

Sharing Our Faith with Roman Catholic Friends

Leader's Guide



HOME MISSION BOARD, SBC

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HRB

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Produced by the Interfaith Witness Department
Gary Leazer, Director
Tal Davis, Associate Director
Maurice Smith, Associate Director
Darrell W. Robinson, Vice President, Home Mission Board,
Evangelism

Written by: Daniel R. Sanchez

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Evangelism Section
Materials Development
C. Thomas Wright, Director
M. Karin Robertson, Assistant Editor

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This book primarily refers to the Roman Catholic Church. However, there are other Catholic groups, which may believe differently.

This manual complements the Total Church Life evangelism strategy. The total penetration of contemporary culture requires an awareness of the religious diversity in the United States. This manual presents the teachings and practices of Roman Catholics and equips Christians to witness effectively to them in the name of Jesus Christ.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

This seminar can be taught in a variety of ways:

- I. SEMINAR FORMAT:
Five sessions (1½ hrs. each)
 - A. Bible study--20 minutes
 - B. Group activity--30 minutes
 - C. Practical instruction--40 minutes
- II. DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING FORMAT:
Ten Sessions (50 min. each)
 - A. Bible study and group activity--25 minutes
 - B. Practical instruction--25 minutes
- III. COMBINATION WORSHIP SERVICE--DISCIPLESHIP TRAINING FORMAT
 - A. Use Bible studies as outlines for sermons
 - B. Use Discipleship Training format for the other material
- IV. RETREAT FORMAT:
Three sessions (5 hrs.--2 hrs. Friday evening; 3 hrs. Saturday morning)
 - A. Group activity--20 minutes
 - B. Practical instruction--40 minutes

Sharing Our Faith with Roman Catholic Friends

The title of this seminar undoubtedly raises some questions. Why should we share our faith with our Catholic friends? The underlying supposition of this seminar is that we need to share our faith with everyone so they can experience the new birth (see John 3:3) and become followers of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 28:19-20). Other seminars train evangelical Christians to share their faith with groups from other religious backgrounds. The purpose of this seminar is to train evangelical Christians to share their faith with people of Roman Catholic background who have not experienced the new birth and do not have a personal, living relationship with Jesus Christ.

What do we need to know to share our faith with our Roman Catholic friends? This brief seminar will address the principal doctrines, pertinent cultural factors, and relevant historical issues that will enable us to witness to our Roman Catholic friends in an informed and appropriate manner. The seminar consists of Bible studies, group activities, and practical instruction. The objective will be not only to impart information but also equip evangelical Christians to share their faith.

This seminar is divided into five sessions:

- Session One: Preparing to Share Our Faith (Part 1)**
- Session Two: Preparing to Share Our Faith (Part 2)**
- Session Three: Sharing Our Faith (Part 1)**
- Session Four: Sharing Our Faith (Part 2)**
- Session Five: Continuing Bible Study: Discipling New Believers**

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SESSION ONE

Preparing to Share Our Faith (Part 1)

- I. **Objective:** To prepare seminar participants to share their faith by giving attention to opportunities, challenges, and attitudes that relate to this task.
- II. **Bible Study:** Jesus and the Samaritan woman (John 4)
 - A. Method employed by Jesus

Introduction: The dialogue that Jesus had with the Samaritan woman has valuable lessons that can help Christians know how to share their faith with those who have not experienced the new birth and who have questions about their relationship with God. By analyzing this dialogue, we discover that Jesus:

 1. Cultivated a friendship (John 4:7)
 - a. By going out of His way **geographically**
John 4:4 states that Jesus "had to go through Samaria." Actually, many Jews went around Samaria on their way to Galilee. The statement that Jesus "had to go through Samaria," says more about His commitment than about a geographic necessity.
 - b. By going out of His way **socially**
The Samaritan woman was startled that Jesus spoke to her. It was not customary for a rabbi to speak to a woman in public. Furthermore, as John points out (see John 4:9), it was not accepted for Jews to have social contact with Samaritans. John's comment borders on an understatement; Jews and Samaritans hated one another (see Neh. 4; Ezra 4). Despite this, Jesus was willing to go out of His way socially to witness to the Samaritan woman.
 - c. Application: If we are to follow the example of Jesus and witness to those who have serious questions about their relationship to God, we must cultivate friendships. Friendships can become the bridge that overcomes suspicion, fear, and doubt.
 2. Created an interest: (John 4:7)
 - a. By beginning with a felt need Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman and created an interest in spiritual matters. Jesus did this by beginning with a felt need. The Samaritan woman came to draw water so Jesus began by talking about physical water.
 - b. By relating to a spiritual need He then proceeded to talk about spiritual water. As He spoke to her about the living water, a new possibility began to dawn on her: She could quench the thirst of her soul and experience a different kind of life.

- c. Application: Like Jesus, we can often create an interest in the gospel by beginning with felt needs. Psychologists tell us that some of the basic needs of human beings are: (1) to love and be loved (2) to feel secure (3) to overcome a sense of guilt and (4) to have assurance about the future.

As we cultivate friendships, we are in a better position to create an interest in spiritual matters by helping them see that Jesus can make a difference. One way to do this is to share our testimonies of how Jesus has made a difference in our lives.

3. Comprehended her situation

- a. Jesus did not condemn the Samaritan woman. When she said that she had no husband, Jesus confronted her with the sad history of her life. Five times she had sought happiness only to end up in disappointment and despair. Jesus did not approve of her lifestyle, but there must have been a tone of compassion in His voice or she would not have returned.
- b. Jesus found something positive to say about her. "What you have just said is quite true" (John 4:18). Having awakened in her an interest in a new lifestyle, Jesus maintained the dialogue on a positive note. She continued to listen as she sensed that He was willing to see the best in her.
- c. Application: We can be in a better position to witness to prospects by avoiding a spirit of condemnation. Even though we may not agree with their lifestyles, we cannot expect them to act like born-again Christians until they actually are.

4. Concentrated on what was essential to salvation

- a. Jesus avoided discussing religion. The Samaritans were mistaken on several religious matters. They accepted only the first five books of the Old Testament. They also believed that Abraham had offered Isaac on their mountain (Gerizim) instead of (Zion--Jerusalem). Jesus, however, did not spend time trying to explain to the Samaritan woman every theological point before He shared the gospel.
- b. Jesus focused on relationship. The Samaritan woman asked in what religious tradition God should be worshiped (Zion's or Gerizim's). Jesus responded that relationship is more important than tradition: "true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit** and in **truth**" (v. 23). These true worshipers are those who have a spiritual relationship with Him.

- c. Application: If we are to follow the example of Jesus, we will not spend time discussing religion. We will focus on relationships. Our question should not be, "To what religion do you belong?" but rather, "What is your personal relationship with Jesus?"

B. Degrees of understanding

1. Communicated the message patiently.

At first the Samaritan woman did not understand fully what Jesus was talking about. This is evident in verse 15 when she said, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." She was still thinking about physical water. It was not until she said, "When he [Messiah] comes, he will explain everything to us" (v.26) that Jesus said, "I who speak to you am he" (v.28). The way the dialogue progressed is indicated in the terms she used to refer to Him.

- a. First she called Him "a (Jew)" (v. 9).
- b. Then she referred to Him as "(Sir)," which indicates some respect (v. 11).
- c. Then she stated, "I can see that you are a (prophet)" (v. 19).
- d. Finally she refers to Him as the "(Christ)" (v. 29). Jesus communicated patiently until she was able to understand who He was and the implications of this to her life.

2. Application: People who have not grown up in an evangelical setting often do not understand their need to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. We must communicate patiently until they are able to understand the plan of salvation.

Conclusion--Review of Principles

- ◆ We must go out of our way (geographically) and (socially) if we are to witness effectively to Roman Catholics.
- ◆ We must create an interest in (spiritual) matters by relating to (felt) needs.
- ◆ We must avoid a spirit of (condemnation) to help people see what they can become through the grace and power of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ We must concentrate on what is essential to (salvation).
- ◆ We must communicate (patiently) allowing the Holy Spirit to work in the mind of the prospect.

III. Group Activity

A. Examine attitudes

Instructions: Invite the group to play a word association game. Write down the first thought that comes to your mind when you hear the words:

Mormon
Episcopalian
Catholic

After you have done this, share with the group the information from the experience of this writer or share information from your own experience. The point is that even though we do not agree with these people doctrinally, they have some positive qualities and values_ that we can use as bridges of communication.

MORMON

When I think of the word "Mormon," I think of a relative of mine who dedicated her entire life to helping her young daughter who was severely paralyzed with polio. Her daughter is now a successful school teacher. This would not have happened without her mother's love and dedication.

EPISCOPALIAN

When I think of the word "Episcopalian," I think of an elderly lady who lived in the city where I was pastoring while I was a college student. Even though she had a severe and painful curvature of the spine, she found the strength to conduct conversational English classes for new immigrants. Her love and commitment were a real inspiration.

CATHOLIC

When I think of the word "Catholic," I think of a lady who once lived across the street from us. She was closer to us than our relatives during the prolonged illness and death of our precious 2-year-old daughter. This lady mourned the death of our daughter almost as much as my wife and I did.

You do not have to agree with people theologically or compromise your convictions to love and see the best in people of other religions.

Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus met people He did not agree with because of their: (1) lifestyles (the Samaritan woman); (2) theology (Nicodemus); or (3) values (rich young ruler). However, it is clear that He **loved** them.

Through words and by example, Jesus taught us to:

- ◆ Love our neighbors as ourselves--(Matt. 22:39)
- ◆ Minister to the needs of those who are different from us
Good Samaritan--(Luke 10:30-37)
- ◆ Forgive others--(Matt. 18:21-22)
- ◆ Love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us--
(Matt. 5:43-48)

In the past, relationships between Catholics and evangelical Christians have not been good. There are two reasons evangelical Christians should reexamine their attitudes toward Catholics:

- ◆ Christ commanded us to love everyone.
- ◆ Some Catholics are striving to be friendly toward evangelical Christians.

Catholic priest Gerald Williams says:

In the past Catholics have not treated other Christians well. We treated them as doubtful Christians with about the same warmth as we show to Communists. We treated their churches as non-churches because we recognized only one church and one unity, the unity with Rome. A sort of peaceful co-existence is all we hoped for.¹

If there is room for repentance on the Catholic side, there is certainly room for repentance on the evangelical side. In the past, some have been more interested in proving Catholics wrong than in leading them to a personal, saving knowledge of Christ.

B. Practical suggestions

1. Don'ts

- a. Don't (criticize) the Catholic Church, its doctrines, practices, or people. Even if you feel you have a valid point, it is counterproductive to criticize for two reasons: (1) It is not in the Spirit of Christ; (2) It will only antagonize people.
- b. Don't (ridicule) any of the practices of the Catholic Church. Some evangelical Christians are prone to make fun of their sacramentals (images, statues, crucifixes, etc.) . These things are very dear to Catholics.
- c. Don't be (negative) just because you differ with someone. You can disagree without being disagreeable.

2. Do's

- a. (Love) your Catholic friends. Find opportunities to manifest your love in practical ways.
- b. (Pray) with and for your Catholic friends. Many of them have never had the experience of someone praying for them by name. Mention specific

needs. Say: "Lord, I pray for _____ (name) _____. You know that he or she has this need (name the need) and You have promised to hear our prayers. Bless _____ (name) _____, help him or her."

- c. See the (best) in them. When someone says to you, "I'm a Catholic," be in a position both spiritually and emotionally to say to them, "I'm glad to meet you." Let the love of Christ flow through you. Remember, everyone you meet is a person for whom Christ died.

