

Respond
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Acts 26:19-29

Opening: What do politicians and salespeople have in common? [Illustration: The mayor and the menswear salesperson. One never asked for the vote; the other is subtle but effective.] I would never want to diminish the eternal importance of sharing the gospel by comparing it to salesmanship; however, there are some parallels. In business we say if a salesperson never asks for the order, then they are just a professional visitor.

Last week we talked in great detail about being prepared to share our personal story of trusting Christ as Savior and Lord. This week's text builds on that same theme.

The point: Sharing the gospel is not just about telling our story. We must always share the gospel from scripture and then we must gently and respectfully ask for a response.

We find the Apostle Paul in Caesarea under Roman custody. Because Paul was both a Jew and a Roman citizen, he had appealed to have his case taken directly to Caesar. This presented a problem for the Roman governor Felix, who procrastinated because he could not decide what to say in his report to Caesar. Two years went by and when Felix left office, he passed along the problem of Paul to the next Roman governor named Festus. Festus was player number one in this drama. As a Roman official and a Gentile, he was skeptical of Paul's teaching but confused about how to handle him.

Player number two in this drama was King Agrippa. Agrippa, was a Jew but not a true king in the line of King David (and Jesus.) When Agrippa the Jewish "king" came to visit, the Roman governor Festus thought he might provide insight into how to explain Paul and his case in his report to Caesar.

So, Festus called Paul in for an audience with Agrippa. Before these governmental leaders Paul shared the same testimony of his conversion but with a few new details. Of course, there was the bright light and the voice of Jesus.

(NLT) — 14 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is useless for you to fight against my will.' **15** " 'Who are you, lord?' I asked. "And the Lord replied, 'I am Jesus, the one you are persecuting. **16** Now get to your feet! For I have appeared to you to appoint you as my servant and witness. Tell people that you have seen me, and tell them what I will show you in the future. **17** And I will rescue you from both your own people and the Gentiles. Yes, I am sending you to the Gentiles **18** to open their eyes, so they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God. Then they will receive forgiveness for their sins and be given a place among God's people, who are set apart by faith in me.'

- Paul then explained his new mission and new life in Christ:

(NLT) — 19 “And so, King Agrippa, I obeyed that vision from heaven. **20** I preached first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that all must repent of their sins and turn to God—and prove they have changed by the good things they do. **21** Some Jews arrested me in the Temple for preaching this, and they tried to kill me. **22** But God has protected me right up to this present time so I can testify to everyone, from the least to the greatest. I teach nothing except what the prophets and Moses said would happen—**23** that the Messiah would suffer and be the first to rise from the dead, and in this way announce God’s light to Jews and Gentiles alike.”

- Paul emphasized repentance and resurrection. It was the mention of resurrection that brought a visceral reaction from the Roman, Festus.

24 Suddenly, Festus shouted, “Paul, you are insane. Too much study has made you crazy!” **25** But Paul replied, “I am not insane, Most Excellent Festus. What I am saying is the sober truth.

- When we share the truth of a risen Savior, some will think we are crazy!
- What stands out about how Paul replied to this insult? [“Most Excellent” “truth.”]
- Why is sharing your personal story a strong “tool” in witnessing for Christ?
- It is hard for even the most skeptical people to dispute our own personal story.
- Paul was getting nowhere with Festus so he pivoted to Jewish King Agrippa.

26 And King Agrippa knows about these things. I speak boldly, for I am sure these events are all familiar to him, for they were not done in a corner!

- Agrippa would have heard all about Jesus ministry, death, and resurrection.
- Paul took a very shrewd approach that put Agrippa on the “horns of a dilemma.”

27 King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know you do—”

- Agrippa couldn’t deny what the Old Testament law and prophets had said about a coming Messiah, but he also did not want to be embarrassed in front of his powerful Roman friends. Agrippa deflected with sarcasm mixed with humor.

