

HOW TO HANDLE INTERRUPTIONS AND DIFFICULT PROBLEMS

It has been said that if you have ever been tempted to doubt the reality of Satan's existence, just strike out to win souls for Jesus Christ. He will soon make himself evident in his efforts to prevent the salvation of a soul. He will certainly try to bring fears and discouragement to the soulwinner. He will try to interfere with our schedule of working for the Lord by bringing in last minute interruptions. And of course, when we actually get out into the homes of the people he will be there raising objections and trying to distract from the presentation of the gospel.

Very often the things that disturb the presentation of the gospel are little things, simple ordinary things, but they are no less disturbing;—such as the beans boiling over, or children becoming fussy or unruly, or other members of the family who are not interested, interrupting or going in and out. Perhaps the television set is blaring. The other two members of visitation team can be a great help on these matters if they are prepared to do so. It is well before going out on the visit to mention these possibilities so that the other team members will know that they should try to solve these problems, leaving the prospect free to listen to the presentation, if it is at all possible. There are times when it would be well if one of the team members could go into another room and there occupy the attention of

**When we get involved
in the warfare, we find
out who our enemy is!**

Team work helps

**Two common devices
of Satan**

**Resist temptation
to argue**

**Debates are won with
arguments, but souls
are won with love**

**"I'm glad you
said that"**

**Getting back to the
presentation**

children or other members of the family while the leader is making the presentation.

Most of the difficulties will arise from one of two devices,—either argument, or getting off the subject. (Sometimes they are combined together and the prospect wants to argue about something that isn't even germane to the presentation of the gospel.)

Temptation to argument is a special pitfall to Seventh-day Adventists. When you believe you have the truth and that you can successfully defend it, there is a great temptation to accept the challenge. But if we want to win souls for eternity, we will shun this temptation like the leprosy. You may win a debate with arguments, but you seldom win a soul. Someone has said that the only way to win an argument is to avoid it. And certainly the best way to avoid an argument is to preclude it,—to anticipate the objections that the prospect may have, and answer these objections in a tactful and kind way before he raises the objection. When the prospect makes a statement that is obviously intended to create argument we can always say, "You know, I find your viewpoint interesting. I have met others who felt the same way." Or we can say, "I'm glad you said that." We can always be glad that the prospect is listening to us and that he is entering into the discussion even though we may not agree with the substance of his statement.

Most of the time it will be possible to avoid discussion of "off the subject" material during the presentation. You can say, "You know, sometime I would like to discuss that subject with you." Occasionally, however, it may be necessary to deal with the substance of his objection in a kindly, tactful way, as briefly as possible, and then continue on.

A very common interruption is the asking of a question that we will be discussing later in the presentation, and here again most of the time we will be able to tactfully say, "I'm glad you asked that. It is encouraging to see your interest

and we will be coming to that in just a moment. What we are discussing just now will help to make that point more clear when we come to it." And of course, there may be times when it would be best to digress from the outline and to answer the question the prospect raises even though the point is out of its natural order. Then we can come back to where we left off. But this should be the exception rather than the rule.

Because we are Seventh-day Adventists, people will most often ask questions about our faith, right in the middle of the presentation, such as: "Why do you keep Saturday as the day of rest?", or "why don't you people eat pork?", or some other such question. We can always say, "I'm glad you asked that and I am looking forward to explaining to you someday why Seventh-day Adventists are different on that point. It's good to find people who want answers to serious questions of faith and that is why this subject that we are talking about just now is so important. It is only when we understand that Jesus is God as well as man that His sacrifice on Calvary means so much . . ." Now we are back on the subject and moving along with our presentation.

A common objection in our day is doubt of the Bible itself. Dr. James Kennedy of Fort Lauderdale, Florida in his training manual has presented a wonderful way to deal with this question:

"Often as you begin presenting the Gospel, your prospect will say, 'I don't believe the Bible. You'll have to convince me some other way than referring to the Scriptures.' Many evangelists, ministers, as well as laymen, are devastated by this objection, and their attempt at presenting the Gospel fizzles. This need not be the case. Such an objection can be the springboard into the Gospel itself. The Apostle Paul, as he preached in the Greek cities, appealed to the Scriptures even though the people listening to him did not believe in the Scriptures. He did not try to convince his audience of the veracity and the authority of the Scriptures. Rather, he

Common questions to Adventists

Doubters of the Bible

proclaimed them, and the Holy Spirit worked and used the proclamation to save some who then believed the Bible to be true. **In witnessing, our primary function is proclamation, not defense.**

"This is actually a rather easy objection to deal with. When it comes at the beginning of a presentation of the Gospel I would suggest that a person not use the approach of a boxer who would meet the blow head-on and try to overwhelm his opponent with counter punches, but rather that he use the technique of the judo expert wherein the force of his opponent's blow is used to throw him.

