

Dealing With People

(Rev. 05/25)

How do I get a genuinely good person to realize / understand that they need a relationship with Jesus?

Okay, you may not like my answer, but I'm going to pick on the sentence structure here. Check out this verse:

For no one can come to me [Jesus] unless the Father who sent me draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up. - John 6:44 (NLT)

Who is responsible for calling people to a relationship with God? God. The first thing you have to know is that God calls people; in fact, the literal Greek term rendered “draws” actually means “drags”. This is NOT Calvinism, because clearly people can see God's handiwork and still reject Him. (Romans 1:20.) However it's God's job to make them understand, not yours.

Hopefully that's a relief to you, because your job is only to share. It's God's job to change lives.

So, what would I do? Well, in this case I would probably just dialogue with the person. Again, I LOVE asking questions: Have you ever thought about what happens when we die? Do you believe in Heaven? What do you think it takes to get to Heaven?

When you ask a question, listen respectfully to their answer; then, respond with what you believe. By sharing your beliefs as a dialogue instead of a lecture, you're more likely to be able to continue the conversation.

Again, be sure you start and end with prayer, though, because it's more about God-and-them rather than you-and-them.

How do you respond to public figures making incorrect statements?

Short Answer: I don't. (Yay!) When asked, there are three responses that I have:

“I don't know.” In certain cases, I don't know why people, supposedly Christians, make statements that contradict the Bible. Is it because they've never researched it? They don't know what they believe? In these cases, if I truly feel the person is unsure, I can extend grace. I don't have to agree; I just have to realize that they're on a spiritual journey, just like I am.

“I can't agree with that.” If someone is well-educated – or at least educated enough to know better – then I can choose to disagree with them without being disagreeable. (Notice I'm disagreeing with “that”, not “them”.) The Bible tells us in James 3:1:

Dear brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers in the church, for we who teach will be judged more strictly. - James 3:1 (NLT)

If someone is saying something that contradicts the Bible, God is going to deal with them, not me; and I wouldn't want to be in their shoes when they have to stand before Him.

“I am sorry.” If someone claims to represent Christ, but are chasing people away from Him, instead, I have no problem apologizing for them. If someone has been hurt by a “Christian”

who failed to show God's love, I have no trouble apologizing for them either. One of my favorite quotes is from some old song lyrics by Wayne Watson, *"That's not Jesus, / He doesn't carry on that way / Just some flesh and blood like you and me / Somehow gone astray."*

By the way, in this category, I DO allow myself to be angry, if appropriate, because I think God is angry when someone who claims His name prevents others from finding salvation because of their words/actions.

How do you witness to someone who thinks science and technology will solve the world's problems?

This is one of those questions that I truly love! Why? Because any time we can talk about how to share the Good News of Jesus with others, it's absolutely a worthwhile cause! With that being said, I can give you some general guidelines, but a lot of it depends on both you and them.

Step One: Pray.

If you aren't praying for them – and yourself – don't tell them! Why? Because none of us are capable of "changing" someone else; only God has that power.

Step Two: Find a good time.

Don't try to share the Gospel with someone who is busy or distracted. Why? Because they're not paying attention.

Step Three: Ask questions.

When I talk with someone who has a different belief system, I love to ask them to explain it to me. Then, I like to ask follow-up questions to make sure I understand what they're saying.

In this case, I would love it if this person could give me examples of how technology has solved the world's problems (solar power, wind energy)...and see if they can give me examples of how technology has made things worse (nuclear bombs, the Great Pacific Garbage Patch).

Then I would ask what's the difference in these technologies? (I'd be hoping they would say that it comes down to how humans use them.) If they do say that, I'd ask why.

Basically, if they ever get to the point where they admit humans can – and often do – choose to do bad things with technology, I would use that as an opening to talk about fallen, sinful humans. My key verses would be:

As the Scriptures say, "No one is righteous— not even one. - Romans 3:10 (NLT)

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. - Romans 3:23 (NLT)

It's kind of hard to argue with that fact that there ARE people out there who are evil and shouldn't have access to nukes. God says that we're all like that; that we've all missed. Because of that, technology or not, we hurt each other with our words, our actions, and even our choices.

Step Four: See Step One

They may not change immediately. But every time you talk, every time you listen, and every time you continue the conversation, you have another chance to present what you believe.

I hope this helps and please know that I'll be praying for you and for them!

How does Jesus deal with bullies?

This question hurt to read. If you've been bullied, I want you to know that I'm sorry! I hope you know that there are people who care for you and would love to sit down and talk with you. You can talk to me or any other adult leaders!

As for how Jesus deals with bullies, the answer may surprise you: Jesus loves them! Why? Because Jesus loves all of His creation, including bullies!