28 Agrippa interrupted him. “Do you think you can persuade me to become a Christian so quickly?”

- It’s interesting to look at various translations of Agrippa’s response:
 - NKJV: “You almost persuade me to become a Christian.”
 - HCSB: “Are you going to persuade me to become a Christian?”
 - The Message paraphrase: “Keep this up much longer and you’ll make a Christian out of me!”
- Agrippa tried to be clever and funny, but Paul would not be diverted from his task of sharing the good news of the gospel.

29 Paul replied, “Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that both you and everyone here in this audience might become the same as I am, except for these chains.”

- Paul responded to sarcasm with sincerity. *“Agrippa, I’m praying that God will save you and everyone here!”*
- Paul’s heartfelt response is a model for us. People need to feel our care and concern for their eternal destiny when we share the gospel.
- Paul must have struck a nerve with someone because the meeting was over.

30 Then the king, the governor, Bernice, and all the others stood and left. **31** As they went out, they talked it over and agreed, “This man hasn’t done anything to deserve death or imprisonment.” **32** And Agrippa said to Festus, “He could have been set free if he hadn’t appealed to Caesar.”

- Appealing to Caesar was not a strategic mistake for Paul, it was God’s will and the method for taking the gospel to Rome. Though it would mean death for Paul, we recall that he said in **Acts 20:24 (NLT)** — *24 But my life is worth nothing to me unless I use it for finishing the work assigned me by the Lord Jesus—the work of telling others the Good News about the wonderful grace of God.*
- Let’s see how this passage applies to us as witnesses of Christ to others.
- First, we see that Paul again shared his story. Sharing our story is powerful and last week we provided a tool to help you be prepared to share your story.
- Paul incorporated the truth of scripture regarding repentance and resurrection.
- Paul didn’t have the New Testament; he was living it. He DID have the Old Testament prophets and what they said about the coming Messiah.
- Last week we emphasized that we must share the truth of the gospel from scripture. We even gave you some examples of doing that in everyday language.
- This week we come to what may be the most intimidating part of sharing the gospel: asking for a response. We know that the Apostle Peter instructed us, “if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way.”ⁱ Paul certainly modeled that in this text.
- An important point for today: Paul would not have agreed with either of these men “politically” but that did not hinder his respectful tone in sharing the gospel.
- Let’s brainstorm a bit. What are some phrases we might say to respectfully, gently, non-confrontationally ask someone if they are ready to trust Christ?
- Some organizations training people to witness use a “traffic light” metaphor.ⁱⁱ

<p>Red: They reject the message.</p>	<p>Respect their decision and move on. Paul didn’t argue with Festus. He planted a seed and moved on. Remember Jeremy’s barber?</p>
<p>Yellow: They show interest but aren’t ready to commit.</p>	<p>Offer to talk more later. Invite them to church. Keep praying for them!</p>
<p>Green: They’re ready to accept Christ.</p>	<p>Guide them in prayer to receive salvation.</p>

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Sharing the gospel is not just about telling our story. We must always include the gospel from scripture and gently and respectfully ask for a response.
- That can be intimidating so, as we recommended last week to prepare and practice your story, do the same with ways to respectfully, gently, non-confrontationally ask someone if they are ready to trust Christ.
- Remember, they need to sense your love and concern for their eternal future.
- Also, remember: “No one was ever won to Christ at the end of an argument.”
- Use the “traffic light” method to deal with their responses correctly and lovingly.
- Finally, remember one other important thing: Back to my subtle but effective menswear salesperson. He has a “co-conspirator” named Susan. He doesn’t push me to buy nice clothes (I would push back). He has figured out that Susan will, and she has influence over me he doesn’t have.
- When we share our story and how the gospel has changed our lives and eternal future, we have a “co-conspirator” called the Holy Spirit. We just lay out the truth and ask the Spirit to supernaturally touch the heart of that person.

ⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (1 Pe 3:15–16). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱ <https://www.everywhere2everywhere.org/articles/four-responses-to-the-gospel>