

Using Paul's Letters in your Ministry

There are five case studies presented below. You are required to write about three of them, according to your choice. For each case study you must do the following:

Select several relevant passages from Paul's writings that address each issue. Your discussion of these relevant Scriptural passages should include both interpretation and application comments.

Interpretive comments should consider the context, theme, word meanings, structure of the grammar, etc. of the chosen passages.

Application comments should be specific and relevant insights that would be convincing and clear to your friend.

Here are the case studies:

1. In your apartment building there are a number of Indian medical students. You make a friendship with one of them and one day you have a conversation about religion. When you share your testimony of faith in Jesus, they are open and appreciative. In fact, they say they have a very high regard for Jesus. "But," they continue, "in India there are over 300 million gods, Jesus is just one of them. Since Jesus is not unique, there is no reason to give him exclusive allegiance." What would Paul say?
 - Explore their relationship with those 'gods' – any personal contact, feeling of nearness, sense of guilt/shame, forgiveness – how do you communicate with them?
 - Explain the purpose of Jesus coming, His uniqueness as God and man, 1 Tim 2.5
 - Share the benefits you have through a personal relationship with Him, Eph 2.11-14
 - Paul's sermon in Athens to an 'unknown god' - Acts 17
 - Paul's words about idols, 1 Corinth 8.5,6, Romans 1 & 2
 - The fact that there are so many gods may mean none of them really 'work'
 - What has been the social/economic impact of these gods in Indian society?
 - What about testimonies of Indian polytheists who have come to faith in Jesus alone.

2. Another one of your neighbors is an Uzbek national. One day you share a cup of tea and they begin to brag about the great advances of Uzbekistan, greater than any other Central Asian country, they say. As you continue sipping tea you mention that you are a follower of Jesus. The Uzbek is not impressed. In fact, they say “Jesus is not the religion of Uzbeks.” When you ask what prevents this person from following Jesus they say, “Uzbeks are a superior people, why should I follow this Jesus who is worshipped in nations much inferior to Uzbekistan?” What would Paul say?

- The most exalted person in the Koran is ‘Isa
- God is creating a global family which includes each family who will bring their best and display it in His Kingdom, Ephes 3.14, Isaiah 66.19-21
- Jesus is worshipped in every nation, some even more powerful and cultured than Uzbek.
- We have a personal relationship with Jesus – and received His blessings individually – not a national relationship.
- Revel 7.9 shows that even the fully redeemed still display their cultural uniqueness, coming to Jesus does not eliminate the nature of your character and culture – He purifies it and makes it even more beautiful for Himself
- Share testimonies of Uzbeks who have found joy and fulfillment in Jesus

3. A respected citizen from your city begins to attend your church. Soon they decide to attend classes for baptism, and at the service for baptism they present a powerful testimony. They become a highly respected member of the congregation. Soon they are inviting their friends to church and showing many evidences of a growing faith. One day you decide to drop by their apartment for fellowship. When you enter their apartment you think you are in a Museum of Liquor. You find bottles for every kind of liquor in almost every room, most of them empty. You leave that visit quite confused. Later that day you meet the person’s spouse, who has been refusing to come with their mate to the church. The spouse confides in you saying, “My spouse has such a terrible drinking problem. They get drunk every night. In fact, they cannot fall asleep unless they are drunk. I have wondered why your church has allowed them to join?” What would Paul say?

- Connect the wife to women whose husbands have gained victory from alcohol for sharing, friendship, and fellowship
- Emphasize to the wife the nature of salvation – it is by grace and free forgiveness – but it also demands repentance and holiness. Salvation is a

process, but we expect your husband to make progress if he is truly in Christ. She needs to know that Jesus hates sin, and you do to – it is serious and wrong. You need to apologize for not discovering that this man has been lying to God and to the church. Only God knows whether he is truly saved, but if he is there must be some changes made.

