

The Response Pyramid

Introduction

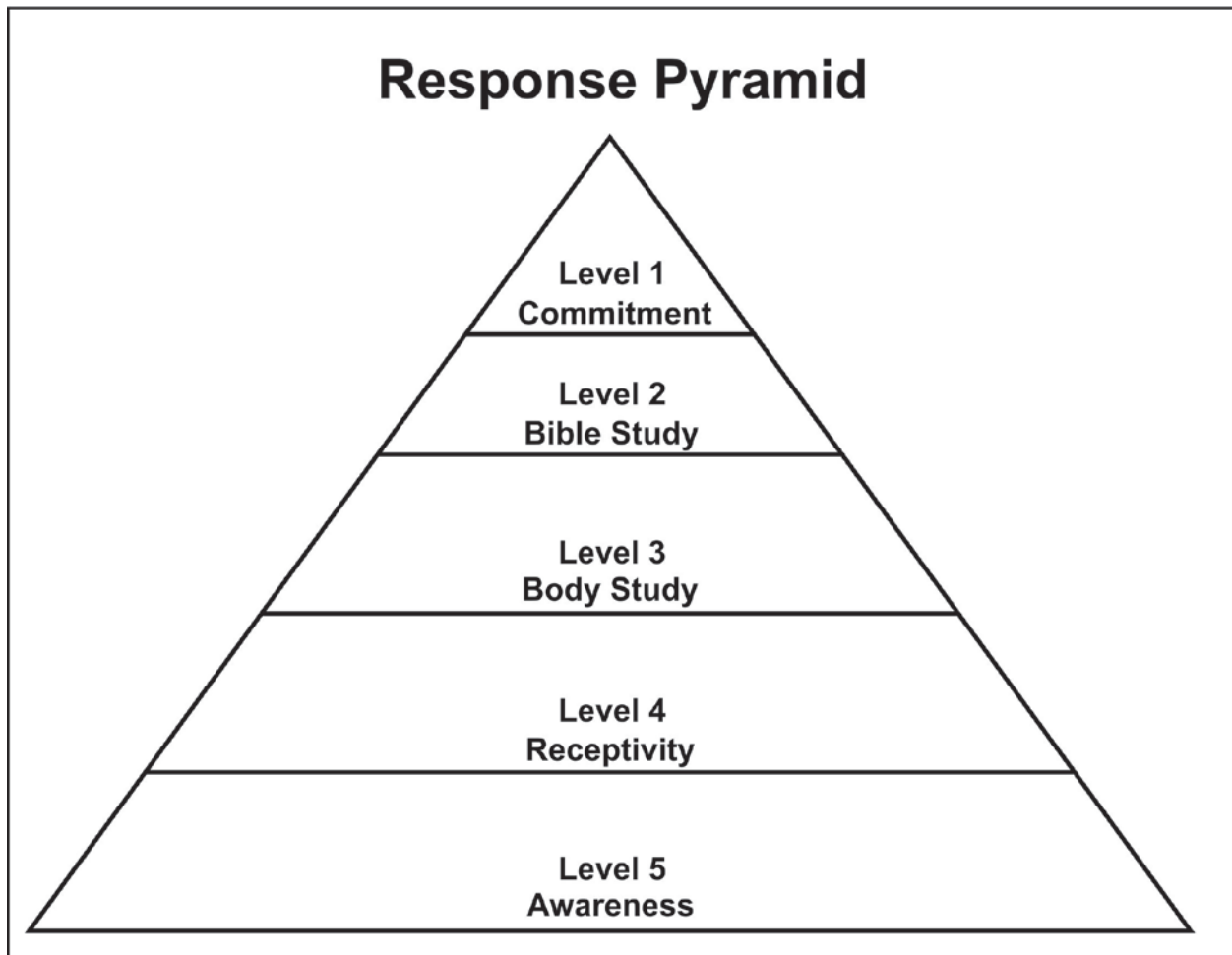
We saw in the first session that the majority of people that become Christians meet Christ through relational evangelism. Statistically, eighty-seven percent come to Christ through a friend or relative. In the Bible, the Greek word *oikos* is used, which means household. It really refers to all the people associated with the household, which would include all the family members and servants. Throughout the New Testament we see households coming to Christ.

