Your goal in this lesson is to make clear that our responsibility in evangelism is merely to faithfully share the Gospel in a relevant way. When we do so, we will encounter a variety of responses. Successful witnessing is taking the initiative in the power of the Holy Spirit to share Christ, and leaving the results to God.

If your disciple has spent any time sharing his faith, he has probably seen a variety of responses. Hopefully, he may have seen someone genuinely place his faith in Christ. There is nothing like seeing someone’s life changed by the Gospel to make you love evangelism. At the same time, the opposite is true. If he’s ever had someone respond with extreme negativity, he may have become disheartened and concluded that evangelism is pretty beat. You want to step in and show him that it is normal to get varied responses. It happened to Jesus. It happened to Paul. It’s going to happen to him, too. Normalizing that for him can help him stay in the game where God can use him to make His glory known.

**How much experience do you have doing evangelism?**

**What has been the best experience you have had?**

**How about the worst?**

It is very normal to have gotten lots of different reactions and responses to the gospel when doing evangelism. We are going to study some passages of scripture that give some common responses to the gospel and present ideas for how to deal with them.

Lets open our bibles and read Acts 17:30-34. These last couple of verses of Acts 17 do a great job encapsulating the three major responses.

As we jump into the narrative, Paul has just finished doing an incredible job laying a foundation for the Gospel. With great grace and tact, he has warned them of the judgment to come - a judgment that will be carried out by a man who has risen from the dead.

Luke records that there are three responses that people show. The first response is found in v. 32. “When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered.” This is the worst-case scenario everybody fears. **Have you ever had this experience of being sneered at or looked down upon? How did you respond?**

Usually our response to this falls into one of two categories. One is that we feel like a dork. We think people are making fun of us, or that we are perceived as weak, too stupid to know that science has disproved God, or whatever. Fill in your favorite insecurity. At the other extreme, we might feel guilt since we apparently blew the evangelistic opportunity. Now the unbeliever is condemned to an eternity in Hell because I screwed up the third law and forgot that really good illustration. Nonsense and nonsense.

**What do both of these reactions have in common?**

Answer: They are both about us. I, I , me, me. Here’s the thing: Evangelism isn’t about me, it’s about God. It is about declaring “the praises of Him who called us out of darkness and into His wonderful light”. I am not the issue, it’s about the lost. It is an invitation to those who are separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel, foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope, and without God in the world, to come inside and find life, forgiveness, and peace with God.

To combat feeling foolish after being rejected we can be reminded of God’s truth that apart from the work of the Holy Spirit, lost men will always reject God. They echo Isaiah’s detractors who said, “Give us no more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, get off this path, and stop confronting us with the Holy One of Israel!” (Is. 30:0,11). We shouldn’t be surprised or affronted when lost men reject the Gospel. Instead we should:

Be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. To those who oppose us, we should gently instruct in the hope that God will grant them repentance, leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses, and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will. (2 Tim 2:24-26)

To combat this idea that it is all your fault for “blowing an evangelistic opportunity” we must remember that it is God who saves. God is the one who longs to show mercy. It is the Father who, “devises ways so that a banished person may not remain estranged from him.” (2 Sam 14:14) He is sovereign in extending His grace. You can’t thwart Him. Remember, successful witnessing is taking the initiative in the power of the Holy Spirit to share Christ, and leaving the results to God.

Alright, back to Acts 17. Take a look at v. 32 for the second response: “Others said, “we want to hear you again on this subject.” I love this one. These people are intrigued, but unsure. They want to think about what they’ve heard, and talk more. They have some questions, recognize that you might have some answers, and sincerely want to investigate. That’s a dream come true. When this happens, we should praise God and ask Him to move in their hearts to respond in faith. By all means, make it a point to get back with them soon; the next day, if possible, and be ready to answer questions.

**How would you approach a second appointment with a person like this?**

Answer: One of the best things to do is to ask questions to find where the person’s specific hesitations are. Most people have specific hesitations that need to be addressed before they can come to faith. If you know what those things are from your first meeting then you spend time researching their hesitation. Another thing to do if you don’t know their specific hesitation is to prepare one of Jesus’ parables to explain the gospel in a different way. It is important to understand that this may not be a quick process. Many people take years to come to faith so be prepared to be in it for the long haul. It is worth it!

The final response though is everyone’s favorite. It’s found in v. 34. “A few men became followers of Paul, and believed.” Glorious. Whenever this happens we should show appropriate exuberance. Someone has crossed over from death to life! What could be greater?

**What do you think are the most important things to do for these new believers?**

Here’s what we would say are the two most important next steps for a new believer.

1. Introduce the new believer to other Christians. Your top priority should be to see them get relationally connected to the body. Go to lunch with them and another Christian friend, invite them to play basketball with other believers, catch a movie with some guys in your small group. Something, anything to get them in a relationship with multiple believers. I cannot over stress that.

2. Begin to meet regularly to teach them the basics of the faith. Cru’s Life Concepts are fantastic. You can find them by searching Cru life concepts on the internet. They give you five lessons on basic ideas of the Gospel.

Now you know three of the most common responses to the gospel. Some will reject it and sneer or just be passive about it, some will want to continue exploring this idea, and others will accept the message. It is important to realize that it is normal to have all of these responses and know how to deal with them. But most importantly we need to consistently remind ourselves that the main actor in evangelism is God and not us. After all, successful witnessing is taking the initiative in the power of the Holy Spirit to share Christ, and leaving the results to God.