"The individual who uses this objection is usually a person who has had at least some college education and exposure to some course on the Bible, Biblical criticism or something of this sort. And there is usually an accompanying intellectual pride which says something like this: 'I used to believe those fairy tales when I was in kindergarten but now I am an educated man and am far above believing such things.' It is this intellectual pride which can be used to turn this objection into an opportunity for presenting the Gospel, somewhat as in the following illustration:

" 'You don't believe the Bible, Mr. Jones? That's very interesting and it certainly is your privilege not to believe it, and I would fight for that right on your part. However, if the Bible is true then obviously you must accept the consequences. But I would like to ask you a question. The main message of the Bible, which has been unquestionably the most important literary work in human history, is how a person may have eternal life. So what I would like to know is, 'Do you understand what the Bible teaches about this matter?' He may reply that he does not believe in eternal life, to which you may respond, 'I'm not asking you what you believe but I am asking you what you understand. It would be a rather unintellectual approach to reject the world's most important book without understanding even its main message, would it not? There-

How to deal with intellectual pride

fore, all I'm asking is, 'Do you understand the main message of the Bible which is how a person may have eternal life? What is your understanding about what the Bible teaches on this subject?' In about 98 percent of the cases he will respond by saying that it is by keeping the Ten Commandments or following the Golden Rule or imitating the example of Christ, etc. You may then respond, 'That is just what I was afraid of, Mr. Jones. You have rejected the Bible without even understanding its main message, for your answer is not only incorrect but it is diametrically opposed to what the Bible teaches. Now, don't you think that the more intellectual approach would be to let me share with you what the Scriptures teach on this matter and then you can make an intelligent decision whether to reject or accept it?'

"Now the tables have been completely turned. Instead of being so superior to the Scriptures and above even listening to them, he now finds himself ignorant of even their basic message and must decide whether to listen to the message of the Scripture or be found to be not only ignorant but also an obscurantist who desires to remain in his ignorance. This is the last thing in the world that his intellectual pride will allow him to be; therefore, he will almost invariably give you permission to tell him the Gospel. At this point you pray mightily that the Holy Spirit will take the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation and will use it to quicken him from the deadness of his sin.

"If this objection is raised toward the end of the presentation, then your answer will have to be quite different. We have found that the apologetic method of presenting the classical evidences of Christianity can be helpful at this point. For instance, you may read from the tract, "A Study of Prophecy," and then ask, 'What have I just described?'

"'The death of Christ,' would be the obvious reply.

"If you reveal that everything you read was

**Helping them to think
seriously about the real
questions of life**

from the Old Testament and was written hundreds of years before Christ was born, your prospect may be sobered to the point that you can deal with him about eternal life."

On rare occasions it may be worth our time to reason with the prospect after this manner: "You know, many scientists and thinking people in recent years have come to the conclusion that the order and design of the universe necessitates the existence of a supreme intelligence. Where there is a design, there must be a designer; where there is a plan, there must be a planner. Whether we are looking at the minute atom or the galaxies in space or the things around us in this world, or even to our own existence, these things argue that there must be a first cause, a great intelligence behind it all. Do you agree with this? (Most people will.) If there is a God intelligent enough to create all these things and to bring us into existence and if He made us with the capacity to love, He must be a loving Creator or He could not put that quality into his creatures. The beauty and order in nature, the scent of a rose, the iridescent color of a beautiful bird, the glory of a sunset, all these say something about the God who brought it into existence.

"You know, any human being with love and intelligence would want to instruct his children and communicate to them the best way of life, and the pathway to happiness and peace. And certainly a God with so great a love and wisdom as all creation testifies to, would want to communicate the way of peace and happiness to His children. The only reasonable assumption is that God has tried to communicate these things to us, and you know the Bible is the only book ever written that claims to be God's communication to mankind throughout history. And I find that what it says not only makes sense, but appeals to my reason and my best self. It is the only book that professes to tell us we can have eternal life with the God who made us. I think the least we can do is consider what it says, don't you agree?" And from here we can continue to tell the gospel story.

Remember that all objections are devices of Satan to get us off the track and to waste our time arguing with the prospect. And so we should deal with them as quickly as possible and get back to the telling of the way of salvation. Never forget that winning an argument almost invariably creates hostilities, and loses the opportunity for you to lead a soul to Christ.

