

How to Handle Objections

Prepared by GOFINISH Team Members

Whenever the truths of God's Word are shared, our faith will eventually be questioned. The devil hates this good news and you can be assured that he will try to block its proclamation. It is not unusual for believers to be nervous in dealing with people's objections or questions concerning the gospel. Most of us are apprehensive when we first step out into a life of sharing God's good news with people. It is a bit unnerving to be challenged with an objection or asked a question about our beliefs about God and the Bible. We tend to fear the worst about these occasions. We ask questions like: "What if I get them mad?" or "What if they ask a question about the Bible that I can't answer?" or "What if I don't make any sense?" Hopefully, after you read this material, you will know how to communicate more and stress less. You will learn how not to be intimidated by the questions that people throw at us and how to turn these "stumbling blocks" into "steppingstones."

BRIDGES OR BARRIERS?

It seems to be a common misconception of Christians that many people will have objections to the gospel. In fact, as you may have certainly seen by now, many people are open to hearing and the objections they have are few. Remember that hundreds of thousands of people come to Christ every day and they ask few questions—they just believe. We need to know that objections are welcomed because they can open the door wider for a better understanding of the message of salvation. Think about it this way: every objection is either an unanswered question or a request for more information. An objection is somewhat like a question in disguise.

As you will see in this document some small objections can be postponed or answered quickly. But sometimes an objection is a bit more than half-hearted and is based on deeper emotional concerns. When a person raises an authentic, emotion-based objection to you, it's as if they have created a divide in the ground between the two of you. If you want to continue in your friendship with them, you'll need to build a bridge across this divide, and carry them over. God has called us to be peacemakers. We are to be *clearer* not *clever*, we are to make *windows* not *walls* and we are to build *bridges* not *barriers*. Rejoice when people object to the gospel because it is your cue to rise to the occasion and give them clarity and understanding. God has explained this fact beautifully in 1 Peter 3:15 where He says, "*But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. 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* (NIV). In a nutshell, what this passage says to me is: *defend* but do not *offend*."

We're going to learn how to validate their objections by using terms they can understand, and which relate to their ideals. Consider all objections as a "bridge-building phase" and then picture how you can help them walk back over the bridge of concern and over the chasm of their doubt, right into the arms of a loving Savior. Keep in mind God always has the answer and nothing catches Him by surprise.

KNOW WHERE OBJECTIONS ORIGINATE

They come from three sources:

The first is *ignorance*. Many of the objections we have dealt with come from the minds of unscripturally taught people. You can tell immediately if people know anything about the Bible. You will hear them say things like “All religions are about the same” and “God helps those who help themselves.” Even some Christians don’t know much about the Word of God. Many believers just don’t read and study the Bible. Surveys of adults and youth in the church reveal that some think Sodom and Gomorrah were husband and wife, that Billy Graham preached the Sermon on the Mount, and that Moses was the father of Jesus! If this is true for the “saved and sanctified,” how much more is it true for those we are calling the “church-detached.” Many people have objections about the Bible because they just do not understand it.

The second source is *rejection*. Some people have a made-up mind not to serve God. They might even know and comprehend the message of salvation, but they are not about to turn their lives over to Christ. It is not a matter of knowledge or understanding—it is a matter of the will. When a person flat-out rejects the truth they will always come up with some objections to God’s Word, but these are usually smoke screens to hide the fact that they’re just not going to accept His way. Jesus said, “*But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life*” (John 5:40). This is well said—some people are not willing to have a new life in Christ. They may change their mind someday in the future. Maybe God puts us directly in the place to help them make that decision when the time comes.