But, the other thing that you have to know is that there IS a price for our sins. In Isaiah 59, we're told:

Listen! The LORD's arm is not too weak to save you, nor is his ear too deaf to hear you call. It's your sins that have cut you off from God. Because of your sins, he has turned away and will not listen anymore. - Isaiah 59:1-2 (NLT)

If someone is living like a bully and enjoying hurting other people, then God isn't going to listen to their prayers. For God to listen to them again, they need to be sorry for their sins...and that includes the sin of bullying!

Also, there's this verse in Romans:

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. - Romans 6:23 (NLT)

If someone bullies other people and never asks Jesus for forgiveness, the price is...death. They are separated from God because their sins aren't forgiven.

But the same is true for all of us. Our sins, our choices, can separate us from God. But God still loves us, still offers us a way to return to Him. What I encourage people to do is to not worry about what will happen to others because of their mistakes. Instead, we should look at our own lives and figure out if we have any other sins we need to confess to God!

Again, if you'd like to talk more about this, please ask someone!

How to respond in love and truth to a close relative who invites me to her wedding to another woman.

This is a very difficult situation. The best I can give you is some advice that was given to me:

We can honor the person without honoring the ceremony.

What does that mean? I was invited to a wedding of a relative; she was marrying her girlfriend. When I received the invitation, I spent a lot of time debating about what to do. Finally, I called a man so much smarter than I: Jack Hager.

Jack told me that he wouldn't go to the wedding, because of his religious views. Since God ordained marriage to be between a man and a woman, he couldn't go to a wedding that violated that rule.

Jack DID say that he would go to the reception, however. Why? Because the reception isn't a Biblical mandate; it's just a party. We can go, eat food, chat, encourage our loved ones, and be there for them. This honors the person – we could go to the reception – without honoring the ceremony – we weren't at the wedding.

Now you need to know, I DID try this with my relative and was told that if I couldn't come to the wedding, I wasn't invited to the reception; and I was okay with that.

In closing, I guess I would leave this up to you to decide what is acceptable to your own conscience.

In the Bible, the laws had poor people glean from the fields. How do we help poor people without enabling them?

Okay, the verse in question comes from the Book of Leviticus:

"When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick up what the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the LORD your God." - Leviticus 23:22 (NLT)

If you read through the Old Testament, there are a lot of laws for how we're to treat the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the foreigner. Why? Because in that society, everyone was responsible for earning their own living. If you didn't work, you didn't eat. It was as simple as that. (There are exceptions for those who CANNOT work, as they are allowed to beg at the synagogues and Temple – the places where everyone in that culture passed by.)

In fact, the concept of earning your own living is also echoed in the New Testament. Flip over to 2 Thessalonians 3:

Even while we were with you, we gave you this command: "Those unwilling to work will not get to eat." - 2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NLT)

Does this sound harsh? Well, think about this: in the Old Testament, the rich are required to leave food in the field. The catch? The people who want to eat have to go out and get it. It's not gathered in and then handed out to those who are sitting down on their backsides; it's free food that you have to work to receive.

Moreover, in 2 Thessalonians, if you read on in chapter 3 you find that the people who aren't working are simply taking from those who are; and, at the same time, they're creating confusion and dissension in the body. Why? Because they have nothing else to do!

Is it loving to let someone starve? Sometimes it is... If we provide the jobs, but they refuse to work; we offer them food, but they demand money; we offer help, but they demand we do everything for them. In those cases, they're so self-focused that anything we do is only going to make them believe they deserve it even more. It's not healthy and it's not sustainable. Sometimes it takes suffering in our lives to help us learn valuable lessons.

So, what do we do instead? We give a hand up, but they still need to take it. We give them opportunities, but they still need to make the most of them. We do our part to provide assistance, but they do their part to take advantage of it. That's what the Bible calls us to do.

Is sarcasm looked down upon?

That would depend on how it's being used. In Job 38:1-40:2, we find God using sarcasm as He challenges Job's understanding. In Matthew 7:3-5, Jesus uses sarcasm to make a point. In 2 Corinthians 12:11 and 11:16 we find Paul using sarcasm to reinforce his ideas. (He has some very sarcastic things to say about the "Judaizers", too!) Again, if its used to make a point and help people to understand, then it's fine.

On the other hand, if you're using it to make fun of people, if people don't get it and think that you mean what you say, or you're using it to make people feel dumb, then it is wrong. Ephesians 2:29 is just one of many verses that talk about using your words to build people up, not tear them down.

What does the Bible say about immigration?

Short Answer: Nothing. (Whew! Done!) Okay, let's take another shot at this, because I think my simple answer isn't going to satisfy you.

