

Gambits for Witnessing for Christ
A Minicourse for Christian Education
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Depending on the time available, this course has been designed so it can be taught all in one large timeframe, such as a weekend seminar, or in a few sessions according to the scheduling constraints of the attendees and the church or a Christian school. The following educational methodology is recommended.

Needs of the Learners:

1. Felt Needs:
 - a. At the beginning of the session(s), the teacher should ask the students what they would like to learn in this minicourse. Then be sure to include what they want to learn throughout the course. Starting with felt needs, the lack of required knowledge and skills the students know they have, is essential, for they are highly motivational for maintaining the attendees' attention, their continued attendance if more than one session is necessary, and their effectiveness for accomplishing the Lord's calling to be His witnesses.
 - b. There are several ways to ask the students for this information, including the following:
 - 1) Verbal questions from the teacher at the beginning of the minicourse,
 - 2) Asking the students to write anonymously on 3 x 5 cards given to each person, or
 - 3) Dividing the class into small groups (no larger than four in a group) with the task of listing the desires of the students in that group.
2. Unfelt Needs: These are needs the students have, which they don't know they need, in order to develop the required knowledge and skills to function most effectively in the course subject matter, in this course witnessing for Christ. The teacher should add to this list any other needs he or she observes the students have that should be included. The curriculum serves the teacher; the teacher is not bound by the curriculum. Ask the Lord, who knows His people best, to guide you as you prepare to teach this course. Within that framework, all the students need to learn the Biblical teaching on and how to develop and implement the following competencies:
 - a. An understanding of, and ability to explain, the meaning of witnessing for Christ in the Bible.
 - b. The role of the Holy Spirit in witnessing and evangelism.
 - c. The difference between witnessing and evangelism.
 - d. How to witness effectively in order to facilitate the Holy Spirit's work.

Goal: This minicourse will explain how evangelism and witnessing for Christ are similar and different. The focus will be on helping the participants learn how to witness effectively for Jesus Christ. An emphasis will be on learning verbal and nonverbal gambits that can lead to a conversation with nonbelievers about Christ, which will rely on and facilitate, instead of interfering with, the Holy Spirit's work in the unbelievers' mind and heart.

Objectives: At the end of this minicourse each participant will be able to do the following:

1. Identify and explain, verbally or in writing, at least two differences between evangelism and witnessing for Christ.

2. Define, verbally or in writing, the term conversational gambit, and give at least one example.
3. Identify and explain, verbally or in writing, at least three conversational gambits that will help him or her witness for effectively for Christ Jesus.
4. By the end of the course, at least 75% of the class members will demonstrate their affective interest by asking at least one question or making at least one positive comment in class, or with the teacher at break times, either verbally or in writing.
5. If there is more than one session of this offering of this minicourse, by the next lesson, at least half of the attendees will report to the teacher (in person, by phone, via email, by regular mail, or on a 3 x 5 card) that they have talked with least one other person in the church(es) they serve about least one gambit to facilitating a conversation about Jesus Christ.
6. If there is more than one session of this minicourse, by the last lesson, at least 95% of the attendees will report to the teacher (in person, by phone, via email, by regular mail, or on a 3 x 5 card) that they feel more comfortable and capable of witnessing for Christ more effectively and with awareness of the Holy Spirit's essential role and work in their witness for the Lord.
7. Within three months of the end of this course, at least 75% of the attendees will report to the teacher (in person, by phone, via text, via email or by regular mail) that they have used at least one conversational gambit in a witness for Christ.

Materials Needed:

1. A Bible for each participant; *The NIV Study Bible* is recommended but not required. A study Bible, which has commentary on each passage in the Bible, that has been written by careful Bible scholars, who hold to historic Christian theology, is very helpful for the leaders and for their students.
2. At least one 3 x 5 file card per objective for each participant. These cards are always helpful for many purposes.
3. A digital projector (and software) **or** flipchart (and at least two markers) **or** overhead projector (and blank transparencies, at least two water soluble markers, any prepared transparencies, and an eraser) **or** chalkboard (and at least two pieces of chalk and an eraser) **or** a dry-erase board (and at least two water soluble markers and an eraser). Since flipcharts are universally common, that word will be used throughout this course. If you are using a digital projector, an overhead projector, a chalkboard, or more sophisticated technology, feel free to do so wherever you see the word flipchart.

