

What Does the Average Conversation Look Like?

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We receive this question almost every week. While no two conversations are identical, we have gathered some suggestions and lessons learned that we believe will help you.

The answer will be different based on technology (Chat, Text, Social Media, Voice), by depth of topic and by degree of engagement of the seeker. There really is no “average conversation” as the average is nothing other than the sum of wide variety of conversation types and not something we manage to.

The nature of conversations varies depending on the technology used (Chat, Text, Social Media, Voice), the depth of the topic discussed, and how engaged the seeker is. There isn't really an "average conversation" because what we might call average is actually just a mix of many different types of interactions, and it's not something we specifically aim for or manage.

Thus, as Responders, we should focus on the fact that there is no "one size fits all" solution and we should seek to adopt a variety of **“best practices”** that will allow us to maximize our impact with each seeker.

It is important to understand that approximately 85% of seekers are coming to us on a mobile device, thus lengthy complex responses from us will require seekers to scroll and scroll, potentially creating a negative impact.

Online Evangelism differs from **Relational Evangelism**, and we must adapt based on what the situation and type of interaction. Online Evangelism continues to evolve, and we want to share some key concepts in managing online conversations well.

- Be concise and make responses easy to digest
- Mirror communication styles
- Draw Seekers in through good listening and helpful resources
- Be in control and turn conversation towards Jesus

Be concise and make responses easy to digest

We don't want to dilute the Gospel message, but it's essential to present it in a clear and straightforward manner that's easy for seekers to understand. Remember, the longer our responses take to develop, the more likely we are to lose the seeker's attention and interest. Responding quickly, even in brief segments, helps keep them engaged.

Secondly with over 50% of our conversations being international (up to 200 countries and territories each month), we need to understand that English may not be their primary language, so clean, simplistic responses are critical. If you are developing a response with several points, then send them one at a time, keeping them brief and concise.

Additionally, we must recognize that many people have been hurt by the church or are distancing themselves from God. Therefore, it's important to meet them there and avoid religious jargon or complex church language. Focus on making your message simple and easy to understand.

We have implemented a "character counter" within ECHO, which provides a visual indicator allowing you to gauge the length of your exchange. It counts to 450 characters then changes color (gray to yellow). You can still send larger exchanges, but it is a reminder to be concise and to the point. And lastly, avoid pasting text from long articles into your exchange unless the seeker is asking for it. Share the URL and allow them to open the article on their own.

Mirror communication styles

We recommend that you try to mirror the communication style of the person you're speaking with, considering both the length of your conversations and the level of formality in your language. It's important to take their spiritual maturity into account. Our aim is to connect with them where they are and communicate effectively.

If you're talking to someone who doesn't know much about spiritual topics, it's important to share a straightforward message of hope from the Gospel, introducing them to Christ. The goal is to avoid using complicated church jargon or religious language that might confuse them.

If a Seeker asks a formal question, then respond in a more formal fashion, attempting to mirror them. Conversely, if they are casual in the exchange, then meet them there as well even avoiding capitalizations and punctuations if you like.

It's important to assess how familiar the person is with spiritual concepts and their level of spiritual understanding. If you're talking to someone from another country who isn't fluent in English, and you start discussing complex theological ideas like substitutionary atonement or propitiation, you'll probably confuse them. Instead, begin with a simple explanation of the Gospel. As the person starts to understand more, you can gradually introduce more detailed concepts and expand on the initial message.

Draw Seekers in through good listening and helpful resources

We have learned that asking good questions is a great way to hear the heart of the seeker. Avoid yes/no questions as they leave you no room to expand the exchange. Focus on asking opened ended questions, such as:

"How is Jesus Christ part of your life?"

"Can you share how Jesus is transforming your life?"

"Can you share how you are living out the call of Christ on your life each day?"

"Can you talk about your involvement in small group bible study at your church?"

These type questions will help you listen attentively and offer valuable insights for guiding further discussion.

Further, look to provide helpful resources. We want to avoid being the "Bible Answer People" where all we do is copy and paste resources. Instead, share your story and your heart for Jesus,

guiding them toward the answer while offering helpful resources they can take with them after the conversation.

Be in control and turn conversation towards Jesus

While we want to give the impression that the seeker is guiding the conversation, as Responders, we should subtly lead and direct the discussion. Listen carefully, noting any red flags or hints they may reveal, and look for opportunities to naturally steer the conversation towards Jesus Christ.

Seekers may arrive with a variety of challenges, such as addictions, job loss, breakups, health issues, depression, anxiety, financial stress, and more. No matter what brings them to the ministry, each conversation presents a chance to offer a message of hope and share Christ.

Aim to connect with them on a personal level and show empathy whenever possible. Even if you haven't faced the exact same situation, we all go through difficult times, stress, or pain. Look for common ground where you can relate to their experiences. By establishing this connection, you build trust and enhance your ability to share Christ effectively.