We also looked at the meaning of gospel, which is good news. You and I have good news to share with people. It is not something that we should be ashamed of, or dread sharing. It is good news. In Romans 1:16 Paul said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” It is not just good news, but it is powerful news. The gospel message is how people are saved. We are told to preach the gospel. We saw that there are two Greek words for preach, *kerusso* and *euaggelizo*. *Kerusso* means to publicly announce or preach, so it is public speaking to a group. *Euaggelizo* simply means to share the gospel with someone. It has nothing to do with public speaking in front of a group. When we share the good news of Jesus with someone while waiting in line at the grocery store, we are preaching the gospel.

In session two we saw in John 4:35-38 that there are different stages of the harvest. There is a sowing stage and there is a reaping stage. There is actually a cultivation stage where the ground is prepared for sowing. In James 5:7 we see that there is a waiting time for the crops to receive the early and latter rains. The things that a farmer does varies by the stage of the harvest. The crop would be ruined if he tried to reap it too early.

In session three we focused on three keys to effective outreach in Colossians 4:2-6. Evangelism must be soaked in prayer. When we see people being reached in Acts, it was the hand of the Lord or the abundant grace of the Lord. We have to pray for opportunities. We have to pray for God to bring us divine appointments. We have to pray for God to soften hearts, and draw people to Himself. We must also make the most of the opportunities. We saw that opportunities are really seasons. This ties in with the concept of different stages of the harvest. People are in different seasons in their life and search for God, and we must recognize where they are and make the most of those opportunities. If someone is at the cultivation or sowing stage, we cannot try to harvest them. We have to listen and respond appropriately. Successful evangelism is helping people move a step closer towards believing in Christ. It may be a word of encouragement that is needed. It may be a testimony. It may be an act of kindness or service. Finally, we saw in that we must season our speech with grace so that we will know how to respond. Gracious speech opens up the doors of communication. We must learn to be good listeners so that we give the proper responses.

This week we are following up on sessions two and three. Some evangelists developed a Response Pyramid to help them identify where people are at and what were the appropriate things to do with people at the stage or season they are in. They have identified five different stages or levels that people are in.



Level 5: Awareness

In Romans 10:12-15, Paul asked how people can call on Jesus if they have never heard. Then, he asked how they can hear without a preacher. God has called all of us to preach the gospel. He asked, “How will they preach unless they are sent?” We are the ones called to preach and we are the ones that Jesus has sent out into the harvest fields. In our families, households, and spheres of influence, we are the ones that God has sent to share the message of good news. Those who have never heard are at the Awareness Level. At this stage, we are trying to help them become aware of the gospel. We are not trying to force them to make a commitment to Christ. We are not trying to reap the harvest; we are just sowing seeds of awareness.

(Rom 10:12-15) “For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same *Lord* is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; {13} for “WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.” {14} How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? {15} How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!”

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Research shows that there are millions of people living in the United States that have no awareness of the gospel. Recent statistics show that an increasing number of people in America are unchurched and have no awareness of the gospel message. In 1993, 24% of Americans were unchurched. In 2015, 45% of Americans were unchurched. That equates to just over 148 million people in America that are unchurched. According to the Barna Group, 54% of the unchurched are men and 46% of them are women. Seven out of ten unchurched people said that they have never been invited to church in their whole lives. 82% of them said they would likely attend if someone invited them. All of these people would be considered in the Awareness stage.

How can you tell if someone is in the Awareness Stage? We can detect what level a person is at by asking questions and carefully listening to their responses. Sometimes, just listening to the things they say in our regular conversations will indicate where they are at. Here are some good questions to ask to help discern where they are at.

