

WHAT ARE BARRIERS TO SHARING THE GOSPEL?

In us

- Timidity: fear of social awkwardness
- Uncertainty: lack of confidence in our ability to explain what we believe
- Lack of joy, excitement, gratefulness for our own salvation
- Not thinking about reality of heaven & hell

In nonbelievers

- Bad experiences w/ Xians
- Stereotypes
- Satisfaction w/ present life

Ultimate problem: Bondage to sin

2 Corinthians 4:4 ⁴ In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.

1 Corinthians 2:14 ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Important: this is us apart from work of HS

- Bad news: Our sin and others' puts up obstacles to Gospel. We don't have a solution
- Good news: **Romans 1:16** For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes... // Power of Θ can overcome limitations in us and in the people we want to reach. That's what's happening in evangelism.

WHY SHOULD WE SHARE THE GOSPEL?

Because we love GOD AND HIS GLORY.

Romans 15:16-17 ¹⁶ to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles in the priestly service of the gospel of God, so that the offering of the Gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. ¹⁷ In Christ Jesus, then, I have reason to be proud of my work for God.

Paul was excited to share Gosp because he wanted Θ to be glorified among nations. Love for Θ compelled him to work hard.

Because we love PEOPLE.

Romans 9:2-3 I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh.

- Most loving thing we can do for someone is share Gospel with them. (Of course, doesn't exclude other loving things we should do, whether or not they hear Gosp.)
- Alienation from Θ is everyone's biggest problem, meaning Gospel is their biggest need. Should want to fill that need. Should also want to give them all the good things that come from knowing Christ: peace w/ Θ , love for other people, sense of joy & purpose, Θ 's presence in their suffering, eternal life, etc.

Because it WORKS!

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:17 So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

- Conversion is something Θ does; evangelism is one of chief means he uses.
- To be saved, we have to hear Gosp. To hear Gosp, somebody has to tell it to us.
- We get to participate in Θ 's work of awakening faith in his people. Can assume that we will eventually see results as we share his word.

HOW SHOULD WE SHARE THE GOSPEL?

Generally in the context of a RELATIONSHIP

1 Thessalonians 2:8 ⁸ So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us.

- Doesn't mean there's anything wrong w/ street corner preaching, door-to-door, talking to person next to you on the plane, etc. All good things to do.
- Especially in modern Western urban settings, relationship over time is more likely to be effective.
- Give people time to trust you, see how your life works, see that you don't view them as project, etc.
- For all that to happen, has to be true! Don't just see people as projects—love them, and because you love them, share Gosp
- **What do you do that puts you in position to build relationships w/ non-Xians?**
 - o Good to have at least one "fishing pool"—something you do that involves you in non-Xians' lives. Gym, music, work, hang out at same pub or coffeeshop, etc.

With HUMILITY

1 Timothy 1:15-16 ¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost. ¹⁶ But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

- Biggest problem: People think Xians are jerks. Partly because it lets them off the hook; partly because way too often it's true. Ira Glass on NPR: "The Xians I know are nothing like that." This is the goal.
- Demonstrate, in word & deed, that you believe you need Jesus at least as much as people you're speaking to. Talk about failures, frustrations, struggles w/ sin & doubt.
- **APOLOGIZE** when you need to / when you get the chance. Honest apologies are so rare they're jarring; demonstrate you know you need forgiveness.
- Serge story: non-Xian national watching missionaries argue, then repent & reconcile: "I'm not sure what just happened, but I want whatever you guys have."
- **What are some common mistakes WE make that violate this principle?** (Not "stereotypical Xians" but US)

With CONFIDENCE

Ephesians 6:19-20 ¹⁹ [Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

- We actually believe Gosp is true. If we're right (if Θ is true, if JC is his Son, if he can truly offer forgiveness, if he really uses our words) there's no reason for us to be timid.
- People can tell if we're sincere. They will pick up on our passion, or lack thereof.
- People tend to respect confidence when it's paired with humility.
- Confidence placed not in ourselves, not in our ability, but in Gosp as power of Θ .
- Personally, I've never left conversation w/ nonbeliever wishing I hadn't pushed as hard.