INTRODUCTION

- A. The Bible distinguishes between evangelism and witnessing. Write on the flipchart the following information, so students can write it in their notes.
 1. Evangelism (< Gk. εὐαγγέλιον [*euaggelion*] = good news)
 - a. Evangelism is a gift the Holy Spirit gives “to some” (Ephesians 4:11), thus by implication not to all who believe in Christ.
 - b. It is intentional, proactive, and assertive.
 - c. Methods and venues:

- 1) Individuals with the gift of evangelism use this gift in interpersonal conversations, discussions with small groups of people, and in speeches to large groups, such as in mass presentations, e.g., crusades, radio, and TV programs.
 - 2) It is often, though not always, done by teams.
 - 3) Programs, e.g., Backyard Bible Schools, Vacation Bible Schools, summer camps, coffeehouses, and short-term missions, provide venues for evangelism.
- d. An implication of 1 Corinthians 14:1 is that a gift can be requested of God.
2. Witnessing (< Gk. μαρτυρία [*marturia*] = testimony, evidence, witness, martyr)
- a. God has called all of us who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ to witness to him. (Genesis 12:1-3; Psalm 9:11b, 13c-14; Isaiah 42:5-7; 43: 10-13; Daniel 2:25-30; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 3:15)
 - b. Our witness is more usually reactive than proactive; it is a response to those who ask us to give an account of the hope that is within us. (1 Peter 3:15)
 - c. Methods and venues:
 - 1) Our lifestyle is a witness, but words are required as well so people can understand the relationship of our actions to Christ. Otherwise, they could conclude our good deeds are simply humanitarian gestures.
 - 2) Conversations with unbelieving family members, in the hallway at school and in the workplace with friends and fellow workers, at lunch with (an)other(s), during a break from sports activities, and over the backyard fence with neighbors are some occasions where we can look for opportunities to witness for Christ. We must always be prepared (1 Peter 3:15), for those opportunities often arise unexpectedly.
3. In all evangelism and witnessing, the Holy Spirit is the key agent in bringing people to Christ. Our most brilliant reasoning, including logic, and other efforts to persuade, will not change human hearts. Only the Holy Spirit can break through the Satanic and sin-built and reinforced internal barriers in human hearts and minds to permit people to be

receptive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To be effective in our efforts to evangelize and witness for the Lord, we must keep in mind that we need to work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Such cooperation involves praying for the opportunities to be Christ's witnesses, for the Spirit's giving receptivity to the person(s) with whom we are speaking to believe in Jesus Christ, for guidance as we engage in evangelistic and witnessing opportunities, and for remembering that it is the Spirit who will make our words and actions of Christlike love effective.

Another reason why it is necessary to keep in mind that it is the Holy Spirit who will use what we do to make it effective, is that this awareness takes pressure off us to "be successful" and "make converts," which we cannot do; conversion occurs as the Holy Spirit works within the individual to give him or her the regeneration, the new birth, being born again, which makes conversion (his or her decision to change, to turn to Christ) possible.

This understanding also takes pressure off the person to whom we are witnessing for Jesus, indeed for the triune God. Since we are relieved of the unbiblical and unrealistic idea that it's all up to us "to bring this person to the Lord," we will not be inclined, or at least less inclined, to pressure someone to "come to Christ." That they do so is surely our desire and objective, but not in our ability to achieve. All the Lord is asking us to do is to speak the truth about him in love, care for the person(s) with whom we are speaking, and leave the necessary prerequisite regeneration required for conversion, to the Holy Spirit, who will use what we, and other believers, have said and done.

Pressuring people is counterproductive. If people sense pressure from us, they will likely be inclined to resist. Since humans are made in the image of God, part of that image involves a limited, but very genuine, freedom of will. When people feel their freedom being constrained, they naturally push back and resist. We are to speak the truth about Jesus in love, and not allow the temptation to interfere with the loving Holy Spirit's gentle persuasion, often over time, to regenerate the person and facilitate his or her cooperation with the Spirit to convert to Christ.

Thus, our witness should be seen as typically a step in a process over time. Of course, it's possible that when we talk with someone about Jesus Christ, he or she could have been prepared by the work of the Holy Spirit prior to or during our conversation and thereby make the decision to accept the Lord right then and there. More likely, we will build on the work of others, and others will build on our work, and in due time the Holy Spirit will bring to fruition the witness of all of us in the life of those who will believe. We see this principle articulated in the apostle Paul's

statement that “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:6; for context see vss. 5-11.) Not only does this awareness relieve us of the counterproductive temptation and practice of employing pressure tactics, it also gives us great joy in knowing that God is employing us to work in and through us to accomplish his purposes.