We can learn from the advice that some Roman Catholic leaders are telling their people. Priest Williams says: "We must live holier lives while we avoid the prejudice and bigotry of the past. Catholics should avoid expressions, judgments and actions which do not represent the condition of our separated brethren with truth and fairness."¹¹²

Please do not misunderstand this point. You should not (compromise) your doctrine in any way. You should *speaks the truth in love* (see Eph. 4:15). We are obligated to speak the truth. We must do it in a way that conveys God's love. This love leads us to be patient, courteous, and fair as we evangelize our Catholic friends.

IV. Practical Instruction

A. Our opportunity

Because of the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II), we now have the greatest opportunity ever to share our faith with our Catholic friends. Those who do not understand the implications of Vatican II take two extreme positions:

- ♦ "Nothing has (changed), we must view all Catholics as adversaries."
- ♦ "Changes within Catholicism are so great that we do not need to share our (faith) with them any longer."

To avoid both extremes, let us look at Vatican II and its implications.

SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

(VATICAN II)

What was the Second Vatican Council?

It was an ecumenical council of all the (bishops) of the Roman Catholic world to consider the state of the church, pronounce against heresy, and to rule on all matters that pertained to faith, morals, and church discipline.

When did the Vatican II take place?

In September 1962, Pope John **XXIII** opened the first session of Vatican II. He died in June 1963. Pope Paul VI reconvened the Council, which ended in December 1965.

Why was Vatican II called?

Vatican II was called to (update) the church.³

CHANGES SINCE VATICAN II

1. What has not changed?

a. The dogmas

The dogmas are "official (teachings) proposed with such solemnity that their rejection is tantamount to heresy, which is a denial of some truth of faith deemed by the teaching Church to be essential to that faith."⁴

- ◆ The Mass--the (form) of the Mass has changed, its meaning has not.
- ◆ Mary--remains a (mediatrix): (meditates along with Christ) of all favors and co-redemptrix (redeems along with Christ) of humanity.⁵
- ◆ Other doctrines--concept of (salvation), need for good works, importance of tradition, the Sacraments, and so forth have not changed.

b. The hierarchy

The (structure) of the Church has not changed.

The Catholic Church teaches that it "is governed by the successor of Peter and by the bishops in union with that successor."⁶

The supreme (authority) of the pope has not changed. If the doctrine of the authority and infallibility of the pope were changed, the whole structure of Catholicism would be modified.

2. What has changed

a. Worship

The Mass is in the (language) of the people; the priest faces the audience; the congregation participates; laypeople are used in the service.

Catholics are encouraged to (participate) with Protestants in worship. "Join with Protestants for formal religious worship. You may act as a witness at a Protestant church wedding provided the laws of God and the Catholic church are not violated."⁷

"(Scripture)" has gained a new importance in Catholic worship (liturgy) : lessons from Scripture are in the language of the people (vernacular); the Psalms now in the vernacular are from Scripture; many prayers and songs are scriptural. The homily delivered by the priest or deacon is scriptural. Scriptural study and analysis have gained new importance in the church. ¹⁸

IMPLICATIONS

- ♦ Catholics are receiving greater exposure to the (Scriptures) during the Mass.
- ♦ Catholics are now (more likely) to attend an evangelical worship service and less likely to feel out of place.

b. Fellowship

Evangelical Christians are now considered "(separated)" brethren."

The documents of the Second Vatican Council say, "The brethren divided from us also carry out many of the sacred actions of the Christian religion." ⁹

Catholics are urged to respect and admire the many virtues of Protestants. In his *Contemporary Catholic Catechism*, priest Gerald Williams says:

Protestants look to Christ as the source and center of Christian unity; they have love and devotion to sacred Scripture. Though we believe they have not retained the proper reality for the Eucharistic mystery in its fullness, especially, because of the absence of the sacrament of orders, nevertheless when they commemorate his death and resurrection in the Lord's Supper, they profess that it signifies life in communion with Christ and look forward to His coming glory. Moreover, Catholics should respect the Christian family life of Protestants, their sense of justice and true charity toward their neighbor Catholics should unite in prayer and action for the common good of humanity. ¹⁰

IMPLICATION

- ♦ Catholics who obey the teachings of Vatican II show an increased willingness to have (fellowship) with evangelical Christians.

c. Lay participation

Laypeople have been given greater (participation) in the ministry of the church.

The *Contemporary Catholic Catechism* says,

The laymen's apostolate is derived from his Christian vocation and the Church can never be without it. Sacred Scripture clearly shows how spontaneous and fruitful such activity was at the beginning of the church. Our own times require of laity no less zeal. In fact, modern conditions demand that their apostolate be thoroughly broadened and intensified. ¹¹

d. The Bible

Laypeople are receiving a greater encouragement to read the Bible. "After the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the Catholic Church has placed new emphasis on the importance of Scripture in the Christian life of her members. Private reading of Scripture is urged more strongly than ever before."¹²

IMPLICATIONS

- ◆ We can freely (encourage) Catholics to read their Bibles.
- The climate is much more (conducive) for inviting Catholics to join Home Bible Fellowships.

While the dogmas and structure of the church have not changed, the changes in worship, fellowship, lay participation, and reading of the Bible must be viewed as open doors for evangelical Christians to share their faith with Roman Catholics who have not come to a personal experience of salvation in Jesus Christ.

B. Our challenge

We are encouraged to learn that since Vatican II many Catholics are seeking to fellowship with evangelical Christians, are reading the Bible more, and are being encouraged to respect our doctrinal positions. This is certainly sufficient reason for us to be optimistic about the possibility of helping our Catholic friends to personal salvation in Christ. However, we must not be blinded to the fact that there are some barriers to overcome.¹³

FEAR OF LOSING ETERNAL SALVATION

For many centuries, the Catholic Church has taught that outside the Catholic Church there is no salvation. Even though Catholics are being encouraged to fellowship with evangelicals, they are being reminded that "the Catholic Church is the (ordinary means) of Salvation."¹⁴

THE FEELING THAT ONE BELONGS TO THE UNIQUE VISIBLE CHURCH

The Contemporary Catholic Catechism states:

"There is only one true Church of Jesus Christ, the Catholic Church. Our Lord entrusted all the blessings of Christianity to the apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Catholic Church to be brought to all people at all times."¹⁵

Many Catholics point to the fact that there are (many) Protestant denominations but there is only one Catholic Church, which traces its roots all the way back to Christ.

IDEAS ABOUT THE REFORMERS

The Catholic view of the reformers has been changing since Vatican II. Some Catholics still view Protestantism as the product of (renegade) priests (Luther, etc.) who left the Church because they wanted to marry.

THE IDEA THAT ONLY BAD CATHOLICS BECOME PROTESTANTS

Some feel that only Catholics who have committed (unpardonable) sins or who have never really understood their own faith are willing to become Protestants.

IDEAS ABOUT EVANGELICAL CHRISTIANS

Some Roman Catholics believe it is naive to think that one can be saved only (by accepting Christ). Some believe that evangelical Christians use the Bible to support their beliefs but are afraid of an open-minded study of the truth. Others believe that evangelical Christians do not believe in the discernment given to the body of Christ, the church.

FEAR OF CULTURAL OSTRACISM

For many Catholics, belonging to a certain ethnic group and being Catholic are the same. Some have even suggested that (being Catholic) is consistent with the very soul of a given ethnic or cultural group.

There are those who identify with the evangelical presentation of the gospel but who fear being ostracized or criticized by their own group.

SPIRITUAL REASONS

There may be spiritual reasons people of a Catholic background may not want to trust Christ as their Lord and Savior. Like many others, regardless of religious affiliation, they may have the (spiritual) blindness the Bible describes. Ephesians 2 is an example.

It is obvious that there are doctrinal, historical, and psychological barriers that must be overcome if we are to lead our Catholic friends to a personal, saving relationship with Christ.

In many instances, it will take more than quoting Scripture during our first witnessing encounter with a Catholic. It will take prayer, the cultivation of relationships, a clear presentation of the gospel, and on-going Bible study.

V. Preview of Next Session

SESSION TWO

Preparing to Share Our Faith (Part 2)

I. **Objective:** To prepare seminar participants to share their faith by studying the Scriptures on salvation, levels of communication, and degrees of understanding (of the gospel).

II. **Bible Study:** Jesus and Nicodemus (Part 1)--(John 3:1-21)

Introduction: The experience of Nicodemus is very important because this is the case study of a man who was very (religious). He was so devoted to his religious tradition that he was elevated to the position of "teacher of Israel." Having fulfilled all the legal requirements, he was admitted into a very exclusive religious group, the (Pharisees). Despite all of this religious practice, there is evidence that something was (lacking) in his life. The fact that he came to Jesus by night may indicate that he wanted to hear Jesus before it became known that he was identified with Him. He is to be commended because he came to Jesus in spite of his apprehensions.

A. Teachings of Jesus regarding salvation

1. Salvation is a *spiritual* experience.

Jesus said to him "Unless a man is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (v. 5). He explained that a person is born physically of human parents but is born spiritually of the Spirit (see v. 6).

Jesus was aware that Nicodemus had made every effort possible to be a good religious person. But Jesus told Nicodemus that being religious was not enough to enter the kingdom of God. He needed a spiritual transformation so radical that the best way to describe it was to compare it to a birth.

2. Salvation is a *gift*.

Nicodemus was so overwhelmed by the idea of a new birth that he asked "How can this be?" (v. 9). How can all my sins, my mistakes, my habits of the past be erased? How can a person who has lived as long as I have start all over again? How many sacrifices do I have to offer to be totally cleansed of all my sin so that I can be accepted by God? The new birth is only possible because God so loved you that He gave His only Son for you. *For God so loved that He gave.* Salvation is a gift from God. There is no way that we can earn or deserve it.

3. Salvation is received through *faith*.
It is especially important that Jesus underscored to Nicodemus that salvation is attained through faith alone. Nicodemus was depending upon his observance of the Law and of the prescribed religious practice to save himself. Jesus had to make it clear that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. Jesus stresses this point three times (see vv. 15-16, 19) in His conversation with Nicodemus.
4. Salvation is a *present possession*.
Jesus used the present tense when He talked about possessing salvation. There is an assurance about salvation. It is not an uncertain matter. Jesus Himself would give His life so that those who placed their trust in Him would be assured of possessing this precious gift of salvation. There is an assurance that those who believe in Him would have this eternal life that He died to provide.

B. Levels of communication

This conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus reveals they communicated at several levels:¹⁶

1. Face-to-face (vv. 2-3)
At this level of communication, Nicodemus stated he saw Jesus as "teacher who has come from God." Jesus then stated how He saw Nicodemus: "unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." He saw him as a man who was searching but needed to know more. Nicodemus' perception of Jesus was correct but incomplete. This part of the conversation helped them get acquainted with one another.
2. Mind-to-mind (vv. 4-13)
Nicodemus did not dismiss the idea of the new birth, but he did have some serious questions about how this could be possible. Jesus took the time to deal with these questions. He explained that He was talking about a *spiritual* birth. "You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again'" (John 3:7).
3. Heart-to-heart (vv. 14-18)
Finally, Jesus communicated with Nicodemus at the heart-to-heart level. He talked to him about the love of God. He told him that He was going to die. Jesus told Nicodemus that those who believe in Him will have everlasting life. At this level, Jesus communicated what was closest to His heart.

Application: It is important that we ask ourselves, "At what level are we communicating with those who need to hear the gospel?" What are we willing to do in terms of cultivating friendships, to communicate at the heart-to-heart level?

C. Dialogue: This dialogue reveals the pilgrimage of Nicodemus.

Nicodemus

Heard about Jesus (John 3). Believed Him to be (Rabbi). No one could do these things unless God was with Him.