The first thing you need to know is that "immigration", as we understand it, did NOT exist in any way, shape, or form in the Bible. People routinely moved from country to country, settled in new territories, and then moved again. (For a few examples, check out Abraham in Genesis 12:10, Jacob's family in Genesis 42:5, Jesus' family in Matthew 2:14, etc.) If there was a problem, you walked to a new country and started again. It was as simple as that.

The catch is that the people, when they arrived, had a couple of main conditions:

1. They had to accept the law of the land. (Exodus 12:49, Leviticus 24:22)
2. They had to find a way to take care of their families. (Leviticus 23:22)
3. They had to pay their taxes. (Romans 13:6-7)

Those are pretty much the requirements that the Bible has for immigrants. On the flip side, the people of the Bible were bound to:

1. Care for the foreigner's needs. (Deuteronomy 10:18-19)
2. Provide equal justice under the law. (Zechariah 7:9-10)
3. Treat immigrants as natives. (Leviticus 19:33-34)
4. Give them opportunities. (Deuteronomy 24:19-22)

And why were they to do all this? Because they would make money? Because these people were guaranteed to improve the country? Nope. The reason they're commanded to do all of this is because God wants them to remember the slavery He saved them from...oh, and because God has a "soft spot" for those who are helpless and unable to defend themselves.

So, what does this mean for our country? Actually...nothing... Our country is not "Christian", despite what people say about its beginning; we're not bound by the Middle East laws of hospitality; and America already has a system in place that they use to bring immigrants into the country. (My attitude, by the way, is that if you're unhappy with the system, change it, amend it, revise it, or replace it, but don't simply discard it. That's just my two cents worth!)

The question we need to ask is not, "What does this mean for America?" The better question is, "What does this mean to me?" Do I treat those who are different as people who are different, or do I welcome them? Do I give them justice or simply judgment? Do I take care of their needs, or do I turn away?

Our response, based on God's commands, has never changed, regardless of what this country may or may not choose to do. How are you doing with this?

Why are some Christians filled with so much hate towards non-Christians?

Honestly, I read this one and it bothered me a bit. Not because I think it's wrong; but because I've seen this many, many times. Please understand that I can't speak for every possible situation, but I do have a couple of ideas:

- God speaks in Capital "T" Truths; what He says is always True, whether we believe it or not. But if I have a bunch of little "t" truths – lies spoken by humans – and I never bother to listen to God, I can become bitter and angry, and disappointed. If I feel that way toward myself, how am I going to treat others?
- Another issue comes down to what I believe about judgment. If I had a bad experience with a bully, I will hate ALL bullies. Why? Because they remind me of my past. So, if you're a bully, I will judge you...harshly. We ARE allowed to judge, but we have no right to be "judge, jury, and executioner". (I judge your actions based on the Bible, but I don't get to condemn you for them.)

Notice that in both cases, it all comes down to me. I reject what God says and I focus on myself; my attitudes, my hurts, my hang-ups. I take what's inside of me and I apply it to others, and the result is...hate. The Holy Spirit can't change me because I refuse to change; God's Truth has no impact on me because I refuse to listen.

I think this is why people can sit in a church for 30 years and still be bitter and judgmental. It's why a Pastor of 20 years can believe that God loves everyone except him. It's why people who are in abusive relationships stay and keep being abused. We have a little "t", or a bad experience, that's keeping us trapped from becoming who God made us to be!

If this describes you, please let either Maria or I know. It would be our honor to help you. Or, if you want to try to "go it alone", at least check out *The Trek* at www.thetrek.org. (If you need a scholarship,

let us know that too!)

By the way, if you're afraid that may be you, there IS a test to see if the Holy Spirit is active in your life:

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! - Galatians 5:19-23 (NLT)

What kind of fruit are YOU producing?

Barry's Note: At this point, usually someone brings up Matthew 7:1-2:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. - Matthew 7:1-2 (NLT)

The problem is two-fold: first, the word is better rendered as "condemned", not "judged"; and second is that in the very next verses we're told not to cast pearls before swine. How do we know what a "pearl" is and what a "swine" is if we can't judge?

Why did God command the slaughtering of the Canaanites when He also tells His people to welcome foreigners?

Okay, on the surface, this does seem rather contradictory, right? God wants the wholesale slaughter of foreigners...but the Israelites are to welcome foreigners? Does God have a split personality here, or is there more to the story?

As always, we need to make sure we're looking at the Bible for our answers. To make this one really simple, we're only going to one passage; please flip over to Joshua 2. While you're going there, let me give you some background on the story.

