



Maximizing Your Personal Ministry:
Applying Biblical Wisdom to Your Engagements Behind Bars

Cam Abell
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Good News Global



**GOOD
NEWS
GLOBAL**



41,700+

Decisions for Christ



70,000+

Counseling
Sessions



185,300+

Bible Lessons
Completed



44,000+

Services/
Bible Classes



20,700+

Staff
Interactions



700,000+

Attended
Services/Bible Classes



23

US States

23

Countries

70

Chaplains -
US Domestic

161

Chaplains -
Internationally



2024

Global Ministry Impact



MY BACKGROUND

- Raised in a non-Christian home
- Headed towards a career in sports medicine
- Bachelor degrees from VCU in Education & Physical Therapy
- Came to faith in fall of 1970
- ThM from Dallas Theological Seminary
- Minister of Outreach in Iowa 8 years
- Associate Evangelist with Evantell 8 years
- Joined GNG in March 1996 and in my 30th year
- Trained chaplains nationally and internationally

APPLYING BIBLICAL WISDOM TO ENGAGEMENTS BEHIND BARS



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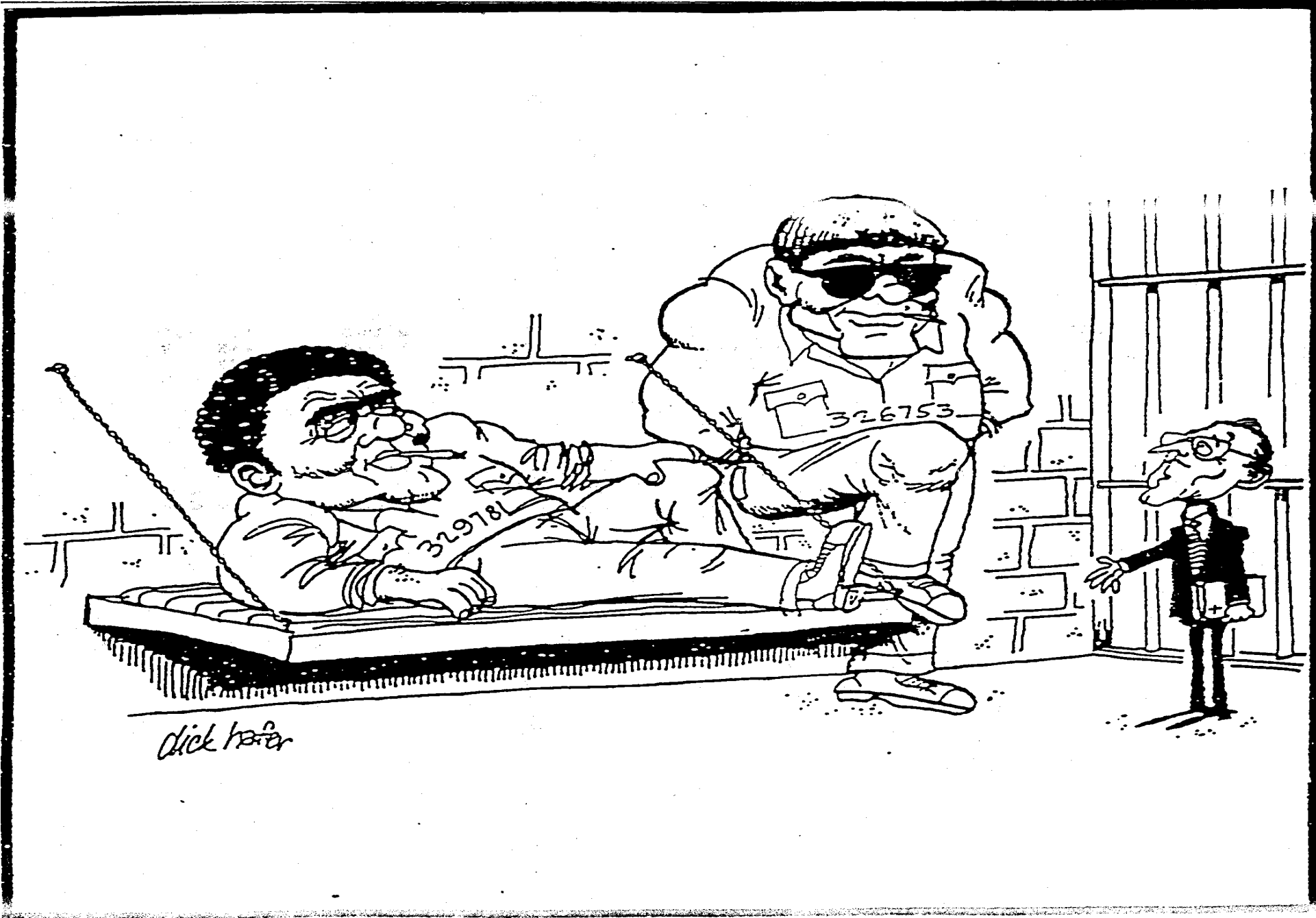
■ *Who do you think can be the biggest help or hindrance to your ministry behind bars?*

