

God talk 101

“How can we create more opportunities to talk to our friends about the gospel? By putting God back on the agenda. If we begin to inject ‘God talk’ back into our conversation then opportunities for discussing who God is, and how we can be right with him, will abound. If our dearly-held beliefs about God are allowed to flow into our everyday conversation, then we cannot help but spark interest in the gospel.” —
Two Ways to Live: Participant’s Manual

I want to suggest a simple God-talk phrase that every Christian can use in conversation with non-Christian work colleagues, friends and family:

“I’ll pray for you” or “I’ll pray about that”

Here’s why I think these few words can be so powerful.

They express care

While lots of non-Christians may be uninterested in God or even sceptical about his existence, saying that you will pray for them in some difficult situation they are experiencing will generally be taken positively as an expression of your care and concern. Maybe the odd person will react with hostility, but that’s rare.¹ “I’ll pray for you” doesn’t come across as preachy; it conveys genuine love. Nonetheless, it does express some important truths.

They express that you’re a person of faith

Hopefully the person knows already that you are a Christian and therefore that this commitment to pray for them is an expression of your genuine *Christian* faith. But even if they don’t yet know you are a Christian, at least you’ve communicated that you are not an atheist, agnostic or materialist.

They express that you believe prayer makes a difference

I was watching football on TV the other day, and a player was interviewed and asked about the black armbands the team was wearing. Apparently a highly respected past player at the club had passed away a few days before. The player being interviewed said, “Our thoughts and... our prayers are with his family”. The “our prayers” came out of his mouth pretty uncomfortably, as the cliché he thought you’re supposed to say. It may be unfair, but I got the distinct impression that prayer was not going to be a big part of his *actual* support for the grieving family.

But saying “I will pray for you” is not a cliché. It’s a commitment to *do* something, made by a person who firmly believes it might help. It conveys a personal belief in the power of prayer and an acknowledgment that there is more to this life than the average non-Christian materialist contemplates.

¹ A negative reaction also gives you a valuable insight, and perhaps opens up a different conversation for later: “Hey, I was interested that you didn’t want me to pray for you. Do you mind me asking—are you upset with God?”

This is actually very important, because the Scriptures tell us that non-Christians actively “suppress the truth” about God—his “his eternal power and divine nature”—even though it is “plain to them” (Rom 1:18-20). When you say “I’ll pray for you”, you point a finger at part of the truth they are seeking to suppress. That’s a good thing. That it’s done in a way that expresses care is even better.

But they don’t express some crucial things

Without the context of the person knowing that you are a Christian and having some basic understanding of what that means, “I’ll pray for you” misses much of what you’d like them to know. It doesn’t necessarily communicate that you believe in the God of the Bible—the one true and living God, the Creator of all things—or that he is a *personal* God who relates to his creation. Nor does it convey on what basis you can pray to that God; i.e. what Jesus has done for you on the cross and what he is now doing from his heavenly throne.

However, they do give you an opportunity

Having made what will hopefully be accepted as a ‘good faith’ commitment to help them by praying, you have the opportunity for a follow-up conversation with that person about what prayer actually means to you—a tangible chance to speak of your faith in the God who relates personally, and of the Son whom he sent to enable us to approach the throne of grace “with confidence” in our time of need (Heb 4:16).

That’s the piece of communication a new Matthias Media tract is designed to help you with. [What I mean when I say I’ll pray for you](#) enables the next step after your offer to pray. It explains who you pray to, on what basis you can pray, and just what can be prayed for. It clearly explains the gospel message and encourages a response of faith or further enquiry from the reader.



So perhaps a day or two after you’ve communicated your intent to pray, you might ask if there is any update to the situation. Having heard it, you could then say something like this:

“Well, I’ll continue to pray about that, and I really hope things improve”
or “That’s great to hear— I’ll give thanks to God for that answer to my prayers”.
“Can I also give you this? Prayer is an important part of my Christian faith, and I thought you might be interested to know a bit more about what I mean when I talk about praying.”

Whether you just give the tract or add an invitation to talk further about it over coffee might depend on your level of boldness and confidence. Either way, as a next step after ‘God talk’, there’s real gospel potential in using this new resource. It’s done in relationship, connected to real experience, demonstrating how you are caring for them. It’s a non-confrontational but thought-provoking evangelistic tract.

So are you up for a bit of God talk? And is this tract one you could have three or four copies on hand ready to give away? ■

[You can read the [full text online](#) (view the product images).]