

STUDY 12

Expansion and Opposition

1. If someone with whom you share the gospel is not interested and rejects what you share, how should you respond, and is that the end of the matter?

If this is someone in your family or someone you work with, it is probably not helpful to keep talking about Jesus in a way that provokes hostility. It is probably better to let your actions speak. Show love. Speak truth. Be gracious. Be open about the difference that Jesus makes to your life. Your testimony is one of the most powerful ways you have to share God's truth (*Revelation 12:11*). And of course pray that the Holy Spirit will give them light. There are lots of different ways to witness and testify. Introduce them to your Christian friends. It may be that at some stage later on this person will ask a question that gives you another opportunity to speak again. Trust God.

It may be that there are particular reasons or beliefs that act as a hindrance to coming to faith. It is good to listen and respond if and when these come up.

2. How does Michael Eaton summarise the principles of support for itinerant^s evangelists and teachers today?

Evangelists get support from **sending** churches; teachers get support from **receiving** churches.

Those who teach in local churches and who devote significant time to this may receive support from the people they teach (*1 Timothy 5:17-18*). When Paul visited young churches where he settled for some time, (such as Corinth) he did, in fact, support himself by making tents. He did not wish to be a burden to such congregations. But he also probably wished to disassociate himself from the Sophists, who were paid teachers of Greek philosophy in those times - both their teaching and the lifestyle.

3. Why would it be inappropriate for an evangelist working with an unevangelised group of people to expect support from them?

The gospel is free. Forgiveness is a gift from God because Jesus has paid the price. To expect support from an unevangelised group would be to give a mixed message. It would be helpful for them to know that others are providing the means of support as an act of Christian love.

4. What do you think the story of Herod teaches us about hearing God's voice

Much could be said on this as it is covered very thoroughly. Herod was a 'mass of contradiction'. He was confused. But the essential point is that every time he heard the voice of God and acted in *disobedience*, things got worse. He had many chances but kept making the wrong decision. So the take-away lesson for us is not to disobey God when He speaks to us (through the words of a person, the words of scripture or by planting thoughts into our hearts). If we obey God we will be in a better place. That is not to say that things will immediately get easier or more comfortable (that was not John's experience), but we will have God's approval and blessing.

5. The verse 'Today if you hear His voice' quoted by Michael Eaton comes from Psalm 95:7-8. How does the writer of the New Testament book of Hebrews use this verse?

The writer of Hebrews uses it as a warning against unbelief and rebellion, as happened with the children of Israel in the wilderness. Hebrews is stressing the importance of not falling away from the assurance that we had at first. John had a similar warning for the people of the church in Ephesus who had lost their **'first love'** (*Revelation 2:1-7*). The Bible contains a mixture of encouragements and warnings, comfort and instructions. We need to pay attention to all of them and not just the *nice to hear* details.