

WHY HAVE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS?, ROMANS 10:13-21

Why? Questions for Christians #16

◆ **Intro:** All summer we've been studying some of the most asked questions Christians receive from others. This is called apologetics; making an apology/defense. So we've looked at how science and the belief in God fit. We've considered why the Bible is a trustworthy document. We've wondering about what kind of person Jesus actually was, is. About why there's evil and suffering. About Christian approaches to abortion, or same-sex attraction.

◆ In my experience people almost never walk up and come right out with these questions. These are deeply concerning things. They don't come first in the order of conversational comfort. They are usually on the other end, the personal, connected, trusting end. When you get on the buss or a plane and sit next to a stranger they hardly ever say, "Morning, do you believe in the existence of God?" Or, "Hi, seat 5c. I believe you're in my seat and by the way why do you suppose there's so much evil and suffering in the world?" But get to these subjects somewhere, sometime we must! We can learn how and when so lets think about it.

◆ **1. Getting to spiritual conversations is essential for salvation.** This much is clear from Romans 10. Paul tells us "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." But then he points out that this requires belief, and belief requires finding out about him, and finding out about him requires someone telling them (v14-15). Therefore, getting to spiritual

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conversations is essential for God's called people to enter into his family. Someone has to say something.

◆A. So the first thing I'd like to raise to our attention is this: lets not spend our whole lives thinking the fabled "silent witness" is sufficient. And let's not sit around waiting for people to ask us what we believe in and why? It rarely happens. No. We are the ones on the move.

◆*"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."*
Matthew 16:18, NRSV.

◆Many translations say "overcome it". I think prevail is better. It is the Kingdom that's on the move, attacking the gates of hell. They will not stand up against the onslaught! Gates don't attack. Jesus said "From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing..." Matthew 11:12, NIV.

◆So the Kingdom of Jesus Christ is on the move. The kingdom of Jesus Christ will conquer all in the end. And as a member of the Kingdom of God, you are not only to defend by answering questions. Christians are to be on the offensive although without being offensive! It is essential that we proclaim the truth.

◆v14 *how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* The term "preaching" is *kyrusso* (κηρυσσο). It doesn't mean you have to be a preacher for your occupation. It means to herald, or publish, or proclaim

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something. When you run in the room and announce "Andrew Luck is retiring at 29!" that's kyrusso. When you post on Facebook or Instagram for all the world to know that you have new shoes, or got engaged –that's kyrusso. A good synonym for kyrusso would be "post".

◆What is that truth we are supposed to be posting/kyrusso-ing? That Jesus is God, in his humanity he endured the death sentence of human sin and by his divinity stood back up in life, and promises that to all who believe. It's free. It's hope. It's life. It's power available now! Ask for it. Receive it!

◆Some years ago a transient family pulled into the church parking lot. Pickup loaded to a tower of belongings. Kids in back with the stuff, sunburned noses. A baby in the cab with parents, wearing no clothes. They wondered if we could help them. They were on their way to a neighboring state. I got them a room for the night and other things. Before I left them I simply said, "Do you know why I'm helping you? Because I love Jesus, and Jesus came into this world to love you and me. To save us and help us. So sometime tonight say a little prayer of thanks to Jesus!

◆Why bother with that? I'll tell you. Hindus can do nice things too but for different reasons. Americans can do nice things but in order to get a tax break, or to feel good about themselves, or even to try to make up for something bad they did. I wanted them to know it was faith in Jesus behind

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what I was doing because spiritual conversations are an essential link in the chain of salvation.

◆**2. Spiritual conversations are all around us.** Do you know why?

◆**A. Because spiritual reality is all around us.**

◆“But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”” Romans 10:18, NIV.

◆Whose voice? Well Paul is quoting Psalm 19.

◆“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Psalms 19:1-4, NIV.

◆The voice of nature. The voice of creation, the skies, “the universe declares his majesty”.

◆**B. But the problem is, fallen humans cannot hear the voice of nature.** Men and women have been in awe of the planets, the seas, the animal kingdom for thousands of years, and yet cannot arrive at the knowledge of the true God through it alone. In fact today, most conclude its all one marvelously fantastic evolutionary accident. Other’s pray to the stars, and read their horoscopes. Paul observes this in v21, quoting this passage from Isaiah the prophet...