- How do you think the world was created?
- Did you ever get the chance to see Billy Graham? What were your impressions?
- May I share with you the greatest thing that ever happened to me? (This is permission to share your testimony with them.)
- In your opinion, who is Jesus Christ?

At this point, we are not trying to correct them or correct their theology. We are trying to discern where they are at. We are showing listening love. We are trying to raise their awareness by showing love and concern. We are cultivating a relationship with them, and also making them aware of Christianity.

What are the things that we should be doing for people in the Awareness Level? One of the best things that we can do for people at this stage is share our personal testimony with them. We will be covering how to prepare our testimonies in a later session. We should have several different testimonies prepared, depending on the amount of time that we have available to share. We should be able to give a quick thirty-second testimony, a two-minute testimony, or a five-minute testimony. We don't ask them to pray the sinner's prayer; we simply share our testimony with them. If they ask questions, we should by all means respond and answer their questions.

Another good thing is for them to hear other testimonies. Jesus sent out the disciples by twos. Having a friend share a testimony is very helpful. Another type of testimony to share is a written testimony. As a professional golfer I gave out thousands of personal testimonies with a picture of my family on it. In addition to salvation testimonies, I have found that other testimonies are very powerful to share with people. I share answers to prayer. When Orange County came and planted two oak trees on my lawn, and no other neighbors received any trees from the county, it gave me opportunities to share. When someone got healed that I prayed for, it was an opportunity to share a testimony with them.

Another thing that I have found helpful is to ask them if you can pray for them. Sometimes they will refuse, but very often they will allow you to pray. Ask them if there is anything that they would like to have prayer for. If they have shared something with you about their job, family or some other concern, you can ask them if it would be okay to pray for them about that.

Recently, I was at simulator manufacturing facility and the manager was having severe back pains. I asked David if I could pray for him. I continued to follow up with him and kept asking him how his back was doing. A couple of weeks ago he told me that he had been able to ride his motorcycle to work for the first time in months. He thanked me for praying for him.

In addition to sharing testimonies and praying for them, serving them is a wonderful way of reaching out to them. I regularly pray for opportunities to serve those in the area by our church. I have taken people to Walmart, to the bank, and to their doctor. We have given and installed a TV to a family. We have insulated the front door to an apartment. I also bought a box of dog biscuits and give them to people's pets that are walking across our parking lot. I felt like the Lord said that when you love their pets, you are loving them. So, dog treats are just another way to cultivate a friendship with our neighbors who are at the Awareness Level.

Level Four: Receptivity

Once a person is aware of genuine Christianity, the next important thing is to help them become receptive. Specifically, they need to be receptive of the messenger, that is us. Second, they need to become receptive to the message, that is the gospel.

The three best ways to develop receptivity with people is through serving them, building positive new experiences in their lives, and praying for them. These things break down the barriers and resistance to us and the gospel message. When they have positive experiences with "Christians" they are willing to take a new look at Christianity.

When Jesus came, He did not come to serve, but to serve and give His life as a ransom. He came as a humble servant, and a humble attitude breaks down barriers and resistance. The rulers of the Gentiles lorded over the people, but Jesus came and humbly served. It was radically different. Today, humbly serving people has the same impact on people.

(Mark 10:45) "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

People are more receptive at critical times in their lives. I mentioned that the fields were white for harvest in the prisons than on the PGA Tour. They were ready to make a change in their life. When people are content with their life, they are less apt to want to change. Here are some of the events that bring more receptivity:

- Death in the family
- Divorce
- Break-up in a relationship
- Personal injury or illness
- Pregnancy or birth of a child
- Fired from job or a change in jobs
- Change in financial status
- Change in residence
- Relational conflict at home, work, or with neighbor

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When we alertly recognize one of these things in a person, we can reach out to them in love. We can listen to them and show care and concern. We can let them know that we will pray for them, and we can continue to follow up with them. We can serve them or meet needs that they have. We need to see these circumstances as key opportunities to minister Christ to them.