- Follow the pattern of Matthew 18 with this ‘believing’ husband. He needs to repent and walk in the light, before God and man.
- Warn him that salvation is shown in fruit; no fruit may mean that it is coming slowly...or perhaps it means no salvation. Salvation is free but not cheap. Jesus died for sin, leave it!
- Insist that this man be accountable and transparent – counseling, small group, admittance into a Christian rehab program
- It may be that the wife is actually more serious and open to God than the hypocritical husband

4. Another devoted and respected member of your church is a very successful business person. They live in one of the largest homes in the city, drive a new car, and dress in the latest fashions. They are often away on business trips throughout Central Asia and the entire CIS. One day you are having a prayer time with this person and sharing about the Christian walk, as you have done frequently with them. On this day the person is much more open and troubled. They pull a number of papers from their briefcase which lists the “business expenses” for their firm. They show you the names of top leaders in government, tax officers, customs officials, from your country and the neighboring nations. When you ask them about this list they say, “Without such personal payments a person cannot do business in Central Asia.” What would Paul say?

- ‘Everybody is doing it’ does not make something right. Everybody cheats on their spouse too. Drinks too much, drives too fast, etc.
- Point out that there are companies – Chevron being one – that are making a profit in Central Asia and do not pay bribes.
- Point out that being ‘salt and light’ is the fundamental requirement of the Christian in this world.
- Point them to Paul’s words about money and to the rich in 1 Timothy 6.
- Rom 16:23 “*Erastus, who is the city's director of public works, and our brother Quartus send you their greetings.*” Here is a believer in the corrupt city of Corinth who held a high, respected, and open position.
- The Bible consistently condemns those who ASK for bribes. It does not say much about those poor and oppressed who are FORCED TO PAY bribes.

But it is a different story when you are paying bribes just to gain benefits and advancement.

- Culturally there are differences between tips, friendship, service fees and bribes. You need to be careful before God that you do not confuse or compromise here.
- Are you paying the bribes to just get a higher standard of living or to survive? You are commanded to provide for your family – 1 Timothy 5.8 – but you are not commanded, or even advised, to spoil them.
- What role does faith play in your life and business? Do you really believe in a mighty, miracle working God? Rom 4:18-25 Against all hope, Abraham in hope believed and so became the father of many nations, just as it had been said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 19 Without weakening in his faith, he faced the fact that his body was as good as dead-since he was about a hundred years old-and that Sarah's womb was also dead. 20 Yet he did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, 21 being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised. 22 This is why "it was credited to him as righteousness." 23 The words "it was credited to him" were written not for him alone, 24 but also for us, to whom God will credit righteousness-for us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead.
- Do you really believe God, not you or your business, is the provider of all your needs? Phil 4:19 And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

5. One of your school classmates is a devoted Muslim. You have been friends for many years and that friendship continues through occasional visits. You have long admired their moral values and sincere devotion to Islam, though you wish they would come to know Jesus. One day God opens the way for a very good spiritual conversation. You share how you have just completed a fantastic course on Paul and his letters. "Paul?" your Muslim friend asks, "who is that?" "Oh, he is one of the great Apostles and authors of the New Testament." Your friend politely responds, "Our Imam has often said the Bible is corrupt, and it sounds like he is correct. I admire 'Isa (Jesus) and know about his 'Injil (Gospel), but the Quran says nothing about any Paul and Paul's letters. Why have you left 'Isa and his 'Injil for this unknown man named Paul?" What would Paul say?

- It is understandable that this Muslim is suspicious; there is nothing in the Koran about Paul. Yet, many Christians are often talking about Paul. This is an opportunity to teach them, if they are open.
- The Koran exhorts Muslims to read the ‘Injil of Isa’. Point out that Jesus did not write any books. Rather, he appointed and inspired apostles to write His words.
- The ‘Injil’ includes both the words of his life (ie. Gospels) and the words to those who followed Him (letters).
- Paul was not a follower at first, in fact he was a hostile enemy. Share about his life, 1 Timothy 1.12-17, Acts 9, 1 Corinth 15.8-11
- Draw a parallel between the role of Muhammed (Allah’s messenger and apostle) and the role of Paul (Jesus’ messenger and apostle). Both men were ‘surprised’ by their call.
- Technically, the Koran does NOT say the Injil or Scriptures of Christians are corrupt. To the contrary, the Koran tells Muslims they should read the Injil and the Scriptures of Jews and Christians – we are considered ‘People of the Book’. But later Islamic tradition, perhaps out of jealousy that Jews and Christians rejected Muhammad and Islam, say that the Bible is corrupt. Today that idea is widely spread by Muslims, but it is not found in the Koran.
- Paul never points to himself, or suggests that others follow him. Galatians 2.20, 1 Corinth 11.1, 1 Tim 1.1, 2 Tim 1.1 – He considers himself a servant of Jesus.

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