The correctional staff!

Other volunteers!

And you!





- “ ■ *Avoid two extremes in your spiritual conversations:*
- ▷ *Being too people driven*
 - ▷ *Being too method driven*



“ ■ *What biblical guidance would you want to apply that might enhance the receptivity of others to your ministry?*



There are four areas of influence that provide guidance for your interactions with inmates in a correctional setting . . .

1. Legal guidelines
2. Correctional guidelines

And to these I'll add two more . . .

3. Biblical principles
4. Practical consideration for the person

That sequence leads to this obvious question . . .

**WHAT BIBLICAL
PRINCIPLES SHOULD
INFLUENCE HOW YOU
RELATE TO PEOPLE?**



Four biblical passages urge you to display balance.

1 TIMOTHY 2:1-4

- v. 1 I urge that entreaties (and) prayers, petitions (and) thanksgivings,
be made on behalf of all men,
- v. 2 for kings, and all who are in authority,
in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life
in all godliness and dignity.
- v. 3 This is good and acceptable
in the sight of God our Savior,
- v. 4 who desires all men to be saved
and to come to the knowledge of the truth.

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- v. 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition,
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COLOSSIANS 4:2-4

- v. 2 Devote yourselves to prayer,
 keeping alert in it
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 that God may open up to us a door for the word,
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COLOSSIANS 4:5-6

- v. 5 Conduct yourselves with wisdom
toward outsiders,
making the most of the opportunity.
- v. 6 Let your speech always be with grace,
seasoned, *as it were*, with salt,
so that you may know how you should respond
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HOW DO YOU MAINTAIN BALANCE?

- Remember that God desires all people to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:1-4).
- But God commands us to communicate truth to them gently (2 Tim. 2:24-26)!
- Remember that God must provide an open door to share Christ (Col. 4:2-4).
- But God commands us to walk through that door with wisdom (Col. 4:5-6)!

**HOW DO YOU DISPLAY
WISDOM AS YOU INTERACT
WITH OTHERS ABOUT
SPIRITUAL TRUTH?**



These passages of Scripture tell us how!

1ST

**BE SPIRITUALLY SENSITIVE AND
OPPORTUNISTIC.**

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2ND

**START FROM THE OTHER PERSON'S
PERSPECTIVE, NOT YOURS!**

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-22

- v. 19 For though I am free from all *men*,
I have made myself a slave to all,
that I might win more;
- v. 20 to the Jews I became as a Jew,
that I might win Jews;
to those who are under the Law, as under the Law
that I might win those who are under the Law;
- v. 21 to those who are without law, as without law
that I might win those who are without law;
- v. 22 to the weak, I became weak,
that I might win the weak.
I have become all things to all men,
that I may by all means save some.

This means you must:

- *Accept* them . . .
as they are, regardless of their background.
- *Adapt* to them . . .
because of their background.
- *Appeal* to them . . .
by building a bridge based on their background.

3RD

**USE GOOD JUDGMENT TO PUT THE OTHER
PERSON AT EASE.**

MATTHEW 10:16

Behold, I send you out
as sheep
in the midst of wolves;
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- You *will* interact with others who are skeptical or hostile.
- You *must* display a non-threatening presence to “disarm” people.
- And since it is not your role to establish facility policy, but to respond based on facility policy . . .

BE CAUTIOUS WITH YOUR WORDING!