At the Receptivity level, we are trying to create positive experiences and perceptions of Christianity. Many people have had prejudices and bad experiences with church or with Christians. Our job is to help them see the true picture of Christianity. Jesus wrote that all men will know that we are His disciples by our love. We want them to experience the love of Christ through all our interactions with them.

(John 13:35) “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

In my own life, I was not receptive because of some bad experiences with the pastor at the church I grew up in. It was through the love that I saw in a man while at college that my heart was softened and I opened up to the gospel. It was the love of Christ coming through this man that made me receptive.

Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 3:3 that we are a letter that is known and read by all men. As people read our lives, they are getting a message from the Lord. They are getting a message of love, hope, and good news.

(2 Cor 3:2-3) “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; {3}being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts.”

Level 3: Body Study

Once an individual has become aware of genuine Christianity and has become receptive to the messenger and the message, it is time for the “Body Study.” The majority of unbelievers in the world are not interested in the “proclaimed word” because they have never seen the “pictured word.” In John 1, we see that Jesus is the Word, but He did not stay in heaven; the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. The people saw Jesus’ glory because He dwelt among the people.

(John 1:14) “And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”

Jesus gave us the ministry of reconciliation, and He has made us His ambassadors. Our citizenship is in heaven and our dwelling place is here on earth, but we represent the kingdom of heaven. We are to properly represent God, and people are carefully watching our lives.

(2 Cor 5:18-20) “Now all *these* things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, {19} namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. {20} Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.”

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Most people only trust those they have a relationship with. Most people have a desire for relationship and to belong. We are to build relationally with them and gain their trust. Jesus was intentional about His relationships; He was always reaching out to people. In Luke 19:10, we find that Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost. He sought out the lost. He reached out to tax collectors and sinners, and the religious leaders attacked Him for hanging out with them. But, Jesus came to seek and save those who were lost. He shared meals with them. Sometimes, like with Zacchaeus, He invited Himself to Zacchaeus' house for a meal. Sharing meals is a wonderful way of reaching out to people and to develop relationships with them.

(Luke 19:5, 10) “When Jesus came to the place, He looked up and said to him, “Zaccheus, hurry and come down, for today I must stay at your house....{ 10} For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.”

Building relationships with people takes time, effort, and visibility. When I was a Head Professional at a golf club, I had quite a lot of lesson business. When I was promoted and became the General Manager, I was not in the golf shop as much. I was not as visible as I was as the Head Professional, and my lesson business went down substantially. Even though I got a nice raise when I became the General Manager, I lost at least that much income because of the lack of visibility. Relationships require visibility.

In our relationships with others, we have to be visible. We have to make ourselves available. For men, we can use activities to give us opportunities to be with people. Our men's group in Orlando played Walleyball, and it was a lot of fun. It was easy for me and for other men to invite the men in our neighborhoods to go play with us. We were able to spend time in the car riding to the courts, and riding back. We were able to play together and have a great time. At the same time, the neighbor I brought, Bob, was able to meet other men in our church. This was a perfect example of the Body Study level.

At the Body Study level, introducing our unsaved friend to other believers is very important. Inviting someone to go golfing or bowling is a great way to do that. When I was a professional golfer, I developed an evangelistic outreach for golfers. I created a Scramble where each foursome was made up of two believers and two unbelievers. When churches had their sign-ups, a man could not participate unless he invited an unbeliever to play with him. At the Scramble, I gave a golf clinic and gave some good pointers. Then, everyone had a shotgun start and played eighteen holes. I stayed on a par three and played that hole with each group. After the round, we had an awards banquet and I shared my testimony with them. We gave out some nice prizes to everyone. All the men that played had a great time. The best thing was that unbelievers got to spend time with believers, had a great experience, and got to hear a testimony from a PGA Tour player. This was another great example of something to do at the Body Study level.