Israel has been set free from slavery in Egypt. Even more than that, the Israelites pillage Egypt on their way out of town! (See Exodus 12:35-36.) Then, Pharaoh has a change of heart and pursues them; God parts the Red Sea; and then, after the Israelites cross to safety, causes the sea to go back, killing pharaoh and his troops. Then, the Israelites march across the Sinai Peninsula, defeating major armies and kings along the way. (Number 21 tells of multiple battles.) As they go, they're attacked by the Canaanites, the ones who occupy the land they're going to. Finally, to protect their own people, the Israelites destroyed all of their towns on that side of the Jordan River.

Now, let's look down at Joshua 2:8:

Before the spies went to sleep that night, Rahab went up on the roof to talk with them. “I know the LORD has given you this land,” she told them. “We are all afraid of you. Everyone in the land is living in terror. For we have heard how the LORD made a dry path for you through the Red Sea when you left Egypt. And we know what you did to Sihon and Og, the two Amorite kings east of the Jordan River, whose people you completely destroyed. No wonder our hearts have melted in fear! No one has the courage to fight after hearing such things. For the LORD your God is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below. - Joshua 2:8-11 (NLT)

What do we find here? We find that the stories of the Israelites are traveling around the land already! More than that, we find that the people in the land are terrified and don't want to fight!

So, what does this mean? It means that by the time Israel arrives at a city in the Promised Land, almost all of the noncombatants have already fled. (Some of the combatants, too!) Those that remain are dedicated to the destruction of Israel, just like the Canaanites were in Numbers 21!

From a military standpoint, do you allow people who unreasonably, unrelentingly, unreservedly want you dead to remain hanging out with you? Not really. From a “safety” standpoint, it usually is good to want the people who want you dead to not be anywhere close to you. That's why God calls for their complete and total destruction. Oh, and from a military perspective, destroying the enemy in one area means that you will have less of a fight when you get to the next town because people lose heart and run away.

On one final note about military strategy, you need to keep in mind that the Israelites did NOT destroy all of the groups like they were supposed to. Care to guess what happened? The Philistines spent the next few decades attacking, killing, raiding, and pillaging Israel...just like they weren't supposed to be able to do..because they weren't supposed to still be there!

The final thing on this topic to realize is the depths of sin in which these people live. The people in the Promised Land offered sacrifices to Molech, burning babies on heated statues; there was constant fighting among the groups, etc. It's not like the Israelites walked into a pristine, Utopian society and destroyed it. Instead, they cleared the land of some fairly...not nice...people!

The main points to realize is:

1. This isn't the “genocide” that most people refer to, since anyone without “the courage to fight after hearing” about the Israelites would have run away, including their families!
2. Those that remained would have been the hardcore groups, dedicated to the destruction of Israel, even if they believed it was hopeless. This is a military strategy, where you don't leave the enemy alive to kill you at a later time.
3. Finally, these people were not innocent and were also not going to accept the God of Israel. (They could have, by the way, just like Rahab!)
4. Once Israel is established, THEN they were told to welcome immigrants and foreigners. (You need a land to welcome them into first, right?)

Because of all of this, there is no contradiction between welcome immigrants and foreigners who

follow God's laws and destroying the hardcore remnant who had previously lived in the land.

Why do Christians judge others?

Christian can be pretty judgmental, right? They're always calling people out for their sins, saying they're doing things wrong, and pretty much making everyone else feel miserable! They do this even though their own Bible tells them to not judge others! Let me show you:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged." - Matthew 7:1 (NLT)

Now some of you are thinking that maybe we're doing it wrong. I mean at first glance, this verse seems to tell us that we are to NEVER judge another human being, right? But there's a problem: we're taking the verse out of context.

Let me give you an example. Did you know the Bible tells you that you have to wash my feet? Let me show you this:

Then he began to wash the disciples' feet, drying them with the towel he had around him. - John 13:5b (NLT)

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same." - Luke 10:35b (NLT).

See Jesus washes their feet and then commands everyone else to do it! So, who's going first with my stinky feet? You don't want to disobey Jesus, do you?

All kidding aside, if you look at just one sentence here and there, you may miss what the Bible is really saying! (Did you notice my verses came from two different books of the Bible?) Let me show you the context of the verse above:

"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye. "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you." - Matthew 7:1-6 (NLT)

In other words, this verse is NOT saying to never judge someone! What Jesus IS saying here is that if you're sinning, you probably shouldn't spend your time pointing out other people's sins! It's kind of stupid to say, "Stop treating people badly!" when you're treating people badly! Jesus is basically saying, "Hey! Knock it off! Fix your own problems first!"

Then, we're told that we CAN judge in verse six. Otherwise, how are you going to know who is "unholy" or a "pig"? The key thing to remember when we DO judge others, though is we do it:

1. By God's standards, not ours.
2. By not treating their sins as any worse than ours.
3. In love.
4. With the goal to help them.
5. In private rather than in front of everyone.

If we violate any one of these, we are “condemning” someone rather than “judging” them.

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