1. Jesus shared with him God's salvation plan.
2. We are not told that he received Christ. On that first visit, he had many questions.

Tried to defend Jesus (John 7:50-51). No evidence that he identified publicly with Jesus (vv. 48, 52). He did not answer the question, "Have you believed"?

Identified publicly (John 19:36-40).

1. Invested in (ointment).
2. Helped prepare His (body).
3. Violated the (rule) of not touching a dead body.

Prospect

Has positive view of Jesus as an (extraordinary) teacher. Hears the gospel but, due to past traditions, needs time to think through these things.

Is a (secret) follower of Jesus like Joseph of Arimathea (John 19: 38) .
Fears cultural ostracism.

Identifies fully with Jesus.
Is willing to pay the price.

III. Group Activity

. A. Levels of communication

| Level | Name | Strategy |
|----------------|-------------|----------|
| Face-to-Face | <hr/> <hr/> | |
| Mind-to-Mind | <hr/> <hr/> | |
| Heart-to-Heart | <hr/> <hr/> | |

Use the chart to do the following:

1. Place the names of possible prospects at the level you think you are communicating with them.
2. Under "Strategy," write briefly what you should do to get to the next level.
3. Share your strategy with your group and spend time in prayer asking the Lord to help you improve your communication skills with prospects.

B. Degrees of understanding

| SAMARITAN WOMAN | PROSPECT |
|--|---|
| A stranger; "You are a Jew"; alienated (Ezra 4:1-5); despised (Neh. 4:1-2). | Jesus is a stranger. I hardly know anything about Him. |
| A respected person but still not equal to her religious leader (John 4:11) . "Are you better than our father, Jacob?-" | Jesus is a respected religious person but not necessarily more trustworthy than the objects of my devotion (Virgin Mary, saints). |
| A prophet (John 4:25-26, 29); a religious leader from whom she is willing to learn. | Jesus is a religious leader from whom I am willing to learn. |
| The Messiah (John 4:25-26, 29); the promised Messiah who has supernatural power" [He] told me everything" (v. 29). | Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, whose teachings are divine. |
| Personal Savior (John 4:39-41). Many believed in Him (v. 39). He is the Savior of the world (v. 42). | Jesus is my personal Savior. I have placed my faith and trust in Him. |

Use the chart to do the following:

1. Try to determine the level of understanding held by your prospects.
2. Think of how you can get your prospects to progress to the next level.
3. Share this with your group and spend time praying for one another.

IV. Practical Instruction

A. Roman Catholic concept of salvation

You do not have to be an expert on the teachings of the Catholic Church to lead your Catholic friends to a personal, saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. There are some basic things about the nature of salvation that you do need to know. Let us study briefly the Roman Catholic understanding of salvation.

1. Uncertain

Catholic theology teaches that saving grace is attained through the sacraments.¹⁷ Lacking, however, is the (assurance) of salvation. There is the belief that the saints are ready to go directly to the presence of God when they die. There is no such assurance for (ordinary) Catholics.

The *Contemporary Catholic Catechism* says:

Good men who die in grace might have to be purified of all sin and imperfection before they gain the eternal joy of heaven. No one of us, no matter how attached to Christ and the Christian life, would feel ready to enter heaven as he is. The manner of purgation, the time, the place or the length is shrouded in mystery. God simply has not made these revelations to us.¹⁸

The catechism uses two verses to support the existence of purgatory, one from Revelation 21:27: "Nothing unclean may come into it [heaven]" and the other from 2 Maccabees 12: 43-46 (part of Apocrypha), which speaks of atonement being made for the sins of the dead. The catechism admits that "(Reason) more than Scripture leads the Church to a belief in the purgation of the dead."¹⁹

2. Intermediated (having some go-betweens)

Catholic theology teaches that salvation is attained through the intermediary of the Church. The Church teaches that God wills the salvation of all men; men are saved in and through Christ; membership in the Church established by Christ, known and understood as the community of salvation, is necessary for salvation.²⁰

3. Sacramental (attained through the Sacraments)

Catholics define a Sacrament as: "a sign instituted by Christ to (give grace)."²¹ Catholic theology teaches that saving grace is obtained by observing the Sacraments.²² There are seven Sacraments: baptism, confirmation, holy eucharist, penance, anointing the sick, holy orders, and matrimony.

Baptism--"Baptism is the Sacrament of (rebirth) through which Jesus gives us the divine life of sanctifying grace and joins us to his mystical body. "²³

Confirmation--"Confirmation is the Sacrament through which Jesus confers on us the (Holy Spirit), making us full-fledged and responsible members of the Mystical Body. We also receive the graces of the Holy Spirit especially those that enable us to profess, explain and spread the faith. "²⁴ "The (bishop) usually administers confirmation. "¹¹²⁵

Eucharist--"The Holy Eucharist is the Sacrament and the (sacrifice) in which Jesus Christ under the (appearances) of bread and wine is contained, offered and received. "²⁶

Penance {Rite of Reconciliation} --"Penance is the sacrament by which Jesus, through the (absolution) of the priest, forgives sins committed after Baptism. "¹¹²⁷

Anointing the Sick--previously known as (Extreme Unction). "The Sacrament of the Sick is the sacrament in which Jesus through the anointing and prayers of the priest, gives health and strength to the person who is now seriously ill. "²⁸

Holy Orders {Ordination} --"makes a man a priest of Jesus Christ. "¹¹²⁹

Matrimony--"gives the graces needed to live a Christian married life. "¹¹³⁰

All the Scriptures listed under numbers 1, 2, and 3 are taken from the Catholic Bible, *The New American Bible, New Catholic Translation*.³¹

B. What the Bible Teaches About Salvation

1. Can one be sure of his or her salvation?

"I solemnly assure you, the man who hears my word and has faith in him who sent me possesses eternal life. He does not come under condemnation, but has passed from death to life" (John 5:24).

"I have written this to you to make you realize that you possess eternal life--you who believe in the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).

"But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7).

2. Are there several mediators, or is Christ the only mediator?

"And the truth is this: God is one. One is also the Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5).

"Jesus told him: I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me" (John 14:6).

"I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy; I came that they might have life and have it to the full" (John 10: 9-10) .

"Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16) .

"There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is no other name in the whole world given to men by which we are to be saved" (Acts 4: 12) .

3. Is salvation through a personal experience with Christ or through the Sacraments?

"I repeat, it is owing to his favor that salvation is yours through faith. This is not your own doing, it is God's gift; neither is it a reward for anything you have accomplished, so let no one pride himself on it" (Eph. 2:8-9).

"Any who did accept him he empowered to becoming children of God. These are they who believe in his name" (John 1:12).

"Yes, God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believes in him may not die but may have eternal life" (John 3:16).

It should have become evident by now that Catholics and evangelicals do not differ on the need for salvation. The main point of difference is (how salvation is attained).

The Catholic Church teaches that salvation is uncertain, mediated, and sacramental. In contrast, evangelicals base their concept of salvation on the Scripture verses just reviewed. These verses teach that we can be (certain) of our salvation; that our salvation is (personal) (we can go directly to Christ, our mediator); and that salvation is by grace through (faith) in Christ and not through sacraments. Borrás makes this point when he says: "We have to explain that salvation is something personal and that we belong to the church of Christ because we are believers, not the other way around. It is not the church that begets members through

the Baptismal Sacrament but the Lord who adds to the church, one by one, those who have been saved through the Holy Spirit. "32

V. Preview of Next Session

SESSION THREE

Sharing Our Faith (Part 1)

- I. **Objective:** To demonstrate how seminar participants can share their testimonies and to learn a gospel presentation.
- II. **Bible Study:** Jesus and Nicodemus (Part 2) (John 3)
Introduction: In the Bible study of the previous session, we focused on what Jesus did:
- ◆ The things He taught regarding salvation.
 - ◆ The levels on which He communicated with Nicodemus.

In this lesson, we want to focus on the experience of Nicodemus. We could divide his experience into five phases:

A. Discovery³³

Nicodemus discovered that Jesus came from God. He was convinced that no one could perform the miraculous signs if God were not with him (v. 2).

Nicodemus discovered that to see the kingdom of God (v. 3) and to enter the kingdom of God (v. 5), he must be born again.

B. Deliberation

Even though he was convinced that Jesus had been sent by God, he found it hard to understand what Jesus was saying. He asked:

1. "How can a man be born when he is old" (v. 4)?
2. "How can this be" (v. 9)?

Part of the problem was that Nicodemus was thinking in physical, rather than spiritual terms. This was very *different* from what he had been brought up to believe. His religious tradition said that salvation was attained through observing the Law. But Jesus was talking to him about salvation through faith in the Son of God (v. 16). It was not easy for Nicodemus to understand. He had many questions.

C. Decision

We do not know the precise moment when Nicodemus decided to accept Jesus as his personal Savior. It could have been during that first encounter with Jesus or perhaps later. We do know that there was a moment when he made a decision to become a follower of Jesus.

D. Dissonance

The fact that he made a decision to receive Jesus did not guarantee that things would be easy for him. In John 7, we notice that his peers were enemies of Jesus. In verse

48, they asked, "Has any of the rulers of the Pharisees believed in him?" In verse 51, Nicodemus made a veiled attempt to defend Jesus, "Does our law condemn anyone man without first hearing him to find out what he is doing?" But notice that he did not challenge their statement that "a prophet does not come out of Galilee" (v. 52) nor did he answer the question, "Has any of the . . . Pharisees believed in him" (v. 48)?

In other words, Nicodemus received a great deal of dissonance from those who surrounded him. What they said contradicted or questioned the things he heard from Christ and desperately wanted to continue to believe.

E. Discipleship

In John 19:39-40, we notice that Nicodemus, along with Joseph of Arimathea, took down the body of Jesus from the cross, prepared it for burial, and tenderly placed it in the tomb. Undoubtedly, as Nicodemus saw the body of Jesus on the cross, the words of the Master echoed in his heart, "So must the Son of man must be lifted up" (John 3:14).

Nicodemus gave every evidence that he became a disciple.

1. He was willing to spend a very large amount of money on the ointment to prepare the body of the Master (see v. 39).
2. He was willing to touch a dead body (of the Lord), which would cause a Jew to be ceremonially impure.
3. He was willing to do this publicly. This gives evidence that Nicodemus reached a stage where he was willing to profess his faith in Jesus publicly.

Conclusion: What do we learn from the experience of Nicodemus? There are people (mainly those who do not grow up in evangelical homes) who go through similar stages in their pilgrimages toward discipleship. They go through discovery, deliberation, decision, dissonance, and discipleship. These stages have implications for how we share the gospel with them. We must be patient and answer their questions ("How can this be?"). We must also offer them our friendship to help them through the periods of dissonance and continue to share the Word of God with them until they confess openly that they are disciples of the Lord.

III. Group Activity

A. Prepare testimony

One of the most powerful tools in witnessing is to share our testimony. People will generally listen when we share the difference Jesus has made in our lives. When the apostle Paul (Acts 26) shared his testimony, he generally used the following outline:

1. What my life was like before knowing Jesus.
2. How I came to know Jesus.
3. How Jesus helps me face life today.
4. How you can know Jesus, too.

Another **way** to share your testimony is to follow the outline from the Bible study on Nicodemus:

1. Discovery--How I discovered that Jesus died to save me.
2. Deliberation--Questions that came up as I tried to understand how to invite Jesus into my life.
3. Decision--How I decided to invite Jesus into my life.
4. Dissonance--Doubts I had and pressures I was under after I decided to become a follower of Jesus.
5. Discipleship--How the Lord helped me overcome these doubts and pressures and what my life is like now that I have a personal relationship with Jesus.

