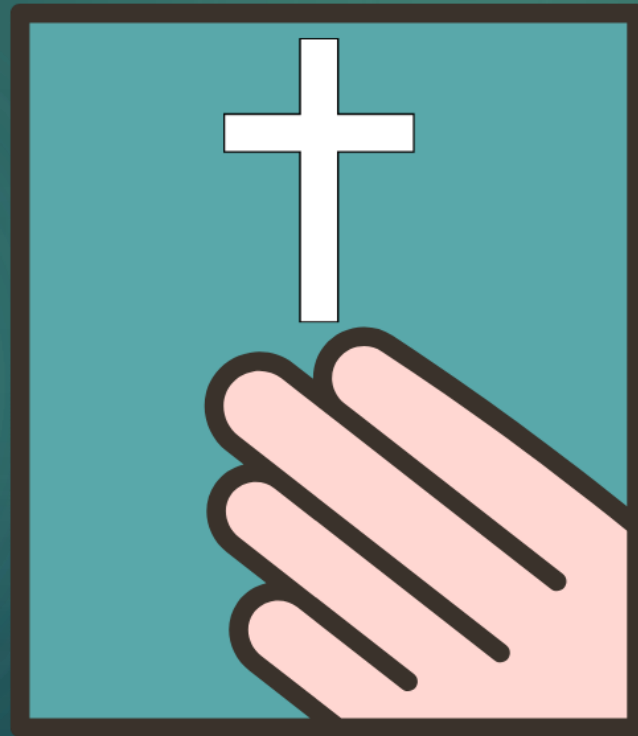


Living in Truth

Confident Conversation in a Conflicted Culture



Bible Study adapted from
Living in Truth by
Mary Jo Sharp

Welcome



- Recap of Week 4
 - Questioning Cultural Views & Individual Beliefs
- Asking the right questions
 - helps to de-escalate tense situations and uncover/clarify a person's beliefs
 - "People tend to trade only conclusions..."
 - Don't just look for the "what", but also the "why"
 - Don't be afraid to engage in conversation just because someone throws around certain terminology
 - True tolerance advocates for the free exchange of ideas, even those we disagree with



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Session 5: Respond to Cultural Views



Avoiding "loaded language"

- What is a "loaded word"?
 - Words that elicit an emotional response – positive or negative – beyond their literal meaning.
 - Loaded words (or phrases) can persuade others to adopt a certain frame of mind
 - Negatively, they can take the form of inadvertent name-calling or finger pointing

Avoiding "loaded language"

- Examples of loaded words/ phrases:
 - Evil vs. Bad
 - Hate vs. Dislike
 - Agony vs. Discomfort
 - Damaging vs. Hurtful
 - Elite vs. Expert
 - Eliminate vs. Remove
 - Vigilante vs. Crime Fighter
 - Disinformation vs. Opposing View

Choosing Words Wisely



- Read Proverbs 18:19-21. What two powers belong to the tongue?
- Read Proverbs 12:6, 13-15. How do these verses compare the words of the wicked to the words of the upright?
- How would you relate these two passages?

Choosing Words Wisely

- Both passages refer to the power of the tongue to speak life or death – not in some mystical way, but our words have great power because they influence ourselves and others. We can use the power of speech to build up or to tear down.
- Another challenge we face in responding to others comes from not necessarily *what* we say, but *how* we say it.

Choosing Words Wisely

- Timbre (pronounced "tamber") refers to the "color" or tone of our speech. We can give our words a different meaning by changing the inflection and tone.
- Examples:
 - "What's up with you?"
 - "I'm fine."
 - "Do you want to go outside?"
 - "I didn't say he stole the money."

Choosing Words Wisely

- How might someone's tone and inflection close people off from considering Christianity?
- How can emotionally charged words affect your conversations about God?
- Read Matthew 15:10-11. What does Jesus say about what comes out of the mouth? How can we apply that to conversations with people who adamantly oppose our beliefs?