- You never say things like . . .
 - *I can't allow you to have that.*
 - *I can't give you that.*
 - *I can't approve that.*
- Because you are under facility authority, you say things like:
 - *Facility policy doesn't allow that, however it allows you to . . .*
 - *Facility policy allows you to practice your faith by . . .*
 - *The facility allows that and for me to facilitate that for you by . . .*

4TH

**PRAY FOR BOLDNESS AS YOU SENSE A
POSSIBLE OPEN DOOR.**

Grant to your servants that with all boldness they may speak your word . . .

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they spoke the word of God with boldness (Acts 4:29-31).*

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5TH

**USE QUESTIONS TO LEAD PEOPLE TO A
DISCOVERY OF SPIRITUAL TRUTH.**

Jesus often used questions when relating to His followers:

- Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?
- Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?
- But who do you say that I am?

Jesus used questions with those who opposed Him:

- Which is easier to say . . . “Your sins are forgiven you,” or to say, “Arise, take up your bed and walk?”
- What do you think about the Christ?
- Whose Son is He?

6TH

**ENGAGE OTHERS IN CONVERSATION INSTEAD
OF “PREACHING” AT THEM.**

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**IF NEEDED –
BACK AWAY FROM THE CONVERSATION!**

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**OBTAIN PERMISSION BEFORE PRESENTING
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10TH

LEARN TO USE QUESTIONS EFFECTIVELY!

How?

- To discern interest in spiritual things in a nonthreatening way.
- To increase the desire for the person to listen.
- To move the conversation toward spiritual truth.
- To obtain permission to interact with them about biblical truth.

Beginning of each bible class . . .

Sliding door at dorm . . .

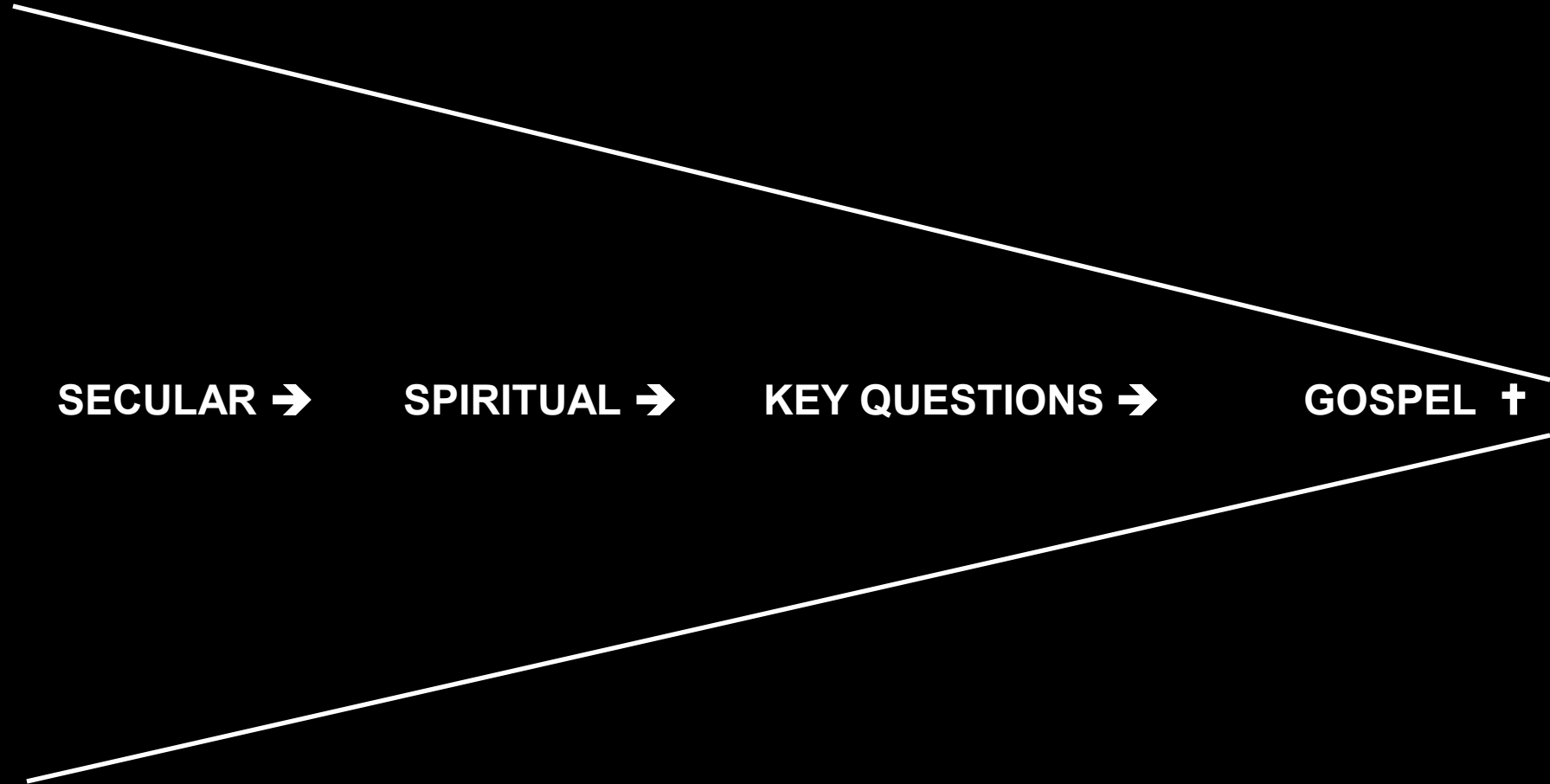
HOW DO YOU DISPLAY PRACTICAL CONSIDERATION FOR THE PERSON?