B. Practice testimony

Use the outline that best fits your experience. Write a brief paragraph under each major heading, telling how you came to know Jesus as your personal Savior. After you have prepared your testimony, take time to share it with someone in your group.

IV. Practical Instruction

A. Guidelines

There are some guidelines we must follow if we are to lead our Catholic friends to experience personal salvation in Christ.

1. Do not discuss (religion). Your main purpose is to lead the person to Christ.
2. Present the (gospel) with simplicity and sound logic.
3. Distinguish between the (official) position of the Catholic Church and what each individual believes.
4. As you study the Bible together, let the prospect (discover) what the Word of God says. Encourage the person to read the verses, to think about their meaning, and to let the Word of God speak to them.
5. Concentrate only on issues (essential) to salvation. Don't discuss (unrelated) issues.
6. Don't ask, "Are you a (Christian)?" (Catholics consider themselves Christians) or, "Are you (saved)?"

Your question should be, "What is your (personal) relationship to Jesus Christ?"

7. Use a (Catholic) Bible or a version acceptable to Catholics such as the *Good News Bible*.

B. Marking the New Testament

One of the best ways to present the plan of salvation to Roman Catholics is to use a marked New Testament. This helps them read the verses straight from the Word of God. It is also helpful to give the New Testament to the prospects. There have been numerous instances where prospects have not understood the full meaning of the passages until they have read them several times over an extended period of time.

1. On the page of your New Testament, write the question, "What is your personal relationship to Christ?" Then put, "Turn to page __."
2. After you turn to page __, where John 10:10 is found:
 - a. Highlight the verse with a yellow marker.
 - b. Write on the top of the page the question, "Why did Christ come?"
 - c. Write on the bottom of the page, "Turn to page __" (where Rom. 3:23 is found).
3. Repeat steps 1-3 for each verse used in the gospel presentation, writing the appropriate questions of the gospel presentation (see next page).
4. Write on the last page of the New Testament the following prayer of acceptance.

MY DECISION TO RECEIVE CHRIST

I admit before God that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now open the door of my life to Christ and accept His gift of salvation.

Name

Date

C. Presenting the gospel

Begin with the question, "What is your relationship to Christ?" Explain, "We are not going to talk about 'religion'; we just want to find out what the Bible says about our relationship to Christ." Lead from there to the questions in your marked New Testament.

GOSPEL PRESENTATION

1. Why did Christ come? (John 10:10)
2. Why don't we have this gift? (Rom. 3:23)
3. What is the result of sin? (Rom. 6:23a)
4. What is God's gift? (Rom. 6:23b)
5. How did God make this possible? (Rom. 5:8)
6. Can we earn this gift? (Eph. 2:8-9)
7. If we could earn this gift (Gal. 2:21), would Christ have died? (Gal. 3:1-5)
8. How does this gift become ours? (John 1:12)
9. How did the dying thief receive this gift?
(Luke 23 :39-43)
10. Can we be sure we have this gift? (John 5:24)
11. Will you open the door of your life to Christ?³⁴
(Rev. 3: 20)

After you have gone through the plan of salvation with your Catholic friend, ask your friend to pray the prayer of acceptance with you.

If your friend is not ready yet, do these things:

- ◆ Pray for your friend. Begin with the Lord's Prayer.
- ◆ Then ask God to help your friend learn the things that He wants your friend to know. Pray for any need he or she might have. Make the prayer as personal as possible. You may want to hold hands with your friend.
- ◆ Give your friend the New Testament as a gift. Suggest that he or she reread these portions of Scripture. Ask them to sign their name below the prayer when they have made a decision to accept Christ.

V. Preview of Next Session

SESSION FOUR

Sharing Our Faith (Part 2)

- I. **Objective:** To equip seminar participants to share their faith by practicing the gospel presentation and learning how to respond to sincere questions.
- II. **Bible Study:** How Jesus dealt with sincere questions

Introduction: As we share our faith, there are going to be those who will not (fully) understand and who will have (sincere) questions. The reason we emphasize the term *sincere questions* is that we want to make a distinction between people who are genuinely interested in learning more about the Word of God and those who merely want to argue. The Bible teaches us to avoid pointless (arguments). It says, "Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith" (1 Tim. 6:20-21).

The Bible teaches us, however, that we must be prepared (to answer) sincere questions. It says, "But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect" (1 Pet. 3:15). In the Word of God, we find some examples of the way Jesus dealt with sincere questions of inquirers.

- A. How Jesus answered the questions raised by Nicodemus
- The previous Bible study showed that at first Nicodemus did not fully understand. When Jesus mentioned the new birth, Nicodemus asked, "How can a man be born when he is old" (John 3:4)? Jesus responded that He was talking about a *spiritual* and not a *physical*, birth. He said, "Flesh gives birth to flesh, but Spirit gives birth to spirit" (v. 6). Jesus helped Nicodemus understand by using the example of the wind, "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going" (v. 8). The same thing is true of the *spiritual birth*. Nicodemus evidently still did not understand Jesus because he asked, "How can this be?" (v. 9).

Jesus again used a familiar example: the serpent in the desert. Being a teacher of Israel, Nicodemus was well acquainted with the meaning of the incident. Numbers 21 describes how the Israelites spoke against God. The Lord responded by sending serpents that caused the deaths of many Israelites. When Moses pleaded for the people before God, the Lord instructed Moses to make a bronze serpent and put it up on a pole. Those who trusted God and looked

upon the serpent in faith would be healed. Jesus then made the application, "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life" (vv. 14-15).

Jesus took time to answer Nicodemus' questions. He also sought to relate His answer to something that Nicodemus already knew. This is extremely important. Educators tell us the most effective teaching is that which goes from the known to the unknown. In answering questions, it is not enough for us to quote other verses of Scripture or the opinion of biblical scholars. We must relate our answers to what the prospects already know and take them from there to a clearer understanding of Scripture.

- B. How Jesus answered the questions of the Samaritan woman
- The Samaritan woman asked Jesus several questions. Her first question was, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (John 4:9) In other words, "Why are you talking to me?" Jesus answered in John 4:10, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." Noting that He did not have anything to draw water with, the woman asked, "Are you greater than our father Jacob" (v. 12)? Jesus did not get sidetracked into a discussion related to traditional beliefs. He did not try to put down Jacob or to point out that He was greater than Jacob. He did not spend time questioning the Samaritan woman's claim that Jacob was the father of the Samaritans. Instead, He continued to focus on the living water. The next question the Samaritan woman asked was, "Where should we worship?" Again Jesus avoided an argument about the claims of the Samaritans regarding their mountain vs. Jerusalem. Instead, He focused on the type of relationship people need to have with the Father--"True worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (v. 23). Jesus did not emphasize religion but relationship.

Application: We learn some valuable lessons about the way we can deal with sincere questions as we examine the way Jesus dealt with the questions put to Him by Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.

First, Jesus began with what people (knew) and went from there to what they did not know. Jesus talked to Nicodemus about the serpent in the desert. He told the Samaritan woman about water. Second, Jesus used (illustrations) common to the people's lives. This was true when He spoke about the wind.

Third, Jesus was (sincere) in His responses. When the Samaritan woman asked, "Why are you talking to me" (John 4:9)? He responded by letting her know His desire was to give her living water. Fourth, Jesus answered the questions to prevent getting sidetracked or involved in irrelevant matters. Fifth, Jesus told the (truth) in love. He did not hold back when He told Nicodemus, "You must be born again" (John 3:7), or when He told the Samaritan woman "salvation is from the Jews" (John 4:22). Yet, He did it in a way that avoided ridiculing or putting them down. Instead, He inspired them to continue in their search for truth. Finally, Jesus did not focus on (religion) but on (relationship). The Father is seeking for those who will worship in spirit and in truth (see John 4:23). Let us keep these principles in mind as we answer the questions of those who are earnestly seeking to know the Lord.

III. Group Activity

The last session reviewed the concepts some Roman Catholics have about salvation. In this activity, divide the group into sets of 2 and give each person 15 minutes to read the plan of salvation to his or her partner. This gives each person the opportunity to practice how to present the plan of salvation.

IV. Practical Instruction

The Bible study for this session emphasizes that Jesus stayed focused on sharing the good news. He dealt with questions but was not distracted from His principal objective. In this session, we will discuss some common questions that arise when we seek to lead people to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. The main objective is to share some ideas on how to acknowledge these questions and relate them to salvation.

Which church is the true church?

Reason for asking this question

Many Catholics believe that salvation is found (in) and (through) the Roman Catholic Church.³⁵ Their principal concern is not academic but (existential). They want to find out, "Who or what can I trust for my salvation?"

Suggested response

There are many views about the "true church." The Bible says the church is the (body of Christ) (see Eph. 5:29-30). It is made up of people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord (see Acts 2:41). It is not just which is the true church; but rather, *am I part of the true church, the body of Christ?* The Word of God tells us we can be part of the body of Christ by (accepting) Him as our personal Savior (see John 1:12).³⁶

Was Peter the first pope?

Reason for asking this question

Many Catholics ask this to address a more immediate question, "Why shouldn't I (trust) the hierarchy (structure) of the Catholic Church with the pope at its head?"

Suggested response

It is counterproductive to debate whether Peter was the first pope or not. It is more helpful to address the question of (trust). One way to do this is to say something like: "You know, this question has been debated for centuries. Many Roman Catholics believe that when Jesus used the expression 'on this rock I will build my church' (Matt. 16:18), He was referring to (Peter)."³⁷ Most evangelical Christians believe that Jesus was referring to the statement (confession) Peter had just made about Jesus: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt 16:16). In other words, the church is built on Jesus Himself. He said, "I will build *my* church."

Look at what the apostle Peter (himself) said. First Peter 2:4-6 says: "Come to him, the living Stone--rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him--you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'³⁸ Peter said here that Jesus is the (cornerstone) and whoever trusts in Him will not be shaken. The important thing is to put our (trust) in Jesus Christ. Have you come to the place where you have put your trust in Jesus by accepting Him as your personal Savior?

Which is our ultimate authority, the Bible or tradition?

Reason for asking this question

Most Catholics believe the Bible and the traditions of the Catholic Church are of equal importance. The *Documents of Vatican II*, for instance, state: "Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church."³⁹ A verse often cited is: "So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter" (2 Thess. 2:15). The underlying question is, "On what can we put our trust--the Bible or the Bible and tradition?"

Suggested response

Take into account that the Scriptures were still being written when the apostle Paul wrote to the Thessalonian church. He wanted to emphasize to the new Christians there that they should continue to be true to what they had been taught

(personally) and through (letters) . They were taught what the apostles had received from Christ (see Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11:23) . These teachings, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, were put into writing and added to the Old Testament. Jesus did not present one way of salvation in writing and another passed on by word-of-mouth.⁴⁰ The Word of God says that the Holy Scriptures can make us wise unto salvation (see 2 Tim. 3:15). Verses 16 and 17 state: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." We have in the written Scriptures all we need to find salvation in Jesus Christ. Have you found this salvation spoken of in the Scriptures?

What is the role of the Virgin Mary?