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◆ "All day long I have held out my hands to an obstinate people, who walk in ways not good, pursuing their own imaginations-- a people who continually provoke me to my very face, offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on altars of brick; who sit among the graves and spend their nights keeping secret vigil; who eat the flesh of pigs, and whose pots hold broth of unclean meat; who say, 'Keep away; don't come near me, for I am too sacred for you!...' " Isaiah 65:2-5, NIV.

◆ Again, in Romans 1 Paul makes the point

◆ "...what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities--his eternal power and divine nature-- have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles." Romans 1:19-23, NIV.

◆ Are you getting the picture. Nobody arrives at knowledge of the true God on their own even though spiritual realities are all around them. (Rom.8:7, John 6:44)

◆ C. That means we just need to point them out! One of the best ways is to comment on nature and add the truth about God. Simple statements like...

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- ◆ “Isn’t it amazing how good it feels to be out when God sends a beautiful day?”
- ◆ “The physics God built into the universe blows my mind.”
- ◆ One fellow, his name is Mark, did this while camping. He merely said, “What an imagination God has to make so many different flowers.” Another camper responded that he did not believe in God. Mark asked, “Oh, why not?” and the conversation lasted well into the night.
- ◆ That brings us to a few thoughts on how to have spiritual conversations. This is not really as hard as a lot of us think. And happily some of you do this quite naturally.
- ◆ **3. To have spiritual conversations be genuinely loving and humbly interested:**
 - ◆ *“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:” Philippians 2:3-5, NIV.*
 - ◆ **A.** How can we look to other’s interests? Be curious. Shaller and Crilly write in *The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversation*, that it’s as simple as genuine curiosity. “Curiosity is the bridge that moves you from listening to asking questions and fully engaging.” The Latin root is *cure*: to care, to tend, to heal, to cure. Curing starts with

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caring. Curiosity is simply genuinely caring. How much do we care about other people's lives? So be curious about other people. Notice them and then...

◆**B.** Ask questions: Questions are much more affective, Shaller and Crilly point out, than merely telling people things. We might notice that God and his Son Jesus were very good as asking questions. Questions get people to think. When Adam and Eve sinned in the garden what did God do? Give them a lecture on obedience and the obvious consequences? Remind them of all the instructions he gave earlier like one of us might do with our kids?

◆(Adam, I told you to stay away from that Tree of Good and Evil! Evil always bites you in the shorts. And Eve, now you know what shame is, don't you, and shame on you, by the way. You could have lived on bananas and oranges! *They're good for you!*)

◆But that's not what God does. He gets Adam and Eve to think by asking questions. "Where are you? Who told you you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree...? What is this that you've done?" He's getting them to ponder. Jesus did the same thing. There are over 150 questions recorded in the Gospels that Jesus asked people.

◆A study was done that discovered that asking things is more motivational than telling things. Two young boys were sent out to approach smokers, to tell them it was bad for

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them and offer them information on quitting. 90% of the smokers they spoke with responded negatively. They were sent out again, this time with a fake cigarette asking for a light. Not once were they offered a light from a smoker. Instead they got lectured on the dangers of smoking. Then they asked the smokers, "If you care about us, what about you?" 90% of respondents told the boys they would try to quit. The city quit line recorded a 40% higher volume of calls the day of the experiment. Shaller&Crilly, p.110

◆ So ask people about themselves. Ask them what they think about the tough questions they ask you! Resist the temptation to argue or correct right away. You want to understand them. Often their views have little to do with the facts and a lot to do with some experience, or pain.

◆ [Obviously we need to learn to ask good questions that show we want to know and understand the person. Please don't ask questions that are really lectures or blame and shame.

◆ How could you be so stupid? isn't the kind of questions were talking about. Neither is,

◆ "Did you know that the KJV is the only right translation of the Bible?"

◆ "Do you believe in science, or do you believe in God?" Or

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◆“Why would you think such a thing?” Try not to ask “why” questions if you can. “Why” questions put people on the defensive.]

◆**Conclusion:** Remember what we are after as followers of Jesus! We want to post the good news that there is a God and he has sent his Son as the answer to all human problems and sin. We want to glorify God and love God! And we want to love and bring cure to people! Gods word hold truth about all things!All the questions we asked this summer, about history, and science, the Bible, the resurrection, evil, purpose, sexuality - all of it we found out about in the Word. As Christians we've been given access to answers! Everyone needs those answers! Ultimately all our arguments and truth claims should draw attention to, and support , the truth-claims of Jesus Christ, particularly his claims of Lordship. -Ken Samples. Learn to bring it up. Pray for the opportunity. And see God in action through you!