

HOW TO TALK TO FRIENDS ABOUT THE CHURCH

By: Todd Clippard via The Lincoln Light, Huntsville, Al

How do I talk to my friends about the one church? Allow me to suggest four ways to communicate effectively this vital Bible truth. This plan can be used to teach any “controversial” Bible truth.

Speak intelligently. This requires study! *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (II Timothy 2:15). May we never be guilty of misusing or misrepresenting God’s Word. Speaking intelligently requires knowledge of what to say, but it also includes knowing how to say it. Too many people have been driven from the truth by well-meaning Christians either through poor attitudes or poor selection of words. Paul says, *“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, so that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man”* (Colossians 4:6). Jesus spoke in words the common man could understand (Mark 12:37). Use words that are easily understood and create an interest in learning more.

Speak incrementally. Don’t try to teach everything you know (or think you know) in one sitting. Sometimes in our zeal to teach, we overload our audience with too much information. Remember, most of our friends have never considered the idea that denominationalism is anti-Biblical and unacceptable to God! The one church is as good as another” idea has been taught to them all their lives. Even Jesus practiced this principle. He told the twelve, *“have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now”* (John 16:12). These men had been with Jesus, heard His teachings and witnessed His miracles for three years, yet Jesus knew the limitations of their understanding. Paul writes similarly to the Corinthians (I Corinthians 11:34).

Speak illustratively. “A picture is worth a thousand words.” The same is true in teaching. We all love to hear folks who can “spin yarns” and place you in the middle of their stories as if you were an invisible spectator. Great teachers and preachers do the same. Consider Jesus’ first recorded sermon in Matthew 5-7. Jesus pictured His audience as the light of the world and a city set on a hill (5:13-16).

Not coincidentally, He was on a mountain at the time. He illustrated the hypocrisy of the religious leaders (6:1-8) and the worthlessness of worry (6:25-34). He illustrated using hyperbole (an intended exaggeration (7:13-14), of sheep and wolves; figs and thistles (7:15-20) of firm and floundering foundations (7:21-27).

In like fashion, the church is pictured in many ways. It is called a kingdom in Matthew 13, meaning it has a king, subjects, a law and a boundary. In I Corinthians 3, Paul describes the church as a family (V. 1), a field or vineyard (V. 9), a building (Vv. 9-14) and as a temple (Vv. 16-17). All of these characteristics of the church can be explored individually.

Finally, speak insistently. *“Buy the truth, and sell it not”* (Proverbs 23:23). Do not compromise the truth. Where the Bible speaks definitively on a subject, we must be firm in our resolve concerning that truth. The Bible speaks clearly as to the number of churches having a scriptural right to exist. ONE! Jesus promised to build His church, not “Churches” (Matthew 16:18).

On the day of Pentecost, the saved were added to the church (Acts 2:47). Paul said there is one body (Ephesians 4:4). Earlier in the same epistle Paul equated that body with the church (Ephesians 1:23). Later, Paul uses 12 nouns and pronouns to describe the church—all of them singular (Ephesians 5:23-32). This settles the matter of how many churches Jesus built and how many existed in the New Testament.

We must not be ashamed to say what the Bible says on this subject (Mark 8:38). Let us all prepare ourselves to speak as the oracles of God (I Peter 4:11). Anything less is to do God and His word a terrible injustice.