4. For further information on the Biblical teaching about evangelism and witnessing for Christ, as well as regeneration and conversion, see my PowerPoint presentation, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#). If you are unable to use the hyperlink in the previous sentence, this presentation can be accessed on my Website at www.fromacorntoak12.com. On this Website, see also the [Christian Witness](#) page, which is located in the menu on the home page.

B. The word gambit comes from the game of chess and involves opening moves in which a player strategically places one or more pawns or another minor piece in a position where he or she can accomplish his or her objectives most effectively. In communication the word has come to mean a remark that is intended to open and facilitate a discussion on a particular topic. I use gambit to refer not only to verbal but nonverbal means of providing opportunities for a witness for Christ.

C. This presentation focuses on witnessing for Christ, especially what we can do to facilitate the opportunities where people ask us to “give the reason for the hope that you have.” (1 Peter 3:15)

1. Remember, the hope we have is entering the presence of God who is most holy and serving him in his eternal fellowship. We’re not trying to talk people into believing in Jesus to have more happiness, fewer problems, or greater wealth.

Many people, including especially those proponents of the “health and wealth gospel,” make the mistake of trying to talk non-Christians into believing in Jesus so they’ll feel better, have fewer problems, or become healthy, wealthy, and prosperous. They also emphasize believing in Jesus, not following him; but the Gospel doesn’t work that way. Jesus is Lord as well as Savior, and he commands our ongoing obedience (in gratitude for our salvation, not to earn it). (Cf. Matthew 7:15-23; John 13:34-35; 14:21; 15)

In a sinful world, where all humans have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), the “health and wealth ‘gospel’” is an unrealistic and misleading message. Because there is sin in the world, all people, believers and unbelievers in Christ, will have problems. To be sure, many of the problems will be different, and believers will have access to God’s special and all-sufficient help to overcome, though not necessarily to

eliminate all of, those problems, and much of the time that will make us feel better, but until the Lord returns, there will be suffering on earth. We must remember, and help others to know, that we are engaged in a spiritual warfare (e.g., Ephesians 6:10-18), and all warfare involves suffering. However, those of us in Christ Jesus have the Lord's help to come through it with the victory he won for us, now and forever. (Cf., e.g., Matthew 5:11-12; 11:28-30; 28:18-20; John 10:10) This Good News is the Gospel we want to witness to in and for Christ, so others whom he loves and for whom he suffered, died, was buried, and rose again can have these great blessings as well.

2. The rest of this document is not an exhaustive list. Neither should any of us feel we have to do every one of these suggestions. It is a work in progress that we as a class should shape and extend.

D. The most important prerequisite: Pray.

1. Let us pray for the opportunities to “give the reason for the hope that [we] have” and for the Lord's guidance and direction that we prepare well, for he alone knows with whom we will be talking and what their needs are, and that we offer the witness in word and in deed as will please him and be productive for him.
2. Notice where Paul puts prayer in this paragraph in Colossians 4:2-6 on prayer and witness for Christ. He puts prayer first, a means of emphasis in Greek grammar.

NONVERBAL GAMBITS

1. Nonverbal Gambits

- a. Our whole lifestyle should be a witness for Christ. Remember Jesus' command: “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35 NIV)
 - 1) The context indicates that Jesus is talking about his followers loving one another.
 - 2) However, we know from other texts that we are to love all people (Matthew 22:39), even our enemies. (Matthew 5:44)
 - 3) Jesus was a realist. He didn't mean that we should run over and hug someone who has treated us unjustly who is walking toward us, so what did he mean?
- b. How do we do this love, which is the same Greek word, *agape*, in all these texts? Led by the Holy Spirit, the apostle Paul defined *agape* in action

terms: “Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 RSV) Notice that love is much more than a feeling; it involves daily deeds.

- c. Always remember and live with the conscious identity that believers in and followers of Christ are “aliens and strangers in the world” and “abstain from sinful desires which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” (1 Peter 2:11-12 NIV)

1) The root of the Greek verb translated “see” that the apostle Peter uses here in verse 12 is ἐποπτεύω (*epopteuō*), a very unique word that appears only twice in the New Testament and both times only in this letter. The grammar of the verb indicates that it is done and is an ongoing practice over time, which is regularly observed by unbelievers, indicating that the pagans carefully watch us, and that they do not make a snap judgment of us.

2) By acting over time in this manner (described in verses 11-12), others will see the contrast between us and those who do not follow Christ, and they’ll be inclined to ask, “Why don’t you do such and so?” Then we’ll have the opportunity to explain what motivates us to live as we do. As communication theorists and practitioners say, we’ll have “earned the right to be heard.”

