

Managing Difficult Conversations

You will eventually encounter some people that want to debate, argue or simply demean. Many of these people are frequent visitors and do not always show a desire for real conversation. This attitude may be from confusion or being hurt so we always want to treat these people with love and respect even when it is extraordinarily hard to do so.

We encourage you to be patient and show grace in order to share the Gospel but that does not mean at the expense of being “held hostage” by an unreasonable visitor. We also ask that you never share information displayed in the system (location, number of conversations, prior topics, aliases, etc.) or comments you see in Group Chat with these visitors.

It is always important to do our best to understand the perspective of the visitor and what type of conversation they are seeking. Many of these difficult interactions come from three different types of conversation:

Serial Seekers - These people are often battling a mental health issue or some type of social phobia. They usually have a very limited circle of people in their lives and are looking for community or conversation. They may come with a list of questions or the same questions each time. They also at times struggle to understand the appropriateness of some of their questions even though they are usually polite. Feel free to draw clear topic boundaries, set time restrictions or even tell them when things are busy and you can't talk for a long period of time. One day we will meet them in their heavenly bodies as God intended them and we pray that we can each celebrate that reunion having treated them well.

Agenda-Driven Visitors - Some visitors come seeking to make a statement or criticize our beliefs. Unfortunately, many of these visitors often don't do that up front or with any transparency. They prefer to come online and rapidly ask a series of questions aimed at making you justify your faith. Others want to take scripture out of context and claim something it does not say or mean. Lastly, others will want to criticize Christianity and/or make a case for some other religion. Start by taking a breath. Remember that you are always in control and have the ability to graciously end any inappropriate conversation. Slow things down and ask if you can ask them a few questions. It is always a sign of an agenda if people are unwilling to engage in simple two-way conversation. Pray for wisdom and guidance. Know you can respectfully end the conversation if there is no reasonable or respectful exchange of answers and ideas. Tell them it seems like they are here for some type of debate or argument and that you volunteer to share the Gospel with those seeking information and not conflict.

Angry Visitors - Some of the most difficult conversations are with people who are well-educated and know how to control a conversation. You may get a person filled with anger or hate who simply wants to disrupt what we are doing. Some of these folks have no sincere desire to talk and may actually want to demean, use degrading language or even insult you simply because you are a Christian. We obviously have no way of knowing what is in someone's heart but these visitors often make no effort to hide their anger or intentions. Some use profane language and make outrageous claims while not engaging you in a serious or reasonable manner. Like any prank, you are encouraged to be firm and quickly end the conversation.

Lastly, you should be aware that some of these visitors regularly change their IP address and do everything possible to hide their true identity and keep us from blocking them. You should flag the conversation in the system so we can track that information going forward and determine if further action is required. Pray for their souls and move forward in the freedom of knowing God loves them and can one day use any positive truth you share with them.