Today, we live in a time where everyone is busy. Making time to spend with lost people must be intentional. It won't just happen on its own. We have to realize that it is important and we must be willing to invest our lives in unbelievers. That is what Jesus did; He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

Level 2: Bible Study

At this level, people are aware of genuine Christianity. They have become receptive to you as the messenger, and they are receptive to things that you share with them. They have met some other believers and have had some positive experiences with Christians. They know that you have invested in a friendship with them, and they have developed a great sense of trust in you. Now, they are ready for Level 2, the Bible Study. At this level, they will hear the gospel message shared. They will hear God’s plan of salvation. They will have opportunities to ask questions and share any objections or difficulties with you. This is not the final level, which is commitment. We are not pressuring people or asking them to make a decision. The harvest is almost ready, but not quite white for harvest. We want to allow them to feel unpressured and to safely ask questions.

In Romans 10:15-17 Paul quoted Isaiah 52:7, saying, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things.” At this level, we have the privilege of bringing good news to them. They are receptive of us, our message, and trust us.

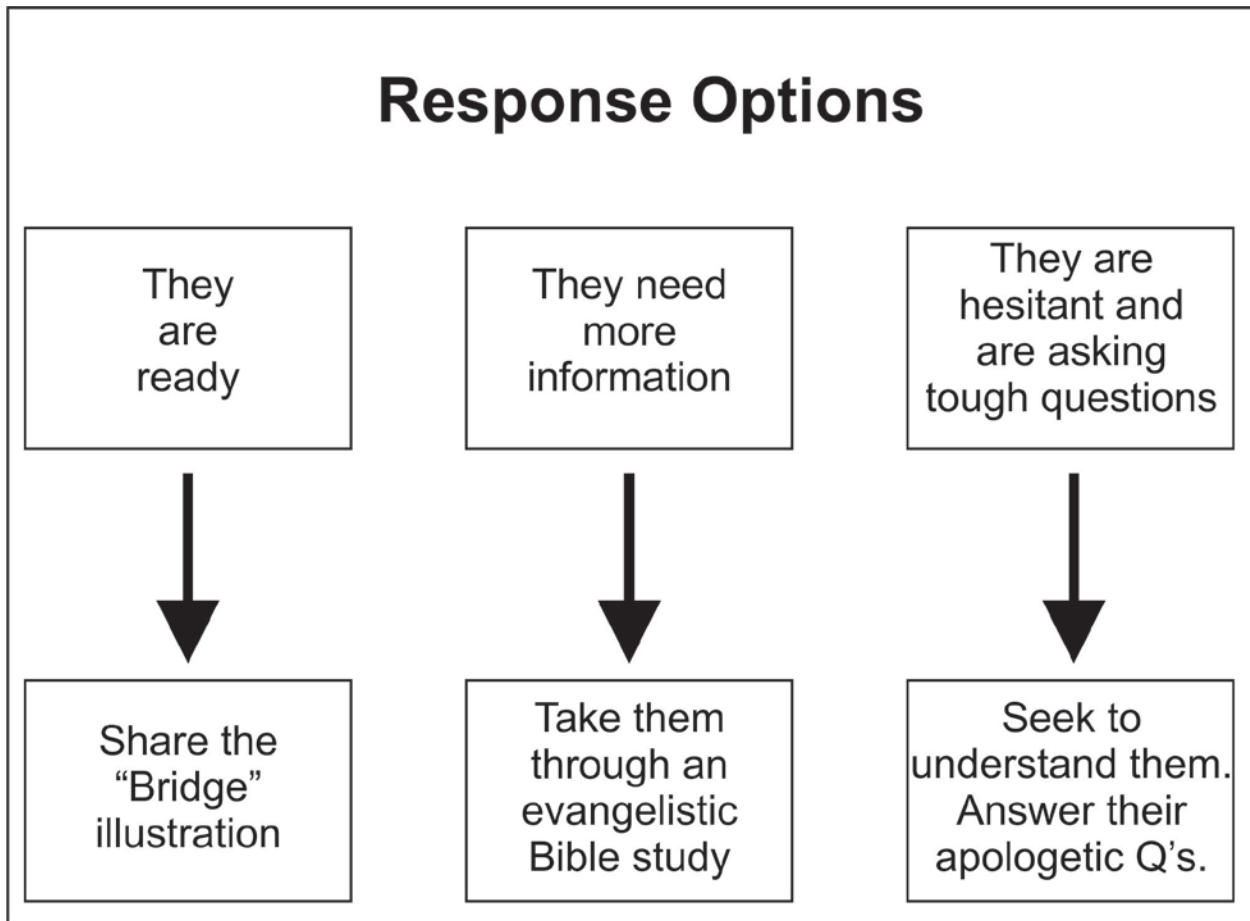
(Rom 10:15-17) “How will they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, "HOW BEAUTIFUL ARE THE FEET OF THOSE WHO BRING GOOD NEWS OF GOOD THINGS!" {16} However, they did not all heed the good news; for Isaiah says, "LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT?" {17} So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.”