3) What are some examples of good deeds that will over time catch the pagans’ attention and provide gambits for conversation? To begin, consider the following:

a) Speaking only in a wholesome manner, including

1- Expressing kindness, thanksgiving, and joy including during challenging times (1 Corinthians 13:4; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 5:4)

2- Avoiding the following: misusing God’s name (Exodus 20:7); boasting, rudeness, revisiting a record of past wrongs someone has done (1 Corinthians 13:4-5), slander, gossip, arrogance (2 Corinthians 12:20), and foul language including obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking, and cursing. (Ephesians 5:12; James 3:8-10)

- 3- “Let your conversation be full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” (Colossians 4:6)
- DISCUSS: What is a conversation that is
 - “full of grace?” (E.g., forgiving)
 - “seasoned with salt?” (E.g., supportive, edifying)
- b) Worshiping regularly on Sunday. (Hebrews 10:25)
- c) Honoring marriage, keeping the marriage bed pure, and avoiding even a hint of any sexual immorality. (Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 5:3)
- d) Exhibiting patience. (Galatians 5:22)
- e) Demonstrating self-control, including not expressing bitterness, rage and anger, brawling, and malice. (Galatians 5:20, 23; Ephesians 4:31)
- f) Keeping our lives free from the love of money and being content with what we have. (Exodus 20:17; Hebrews 13:5)
- 1- Being content with what we have does not mean avoiding trying to make improvements or making progress and advancements in accomplishing objectives; it means not coveting and developing the ability to be satisfied with and grateful for what God has made possible for us.
 - 2- We do give up certain things we could have, e.g., if we didn’t tithe, but by being content with what we have we are freed to give to others as part of our service to God. One way to do this is to see money as a means to an end that is part of God’s calling and not an end in itself apart from God.
- g) Rejoicing in that which is true, not delighting in what is evil, and always telling the truth in love, avoiding deceit (Exodus 20:16; Proverbs 12:5-22; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Ephesians 4:15; 2 Timothy 3:13)
- h) Avoiding debauchery (Galatians 5:19)

- Would someone acting like this consistently over time, with such a track record, cause people to want to know what makes him or her tick and want to be like him or her?
- d. Our lifestyles should differ from the world, and we should value and affirm those differences as part of encouraging one another. (Hebrews 10:25)
- 1) At the same time we should avoid communicating a sense of superiority which “looks down our noses” at those outside of Christ. We need to remember that we, too, need God’s grace. “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” (Ephesians 2:8-10)
 - 2) Thus, as we reach out to others so they, too, can have this saving grace, we will do well to emphasize our points of common ground. As research in the field of communication, the subfield of diffusion of innovations, has identified, people are drawn to those they see as having what they value. The researchers refer to a phenomenon called homophily, literally the love of the same; i.e., people trust those they perceive as having a lot in common. We just have to be careful to not have unbiblical values and practices in common with those outside of Christ. These realities also give us the right to be heard.
- **DISCUSS:**
 - Where in the Bible do you see homophily being used for a witness to and for Christ? (Acts 16:3; 21:17-26; 28:23; 1 Corinthians 9:22; 2 Corinthians 11:21-33; Galatians 1:13-14)
 - In what ways can and do we use homophily to establish commonality, especially of values? Add any of the following not mentioned by the group.
 - **FOR MEN:** sports; hunting and fishing; cars and trucks; jokes; (eventually) politics. [Group added: news, religion, markets, weather]
 - **FOR WOMEN:** relationships (mentioning friends in common); where you are from; children; school; fashions; recipes. [Group added: family, cooking, health issues, morality, husband’s behavior]

- FOR BOTH SEXES: work; music; entertainment options. [Group added: parenting, pop culture trends, media, regional events, politics]
- e. Practice giving your genuine joy in Jesus frequent expressions in smiles and grins.
 - f. Invite your neighborhood over to a Christmas and/or Easter open house. Have symbols of the faith (crèche, picture of Jesus, Easter book) visibly displayed. In our age, ease of travel turns neighborhoods into bedroom communities, and we relate more to business associates and church friends. It is thus easy to fail to be a blessing right on our own block.
 - What else can we do for our neighbors that could provide a gambit for a witness for Christ? (E.g., bringing a meal when someone is sick; staying an appropriate amount of time to visit; asking if there is anything you can do to help; observing if there is an obvious need [such as leaves to be raked] and then asking permission to do that either yourself or by recruiting others to help you do it)
 - g. Listen carefully. Listening communicates caring. Caring for others is a quality not commonly associated with the world, but it is especially part of the new nature that comes with the regeneration and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. (John 3:3; 1 Corinthians 12:3) When people observe you consistently caring, they typically see something different that they like, to which they are attracted, and a model they're motivated to emulate and about which they want to learn more.