Responding to Misconceptions



- When people hold on to misconceptions or false beliefs about Christianity, those beliefs can plant themselves in their mind and "gum up" the process of clearly thinking through Christianity.

Responding to Misconceptions

- An all-too-common trope in media and society is that Christianity is only for uneducated nincompoops. Examples include *The Big Bang Theory* and *The Simpsons*.



Responding to Misconceptions

- The accusation that Christians are ignorant can stir up some raw emotion from a former experience – even one unrelated to faith – and may bring to light a hurt with which you've been struggling.
- Have you ever been accused, directly or indirectly, of being unintelligent? What was that experience like?

Responding to Misconceptions

- We can look at this misconception from two perspectives:
 - #1: Character Flaw. Anyone who purposefully makes you feel unintelligent or lower than themselves in some way has a character flaw. They lack grace and charity.
 - Isaiah 5:21 - "Woe to those who are wise in their own opinion and clever in their own sight."

Responding to Misconceptions

- We can look at this misconception from two perspectives:
 - #2: Marginalization. Anyone who claims Christianity is for the unintelligent has chosen an uninformed approach themselves. This is a shallow perspective meant to marginalize those who are Christian, leaving emotional, psychological and spiritual damage in its wake.
 - It can be especially difficult not to respond to this smugness in kind.

Responding to Misconceptions



- Suppose someone said to you that belief in God is like committing intellectual suicide. Can you think of a reason someone might hold this belief?

Responding to Misconceptions

- One common reason for that belief is that before the dawn of modern science, people were prone to ascribe "gods" to natural forces they didn't understand, such as the sun, the seasons, lightning, etc. These people may have believed that Osiris or Dionysius died and rose from the dead every year, explaining crop cycles. The assumption is that now we know better due to scientific advancements. (note the charged language of "know better.") How would you respond to this reason?

Responding to Misconceptions

- Possible response:
 - Begin by asking "how do you know that?" How do you know that early Christians were prone to believe "that stuff"? Pagan beliefs have been around for millennia and so they were certainly prevalent at the time of the early Church, but it seems overreaching to assume that "everyone believed that stuff."

Responding to Misconceptions

- Read Genesis 18:12-15, Luke 1:11-25 and John 20:24-29. Did these people jump to a supernatural conclusion?
- Read Acts 23:6-9. For what did Paul say he was being judged? Why did a dispute break out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees?

Responding to Misconceptions

- Another common objection to Christianity is that "all Christians are hypocrites."
- What are some ways we Christians bring that charge upon ourselves? Think of small and large ways.
- Read James 3:9-10. In what areas of life do we use our mouths to praise God, while using the same mouth to curse those made in His likeness?

Responding to Misconceptions

- We are not only to live in an upright way when it is easy or comfortable to do so, but we are to live honorably in every situation. We can show ourselves as hypocrites even in the small, mundane tasks of everyday life. For example, it is a common experience of Christian youth to feel torn between what their family members say they believe and how they fail to demonstrate a sincere trust in Jesus in everyday matters. We are always teaching our children; seldom do we use words.

Responding to Misconceptions

- As people who profess Christ, we must be the first to admit our failures. This is one way to respond to the charge of hypocrisy.
- Another response is to point out that a standard of goodness is implied when using the argument of hypocrisy.
- Read Romans 7:14-25. What does Paul say he wants to do, and what does he do? What is the standard by which he knows what is good? (verses 16, 22 and 25)

Responding to Misconceptions

- Paul says that he knows the law of God, however he struggles with his own sin. The law of God is a moral compass that was given to reveal our sin (Galatians 3:19) and, consequently, our need for a savior. When a non-Christian points out that a Christian is a hypocrite, they are unknowingly in agreement with Paul's writing.
- Furthermore, when making the hypocrisy claim, the non-Christian uses God's law as the standard of goodness to which the Christian is being hypocritical. The only way a Christian can truly be a hypocrite is if there is a real law of God which they are violating.