At this level, we should be looking for spring boards. What are spring boards? They are opportunities for us to redirect a conversation towards the gospel in a natural way. I mentioned that one year at the Hartford Open, I saw a young man with a sweatshirt that said, “College is where you learn to make good decisions.” I used that as a springboard and shared with him that college was where I made the two best decisions in my life. I met a woman that I loved and made a decision to marry her, and I made a decision to follow Jesus Christ. I did not have time to do anything other than that and to give him a written testimony. But I used it as a springboard.

In Acts 17:22-25 Paul was in Athens. He had passed an altar and found an inscription saying, “to an unknown God.” He used that inscription as a springboard to share the gospel with them.

(Acts 17:22-25) “So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, "Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. {23} For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you. {24} The God who made the world and all things in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; {25} nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all *people* life and breath and all things;”

At this level, we are also trying to evaluate and assess if they are ready to make a commitment. We are not trying to force or manipulate anyone, but we do want to know if they are ready to be asked if they want to make a commitment to Christ. We saw in Colossians 4:2-6 that when our words are seasoned with grace, we will know how to respond to people. We will listen to their responses and we will know how to proceed from there.



If they are receptive to the gospel message, and seem ready to receive Christ, share the "Bridge" illustration with them. We will be covering the "Bridge" illustration in Session 7.

If they need more information, but indicate they need more time or want some more understanding, do not pressure them. Suggest that you do a Bible study together. You will recall that I gave a story of a young man that I had shared the gospel message with on a Delta flight. I asked him if he wanted to receive Christ, and he said no. I dropped it right there. I did not try to talk him into making a decision. God intervened and the plane began to nosedive towards the ground. He grabbed my arm and said, "Mister, can we say that prayer now?" And we did. I led him in a prayer while that jet was racing toward the ground. Immediately afterwards, the captain was able to regain control and level out the plane. But, the key is that I did not try to force him to make a decision. We allow God to work and finish preparing the field for harvest.

If they seem hesitant and defensive, and begin to bring up difficult questions, do not try to go to the Commitment level. Try to find out their questions. If you do not know the answers, do not try to come up with an answer. Tell them that their question is a good one and tell them that you will get back to them. We will be covering apologetics in Session 8. Here are some of the more common questions that people may bring up: What about the pygmies in Australia that have never heard the gospel? Is God really going to send them to hell? How can a good God send people to hell? How can God permit suffering? What about all these other religions? Isn't God the same God in every religion?

Level 1: Commitment

We have been very intentional in our efforts to cultivate friendships, remove distortions, build positive experiences, develop trust, and help people find Christ. It is a process. However, Jesus said that unless a man is born again, he shall not see the kingdom of God. There must be a time where a person believes and receives Christ and is born again. There is a time that the person confesses that Jesus is Lord, and is transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light.

(John 3:3) “Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.’”

(Acts 26:18) “to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.”