The third source is *Satan*. Satan has a habit of “blinding” people to the truths of the gospel. He and his demons are always around to cast doubt, diversions, denial, and delay into the lives of people so that they will not come to the knowledge of truth. The Bible indicates that he is a personal devil with distinctive traits of personality including intellect (2 Corinthians 11: 3; Luke 4:1f). Ascribed to him are the emotions of desire, jealousy, hatred, and anger. We see all of these traits in people who are full of objections and questions. Satan is described as a personal enemy of God and humans and is a master at deception. He will always oppose the proclamation of the gospel. Causing objections to arise is one of the first tools of war the devil will throw at you for no other reason but to discourage or confuse you. His goal is to show that you are not in control of your beliefs and thereby not believable. It is a device to damage your credibility. Many times objections indicate demon activity which is stirred up any time the name of Jesus is mentioned. All we have to do is mention the blood of Jesus and the cleansing power in that blood and we will see increased satanic activity.

KINDS OF OBJECTIONS

Petty. This is an objection that really has nothing to do with what Jesus did but is used as a stalling technique. It could come in the form of a “trick question” like this: *Could God make a stone so heavy He could not move it?* Any answer will work against you. By the way, the answer is, “Yes He can.” And then He will move it anyway!

Impulsive. A common example is the question, *What about the heathen?* What we discover is that the prospect is not *really* concerned about the lost people of foreign lands; instead, he is trying to get the heat off the heathen in the living room—himself!

Excuse. A person using this kind of objection is just looking for a reason and it does not have to make a bit of sense. An example is: *I don't go to church because there are so many hypocrites.* I have heard this one many times through the years. After dealing with it, we should return to the basic salvation message.

Genuine. There are genuine reasons for objections and the reasons usually are not understood by the person to whom we are witnessing. An example could be the seemingly unexplainable death of a loved one due to illness or accident. This always calls for a further clarification of the point either misunderstood or a point not covered in our presentation. We may need to let the person know that we don't know the answer, but we will be glad to do the necessary research and discuss it with them.

WHEN OBJECTIONS ARISE

When these objections come at you it is important to know how to A.C.T. Here's what we mean:

Acknowledge the objection

Clarify the objection

Test the answer you offer

While it may sound simple, **acknowledging** the objection is important. Don't just keep talking, assuming that by sharing wonderful things the objection will disappear. Highly unlikely. And worse yet are Christians who ignore an objection, assuming that if it isn't addressed it will go away. Unlikely as well. Not acknowledging an objection only signals to a person that you're not listening. Always remember that objections are opportunities that will enable you to help people come to faith in God. Let them talk at this point. Don't interrupt them because then you would be objecting to their objection! If you refuse to listen, then their next step may well be towards the door. This is a good time to just stop and listen to them. It is called "active listening" like making eye contact, nodding, and allow your "body language" to physically show interest.

Next, you should **clarify**. By clarifying you can avoid the trap of hearing an objection and immediately trying to answer it. It is a much better idea to acknowledge it, and then ask questions to find out how important it is and why the person feels it is a problem. By doing this, you are changing the tone of the dialogue: you are participating in a problem-solving discussion versus being in a defensive mode. When it is appropriate, ask some questions to help you understand what is being said. This not only shows you are interested in them, but it also gives you more information with which to answer their objections.

Finally, once a solution is offered, don't assume the objection is addressed and move on. Instead, **test** to make sure the person understands the solution and agrees that it addresses the objection. Check to find out whether your objection-handling worked. Ask if you have answered their questions. Then ask if there are any more concerns. Handling objections is an age-old topic, but

if anything, the art and science of skillfully handling objections has grown in importance over the years.

POINTERS

Avoid argument. Do not take it personally. Our natural instinct is to meet the objection head on, over run it, and show our own superiority. Then if you get into an argument (win or lose) you will lose the opportunity to win them to Jesus. Remember this rule: You cannot reason with emotion. I always say that an argument “generates a lot of heat but very little light.” This is especially true when the argument is over theological issues. Remember Proverbs 15:1: *A soft answer turns away wrath, but grievous words stir up anger.* You are trying to save a lost soul from an eternity in hell...you must be patient and kind. If you make people angry, you may have lost every opportunity you might have in the future to develop a relationship and eventually lead them to Christ.

Use “spiritual judo.” This is an effective technique. When an objection arises always meet it with a positive statement. In other words, roll with the objection and come right back with an upbeat comment. Use affirmative statements like *I’m glad you said that*, or *You know, a lot of people feel the way you do* or *I think I understand why you feel that way*. You should be glad that individuals have voiced their objection. It shows they are interested. By showing a positive attitude you are clearing a way for them to come to Jesus.