Reason for asking these questions

Many Roman Catholics have the impression that Protestants consider Mary (just another) woman. One of the reasons for this is that some Protestants who are careful not to worship Mary also fail to give her the place of honor she occupies in (Scripture). Mary occupies a very special place in the hearts of many Catholics. Part of this is due to their having been taught that Mary is a mediatrix (mediates along with Christ).⁴¹ For other Catholics, devotion to Mary has deep (cultural), as well as (religious), roots. Saying anything disrespectful of Mary is worse than saying something against their own mothers. There are several appropriate responses: never (argue) about Mary; never (misrepresent) Scripture--Mary occupies a special place in Scripture; never try to prove she had (other children). There will be time later to deal with this misconception. Once they have come to a personal, warm, loving relationship with Jesus, a prospect will be able to put this and other things into a biblical perspective. *Many witnessing efforts have been completely destroyed by witnesses who think it is more important to win an argument than to win the prospect.*

Suggested response

Assure your Catholic friends that you hold Mary in (very high regard). She had to have been a very special person to be chosen by God to give birth to His Son, Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "The Lord is with you" and "You have found favor with God" (Luke 1:28;30). The Bible also says, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear" (Luke 1:42) ! Furthermore, Mary provides an example of true (Christian discipleship) in her conduct, her obedience, and her faith. It is very important to let your Catholic friends know that you hold Mary in high regard as God's chosen vessel. It is also important to let them know that you follow Mary's (advice). At the wedding of Cana in Galilee, Mary said to the

servants who were concerned that the wine had run out, "Do whatever he tells you" (John 2:5). And what does Jesus tell us? "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).⁴² By focusing on John 2:5, John 14:6, and Matthew 11:28, you can avoid an unproductive discussion about Mary and concentrate on Jesus' teachings about (salvation).

What about my religious affiliation?

Reason for asking the question

Roman Catholics are concerned that we merely want them to join our church. It is important to assure your Catholic friends that you want them to personally experience salvation in Jesus Christ.

Suggested response

Build bridges of communication by talking about the beliefs we have in common.⁴³ We both believe in:

1. God--Creator, Redeemer, Ruler, and Judge.
2. Jesus--God's Son, Virgin Birth, miraculous ministry, atoning death, present reign, and final coming.
3. The Trinity--Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
4. Scriptures--divinely inspired.
5. Man--sinful, in need of God's saving grace.
6. Love--a Christian virtue.
7. Marriage--sacred in God's sight.⁴⁴

It is important to stress that your concern is not the prospect's (religion) but his or her (relationship) to Jesus Christ. One way to do this is to review briefly the experience of the rich young ruler. In Mark 10:17-22, the Bible tells of a young man who knew everything about religion. He came to Christ inquiring. But he went away sad because he was not willing to give Christ first place in his life. The important thing was not the religious membership this young man had, but how he responded to Jesus' request to follow Him.

Are you using a Protestant Bible?

Reason for the question

Some Roman Catholics have the idea that the "Protestant Bible" is very different from theirs. They know they can trust their own Bible but are not sure about other versions.

Suggested response

There are some books in the Roman Catholic Bible that we as evangelical Christians do not accept as inspired. In a witnessing situation, however, it is not necessary to enter a lengthy discussion of these books for two reasons:

1. These books are seldom used by the Catholics themselves.
2. These books are not in the New Testament; therefore, we can make a full presentation of the plan of salvation without referring to them.

We have several options if there is apprehension about using a "Protestant Bible":

1. We can use a Roman Catholic Bible. The *New American Bible, Saint Joseph Edition* is a modern translation comparable to the *New American Standard Bible*. Some words are different, but the meanings of the passages you use in witnessing are the same.
2. The second option is to use the *Good News New Testament*⁴⁵ with the (imprimatur--seal of approval) of Roman Catholic officials.

If questions are raised, point to the imprimatur usually found on the first or second page. Assure your Catholic friend that this version has been approved by the officials of the Catholic Church.

Conclusion: This study has helped you deal with some of the most frequently asked questions in a witnessing situation. The doctrinal points in these questions are very important. Our goal has not been to downplay their importance. We have suggested a way to prevent getting distracted from the main objective; (to lead people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ). New Christians are more sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit and will be in a better position to understand what the Scriptures say about these and other doctrines. It is not necessary to straighten out people at every point (doctrinally) before they accept Jesus Christ. Remember the response of the apostle Paul to the question raised by the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved" (Acts 16:30)? It was "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Therefore, acknowledge the questions that are raised and find a way to guide the discussion back to the all-important question, "What must I do to be saved?"

V. Preview of Next Session

SESSION FIVE

Continuing Bible Study: Disciplining New Believers

I. **Objective:** To equip seminar participants to involve prospects in continuing Bible study.

II. **Bible Study:** The pilgrimage of Paul as a new believer
Introduction: All of us are inspired when we read the biblical account of the dramatic conversion and fruitful ministry of Saul of Tarsus (later called Paul). Paul was second only to Jesus as the greatest missionary of the Christian faith. We seldom give attention to what happened (between) conversion and ministry. Let's examine some of the details surrounding the pilgrimage of this remarkable servant of God.

A. Paul was a very devout person

1. Paul's background

Paul referred to himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5). Both his parents were Hebrew. They were of the tribe of Benjamin, which belonged to Judah in the Southern Kingdom. Paul's cultural and religious backgrounds were clearly defined.

2. Paul's training

Not only was Paul a religious person, he was a Pharisee. He had studied in the School of Gamaliel, one of the leading Jewish scholars of his day. There Paul had learned the rabbinical interpretation of the Law.

3. Paul's dedication

In addition to having the qualifications mentioned above, Paul was a devout person. He gave himself wholeheartedly to the task of promoting Judaism and protecting it from "dangerous cults." This is why he persecuted Christians.

B. Paul had an encounter with Jesus

1. A contributing factor

The witness and the example of Stephen likely had a profound effect on Paul. The way that Stephen died, praying for those who were putting him to death, undoubtedly planted the seed of the gospel in the heart of Paul.

2. The conversion of Paul

Paul evidently sought to drown the voice of conviction by persecuting Christians with even more zeal. It was in one of these attempts to apprehend Christians and extradite them for trial in Jerusalem that he was *apprehended by Christ*. His encounter with the Jesus whom he was persecuting shattered Paul's previous

convictions. Could he have been wrong all of this time? What about all of the things he had been taught since his childhood?

C. Paul began his discipleship

1. His earliest instruction by Ananias

Jesus confronted Paul personally and made provision for his instruction in the faith, "Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do" (Acts 9:6). Acts 9:10-18 gives an account of a Christian in Damascus named Ananias who communicated the Lord's message to Paul. Ananias offered Paul fellowship, was instrumental in his being filled with the Holy Spirit, assisted with his being healed, and baptized him. The account is given in almost outline form. Ananias helped Paul answer some of the most pressing questions about his encounter with the Lord.

2. Paul spent time soul-searching

The brief account in Acts 9 gives the impression Paul began preaching immediately after his visit with Ananias. Verse 19 says, "And after taking some food, he regained his strength." Then it says, "Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus." Verse 20 says, "At once he began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God." Many biblical scholars believe that Luke, writing years later about this experience of Paul, did not include the time Paul spent in Arabia. The gap between the two statements in verse 9 is precisely the time that Paul later says he spent in Arabia. Galatians 1:17 explains that after Paul's encounter with Jesus he "went immediately into Arabia and later returned to Damascus." Some believe that Paul spent at least two years in Arabia "probably under the very shadow of Sinai"⁴⁶ studying the Scriptures in light of Jesus' resurrection.

Conclusion: There are several lessons from the conversion and discipleship of the apostle Paul.

- ♦ A person can be very (religious) but very (wrong). Paul had the finest of religious pedigrees, yet he was fighting against Jesus.
- ♦ It often (takes time) for the seed of the Word of God to germinate. The seed planted by the testimony and death of Stephen was causing greater and greater conviction of sin in the life of Paul.
- ♦ The fact that an individual has had a personal experience with Jesus does not mean that he or she

(understands) all of the Christian doctrines (immediately). Despite the dramatic conversion of Paul, he had to spend time thinking about the implications of that miraculous encounter with the Lord. Think of the *shock* he received! What about those interpretations he had learned about the Messiah? What about the religious tradition he had inherited from his devout parents? What would be the reaction of his close friends and colleagues when they heard Paul had become a follower of that despised Nazarene. It is extremely important for evangelical Christians to realize the pilgrimage to saving faith for people from other traditions (can be totally different). We must allow time and an opportunity for new Christians to sort things out until they understand the implications of discipleship.

- ◆ The human touch is (indispensable) in the discipleship process. The ministries of Ananias and Barnabas were crucial for Paul's discipleship. It must have been refreshing for Paul to hear Ananias' words as he laid hands on Paul, "Brother Saul, the Lord--Jesus . . . has sent me" (Acts 9:17). Barnabas later befriended Paul and encouraged him in the ministry. Time we spend leading people in Bible study and discipling them is time that has vital implications for this life and for eternity. May God help us be this type of equipper.

III. **Group Activities**

Activity 1:

Divide the group into twos. Ask each person to take five minutes to share with the other person his or her experience in discipleship as a new Christian. Who discipled them? What were the strong points of the discipleship effort? What were the weak points?

Activity 2:

Ask each person to take five minutes to share with the other person what he or she would do in discipling a new Christian with a Roman Catholic background. What are some topics (issues, doctrines) that they would discuss? What are some things about a Baptist church that they would want to explain? What efforts would they make to fellowship with these new converts?

Conclusion of Group Activities:

Reconvene the group and ask for volunteers to share some insights from the small groups. List these insights and suggestions on a chalkboard. Ask the group to take notes for future use in discipling new converts.

IV. Practical Instruction

The material in this section can be used in two ways:

- A. To continue to cultivate those who have not made a decision to receive Christ.
- B. To help those who have received Christ to grow in understanding their salvation.

There are several approaches to Bible study that can be helpful in accomplishing these objectives:

- 1. A study of selected Bible books (chapter by chapter)
Study the Gospel of John, the letter to the Romans, and the letter to the Galatians. This approach can be helpful to prospects who have a limited knowledge of the Bible. This study can help them gradually understand more about the Word of God. As they study, they can also learn more about the Bible's teachings about salvation.

In the chapter-by-chapter method, the following outline may be helpful:

- a. Who are the (key) people in this chapter?
- b. What does the chapter (teach) about Christ?
- c. What does it teach about (salvation)?
- d. Is there something in this chapter that (speaks) to my life today?

- 2. A study of people whose lives were changed by Jesus
One of the greatest benefits of this approach is that it exemplifies the *personal* experience of salvation with Jesus Christ. The people did not just know something about Jesus or hold Him in high regard; they received Him as their *personal Savior*. This is one of the emphases missing in many Roman Catholic Churches. Many Catholics emphasize belief in specific doctrines and the observance of the sacraments. They often do not focus on a *personal and vital relationship with Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord*. This approach to Bible study can help people understand the importance of the new birth in Christ.

Use the following people to study the lives of people who changed through a relationship with Jesus: ⁴⁷

| | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| Zacchaeus | Luke 19:1-10 |
| Dying thief | Luke 23:39-43 |
| Nicodemus | John 3:1-21 |
| Samaritan woman | John 4:1-42 |
| The man born blind | John 9 |
| The Ethiopian | Acts 8:26-40 |
| Saul of Tarsus | Acts 9:1-22 |
| Cornelius | Acts 10:1-48 |
| Lydia | Acts 16:11-15; 40 |
| The Jailer | Acts 16:23-34 |

Method: Assign one character and ask the student to answer these questions:

- a. What was the person's life like (before knowing) about Jesus?
- b. How did he or she come to have a (personal faith) in Christ?
- c. How was his or her (life) changed?
- d. What can I (learn) from his or her experience?

