the Christian must discern between *genuine* objections to the Christian faith, which must be answered wisely and respectfully, and *deflecting* objections, designed to mask the *real* reason for not believing in Christ.

The Core Objection

For every unbeliever who refuses to commit his or her life to Christ, there is a core objection. This core objection is rarely among the objections that are raised at first. This is because the core objection – the real reason an unbeliever refuses to believe in Christ – is almost always a *heart* reason, not a *mind* reason.

Paul Little tells this story:

“A student once told me I had satisfactorily answered all his questions. ‘Are you going to become a Christian?’ I asked. ‘No,’ he replied. Puzzled, I asked, ‘Why not?’ He admitted, ‘Frankly, because it would mess up the way I’m living.’ He realized that the real issue for him was not intellectual but moral.”⁴

This student was honest about his real reason for rejecting Christ, but few are so honest. Rather than admit to rejecting Christ because of moral issues, most people raise intellectual objections. The French philosopher Blaise Pascal made this observation:

“The evidence of God’s existence and His gift is more than compelling, but those who insist that they have no need of Him or [His gift] will always find ways to discount the offer.”⁵

If an unbeliever wants to deflect the conversation away from the real issue (the unbeliever's personal standing before God), then one argument can be raised after another. Such a person does not really want to have his objections answered. He is simply raising excuses for not believing in Christ.

The Bible reveals only four reasons for a person to reject Christ:

- Ignorance (**Matthew 22:29; Romans 1:18-23**)
- Pride (**John 5:40-44**)
- Bitterness (**Romans 3:14**)
- Immorality (**John 3:19-20**)

It is one (or a combination) of these reasons that stops a person from coming to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This state of spiritual blindness – induced by gross ignorance, stubborn pride, festering bitterness or blatant sin – is what you face when you witness to an unbeliever.

As we have already stated, each core objection (and they differ slightly from person to person) is a heart-objection, not a mind-objection. For one person, it might be an intense dislike of religious hypocrisy (which, in fact, God dislikes also). For another, it might be the fact that a loved one died young, resulting in an unvoiced bitterness against God. For still another, it might be that the unbeliever is simply having too much of a good time to allow God to “crash the party.”

How should we respond to genuine intellectual objections? With wisdom and sincerity, but always with our eye on isolating and answering the core objection. John Stott explains:

“We cannot pander to a man's intellectual arrogance, but we must cater to his intellectual integrity.”⁶

When you share your faith, you need to remember that it is more than just an exchange of opinions. The basic rule of thumb in all Christian witness is this:

Show Me That You Are Redeemed

As important as **Module 108** is, all our studies to date are useless unless they are backed up by a *living* proof. The atheistic philosopher, Friedrich Nietzsche, laid down this challenge:

“Show me that you are redeemed, and I will believe in your Redeemer.”⁷

You can argue intelligently in support of the existence of God or the deity of Christ, but the best argument is your own life. There is no better presentation of the Gospel than “to live in such a way that one's life would not make sense if God did not exist.”⁸ This is because your life is the final and incontrovertible proof that God exists and that he sent Christ into the world to redeem the human race. A person may raise objection after objection to the Gospel, but he cannot deny a redeemed life. The best argument for the Gospel is not what you say, but what you are!

- Do not target the unbeliever’s mind – target his heart. Share the excitement of the salvation that you have received and the challenge that the Gospel brings.
- If an intellectual objection is raised, address that objection sincerely and with the wisdom that God provides.
- As soon as you can, bring the issue back “on track” to the person’s individual standing before God – the “heart issues” of his relationship with God and his eternal destiny.

The Added Dimension

Read 1 Corinthians 2:13-14

The Bible teaches us that we are spiritual beings. We are not simply reasoning animals, but rather creatures with the in-built capacity to know and love God. For this reason, whenever you share the Gospel, you must never assume that it is just a matter of trying to convince a person intellectually that the Gospel is correct. Ultimately, it is in the *spirit* of a person that the Holy Spirit works, bringing conviction of “sin and righteousness and judgment” (**John 16:8**).

Whenever you share the Gospel, there should have a unique characteristic – what the KJV describes as “comparing spiritual things with spiritual” and what the NIV calls “expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.” Simply put, your witness has an added dimension – the spiritual dimension. Your words should not just tickle the human intellect but touch the human spirit. This is what we mean when we speak of an “anointed” message – a message that stirs the human spirit to reach out to God.