VERBAL GAMBITS

2. Verbal Gambits

- a. Nonassertive verbal gambits (where we're passive and people approach us)
 - 1) Always be preparing yourselves "to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have" and to do so "with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)
 - 2) Use careful language, e.g., instead of saying "I will be there tomorrow," say, "I plan to be there tomorrow." Or even better: "I will be there tomorrow, Lord willing." (James 4:13-17)
Another example: avoiding the word luck and its derivatives. (James 1:17 Since everything good and perfect comes from God, luck is not a factor. For further discussion of this matter see my essay, "*Who is God, and what is he like? Part 24: What is meant by God's Providence, and does luck have any part in it?*" in the

Christian Theology page of my Web site

[\[http://www.fromacorntoak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Part-24-Who-Is-God-Provider.pdf\]](http://www.fromacorntoak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Part-24-Who-Is-God-Provider.pdf)) If someone says to you, “Good luck!” What is a good response? How about something such as, “Thanks but I don’t believe in luck.” What is a better reply, especially one that will open the door for more conversation? [Group added: “Oh, I hope I have something better than luck on my side.” Substitute Providence, “The Lord provided.” And, “Thanks, but I need more than luck.”]

- 3) Wear a Christian symbol that is not obvious, such as a fleur d’lis. Then, when people ask if you’re involved with the Boy Scouts, if you were you can say, “Well, actually I was, but this is an ancient Christian symbol for the Trinity, one way of explaining that God exists as three distinct persons who share one essence.

An even better symbol is the sun.” The sun is one of the elements God has built into his Creation that point to and help us understand his invisible qualities. (Romans 1:19-20) The sun shows how it is reasonable to understand something as having three distinct aspects, all of which at the same time constitute one substance. Other symbols: fish (an acronym for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior in Greek) and a cross.

- 4) Think of a fresh response to mundane statements to catch attention and invite a follow-up, e.g., in replying to someone who says, “Hi, how are you?” consider, “Better than I deserve.”
- 5) How do you handle such opportunities as when you do something right that is uncommon, e.g., returning money to a cashier who has given you too much change, and she or he says, “Boy you sure are honest!”? Do you say nothing and witness to humanitarianism and the unbiblical concept of the goodness of human nature, or do you use this opportunity for Christ? Of course we want to do the latter, but what can we say? A couple of possibilities: “It’s tempting, but I’m a follower of Christ.” [Or, I’m a Christian].” Or, “I try to follow the teachings of the Bible.” What would be a better response? [Group added: “My beliefs won’t let me; Christ is watching my actions.”]
- 6) When someone accuses Christians of being hypocrites, say, “Now wait a minute; let’s first define that term so we are talking about the same thing. What is a hypocrite?” When you both agree to the definition that includes words such as the failure to

act in accord with one's beliefs, ask, "Who has not failed in this manner?"

Followers of Christ are daily trying to make their deeds congruent with the teachings of Jesus. We ask God to forgive our sins and help us to do rightly in his sight. Those who are maturing in Christ are achieving this congruence more and more.

Are you sure you aren't talking about the wolves in sheep's clothing, about which Jesus warned us, i.e., those who pretend to be Christians but are not? It is also possible you may be thinking of the deeds of a Christian who is immature, but that doesn't characterize many other followers of Christ."

- a) "Further, since the Bible teaches that all have sinned and fallen short of what God requires, all other religions, as well as agnostics and atheists, have the same problem, not living up to the ideals."
- b) "The ultimate question is: What do you do with your guilt for failing to match your deeds with what God requires? How will you enter the presence of God who is most holy and who has said he will not coexist with those who are guilty of sin? Even though God is essentially love, his love is pure love, which is therefore also just and righteous."
- c) The Bible teaches that the only way God has provided for people to be cleansed of their guilt is by being credited with the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith in him. We can't earn our way into God's presence; on the contrary we daily increase our debt to God. One of the key differences between Christianity and all other religions is that all the others have a prescribed list of things people need to do in order to achieve salvation according to their religion. On the contrary, Christians believe the Bible's key precept that salvation is through God's loving grace alone whereby a person is credited with the perfect obedience of Christ through genuine faith. (See Romans 4.) The Holy Spirit uses that relationship with Christ to help the believer grow in Christ and follow him into more and more mature actions.