3. A study of topics relating to salvation
When time is limited or when the people in the group already have some knowledge about the Bible, study topics relating to salvation:

a. Romans

- (1) Need for being right with God (Rom. 1:18; 3:20)
- (2) Method and provision for being right with God (Rom. 3:21-31)
- (3) Example of a person who was right with God (Rom. 4:1-25)
- (4) Result of being right with God (Rom. 5:1-11)
- (5) The life of those who are right with God (Rom. 6:1-4)
- (6) The liberation of those who are right with God (Rom. 6:15-23)
- (7) Fellowship with Christ (Rom. 7:1-6)
- (8) Life in the Spirit (Rom. 8:1-17)
- (9) How a believer in Christ faces suffering (Rom. 8:10-30)
- (10) The eternal security of those who are in right relationship with God (Rom. 8:31-39)

b. Galatians

- (1) The gift of grace (Gal. 3:1-9)
- (2) The curse of the Law (Gal. 3:10-14)
- (3) The covenant that cannot be changed (Gal. 3:15-18)
- (4) The effects of sin (Gal. 3:19-22)
- (5) The coming of faith (Gal. 3:23-29)

c. Ephesians

- (1) Life without Christ (Eph. 2:1-3)
- (2) The work of Christ (Eph. 2:4-10)
- (3) Before Christ came (Eph. 2:11-12)
- (4) The end of barriers (Eph. 2:13-18)
- (5) Fellowship with God (Eph. 2:19-22)

Method: Use these questions for each of these topics:

- ♦ What does this portion of Scripture teach about salvation?
- ♦ Which is the most meaningful verse to me?
- ♦ How does this lesson affect my life?

Caution: Do not assign all of these chapters, character studies, or topics at one time. Assign one at a time, with the corresponding questions. Then allow enough time for discussion.

Suggestion: Get acquainted with these chapters, character studies, and topics yourself. They will be a blessing to you and help you provide guidance for your friend.

Follow.up: After you have led your Catholic friend to a personal relationship with Christ:

- ♦ Continue to (involve) your friend in Bible study.
- ♦ Continue to () with and for your friend. He or she will need a lot of support from you and other evangelical friends.
- ♦ Be (patient). Don't expect your friend to change an entire belief system overnight. It may take months or years before a complete transition is possible.
- ♦ Refrain from (pressuring) your friend about not depending on relics or saints. It is only as he or she becomes totally full of Christ that dependence on anyone or anything else is no longer necessary.
- ♦ Use a (discipleship) plan. The *Survival Kit for New Christians* is an excellent resource.

APPENDIX

Additional Help

This section can be used in several ways:

1. To help witnesses answer questions about the doctrines held by Roman Catholics. The group that has taken this seminar can meet to pray for one another as they witness to their Catholic friends, as they share the progress of their witnessing efforts, and as they study some of the key issues of Roman Catholicism. One of the key issues (listed in this Appendix) could be studied at each session.
2. The help those who have already received Christ but have questions about church doctrine. A discipleship program can be used with the following key issues to help new believers grow in their faith and knowledge of Jesus Christ.
3. To deal with questions that may come up as witnesses share doctrinal concerns. They should deal only with the questions that come up, not with the entire list. It is always better to guide new converts in Bible study so they will discover for themselves what the Word of God says about these crucial issues.

KEY ISSUES

Summary of Key Doctrinal Issues Described in this Study

1. **The Bible--Roman Catholics** are being encouraged to study the Bible. The following passages encourage Christians to study God's Word: John 5:39; Acts 17:11; Ephesians 6:17; Revelation 1:3.

This issue often comes up when Roman Catholics are invited to participate in Bible study: Are we going to use the Catholic or the Protestant Bible? A Roman Catholic Bible or a New Testament with the Roman Catholic imprimatur can be used for witnessing purposes: however, it is important for evangelicals to be informed about the differences between the two Bibles. The principal difference between the two Bibles is the seven deuterocanonical (also called Apocrypha) books that are included in the Roman Catholic Bible. These books cover the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They are viewed by some as having historical value. The basic question is: Are these books divinely inspired as are the others? Adolfo Robleto gives six reasons Protestants do not consider the deuterocanonical books to be divinely inspired Scriptures:

- (a) These books are not in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament.
- (b) The introduction of these books in the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament) was improper and

- accidental (this was done in Egypt but the Jews of Palestine never accepted these books).
- (c) There is no single quotation from them in the New Testament (Jesus never quoted a single passage from these books) .
 - (d) These books did not receive the approval of the Roman Catholic Church for many centuries (it was not until the Council of Trent in 1546 that these books were declared canonical).
 - (e) Some of the authors of the Apocryphal books recognized their lack of inspiration (see 1 Maccabees 4:44; 9:27; 2 Maccabees 2:23; 5:39) .
 - (f) These books contain passages that go against the doctrinal revelation of the Bible (Tobit 4:10, for instance, says: "Almsgiving frees one from death, and keeps one from going into the dark abode. ") ⁴⁸

Another question that relates to this issue is: What is our source of authority, the Bible or tradition?

Tradition is that body of knowledge, which is transmitted orally from one generation to another. The Documents of Vatican II teach that "Sacred tradition and sacred Scripture form one sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church." ⁴⁹ Roman Catholics use two biblical texts to support their argument that tradition and Scripture have the same authority: John 21:25 and 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

The first passage states "Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written." This is undeniably true. Two statements of explanation should be made: 1) If the Holy Spirit inspired both writings, they would not contradict each other. 2) Scripture that *is essential* for salvation is included in the Protestant canon. ⁵⁰ John makes this point when he states, "Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name" (John 20:30-31). In the other passage, the reference is quite clear. Second Thessalonians 2:15 talks about the *doctrine* which the Thessalonians had received from Paul. This is the doctrine described out in the content of the epistle.

Scripture speaks very clearly against the traditions of men that contradict what is found in the Bible. The texts speak clearly about the absolute sufficiency of the Word of God (see Matt. 15:7-9; Mark 7:13; Col. 2:8; 2 Tim. 3:14-17).

An earlier point should be emphasized here. We can use the Roman Catholic Bible or a version with the Catholic

imprimatur to overcome obstacles in witnessing situations. In discipleship situations, we must be in a position to answer questions regarding the place of the Bible in our personal lives and in our churches.

2. **Confession--To whom should we confess?** The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Christ gave the apostles the power to forgive sins.⁵¹ Keeping the sacrament of confession means Roman Catholics are urged to confess their sins to the priest.⁵² The question we need to address is: to whom should we confess according to the Bible?

In Luke 24:47, Jesus reminded His disciples that "repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations." In Acts 8:22, the apostle Peter rebuked Simon the So: i; :-œrer and told him, "Repent of this wickedness and pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart." Notice that Peter does not ask Simon to confess to *him*, nor does he make an attempt to absolve or forgive Simon. Instead Peter asks Simon to pray to the Lord. In Acts 10:43, Peter explains to Cornelius that everyone who believes in Jesus receives forgiveness in His name. Peter does not ask Cornelius to confess to him. In Acts 13:38, Paul reminds his audience that through Jesus the forgiveness of sin is preached to them. The Bible teaches that confession should be made to the Lord. In 1 John 1:9, we read, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (study also Ps. 32:5; 51: 4; 2 Sam. 12: 13; Dan. 9: 9) .

While we find in the Bible such concepts as reciprocal confession (see James 5:16) and public confession prior to baptism (see Matt. 3:6), there is no teaching in Scripture that instructs people to confess to a priest.

What about the keys to the kingdom?

Roman Catholics teach that the keys to the kingdom mentioned by Jesus represented the apostle's right to forgive sins. As we examine the Scriptures, we can answer the following questions raised by Brewer:⁵³

What were the keys to the kingdom? As we study the following passages we can see clearly that the keys were the message of salvation. In 1 John 1:5, we see that John was careful to communicate "the message we have heard from him." It is the response to this message, which results in salvation, and not the activity or pronouncement of a servant of Christ. John 1:9 explains, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." There is no hint here that John sees himself as the dispenser of God's forgiveness other than through the proclamation of the message of salvation. The same

is true for Peter. In Acts 8:22, he does not offer to forgive Simon (the sorcerer), but instead urges him to "pray to the Lord. Perhaps he will forgive you for having such a thought in your heart." In Matthew 28:19-20, we see once again that the keys to the kingdom were the message of the gospel, which the apostles were commissioned to proclaim in all the world.

Were they given to Peter alone? In the following passages it states that the keys to the kingdom (the message of salvation) were not given to Peter alone. In Matthew 18:18-20 and John 20:22-23, the Great Commission was given to all the apostles (except Judas) by Jesus after His ascension. It can be stated, therefore, that the other apostles also had the keys to the kingdom because they had the message of salvation to proclaim.

What about intermediaries--Can we go directly to Christ? As stated previously, the Roman Catholic Church emphasizes the role of the church, Mary, and others as intermediaries (or go-betweens). The study of Scripture shows Jesus teaching His followers to go directly to Christ with our prayers, praise, and petitions. In John 10: 9, Jesus states, "I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved." In John 14: 6, Jesus declares, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Jesus does not speak of any mediators through which people may come to Him. The apostles understood this clearly. Before the high priest, who was seen as a mediator by many Jews, Peter declared "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Paul emphasized this when he wrote to Timothy, "For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Hebrews 7:25 clearly stresses the role of Jesus as our only and sufficient mediator, "Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

3. Another key issue is the Mass--Must Christ be sacrificed over and over again?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Jesus Christ is sacrificed at the celebration of the Mass. Roman Catholic theologian McBrien explains:

It is the official Catholic teaching (Council of Trent) that the Mass is a true *sacrifice*, not only of praise, thanksgiving, and commemoration, but also of expiation for the living and the dead, without diminishing the value of the sacrifice of Calvary. Christ is the same victim and priest in the Eucharist as he was on the cross, although the mode of the offering is different at Mass. The sacrifice on the cross was a bloody sacrifice; the sacrifice of the Mass is unbloody. Nevertheless, the fruits of the latter sacrifice are the same

as those of the former. The sacrifice of the Mass, Trent declared, is "properly offered not only for sins penalties, satisfactions, and other needs of the faithful who are living *but also for the departed in Christ who are not yet fully cleansed.*"⁵⁴

There is a major concept in this quotation, which must be examined in the light of Scripture: Was the original sacrifice of Christ sufficient for our salvation, or must Christ be sacrificed every time the Mass is celebrated?

The Bible speaks about sacrifices of praise. Hebrews 13:15 says, "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise--the fruit of lips that confess his name." The author of Hebrews makes it very clear that our sacrifice is one of praise. The Bible also speaks about *spiritual* sacrifices. First Peter 2:5 says, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering *spiritual* sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." Here Peter is saying that all Christians are priests. The implication is that they do not need other priests except for Jesus Christ Himself (the sacrifices are acceptable "through Jesus Christ"). Peter says these sacrifices are *spiritual*. There is no mention of the "unbloody sacrifice of the Mass."

First Peter 3:18 speaks of the finality of Jesus' sacrifice, "For Christ died for sins *once for all*, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit." Notice that Peter does not say that Jesus was offered repeatedly (either through bloody or unbloody sacrifices) for the salvation of the world. It is very clear in Scripture; He died **once for all**. Hebrews 10:18 emphasizes the historical present tense of the efficacy of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ when it states, "And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin."

Several passages in Hebrews address this same issue. Hebrews 7:26-27 says, "Such a high priest meets our need--one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, *he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of all the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.*" [author's italics].

Other passages that emphasize this same important point are Hebrews 9:25-28 and Hebrews 10:10-12. It is not just one passage, but many that clearly stress that Jesus is our High Priest. In Him, we are all priests, and His precious sacrifice on the cross was *adequate* for our salvation. No

other sacrifice of Christ is needed. Christ died once for all.