With CLARITY

- Becoming Xian not about passing theol exam, but there are truths that have to be believed. Gospel has content.
- There are true statements that aren't the Gospel: God is real, Jesus loves you, religion is important, etc. Be happy whenever someone moves closer on the spectrum, but remember there is a core that has to be believed.
- **What are some of those key elements?**
 - o God: existence, holiness, goodness, justice
 - o Sin & God's judgment: original sin, actual sin
 - o Christ: fully human, fully divine, able to mediate
 - o Atonement: Christ pays penalty for our sin
 - o **Response:** Repentance & belief
 - o Benefits of knowing X: don't limit to heaven!
 - o Justification/Adoption/Sanctification
 - o Reality of heaven & hell
- Good to know, even memorize, Gospel outline w/ Scriptures, etc. (Two Ways to Live, Tell the Truth, Roman Road) But most conversations won't go exactly like that. Not giving a sales pitch; **listening** to what person is saying & bringing in elements of Gosp that speak to their needs. Challenging false beliefs, offering God's promises instead.

APOLOGETICS

Definition: “field of Christian theology that presents historical, reasoned, and evidential bases for Christianity, defending it against objections.”

Positively: Demonstrating that Christianity provides a rational way (ultimately, *the* rational way) of looking at the world.

Negatively: Demonstrating the flaws and shortcomings of non-Christian systems of thought.

Goal: Not to win arguments, but to eliminate roadblocks to faith. **2 Corinthians 10:5 ESV** *We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.*

THE EXISTENCE OF GOD

Positive argument: Christian arguments for God’s existence

Transcendental argument. Only the Xian Θ accounts for existence of knowledge, rationality, morality. We can’t know anything if there is no God who creates order, a world that makes sense, universe that follows predictable patterns. “How do you know you’re not a brain in a jar?”

Cosmological argument. Existence of universe demands a cause.

- Must be a starting point, not infinite regress of causes.
- 2nd law of thermodynamics, expanding nature of universe, all suggest order and causality. Universe can’t be infinitely old, or it would have unwound itself long ago.
- Cause must be greater than effect. Must be eternal, self-existent, immensely powerful.

Teleological argument. Order in universe suggests design, which suggests designer. Watchmaker argument: if you’re walking along beach & find a watch, you don’t assume it assembled itself at random and showed up there on its own.

Negative argument: Christian responses to atheism

- Atheism cannot account for laws of logic, moral absolutes, uniformity of nature. Why should gravity be constant? Why is 2+2 always 4? How can we know it will be tomorrow?
 - o This is especially true of moral absolutes. Why is it bad for one human to kill another? “The word ‘ought’ ought not to be in the atheist’s vocabulary.” A worldview hanging in midair, even when we agree.
- Atheism has no basis to object to Xianity, because it has no basis to evaluate metaphysical claims.
- Atheism cannot be empirically demonstrated—they can’t have exhaustive knowledge necessary to demonstrate that there is no God
- Common claim: “If Θ existed, he would make himself known.”
 - o How do you know that?
 - o Argument from experience: they haven’t seen enough to believe Θ exists. They don’t like it when we argue like this.

- Why is it that θ 's existence depends on the unblvr's standard for what's evident enough? Θ not meeting your terms is not evidence that he doesn't exist.
- We don't believe Θ is silent. We actually believe he's revealing himself all over; the atheist just isn't accepting the evidence. Why should Θ go out of his way to meet this standard?
- Who says that God is obligated to make himself equally evident to everyone under the sun? θ has to be the way you say he is in order to exist?