We cannot manipulate and make someone a Christian. We cannot make them believe. We are simply servants who have been entrusted with a powerful gospel message. We do everything that we can to influence people, but we cannot force them to become Christians. There has to be a heart transformation, and that is something internal. When Paul was sharing his testimony and the gospel with King Agrippa, he came to the Commitment Level, and he asked, “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know you do.” Then, King Agrippa replied, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” Paul responded by saying that he wished that he and all the others that were listening that day would become Christians (as he was, except for the chains). Paul tried to persuade King Agrippa, but he was not forceful.

(Acts 26:27-29) “King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do.” {28} Agrippa *replied* to Paul, “In a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian.” {29} And Paul *said*, “I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains.”

In session two we discussed the fields that were white for harvest. The fruit that is ripe is easy to pick. It does not have to be pulled and forced off the tree. We should not have to try to force or manipulate people. But, we do need to ask them if they believe, and if they would like to receive Christ. Once the gospel message has been shared (Bridge Illustration), and the person has been receptive to us and the message, there are a couple of helpful questions to ask:

- Do you believe that Jesus Christ was God’s Son and that He came and died for our sins, and was resurrected from the dead?
- Does all of this make sense to you?
- Can you think of any reason why you wouldn’t want to receive Christ now? (I like to ask this in a positive way: Would you like to receive Christ right now?)
- Would you like me to lead you in a prayer to receive Christ?

In 1981, I took some time off from playing golf and went through the Xerox Sales course. We were taught twenty-nine different closes to use with customers. We were taught how to get people off of the fence and to make a decision to buy our product. Sometimes the prospective

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buyer felt pressured. As ambassadors for Christ, we want to do everything we can to persuade and influence someone to believe and receive Christ, but we do not want to pressure them. God does not pressure us to believe and receive. The Holy Spirit works gently with us and is patient with us. We need to be gentle and patient. If the person is not ready, then we must continue to pray for them and reach out to them.

If the person says no, then it is good to thank them for giving you the opportunity to share with them. Then, tell them that you are available anytime to discuss this with them or pray with them. It is important not to end the relationship if they do not pray with you. You want to continue to share with them and be a friend to them. You want to continue to pray for them. You want to continue to follow up with them and answer any questions that they might have.