4. **A fourth key issue is the head of the Church--Who is the head of the Church?**

The Documents of Vatican II state:

In order that the episcopate itself might be one and undivided, He [Christ] placed blessed Peter over the other apostles, and instituted him a permanent and visible source and foundation of unity of faith and fellowship. All this teaching about the institution, the perpetuity, the force and reason for the sacred primacy of the Roman Pontiff and of his infallible teaching authority, this sacred Synod again proposes to be firmly believed by all the faithful.⁵⁵

Bartholomew F. Brewer, a former Roman Catholic priest and a thor of *Pilgrimage from Rome*, makes the following observations regarding the Roman Catholic teaching that the church was built on Peter:⁵⁶

- (1) Peter did not act as if he were the head of the church. In Acts 8:14, the apostles sent Peter and John to examine Philip's ministry in Samaria. It was not Peter who sent anyone. He was sent by the apostles.

In Acts 10:25-26, when Cornelius fell at Peter's feet in reverence, Peter said, "Stand up, I am only a man myself."

In 1 Peter 5:1, Peter called himself "a fellow elder." There is no evidence that he considered himself having authority over the other apostles.

- (2) The other apostles did not act as if Peter were the head of the church.

At the Jerusalem council (see Acts 15) it was not Peter but James who proposed the solution to the problem they were discussing.

In Galatians 2:1-10, Paul described his trip to Jerusalem to meet with the leaders (James, Peter, and John). Notice that he did not meet with Peter alone. As a result of this meeting, it was agreed that Paul and Barnabas would focus their ministry on the Gentiles. The leaders (including Peter) would go to the Jews. Peter's ministry was not viewed as universal.

- (3) Peter himself said that Jesus was the head of the Church.

In 1 Peter 2:6-7, Peter applied two Old Testament passages⁵⁷ to show that Jesus was the head of the Church 'See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be

put to shame.' Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, 'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone,' and, 'A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.'"

- (4) The Epistles emphasize that Jesus was the head of the Church. (see 1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 1:22; 2:20-21; 5:23; Col. 1:18) .

What about Matthew 16:18? Does the phrase "upon this rock" refer to Peter or to his confession that Christ was the Son of the living God?

Brewer makes an important point when he calls attention to the original Greek words for "Peter" and for "rock" which are different words. The text reads, "Thou art Peter (Petros) and upon this rock (Petra) I will build my church." Petros refers to a smaller rock, while Petra refers to a large rock, a boulder. Jesus said, "Upon this rock," not upon you, I will build my church." The Petra (solid boulder) upon which the church is built, is the confession that Jesus is the Son of the living God. As Christians, we are all stones in the spiritual building, but Jesus is the rock, the boulder, the cornerstone upon which His church is built (see 1 Peter 2:4-5) .⁵⁸

The strongest argument of all is that Jesus viewed himself as the foundation upon which the church is built. In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus identifies himself as the *chief cornerstone which the builders rejected*. It also needs to be pointed out that in Matthew 16 Jesus states: "I will build *my church* [*italics author's*]."

5. A fifth key issue is the Virgin Mary--What place does the Virgin Mary occupy in the Bible?

Several Roman Catholic teachings about Mary must be examined in the light of Scripture: (a) She was conceived without sin (this is the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary);⁵⁹ (b) she always remained a virgin (she had no children except Jesus);⁶⁰ (c) she was taken up into heaven body and soul;⁶¹ (d) She is a mediatrix (she is a go-between, and people can pray to her) .⁶²

Roman Catholics base the doctrine of the immaculate conception of Mary on the phrase translated "full of grace" in some versions (Luke 1:28).

The argument states that if she was full of grace she could not have sinned. Actually the rendition of this phrase in the more modern Roman Catholic editions is more accurate, "You are highly favored."⁶³ The phrase "full of grace," was used of other people (see Acts 4:33); yet that does not mean

they were sinless.⁶⁴ Furthermore, study Luke 1:47 and see the term Mary uses to refer to God. Does this reflect her need of God's grace? Yes.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary was a perpetual virgin. As evangelicals we believe there is biblical support that Mary was a virgin before the birth of Jesus. This is known as the ante partum (before birth) virginity of Mary. The New Testament does speak about Mary having other children. Mark 3:32 says, "A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, 'your mother and brothers are outside looking for you.'" Some Roman Catholics explain that they were actually Jesus' cousins.

Jose Borrás, a former Roman Catholic priest, explains that the New Testament uses different words for cousins and for brothers.⁶⁵ Luke 1:36 says, "Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child." The Greek uses different words for "relative," suggenis (in Luke 1:36); for "cousin" aneosios (in Col. 4:10); and for "brother" adelfos. This word is used in Matthew 4:18, which speaks of Simon Peter and his adelfos Andrew. This is precisely the word used in Mark 3:32, "Your mother and your [adelfoi] (plural) are here." This same word is used in Mark 6:3 in which the names of Jesus' brothers are given (James, Joseph, Judas, and Simon). See also Matthew 12:46; 13:55-56; Luke 8:19-21; Acts 1:14; Galatians 1:19. These passages clearly show that Mary had other children. It must be emphasized that the belief that Mary had other children is not essential to salvation (see Acts 16:31; Rom. 5:11).⁶⁶ It is not wise to dwell on this when witnessing to people with a Roman Catholic background. However, in the discipleship process it is a good idea to help them study these passages from Scripture.

The Roman Catholic Church teaches the doctrine of the assumption of Mary. The *Documents of Vatican II* state:

Finally, preserved from all guilt of original sin, the Immaculate Virgin was taken up body and soul into heavenly glory upon the completion of her earthly sojourn. She was exalted by the Lord as Queen of all, in order that she might be more thoroughly conformed to her Son, Lord of lords (cf. Apoc. 19:16) and conqueror of sin and death.⁶⁷

One tradition states that the apostles were summoned when Mary became ill. All of the apostles except Thomas got there before she died. However, as he was transported there on a cloud, he saw the body of Mary ascending into heaven. Upon arrival he told the other apostles what he had seen. They then went to the grave and found it empty.⁶⁸ The interesting thing about this (and other similar traditions) is there is no mention of them in Scripture; even John does not mention this event though Mary was entrusted to him and he lived after her

death. John later cites the words of Jesus without adding an explanation as he did in other occasions (see 4:9; 21:20-23), "No one has gone up to heaven except the One who came down from there--the Son of Man [who is in heaven] ." Mary's assumption (taking up bodily) into heaven would have been alluded to by John with a note of explanation.⁶⁹ There is no biblical basis for the assumption of Mary.⁷⁰

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that Mary is a mediatrix with Christ. There are several implications: First, it means that Mary is a go-between. The argument that some Roman Catholics use is that if we need the help of someone the most logical person to persuade him is his mother. While this may be impeccable human logic, it is not accurate theology. The Bible teaches explicitly that Jesus is the mediator by virtue of His death for the sins of humanity. First Timothy 2:5-6 states, "There is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." The Scriptures also show Jesus Christ is at the right hand of God (see Rom. 8:34) . First John 2:1 states even more clearly, "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One." Mary is not mentioned anywhere in Scripture as carrying out the functions of mediator or intercessor assigned to Christ. Nowhere in Scripture is Mary described as the right hand of the Father. (also study Eph. 2:18; Heb. 4:15-16.)

The second implication of this Roman Catholic doctrine is that people can venerate (render homage to) Mary. Informed Roman Catholics make a distinction between the Greek words latría, which means worship (adoration) due to God; dulia, which means "veneration, given to the saints (this includes honoring the saints and seeking their intercession with God)"; and hyperdulia, which is not quite worship but is more than veneration. Hyperdulia is the word used to describe what takes place with regard to Mary. According to the *Catholic Almanac*, hyperdulia is "the special veneration given to the Virgin Mary because of her unique role in the mystery of Redemption, her exceptional gifts of grace from God, and her preeminence among the saints."⁷² Officially, therefore, Roman Catholics do not worship Mary, "only God is adored."⁷³ However, in practice many Roman Catholics do not make this distinction and do worship her as they would God or Christ. In many countries, more emphasis is placed on Mary than on Christ. As Robbleto states:

Daily among Roman Catholics more prayers are offered to Mary than to Christ; during the year more fiestas are celebrated in honor of Mary than in honor of Christ. In many cities there are more temples dedicated to Mary than to Christ. It is not an exaggeration to say that the Catholic faith is built around Mary to a large degree. Highly elevated titles are given to her; entire monastic orders are consecrated to her; many extraordinary

apparitions and countless miracles are attributed to her. Candles are lit and flowers are placed before her image and taken in public processions.⁷⁴

It is extremely important to emphasize the words of Jesus, "Worship the Lord your God and serve him only" (Luke 4:8).

In summary, there is no New Testament foundation for the doctrines of the perpetual virginity (that she had no other children), the immaculate conception (that she was born free of original sin), or the Assumption (that she was taken up bodily into heaven) of Mary. Evangelicals do not have to believe these Roman Catholic doctrines to have a high concept of Mary. We can always emphasize her holy conduct, her obedience, her faith, and her willingness to point people to Jesus. As Borrás states:

Mary deserves our appreciation and love as well as our most sincere recognition that she was a pious woman, humble and full of faith, and that she was chosen by God to carry in her womb the redeemer of the world. Therefore, as was said by the angel when he announced to her the privilege which God had given her, she will always be called blessed by all generations. The best way to honor Mary is to obey what she told the people at Cana, "do whatever he [Jesus] tells you" (John 2:5).⁷⁵

6. The sixth key issue is purgatory--Is there a purgatory?

Roman Catholic theology teaches that purgatory is an intermediate realm between death and the final judgment. The soul of the faithful who die in venial sin go to purgatory to be purged of sin. There is divergence of opinion as to the type of suffering and the place where this occurs. However, the concept of purgatory is an official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church.

Purgatory did not become an official doctrine until the Council of Florence in 1439. The subsequent Council of Trent "defined the existence of purgatory, insisted that the souls detained there are helped by acts of intercession of the faithful, and especially the sacrifice of the Mass."⁷⁶

There are three New Testament passages that some Roman Catholics use to support the doctrine of purgatory: Matthew 5:26; 12:32; 1 Corinthians 3:15. The first passage speaks about an earthly situation with an earthly judge; the second passage speaks about the sin against the Holy Spirit, which is not forgiven in this life or in the next. This passage contradicts the concept of purgatory, which claims that a person can be forgiven after death. The third passage uses the analogy of fire to explain how the work Christians do will be tested (not the people themselves, but the work they do).

Roman Catholics base the doctrine of purgatory more on 2 Maccabees 12:39-46. This passage describes the event during the Maccabean wars in which "amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia" (v. 40) were found in the clothing of Jewish soldiers who had died in battle. Judas Maccabee considered this a desecration. He collected money from his soldiers and sent an offering to Jerusalem as an expiatory sacrifice to be offered for the soldiers' sins. Several observations should be made regarding this passage. First, Maccabees is describing a *Jewish* practice, not a *Christian* practice.⁷⁷ Second, this passage is talking about the belief in the *resurrection*, not the belief in *purgatory*. Third, this passage, according to Roman Catholic theology would have to refer to *mortal* sin (idolatry). A mortal sin results in a person going to hell, not purgatory.⁷⁸

An examination of these passages leads one to agree with Roman Catholic theologian Richard McBrien: "There is, for all practical purposes, no biblical basis for the doctrine of purgatory."⁷⁹

Study the following passages to focus on the completeness of Christ's forgiveness and the assurance of salvation: Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:8-9; Matthew 25:31-46, 1 John 5:13; 1 John 1:7.