THE RELIABILITY OF THE BIBLE

Positive argument: The case for trusting the Bible

- I. What the Bible says about itself
 - A. More than a regular book. **Heb. 4:12** ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.
 - B. Not everyone can see this. **1 Co. 2:14** ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.
 - C. Isn't this a circular argument?
- II. What the external evidence says about the Bible
 - A. No other book in human history has been studied, tested, fact-checked like the Bible. No other book, particularly no other ancient text, comes close to Bible's reliability.
 - B. One really impressive thing: How well text of Bible has been preserved through history.
 1. Ever wonder how we know we're reading same words Peter and Paul wrote? Being copied that many times, couldn't errors have slipped in?
 2. Here's how: Bible is much better attested than any other ancient work.
 - a. **Number of manuscripts**
 - i. Caesar's Gallic War: 1st-cent BC, 10 copies
 - ii. Plato: 7 copies
 - iii. Homer's Iliad: over 600, pretty impressive
 - iv. NT: Over 5K copies in Greek, over 10K Latin, over 9K in other languages.
 - b. **Age of manuscripts**
 - i. Caesar's Gallic War: 1000 years after orig publication
 - ii. Plato: 900 years
 - iii. Homer: 500 years
 - iv. NT: As early as 35 years after publication. Historically negligible.
 - c. **Quality of manuscripts**
 - i. Something like 97% agreement among these thousands of manuscripts. Most discrepancies are incredibly minor—spelling errors, issues where scribe skipped a line, etc. Very few major variations in the text, none of which have to do with central doctrines.
 3. Simply put, amount of data we have on hand when we want to study Bible is incredible. Amazingly well-preserved, better by light-years than any other book of its time.
 - C. Not just that the data is there, but that data is incredibly reliable. Time and time again, people have claimed to find historical errors in Scrip. Time and time again, further discoveries have only confirmed what the Bible says.
 1. For years, ANE scholars said David didn't exist. Then in 1993, Tell Dan Stele was discovered, referred to "House of David". Now it's widely taken for granted that David was historical, even among secular scholars. (I'm reading book about history of Judaism that straightforwardly acknowledges all this.)
- III. What we experience about the Bible
 - A. Our own testimony of Bible as supernatural book is powerful.
 - B. In many cases, more effective than pulling out the big guns above is sharing a Scripture that has encouraged you recently.

Negative argument: Critiques of non-Christian stance on Bible

- I. “You can’t trust a book written by men.”
 - A. Why should I trust *your* reasoning?
 - B. We all trust *lots* of books written by men.
 - C. We don’t believe it was *merely* written by men.
- II. “Have to see it with my own eyes”
 - A. We believe most things without seeing them with our own eyes. History, for example.
 - B. Not applied to other books—if they read anything that contradicts Bible, eager to believe.
- III. “Can’t believe in a book that teaches X”
 - A. Where are these moral absolutes coming from? Personal preference doesn’t determine whether something is true or not.
 - B. A claim of objective right or wrong that their worldview can’t support
- IV. “Bible contradicts itself”
 - A. First: If I can give a satisfying answer to your example (assuming they have one), will you acknowledge that the Bible is in fact a divine book? They won’t.
 - B. Then ask for examples. Often they can’t give one. If they do, look it up. There are whole books examining Bible difficulties. Common ones:
 - i. Many places where same story is told twice w/ different details; not a contradiction
 - ii. Instances of 2 names given for same person, e.g. Moses’ father-in-law
 - iii. Predictions that don’t come true because of intervening events
 - iv. Main point: **engage on this**. Bible can handle this kind of scrutiny. Get help if you need it. People bluff on this, and they’re not used to having to explain themselves.

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Defined: How can all the evil in the world be reconciled with the existence of a good God?

Important: distinguish between *intellectual* problem of evil and *emotional* problem of evil. Very different responses.

Positive response:

- Bible acknowledges presence of evil, says God is doing something about it.
- God’s justice guarantees that evil will be punished, whether in hell or on the cross.
- God is creating a world where evil will be no more. We’re still in the middle of the story.

Negative argument:

- Atheist worldview can’t explain concept of “bad things happening.” Who decides what’s bad?
- Assumes we’re qualified to make absolute statements about good and evil—categories that don’t exist on their worldview.

- How much pain and suffering *could* be reconciled w/ existence of a good Θ ?
- As we said above, Θ not doing things the way you want them done is not an argument against his existence

Response to the emotional problem of evil:

- Weep with those who weep
- Promise of Θ 's presence in midst of suffering
- Talk about how Θ has sustained you through your own suffering
- Hope of heaven