- b. Assertive verbal gambits (where we initiate or reply to a statement)
- 1) Start with this orientation: Tell people what you know. Don't think you have to wait until you know more; none of us will ever come to the point where we don't need to learn more. Don't worry about being asked a question you can't answer. We all need to learn more. If you're asked a question you can't answer fully, say, "I personally don't have the best answer to that question, but I'll check into it and get back to you about it." Then, ask your pastor or another mature follower of Christ and be sure to get back to the person with a response.
 - 2) As the outstanding evangelist Paul Little wrote in his classic book, *Know Why You Believe*, "many Christians are overwhelmed by a mountain of material which they think they must master if they are ever to answer the questions of thinking Christians and non-Christians. A little exposure to non-Christians, however, will help to dispel those fears. It will soon become apparent that the same few questions are being asked repeatedly. Further, these questions fall within a remarkably limited range...The questions may vary in wording, but the underlying issues are the same. This consistency is a great help in knowing what to study to answer such questions." (30)
 - 3) Be sure to pray before, during, and after a time of engaging a non-Christian in conversation. Your prayer for God's help can be silent even while you are in the conversation. Remember, "no one can say, 'Jesus is Lord,' except by the Holy Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12:3) It is not by our intellectual brilliance or finely crafted argument that someone is persuaded to accept Christ as his or her Savior and Lord. To be sure, the Holy Spirit will use what we say, but only he can open an unregenerated human heart and mind.
 - 4) Keep in mind that the universal desire and need to be accepted and liked/loved which often inhibits and/or mitigates our witness for Christ can be used for our Lord by recognizing that those to whom we should say something also want our approval, acceptance, love, and to be liked by us.
 - a) Plus, we are speaking up for the Lord. God has not called us to be silent. Whose opinion of us is most important to us: the opinion of these others or the opinion of God? If someone doesn't like us for what we say about God, that's not bad; it's good. It is an indication that we are identifying with the Lord rather than, and not being confused with, the world. Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all

kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

- b) You will also find that not a few people will respect you for speaking the truth about the Lord in love. (Ephesians 4:15)
- 5) Model forgiveness in relationships. Don't talk in the world's terms about people with whom you have had a conflict. Forgive one another. (Matthew 18:21-35) Apologize when necessary.
- a) How can an apology help in witnessing for Christ? Apologizing demonstrates respect for the other person and helps him or her sense worth and dignity along with appreciation for the one facilitating such personal blessings. Is that a catalyst for conversation?
 - b) People want to know where such grace comes from. They don't find it in the world.
 - c) Also keep in mind that many people admire and respect someone who can apologize when he or she has made a mistake. Only a strong person can admit when he or she is wrong; weak people can't admit when they are wrong. We can pray to God that he gives us the strength, courage, loving kindness, and the words to admit when we are wrong, apologize, and ask for forgiveness. Say, e.g., “I owe you an apology; I was wrong; I hope you can [or please] forgive me. I will redouble my efforts to never say [or do] that again.” Take full ownership of what you did wrong; no “but you...” statements; or excuses. In so doing, you will please the Lord and all reasonable people to whom you apologize.
- 6) While having a casual conversation with someone when you sense the time is right, e.g., when reflecting philosophically about matters of life, say, “Tell me who God is and what he is like.” (People like to give their opinions, to talk. Many, if not most, aren't awfully good at listening, but they do like to be asked what they think about many subjects.) After the person mentions whatever he or she can, his or her comments will likely not include God being holy, and especially not holy, holy, holy, i.e., most holy, so then say, “You didn't mention that God is holy, or in fact that he is holy, holy, holy, the Hebrew (language in which the Old

Testament was written) way of saying that he is most holy. What will you do with your guilt? [Then, say] He tells us in the Bible that we've all sinned. How will you stand before God who is most holy and who says he will not accept that which is sinful?" Explain that no human is worthy by him or herself to enter God's presence; we need to be credited with Christ's righteousness by faith in the Lord Jesus in order to be acceptable to God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

