

Effective Gospel Conversations
First Baptist Church Dandridge
February-March 2026

Session Three: After You Go

1. Ready to Trust Christ

- a. **Readiness to Believe:** On certain occasions, when God graciously opens the heart of a person to believe, a sign of the Holy Spirit's conviction is a strong sense of guilt over sin and an overwhelming desire for Jesus to save them. It's important to see the difference between a person who merely wants to go to heaven versus a person who wants forgiveness and a new life in Christ. Most rational people want heaven over hell, but only true believers want Jesus over sin. However, there are times when it's obvious that a person is being drawn by the Holy Spirit to trust Jesus.
- **Luke 19:3** – *"And [Zacchaeus] was seeking to see who Jesus was..."*
 - **Acts 2:37** – *"Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Brothers, what shall we do?'"*
 - **Acts 16:30** – *"Then he brought them out and said, 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?'"*
- b. **Trust Jesus:** If we sense that a person is being drawn to Christ, we should urge them to respond through faith and repentance. In essence, this means calling them to trust Jesus by turning away from their sins and committing to follow him as Lord. When the Holy Spirit convicts someone of their need for Christ, this step will be natural and desirable. In many cases, the person will seek to ask Jesus to save them without much prompting. You might transition by saying, "Do you see your need for Jesus? Do you want a new life in him? Are you ready to ask Jesus to save you?"
- **Mark 1:15** – *"Repent and believe in the gospel."*
 - **Acts 3:19–20** – *"Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus."*
 - **Romans 10:13** – *"For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*
 - **Warning:** Never manipulate someone to say a prayer or make a commitment without a genuine sense that they understand the gospel, see their need for Christ, and are ready to repent and commit their lives to him. Merely saying a prayer never saves anyone. In fact, it leads to false assurance, which can be devastating.

- c. **Invite to Church:** Once a person has turned to Christ in faith, it's important to continue the discipleship process by connecting them to a solid church. You should encourage them to make their faith public through baptism and become an active member in a local congregation. Continue to encourage them.

2. Questions or Doubts

- a. **Principle:** In many gospel conversations it's not uncommon for a person to ask questions or express doubts. While we would rather them express their need for Jesus immediately, we shouldn't view questions and/or doubts negatively. These responses indicate that they are taking the conversation seriously and want to be certain before making the most costly and important decision of their lives. In fact, we find examples in the Bible where some who became believers didn't immediately believe upon hearing the gospel.
- **John 3:4, 9** – *"Nicodemus said to him, 'How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?' 'Nicodemus said to him, 'How can these things be?'"*
 - **John 20:25** – *"But [Thomas] said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the marks of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.'"*
 - **Acts 17:11-12** – *"Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they receive the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so. Many of them therefore believed."*
- b. **Preparation:** There are different reasons for questions and doubts. Some questions are natural and sincere, where a person is looking for confirmation. Other questions are dismissive and critical, where a person is trying to expose perceived weaknesses in the gospel or give reasons why they don't want to follow Jesus. However, we must be prepared when questions and doubts arise. Peter writes, *"Always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience"* (1 Peter 3:15-16).
- **Be Prepared:** God has blessed the church with a Bible and myriads of apologetic resources to help us give solid biblical answers to the toughest questions and doubts. Every believer should at least be familiar with the most common responses (problem of evil, evolution, other religions, church corruption, etc.) and be ready to give reasonable answers. Once again, Jesus has called all believers to make disciples, so preparing in this way is crucial.
 - **Be Dependent:** Jesus promised that he would always be with us on mission. One of the ways we benefit from his presence is through the Holy Spirit filling our hearts with boldness

and our minds with the right words. Therefore, we should always pray before and during our gospel conversations that God will help us in that crucial moment.

c. **Practice:** How do we respond to questions and doubts?

- **Be Gracious:** When people ask us questions or express doubts, we should never be arrogant, dismissive, argumentative, or offensive. Tony Payne writes, “Our aim is not to win an argument, but to win a person.” Seek to be loving and kind, sympathizing with them that their questions or doubts are understandable. Being gracious will help the conversation to continue and the other person be more open to listen.
- **Be Equally Inquisitive:** When a person asks a difficult question, sometimes the best approach isn’t to answer right away, but to ask them why they are curious about that, or what do they mean, or what have they been told. We can often learn more about the person and how best to answer if we know why they’re asking a certain question (e.g., “Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people?” They might confess that they lost their home in a fire, etc.). Jesus made a practice of asking questions before giving answers. Sometimes a person’s motives can be exposed, or maybe they’re not asking the right question to begin with. Other times, ask them to be specific on why they don’t believe a certain point of faith (e.g., So, why do you think there are errors in the Bible? Could you show me some examples?).
- **Be Focused:** While questions and doubts could be discussed for hours, we need to focus the conversation back to Jesus. Clearly explain how Jesus overcame sin and evil through his perfect life and sacrificial death, and how God will create a new heavens and a new earth for those who belong to Jesus. Again, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to work through the gospel message. Perfect answers and arguments do not save, only Jesus.

3. **“I’m a Christian”**

- a. **Problem:** One of the most common responses (especially in our local context) is, “Yes, I’m a Christian.” While we want everyone to profess faith in Christ, we also know that many are confused or misled about what trusting in Jesus really means.
- b. **Questions:** It’s important to kindly ask, “Could you tell me about how you came to know Jesus? What has he done in your life since? Have you seen evidence of a new life and spiritual growth? Are you active in a local church?” Such questions reveal whether a person possess genuine faith. Be ready to explain from Scripture the different signs of true faith (see 1 John).

4. **Antagonism**

- a. **Problem:** The most discouraging response is antagonism, which moves beyond questions and doubts to bitterness and anger. Some people will respond, “I don’t want anything to do with

church! I don't want to hear anything else about Jesus. I don't believe a word of what you are saying. I don't want anything to do with organized religion." Obviously, it's hard to continue a conversation with a person like that.

- b. **Response:** Be as kind as possible. Don't pressure or argue. Simply thank them for their time, let them know you are praying for them, and invite them to contact you if they want to talk again. Be diligent to pray for them. Find a practical way to bless them. The bottom line: keep your relationship positive so they will feel comfortable if they ever want to talk again. Making an enemy never wins anyone to Christ.