Don’t panic. Remember John 14:26. The Holy Spirit will bring those things to your remembrance that you need, if you have properly prepared. Dr. D. James Kennedy, author of *Evangelism Explosion*, recommends prayer at this point. He says, “*The first and most important step to remember when you encounter someone with an objection is to pray and ask God for His help. Send a ‘Sky Telegram’ heavenward. When the god of this world attacks, you need to go over his head to the all-wise God who is over all.*”

Remember three rules: *agree* to the extent you can, *reason* with them so you can work out the differences without argument, and then *close* so you can come to a conclusion and get back to the gospel message.

DEALING WITH OBJECTIONS

Preclude them. To do this you simply keep your eyes and ears open and look for the coming objections. Then you handle them before they become full-blown. It is easier to deal with things before they get to their full steam. This method works well in relationships, the workplace, and many other places.

Postpone them. If it is a question that does not have to be answered right away, you can use this method. You might say “I’m glad you brought this up. I am going to talk about this very thing in a few minutes.” Continue talking about the subject at hand and deal with the objection later. This will keep you from spending a lot of time on things that are not important. Postponing is not saying that you will not deal with it, but that you will deal with it later. We need to be considerate and tactful when using this method.

Answer the objection quickly. There will be questions asked that will require an answer before you can move on. Give a quick answer and return immediately to the subject at hand. This needs to be done smoothly and quickly enough to keep the train of thought. It is not wise to pause long enough after answering the question to give them time to respond. A response will usually come in the form of another objection. Very rarely will someone say, “Oh I see.” Usually if given the chance they will have a series of objections that will change the subject. Remember, many times, the reason they want to change the subject is they are under conviction, they are uncomfortable and want to change the way they feel.

Research and return. There is nothing wrong with not knowing the answer. No one individual has all the answers. It is all right to admit that you do not know. Tell them you will have to do some studying and that you will get back to them. It is better to do this than to set yourself up as a know-it-all.

Answer a question with a question. Christian Evangelist William Fay says, “The best way to conquer an objection is through a simple three-letter word, the question ‘Why.’ When someone says, ‘I am not ready,’ don’t second guess his reason. Instead, do what a psychologist does...ask why. Ask the person where he or she heard that fact, or why they hold that particular objection. Find out their church background, and how that has influenced them. This method has to be used tactfully because it does get a little personal when we ask questions and it is easy to get off the subject.

Always remember how important it is for them to see Jesus in your attitude. However we respond, we must do it in love. It's the Word that will do the work! Remember: Witnessing is sharing the person of Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, and leaving the results to God. Always show love and patience. Noted men’s author, Pat Morley, has won many men to Christ with his excellent books that speak to a man’s heart. He wrote a brilliant little booklet on how to reach men. He says, “*Our job is not to ‘fix’ their behavior. Our job is to make Christ ever more attractive so that He can do His life-transforming work in them.*” Be happy for the objections your prospect gives because it allows an opportunity to “show them Jesus!”

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Objections are a part of the total witnessing experience. How we react to them will have a definite influence on the salvation progress—positive or negative. We can’t let fear hold us back from reaching people with the gospel. Fear should drive us to a greater dependence on God. Reliance upon the Holy Spirit in prayer is always the position to maintain. We are never stronger than when we have bowed our spirits in dependence upon God to do what we cannot. Steve Sjogren sums it up best when he says, “*I’ve spent most of my Christian life being stuck in these kinds of fears and myths about life. I operated as a sort of Christian agoraphobic: loving the Lord, but afraid to go outside the house of the Lord. In recent years, however, I’ve been venturing out of the Christian ghetto which once kept me bound. I’ve been saying no to the fears and myths that once gripped me and kept me in a place of inactivity. To put it another way, I’ve been daring to color outside the lines.* We can do the same. Let’s venture out into a world of hurt and do our best to “give a reason for the hope that is within us.”