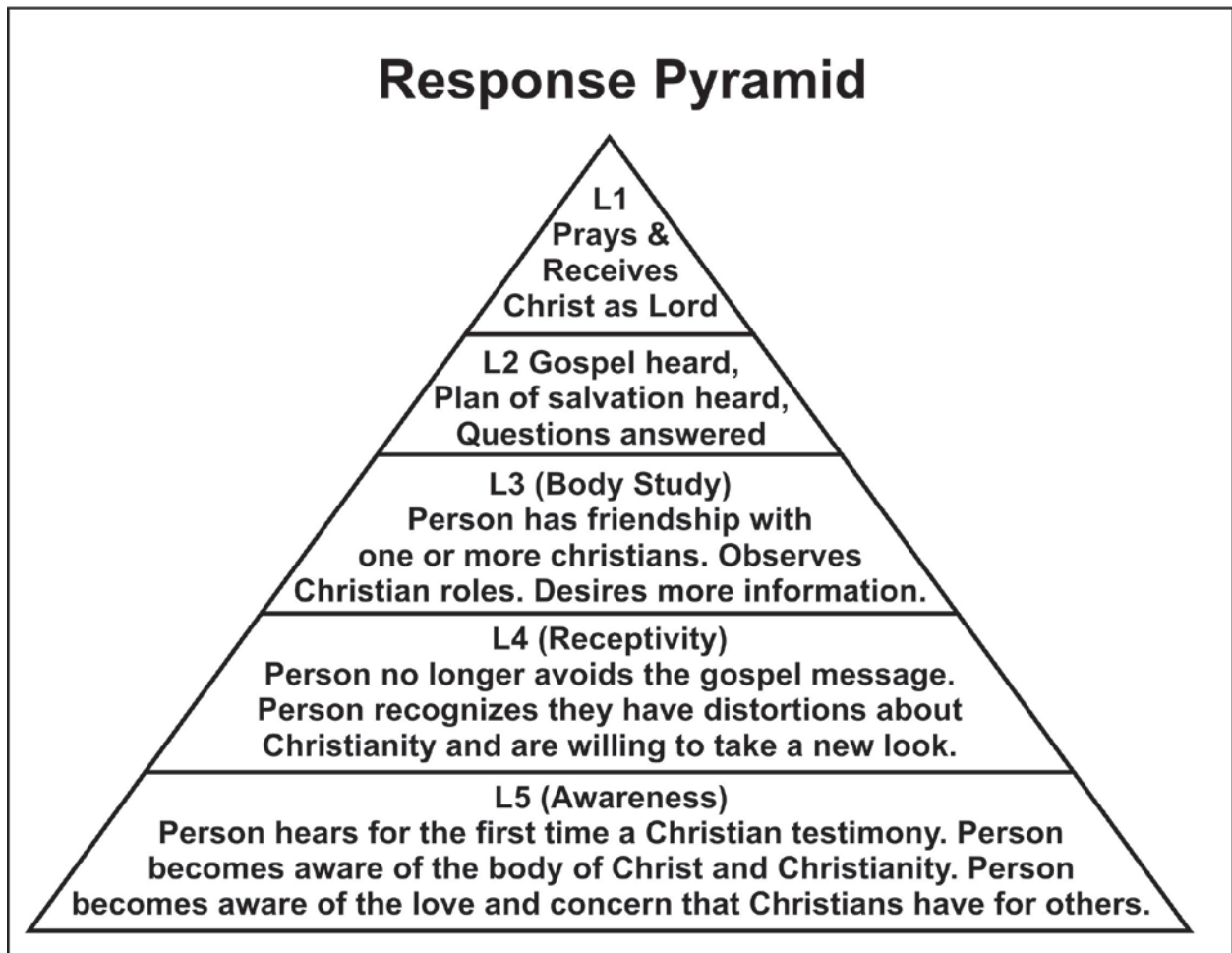
If the person does respond that they want to receive Christ, then simply lead them in a prayer to acknowledge that they believe that Jesus came and died for their sins and was resurrected from the dead. (Romans 10:9-10) Lead them to ask Jesus into their lives, and to forgive them of their sins. Lead them to confess that Jesus is Lord. In Billy Graham's Bridge Illustration track (Steps To Peace With God), he uses the following prayer:

“Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from my sins. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust You as Savior and follow You as Lord, in the fellowship of Your church.”

Once a person has received Christ, it is important to give them some instructions about how to grow in their relationship with Christ. When I received Christ, I went nearly a year before a brother shared with me that I needed to read my Bible and have fellowship with other believers. Once I began to read my Bible and go to Bible studies with other believers, my life began to change. I began to grow as a believer. So, it is important to help new believers get started in their journey with Christ. Here are some things to do with them.

- Make an appointment with them to begin discipling them.
- Share with them 1 Peter 2:2-3 about longing for the pure milk of the word. Tell them to begin reading their Bible. Give them some basics about how to have a quiet time.
- Share with them the importance of talking to God every day (prayer).
- Share with them the importance of going to church and fellowshiping with other Christians.

In your discipleship meetings, you can go more in depth about these things. You can teach them about baptism, and many other basics. But, immediately after receiving Christ, they need to begin reading their Bibles, praying, and having fellowship with other believers.



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Small Group Break-Out

- Sharing:** Share a testimony from the past couple of weeks, one thing that you learned tonight that stood out, or one thing that you can apply in your own life.
- Prayer:** Pray for wisdom in what steps of evangelism are needed with the people in their oikos. Pray for 1 person in each person's oikos.
- Homework:** Revisit your chart with the people in your oikos and try to determine where they are at on the Response Pyramid. Develop a plan of action for reaching one or two people in your oikos based on the Response Pyramid.
- Scripture** Review Matthew 28:18-20, Matthew 4:19, Romans 3:23, Isaiah 53:6.
- Memory:** Memorize Romans 6:23.