- a) Everyone has a philosophy, a worldview, even though most are not well formulated and not well articulated especially those of the unregenerate mind. Simply by raising questions those philosophical worldviews that are built on sand, or to use another metaphor are only a "house of cards," will quickly fall.
 - b) Moreover, people can easily dismiss propositional statements, but questions linger long after we have left. The developmental theory of human learning has demonstrated that mentally normal healthy people are daily trying to make sense out of life, and when they receive input they cannot fit into the mental structures of their worldview, they experience a "mental disequilibrium" that motivates them to continue to work at achieving an equilibrium that makes more sense. Our questions help in that process.
- 7) When you are talking with someone, and he or she says, "Well, we'll just have to keep our fingers crossed," sincerely—not arrogantly—ask, "How does that help?" Then ask, "Would you like to try something that really will help? I find that praying to the Lord Jesus [or, praying to our triune God in the Lord Jesus' name] is truly effective." That simple and brief, but very profound, response gives an opening to further discussion which the Holy Spirit will use to accomplish his purposes with that person, and likely through him or her with many others. You can make the same comment when you hear similar secular expressions, such as "Well, just knock on wood that..." Ask, "And how does that help?" Or, "Do you have any evidence that knocking on wood helps? Would you like to try something that really will be effective?"

In your explanation, be prepared to cite your evidence of such effectiveness by referring to such related passages in the Bible as 1 John 5:14-15, "This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.

¹⁵And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him.”

- 8) When someone is talking with you about what he or she should do about something, ask, “Have you considered God’s will in your decision?” Again, use the ongoing impact of a question, even a simple question, especially a simple question, which is most effective with the short attention spans of many if not most people and is often the most profound.
- 9) When someone is stating his or her opinion on a matter and it is contrary to the teaching of the Bible, ask, “Have you given thought to what God has to say about that?” This question is most effectively used when the issue is dealt with specifically in the Bible or where easily seen principles are expressed in the Bible.
- 10) When someone says something with spiritual connections, such as “I hope to hell that...” Interrupt politely with a statement such as, “Excuse me; don’t you mean ‘I hope to high heaven?’” A smile helps ease tension; then add: “There is no hope in hell.”
- 11) When someone flippantly says “O God,” ask quizzically, “Did you just pray?” After the person responds, or when enough silence occurs, add, “If you weren’t praying, didn’t God say some strong things about using his name in vain in one of the Ten Commandments?” How can we improve this response? (See *The Heidelberg Catechism*, Q & A 99-100.)
 - a) Since the commandments are interpreted broadly more than narrowly, we don’t want to be too technical or restrictive regarding the Hebrew word, שָׁוְעָ (shāwe), typically translated with לֵ (le), “in vain” in the commandment, “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.” (Exodus 20:7 NIV). The term involves using the name Yahweh (translated LORD in modern English versions of the Bible) in any inappropriate manner and means in vain, worthlessly, falsely, insincerely, in vanity, to gain personal advantage, idly, emptily, futilely.
 - b) The commandment applies also to Jesus’ name used as an expletive. A fellow seminary professor and former colleague of mine suggests we warn people with whom we are acquainted who misuse the names of God and Jesus, and warn any we can influence when they misuse the name

of Jesus. Regarding *The Heidelberg Catechism*, he points out that the catechism assumes the geopolitical context of Christendom, in which it was written, which would make such communication with strangers more reasonably and easily accomplished.

- 12) If someone talks about demons, such as (“He’s trying to get rid of his demons.”), ask, “Did you mean that literally?” Then add, “Because I believe there is ample and persuasive evidence that demons actually exist.” (In addition to the Bible, I know of people who have exorcized demons in Africa and also here in the United States.)
 - a) We who are in Christ do not need to be afraid of Satan or the demons. As John said in his first letter, “the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.” (1 John 4:4)
 - b) As C.S. Lewis said, avoid the two extremes: the careless idea that there is no Satan and demons, and the extreme fear that the demonic is overpowering. Satan and the demons are dangerous but not all-powerful. The reality is that Christianity is not a dualistic religion. God and Satan are NOT peers; Satan is a little peanut in contrast with God. Only God is sovereign and all-powerful, and he loves us.
- 13) Written responses to assertions by others is a valuable witness. Consider the opportunities that follow. What others come to mind?
 - a) An e-mail or letter to a columnist who has written on a specific issue that has Biblical implications.
 - b) Letters to the editor of a newspaper or other periodical. Be careful of editing.
 - c) Calls to a newspaper’s anonymous public pulse column. The *Loveland Reporter-Herald’s* section is called the “R-H Line.” Be careful of editing.
 - d) Letters to legislative representatives.
 - e) When writing (and also in speaking), in reference to the period of history prior to Jesus’ First Coming, use the traditional designation, BC (before Christ) instead of the newly introduced (mostly in academe) “politically correct” BCE (before the common era). When referring to our

period of history after Jesus' First Coming, use the traditional AD (*anno domini*, Latin for the year of our Lord) instead of the newly introduced CE (common era). We are called by God to be holy to him and his witnesses; how can we abstain from that calling by using terms deliberately designed to distract people from Christ and thereby participate in that deception?!