*In obtaining permission to share biblical truth . . .
and how you obtain it!*

Especially as to how you turn conversations to spiritual things!

AS TIME PASSES DURING THE CONVERSATION . . .



ALLOW IT TO FLOW FROM SECULAR TO SPIRITUAL SUBJECTS.

Here's a quick explanation of the key points.

1. Begin by praying that God will provide an “open door” for the gospel.

2. Don't start by talking, ask questions that encourage them to talk!

3. Engage in ordinary, everyday, non-threatening, casual conversation that usually revolves around three main subjects:
- Where they're from (local or from out of town?)
 - What they do (student or professional person?)
 - Who they know (family or close friends?)

How do you know if you should “go for it”?

If they're receptive to you as a person, that *may* be an opportunity to talk further and *may* become an opportunity to talk about spiritual things.

If they're *not* receptive to you as a person, back off!

4. As you converse be sensitive to natural opportunities you may have to smoothly move the conversation to spiritual things based on something they already said:

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 - a. Them: “I lost my best friend in a car accident last week.” [Or] “My wife walked out on me.” [Or] “My company downsized and I lost my job.”
You: “That’s horrible, how are you handling that?”
 - b. Them: “I’m not handling things very well, but a friend at church is praying for me.” [Or] “With all the turmoil in the world, I don’t know what to expect next.” [Or] “I’m still trying to find peace in my life.”
You: “I know what you mean. Some people find comfort in their faith.”

5. As you converse and listen, ask questions based on something they already said that focuses more directly on spiritual things:

5. As you converse and listen, ask questions **based on something they already said** that focuses more directly on spiritual things:
- “Have you ever thought about how spiritual things may relate to that?”
 - “Are you interested in spiritual things?”
 - “That’s an interesting statement . . . what is your spiritual background?”
 - “Would you tell me about that?”

6. As you converse and listen, ask questions that enables them to give you clear permission to discuss spiritual truth:

6. As you converse and listen, ask questions **that enables them to give you clear permission** to discuss spiritual truth:
- “As a Christian, the only way I can respond to your question is from a biblical viewpoint. Would you like me to do that?”
 - “Well again, the perspective I’d use to comment on that is based on the Bible. “Would you like me to do that?”