Paul states categorically that we are to speak “not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit.” The reason for this is simple. Paul goes on to explain that the unbeliever “does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, *because they are spiritually discerned.*” What the natural mind cannot grasp, the spirit of a man (through the revelation that comes by the Holy Spirit) can.

Why then should we seek to address the misconceptions and answer the objections raised by an unbeliever? We must remember that although it is the spirit of a man that grasps the things of God, the doorway to a man’s spirit is often blocked by the junkyard of philosophies and godless reasonings in the mind. By targeting incorrect reasoning, we can take away any an excuse for not believing in Christ and open the door for the Holy Spirit to convict an unbeliever’s spirit.

The Vital Ingredient

You will notice that the title of this lesson is not “How Do I Share My Arguments?” or “How Do I Share My Logic?” but “How Do I Share My Faith?” We are not called to share our logic or share our arguments. We are called to share our *faith*.

Even though God has created each of us as intellectual beings, the Christian life is lived by faith, not by the intellect (**Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:20**). Faith is the vital ingredient that must be added to Christian witness in order for the revelation of God's Spirit to strike the heart of the unbeliever.

Hebrews 4:2 tells us:

“For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard *was of no value to them*, because those who heard *did not combine it with faith.*”

Faith in God is what transforms a person into the “new creation” described in **2 Corinthians 5:17**. For this reason, the act of witnessing involves faith expressed in two ways:

- **Faith expressed by the one who is witnessing** – when you share the Gospel with another person, your faith in Christ is what ultimately shines forth. Faith is contagious. It is the strength of your conviction, not your intellectual grasp of life's issues, that is the key to witnessing.
- **Faith expressed by the one being witnessed to** – the goal of your witnessing is to see faith birthed in the spirit of the person you are speaking to. This is an act of God's grace.

It is this contagion of faith – faith shared by one person to another – that has spurred the growth of the Church down through the ages, from the time of the first apostles right down to our generation. When we address objections, we are simply seeking to eliminate any barrier to faith being birthed in the heart of an unbeliever.

The Simple Gospel

The incredible thing about the Gospel is just how simple it is. You don't need a doctorate in theology to understand it and you don't need years of study to live it. You just need faith. Ultimately you will find that it is not the great arguments that stop many people from committing their lives to Christ. It is its simplicity.

Our world is complex and complex problems require complex solutions, or at least most people think. Yet the Gospel remains simple. Becoming a Christian doesn't mean, of course, that we become an anti-intellectual. We don't need to kiss our brains goodbye. But at the same time, we must never intellectualize the Gospel. God, who is far more intellectual than the brightest minds this world can honor, has reduced the Gospel down to one simple requirement – faith in Christ. This may be a stumbling block to the sophisticated modern mind, but this fact cannot be altered to suit modern tastes. The Gospel is a simple Gospel.

In this module, we have studied the answers to ten key questions raised by unbelievers – ten genuine objections that may prevent a person from coming to a knowledge of the truth. But we have exhausted neither the questions, nor their

possible answers, nor the possible counter-objections, nor the possible counter-responses. “How can I learn all the possible variations of these ten common themes?” you may ask. “What happens when someone asks me a question that I don’t know the answer to?”

When you are faced with a question to which you have no answer, there is only one response. Be honest! You should say, “I don’t know the answer to that, but this is what I *do* know...” And you then bring the conversation back to the heart-issues.

Our model for this kind of a response is the blind man, healed by Jesus, who in **John 9:25** answered his detractors in this way:

“...I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!”

Never be worried if you don’t have all the answers to an unbeliever’s objections. What you do have is *the* Answer to his life! Paraphrasing Peter and John’s words in **Acts 3:6**, you can say, “[All the answers] I do not have, but what I have I give you...”

Read Luke 12:11

The theologian Karl Barth was once asked in his old age what was the most profound idea he had ever had, in his many years of theologizing. He instantly replied:

“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

¹ J. Warwick Montgomery, quoted by Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.354.

² Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.xli.

³ Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), p.xli.

⁴ Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 1997), p.18.

⁵ Blaise Pascal, *The Provincial Letters, Pensees, Scientific Treatises, in Great Books of the Western World*, edited by Robert Maynard Hutchins, translated by W. F. Trotter (Chicago: The University of Chicago & Encyclopedia Britannica, 1984).

⁶ John Stott, quoted by Paul Little, *Know Why You Believe* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 1997), p.18.

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

⁸ Emmanuel Suhard, quoted by Edythe Draper, *Draper’s Quotations for the Christian World*, excerpted from QuickVerse 6.0, Deluxe Edition.

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