Lastly, a few suggestions that will make your work go more successfully and smoothly:

Most people nowadays are not favorably impressed or inclined, if someone comes to their door carrying a large Bible. They are afraid it is some fanatic who will want to take up a lot of their time. A small pocket Bible or Testament carried in the pocket or purse is a much better plan for our day.

Don't feel obligated to know the Scripture references for the portions of the Bible you refer to. It isn't necessary to quote them word for word. Just state in your own words what the Bible says. This is what Jesus and the apostles did and it was very effective for them as it will be for us.

Try not to use leading questions, that is, suggesting in the question the answer you want or expect. There are two reasons for this: 1) It is an insult to the prospect because it obligates him to answer you according to the leading you gave. You should be willing to ask a straightforward question and listen to his answer just as he actually feels it in his heart. And that points up the second reason a leading question is bad: 2) You don't really get the information you want and need to enable you to help the prospect. Only when you know how he truly feels in his heart can you know just what part of the Scripture will be a blessing to him.

It is even worse, of course to use **misleading questions**; to suggest by your questions a wrong answer. For example, "Tell me, Ray, how do you think the Lord expects us to earn our way to heaven?" To be agreeable he might try to an-

Helpful suggestions

Learning to ask questions that will bring helpful answers

**Keep in mind the
Biblical and spiritual
illiteracy of our
generation**

swer that with some suggestions as to the good works that a Christian should perform and then you might assume he is trusting in righteousness by works. This sort of questioning only creates problems.

Do not assume a broad knowledge of the Bible and its history. The large percentage of the people today do not know the difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament, or whether John the Baptist lived before or after Moses. They are acquainted with very few Bible characters and even less acquainted with the particular part of Bible history that these individuals are associated with. We need to be very careful not to frame our language in old King James English, and we need to avoid the religious cliches and figures of speech that they are totally unacquainted with.

When presenting the gospel to more than one individual, it will be to the best advantage to address the **two questions** at the beginning, first to the one who will probably give wrong answers. There are two reasons: 1) If you get correct answers from one person, all the rest will repeat that answer, even though it is not their own thinking. 2) By getting at least one wrong answer from the group, you create an opportunity to present the gospel.

It is a good practise to ask the prospect's permission to ask questions and to continue with the sharing of the gospel story. You will notice in the sample presentation how this is done again and again.

**Ask for permission
to continue**

Several times throughout the presentation ask your prospect his opinion on a point that you have just referred to. It will capture his interest and keep him moving with you and it will help you better to know him and his needs.

Don't criticize

Avoid at all costs making critical comments of other ministers or denominations, even if the prospect asks your opinion and indicates his prejudice, which might be in agreement with

your own. It is best to say, "Well, you know, I don't think we can pass judgment" and get on with the presentation.

Try very hard to keep the atmosphere relaxed and not too intense, especially when you are asking the two questions at the beginning of the presentation. If you can keep a pleasant smile and perhaps a little nonchalance in your attitude, the prospect will not feel that he is being pinned down, and resent it.

No matter what happens, make your exit pleasant. If the prospect has been difficult and rejected the gospel, remember that he has not rejected you and he may yet receive Christ in the future.

Be sure that you represent the Lord in the way you dress and in your grooming. We should do our utmost to be neat and clean and well groomed.

All members of the visiting team should enter into conversation during the time of the introduction. It is rather stilted for all but the leader to sit mute, just listening. But once the leader brings the conversation into the spiritual phase and asks the two questions, the other members of the team should not speak unless spoken to, until the presentation is completed and then they should enter into the conversation again just before leaving the home.

It is important **how the people are seated for the presentation.** It is not always possible to arrange things just as you would like, but make an effort for the one who is to present the gospel to be seated not too far from the prospect and where he and the prospect can easily see each other without having to turn a great deal. If the other team members can be seated on the opposite side of the prospect from the leader, so that the prospect is not looking at them when he is looking at the leader, this makes it easier to hold the prospects attention.

Who should the team members watch during the presentation? They should not stare at the

**Always leave on
happy note**

**Grooming and
sweet breath**

**When to talk and
when to listen**

**How to
arrange seating**

Where to look

prospect. They should let their eyes naturally follow whoever is doing the talking at the moment, whether that be the prospect or the team leader.

Be sure that you have sweet breath; ask a friend for an honest answer, and take steps to remedy any problem here. Nothing is so distracting as breath that is an offense.

Pray, Pray, Pray

Remember to ask the Lord to go with you and holy angels to attend you before you enter a prospect's home. The Holy Spirit has promised to be with us as the mighty power of God when we are working for souls.