



Personal Witnessing, Guidelines When Conversing with Negative People

Only a maximum amount of doctrine can keep the tongue in line. James 3:2; James 3:8; James 3:17. In James 3:2 the word “to bridle” is the aorist active infinitive of χαλινάγωγέω (chalinagōgeō) and means to guide with a bridle, to hold in check.

“For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.” (James 3:2, NASB)

“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison.” (James 3:8, NASB)

“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy.” (James 3:17, NASB)

The “mature” in Hebrews 5:14 is τέλειος (teleios) in the Greek and means completed, mature or full grown.

“But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:14, NASB)

Badmouthing is symptomatic of every kind of human viewpoint. James 3:16.

“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.” (James 3:16, NASB)

A person with negative volition can be unapproachable to the point where you can’t talk with them. They may be too dogmatic to the point that you can’t reason with them. They will never admit to being wrong, so you won’t be able to correct them. They may have an authoritarian manner of declaration that approaches blind dogmatism.

A negative person can be arrogant with an all-encompassing omniscience on all subjects they undertake to discuss. They may be an unapproachable, intolerant spirit, unwilling to be taught and unreachable with discussion on opposing views. A negative person may be so conceited that you can’t reach them. They may be a little dictator whereby you can’t tell them anything because they already know everything.

A negative person may resort to criticizing or badmouthing. Such criticizing targets either the person of the one giving the Gospel message or doctrinal teaching or against the actual message of the Gospel or doctrine. Either way, the criticizing or badmouthing is ultimately against the essence of God. 2 Cor. 10:1-2; 2 Cor. 10:4-6; 2 Cor. 10:9.

“Now I, Paul, myself urge you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ—I who am meek when face to face with you, but bold toward you when absent! I ask that when I am present I need not be bold with the confidence with which I propose to be courageous against some, who regard us as if we walked according to the flesh.” (2 Corinthians 10:1-2, NASB)

“for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.” (2 Corinthians 10:4-6, NASB)

“for I do not wish to seem as if I would terrify you by my letters.” (2 Corinthians 10:9, NASB)



Either the preaching is too strong and personal or there is too little preaching and too much teaching. Some feel that categorical Bible doctrine teaching is the only right way and that all other ministers, no matter how fundamental, have been all wrong.

Some negative people feel the original languages are just too confusing and “I can’t check out what I’m being taught.” Some feel the language from the pulpit is crude and it offends them. Some feel that the necessity of daily teaching bothers them since no previous generations have emphasized it.

Negative people may say that the local church is emphasized to the exclusion of Bible colleges, seminaries, camp programs, child evangelism, missions, etc. Some pastor’s messages sound intolerant of other views, churches, denominations, or individuals. He does not have a loving message. His message neglects the social needs of his congregation. He does not give an invitation. How can people get saved in such a place? He is a very subtle false teacher and is the devil incarnate.

What is the solution to people who criticize or badmouth? Stay in fellowship and continue the consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine. Consider the source. Gal. 6:1.

“Brethren, even if anyone is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, so that you too will not be tempted.” (Galatians 6:1, NASB)

They may need more information presented in a different way or set of conditions. Possibly they need to be questioned such as “Are you in fellowship?” Possibly they need to be set straight such as “Look, I don’t have to listen to you stating garbage like that?” 2 Cor. 10:5-6.

“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.” (2 Corinthians 10:5-6, NASB)

It may be necessary to avoid them. 2 Cor. 6:11-12; Rom. 16:17-18.

“Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide. You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.” (2 Corinthians 6:11-12, NASB)

“Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them. For such men are slaves, not of our Lord Christ but of their own appetites; and by their smooth and flattering speech they deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting.” (Romans 16:17-18, NASB)

Ask them if they have talked face to face with their pastor-teacher about their positions on certain doctrines. You may have to tell them that they are simply out of line on the doctrines being discussed. Suggest that they attend Bible class more regularly and let God the Holy Spirit correct them from within their souls. Titus 2:15.

“These things speak and exhort and reprove with all authority. Let no one disregard you.” (Titus 2:15, NASB)

Do they regularly attend Bible class? Are they quoting what someone else says? Are they the spokesman for a group of people, but won’t give any names. “There are a number of people who are dissatisfied.” Remember, if people have rejected grace and confession of sin per 1 John 1:9 or you are dealing with carnal believers, those in emotional revolt of the soul or reversionistic believers.

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9, NASB)