- 14) Meeting with or phoning legislative representatives about a specific issue that has Biblical implications can lead to a witness for Christ, or in the case of a representative who is already a Christian, encouragement to continue in his or her beliefs and their applications to the matters at hand.
- 15) Speaking at a government assembly, such as a city or county council or another legislative body, and in town hall meetings, can provide an opportunity for a witness for Christ, as can meeting with staff members of civic officials.
- 16) Employing social media sites (e.g., Facebook, My Space, YouTube, Twitter), podcasting, and/or one's own blog or Web site on the Internet, provides many opportunities for a witness for Christ on a personal level that many consider much easier to do than face-to-face (at least initially) as well as corporately for the church or Christian school with the advantage of obtaining measurable results.
 - a) Corporately, it is possible to target subpopulations and to constantly receive reliable and up-to-date feedback on the results, the effectiveness of our messages, including advertisements.
 - b) If you, a relative, or a friend, are fluent in another language, consider translating some of your posts, articles, essays, or longer writings in that or those other language(s).
- 17) In justice matters, when we find that people who are not Christians join in an effort to prevent or correct an injustice in our society, let them do their thing to help accomplish the common objective. However, it is best to not join an organization with them. Doing so mitigates the distinctive Christian witness and such vital Christian practices as prayer would likely be mitigated. For example, it is unlikely that Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus would not object to prayer in Jesus' name. Consider the stewardship of your time:

how likely is it that the non-Christians in this organization will change in the ways you would like them to do? What is the best use of your time?

Neither is it a good idea to hold joint worship services with non-Christians, for we do not worship the same God. See such passages in God's Word as John 8:42-47, 1 Corinthians 10:20, and 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

- 18) Use your awareness of logical fallacies as gambits for those who deny the authority of the Bible and the church. Many people don't believe the Gospel of Jesus Christ because they haven't read the Bible themselves (or at least not more than a few snippets out of context) and have accepted biased and flawed claims of friends, teachers, or skeptics without giving more thought to those claims. Of course the goal is to help people accept the Bible as the trustworthy Word of God and the basis of what we believe about his plan of redemption in Christ Jesus, for all else we believe is based on that premise about the Bible being God's Word.

For such people we need to use the above gambits and also look for opportunities to give the reasons why we are persuaded that the Bible alone is God's Word. Yet before unbelievers are ready to receive such information, we may have to disabuse them of wrong thinking that violates the laws of logic as are found in the field of philosophy. Then we can help them replace the errant beliefs with the truth. For a primer on logical fallacies see my paper, "[Logic: A Primer on Common Logical Fallacies.](#)"

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION AND ACTION

1. How can we improve on the gambits mentioned above, either modifications of these and/or additional gambits?
2. What other gambits have you, or someone you know about, used?
3. How should we respond to adherents of non-Christian religions who appear at our door soliciting for their religion?
4. What have you found helpful and not helpful in witnessing to non-Christians?
5. Since our authority for all we say is based and depends upon the Bible, we must be prepared to include in our witness reasons why we believe the Bible is God's Word and is trustworthy. Identify at least three statements you can make as to

why it is most reasonable to believe that the whole Bible is the Word of God, including at least one for the Old Testament and one for the New Testament. For further information to help with this question, see [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#) on the Christian Theology page of my Website at www.fromacorntoak12.com.

CONCLUSION

1. For any of the cognitive objectives you have not as yet observed the stated behavior, distribute file cards as needed, and ask the students to give you the stipulated responses. Be sure to ask them to sign their name on each card. Or, you can verbally ask the class, corporately in session or selected representative individuals, and/or those about whom you have a special concern, in or outside the class (especially outside and individually for those about whom you are concerned in order to avoid embarrassment and to facilitate their responses), to do the behaviors specified in the objectives. Review the instruction as needed, for any objectives that are not accomplished as you intend them to be. Doing so in class, will help those who need the remedial help and be a good memory refresher and reinforcer for those who have accomplished the objectives.
2. This has been a minicourse on how to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that [we] have” and to do so “with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)
3. Again, the most important prerequisite: Pray. Let us pray for the opportunities to “give the reason for the hope that [we] have” and for the Lord’s guidance and direction that we prepare well, for He alone knows with whom we will be talking and what their needs are, and that we offer the loving witness in word and in deed that will please Him and be productive for Him, doing so in “gentleness and respect.”