Conclusion: This section has been included for help in leading people who have sincere questions and are open to studying the Word of God. It is *not meant to provide material for arguments* with people we are trying to lead to the Lord. This section can also be used to lead new converts to keep learning and growing in their faith. This section can be used in connection with a discipleship guide such as *Survival Kit for New Christians* and *MasterLife*. The following information can also help formulate a specific plan to share the good news with specific types of people.

GROUPS WITHIN CATHOLICISM

The Roman Catholic Church is not a monolithic group; it is made up of numerous groups that have varying degrees of devotion and who have different views regarding the changes brought about by Vatican II.

The following chart shows some of these groups.

Approaches to Various Catholic Groups

| | Bible Knowledge | Questions | Approach |
|----------------------|-----------------|--|---|
| Traditional Catholic | Some | What are changes in the church's traditional practices? | Focus on the unchanging Christ. |
| Progressive Catholic | More | What's the meaning of changes in Second Vatican Council? | Affirm changes; use as open doors for Bible study. |
| Nominal Catholic | Almost none | Questions relate more to personal devotions: the saints, the Virgin Mary | Involve them in Bible study. Show how a personal faith in Christ can make a difference in daily life. |
| Cultural Catholic | Almost none | Questions relate to cultural identity and the practice of Roman Catholicism. "To be Italian is to be Catholic" | Long-term Bible study. Show how a personal faith can make a difference. |
| Charismatic Catholic | Generally good | What is the difference between Catholics and evangelicals? | Make sure they have a biblical understanding of "receiving Christ." Involve them in discipleship Bible studies. |

LITURGICAL SEASONS OF THE YEAR

There are appointed days during the year when the attention of our Catholic friends is focused on Christ. These are the best times to speak to them about their personal relationship to Christ and to invite them to be involved in Bible study.

Advent

This period begins four weeks before Christ's birthday. During the first two weeks, Catholics focus on the final coming of Christ as Lord and Judge at the end of the world. From December 17 to December 24, the emphasis shifts to anticipating the celebration of His nativity on the feast of Christmas.⁸⁰

Scripture readings: Passages that focus on the Messiah.

Christmastide

This period opens with the Feast of the Nativity, December 25, and lasts until the Sunday after Epiphany⁸¹ (January 6). The Baptism of the Lord observed on the Sunday following Epiphany marks the end of Christmastide.⁸²

Lent

The penitential season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, which occurs between February 4 and March 11, depending on the date of Easter. It has 6 Sundays and 40 weekdays. The climatic last week is called Holy Week. The last three days (Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday) are called the Paschal Tridum.¹¹⁸³

Scripture readings: Baptismal and penitential passages

Eastertide

This period, whose theme is resurrection from sin to the life of grace, lasts for 50 days from Easter to Pentecost. Easter, the first Sunday following the vernal equinox, occurs between March 22 and April 25. The final phase of Eastertide lies between the Feast of Ascension of the Lord and Pentecost. It stresses anticipation of the coming of the Holy Spirit and the action of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁴

Scripture readings: Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John.

Ordinary Time

This period is between Christmastide and Lent. It also includes all the Sundays after Pentecost through the last Sunday of the liturgical year. The overall purpose of this season is to elaborate on the theme of salvation history.⁸⁵

Note: During these special days, Catholics are urged to read the Bible and pray. This provides a wonderful opportunity for you to invite your Catholic friends to join you in Bible study and prayer.

GLOSSARY

There are many terms that non-Roman Catholics may not be familiar with. Included here are those that relate closely to this study. For a more extensive list, see the *Catholic Almanac* listed under suggested readings. These definitions represent the Roman Catholic view.

Absolution: The act by which an authorized priest grants forgiveness of sin.

Adoration: The highest act of worship directed only to God.

Ashes: The ashes of palms burned during the season of Lent and placed on the foreheads of the people (usually on Ash Wednesday) to remind them that they are dust and unto dust they will return.

Assumption: The taking up of Mary (body and soul) into heaven.

Catechism: Instruction of Roman Catholics on the doctrines of their church. The format is usually question and answer.

Eucharist: The sacrament of the Lord's Supper, in which the bread and the wine turn into the body and blood of Christ.

Immaculate Conception: The doctrine that Mary conceived without sin.

Penance: A Sacrament that stresses inner sorrow for sin and external acts of atonement.

Purgatory: The state or condition in which those who die in a state of grace, but with some sin in their lives, suffer until they are admitted into heaven.

Rosary: A form of prayer that centers on the important events in the lives of Mary and Jesus. This involves the reciting of Hail Marys, the Lord's Prayer, and other prayers. Beads are used as a guide to prayer.

Sacrament: A sacred sign instituted by Christ to give grace. In the Sacrament of confirmation, for instance, Christ confers the Holy Spirit.

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END NOTES

1. Gerald Williams, *Contemporary Catholic Catechism* (Des Plaines, Ill.: FARE Inc., 1973), p. 96.
2. Ibid. , p. 97.
3. Walter M. Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, (New York: The American Press, 1966), p. XVIII.
4. Richard P. McBrien, *Catholicism* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publisher, 1981), p. 28.
5. See Walter M. Abbot, *Documents of Vatican II* (Piscataway, N.J.: New Century Publishers, 1966), p. 91.
6. Ibid, p. 25.
7. Williams, *Contemporary Catholic Catechism*, p. 100.
8. Ibid. , p. 28.
9. Abbott, *Documents of Vatican II*, p. 25.
10. Williams, pp. 97-98.
11. Ibid., p. 129.
12. Ibid. , p. 22.
13. John Allen Moore, "Catholicism Today and Our Mission Task," *Baptist Witness in Catholic Europe*, (Rome: Baptist Publishing House), pp. 116-119.
14. Williams, pp. 92-93.
15. Ibid., p. 92.
16. This outline is taken from G. Campbell Morgan's *The Great Physician*, pp. 74-79.
17. James Killgallon, *Life in Christ* (Chicago: ACTA Foundation, 1976), p. 155. Killgallon states, "The sacraments not only make us aware of divine life; they actually produce this life within us."
18. Williams, p. 251.
19. Ibid., p. 251.
20. Roy A. Felician, *Catholic Almanac*, (Huntington, Ind.: Sunday Visitor, 1977), p. 380.

21. Killgallon, p. 155.
22. Michael A. McGuire, *Baltimore Catechism No. 1*, (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1942), p. 36.
23. Killgallon, p. 160. See also McGuire, pp. 87-88.
24. Ibid., p. 167.
25. McGuire, p. 90.
26. Killgallon, p. 175.
27. Ibid., p. 187.
28. Ibid., p. 198.
29. William J. Cogan, *Catechism for Adults* (Youngston, Ariz.: Cogan Productions, 1975), p. 59.
30. Ibid.
31. *The New American Bible, New Catholic Translation*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971).
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33. See David Hesselgrave, *Communicating Christ Cross-culturally*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978).
34. Adapted from Joe O'Connell's, "Witnessing to Roman Catholics."
35. See Abbott, *The Documents of Vatican II*, pp. 15, 32-33.
36. To explore this question further, see Ralph Michaels, *Share the New Life with a Catholic* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1975).
37. Brewer points out that Jerome in the fourth century and Augustine in the fifth century stated clearly that the Church was founded on Peter's confession. Bartholomew F. Brewer, *The Primacy of Peter*, audiotope, Mission to Catholics, P.O. Box, 19280, San Diego, California: 92119.
38. *The New American Bible, Saint Joseph Edition*, (New York: Catholic Publishing Co., 1970).
39. Abbott, p. 117.
40. Michaels, *Share the New Life With A Catholic*, p. 20.

21. Killgallon, p. 155.
22. Michael A. McGuire, *Baltimore Catechism No. 1*, (New York: Benzinger Brothers, 1942), p. 36.
23. Killgallon, p. 160. See also McGuire, pp. 87-88.
24. Ibid., p. 167.
25. McGuire, p. 90.
26. Killgallon, p. 175.
27. Ibid., p. 187.
28. Ibid., p. 198.
29. William J. Cogan, *Catechism for Adults* (Youngston, Ariz.: Cogan Productions, 1975), p. 59.
30. Ibid.
31. *The New American Bible, New Catholic Translation*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1971).
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39. Abbott, p. 117.
40. Michaels, *Share the New Life With A Catholic*, p. 20.

41. Abbott, pp. 91-92.
42. For an excellent discussion of this, see Jose Borrás' "Lo Que Creen Los Evangelicos Sobre Maria" taped presentation, Abundant Life Crusades, 4910 Branscomb, Corpus Christi, TX, 78411.
43. Brewer points out that Rome does not so much take away from the gospel (as the cults do), but adds to it. Bartholomew F. Brewer, *The Fallacy of Catholicism*, audiotape, *Mission to Catholics*, P. O. Box 19280, San Diego, Ca. 92119. We have many things in common with Roman Catholics. What we should be concerned about are the things that have been added.
44. See C. Brownlow Hastings, *A Baptist View of Changes in Roman Catholicism*, (Atlanta: Home Mission Board).
45. The *Good News New Testament* is printed by the American Bible Society.
46. G. Campbell Morgan, *The Great Physician* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1963), pp. 344-46.
47. G. Campbell Morgan's book *The Great Physician* (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott) has some excellent material that can be used in these Bible studies. Also helpful are William Barclay's commentaries *Bible Study Series* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press). A Bible dictionary can also be helpful in providing background material.
48. Adolfo Robleto, *Un Vistazo a la Doctrina Romana: Interpretacion a la Luz del Segundo Concilio Vaticano* (El Paso, Texas: Casa Bautista de Publicaciones, 1984), pp. 58-62.
49. Abbott, p. 117.
50. See Robleto, p. 53.
51. See Martin Farrell, *The New American Catechism* (Des Plains, Ill.: FARE, Inc., 1978), p. 96.
52. Ibid, p. 96.
53. For a discussion of this, see Brewer, "The Fallacy of Catholicism," audiotape, *Mission to Catholics*, P.O. Box 19280, San Diego, CA, 92119.
54. McBrien, p. 763.
55. Abbot, p. 38.
56. Brewer, *The Primacy of Peter*.

57. Isaiah 28:16 and Psalm 118:22.
58. Ibid.
59. Abbott, p. 88.
60. See McBrien, pp. 71-72.
61. Abbott, p. 91.
62. Ibid.
63. See the *New Jerusalem Bible*.
64. David Hocking makes this point regarding Stephen in "Mary, Purgatory, and the Pope, " audiocassette, Mission to Catholics, P.O. Box 19280, San Diego, CA 92119.
65. Borrás, "Que Creen Los Evangelicos Sobre Maria?" (What Do Evangelicals Believe About Mary?), audiotape, Sammy Fuentes Evangelistic Association, 4910 Branscomb, Corpus Christi, TX, 78411.
66. Ibid.
67. Abbott, p. 90.
68. For a more complete description of this and other traditions, see Robleto, pp. 92-94.
69. Ibid., p. 96
70. Both Borrás and Hocking make this point.
71. Felician, *Catholic Almanac*, p. 360.
72. Ibid., p. 366.
73. Ibid., p. 366.
74. Robleto, p. 65.
75. Borrás, "Que Creen Los Evangelicos Sobre Maria?"
76. McBrien, p. 1144.
77. Hocking makes this point.
78. For a discussion of this, see Robleto, p. 110.

79. McBrien, p. 1143. McBrien states "This is not to say that there is no basis at all for the doctrine, but only that there is no clear *biblical* basis for it."

80. See *Catholic Almanac*, p. 285.

81. Epiphany means the manifestation of God to the Gentiles (the wise men from the East). See Williams, *Contemporary Catholic Catechism*, p. 37.

82. Ibid., p. 285.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., pp. 258-259.

85. Ibid., pp. 286.