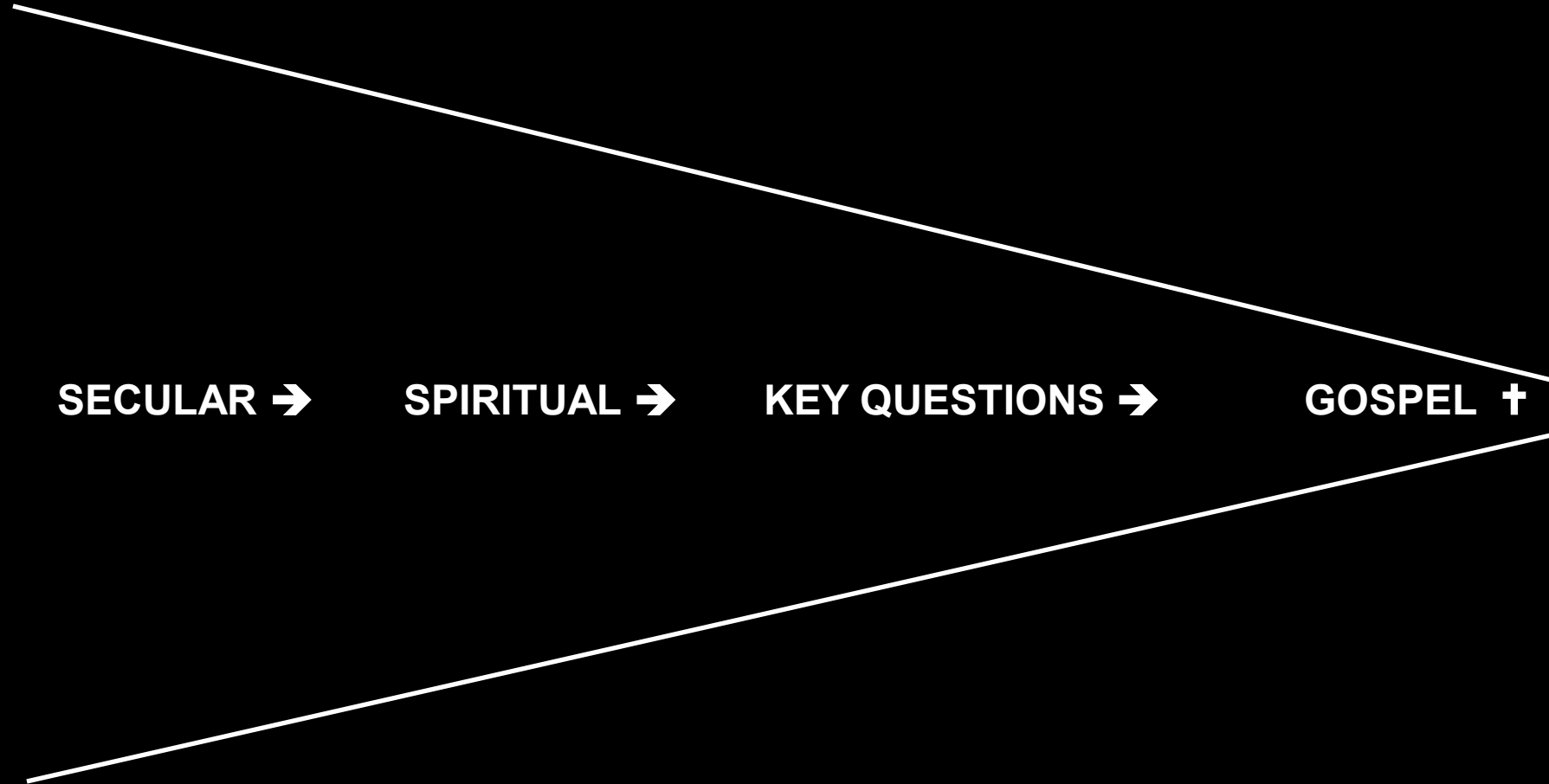
7. Ask specific questions that *may* enable you to present the gospel:

- “May I ask you a very personal question?”
- “Have you come to the point spiritually where you know you’d go to *heaven*, or are you somewhere along the way?”
- “If you were to die and God asked you, ‘Why should I let you into *heaven*?’ what would you tell Him?”
- “Has anyone ever shown you from the Bible how you could know you’d go to *heaven*?”
- “If I could show you how you could know your sins are forgiven and you could go to *heaven*, would that interest you?”
- “May I do that?”

8. Clearly dialogue with them about the gospel!

(In diagram form, the strategy works like this.)

AS TIME PASSES DURING THE CONVERSATION . . .



“TAKE” THEM AS FAR AS GOD HAS PREPARED THEM TO GO!

WHAT MUST YOU CONSIDER IN RESPONDING TO INMATES' RELIGIOUS REQUESTS?



1. Legal guidelines
2. Correctional guidelines
3. Biblical principles
4. Practical consideration for the person

But I'd change the order to this!

1. Biblical principles
2. Practical consideration for the person
3. Correctional guidelines
4. Legal guidelines

Kwabia

Questions?





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