**HOPE INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

**COURSE:** Relational Evangelism

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**DO YOU HAVE TO USE THE KENNEDY QUESTION TO USE THE IAAR?** I wrote this in response to the question, “Do you have to use the Kennedy Question” to use the IAAR?”Right to the point, NO.I suppose one could share the IAAR without ever using the Kennedy Question. the two can stand independent of the other.If you have a way or ways to bring them up with others and find a high percentage of them accepting the offer, go for it. Do it. Share with me what you are doing. It might help me and I’ll share it with others.

My biggest concern is knowing how to get those outside of the church interested in hearing the Good News using the IAAR. It is much easier when someone has visited the church. **Now having said, that let me share a lot more about the Kennedy Question and then I’ll share some other methods that can be used to bring up the IAAR.**

While the KQ is NOT the only method I use, it is the most productive and effective in helping me set up the IAAR with all kinds of people. **I would be remiss NOT to share the Kennedy Question and how to use it with you.** You may chose not to use it. That is your call and I respect that. But if used properly it is powerful, powerful, powerful. I can pretty well guarantee you that if you learn how to use it properly you will have more opportunities to do the IAAR than by not using it; double or triple the opportunities with those outside of the church. In all the years I’ve ***carefully used it*** I can’t recall one time anyone ever acted upset, irritated, offended or attacked by my using it. How it is used is very important. I am not an aggressive, attacking kind of person. By nature I am timid, reserved, shy and insecure. But learning how to use this in a way that fits my personality has allowed me to share the Gospel with hundreds of people. I have confidence in using it because I have seen it work. I’m kind, gentle and respectful but I’m not shy when it comes to this. I don’t want to offend people any more than the next. I don’t want to corner or make people feel trapped by my maneuvers. And the way I do it, none of that happens.

**What does the Kennedy question do?**

There is an old saying that you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink. That is true. But the secret is this: No one said you can’t salt his oats! The question involved in this is how do I even get people outside of Christ interested in even going through the lAAR with me? I need to create a felt need and interest if it isn’t already there. I need to “salt their oats.”

If someone has visited our congregation and they are expressing interest in learning more about our congregation or doctrine, then I might not need the Kennedy Question. They are usually already interested. I will talk about my approach with them later. But for most people I meet out and about from my mechanic, my chiropractor, my computer repair man and the hundreds of others who have NO interest in church and are not really interested in talking much about Jesus, the issue becomes how do I “salt their oats” to create interest in what I believe they need to hear and I want to share with them? How do I get to the point of being able to share Jesus with them?

By arguing with them? No.

By showing how what they believe is false and ludicrous? No.

I need to salt their oats or create a thirst or interest in Jesus and why they might need to hear about him.

Is there a quick way to do that, within a 30-40 minute conversation over coffee or lunch?

Yes.

How do I do that? It is by creating interest in knowing how to be sure about their having life after death among other things. It might come through challenging their understanding or false ideas of what Christianity is all about and being willing to listen to a presentation of what it is really all about. If they listen, the Holy Spirit will be working in their heart. If they listen, the comparison of whatever it is that they currently believe or are living will be shown up for what it is: “The way that seems right but ends in death.”

I won’t be very effective if I try and destroy their atheism, religion or life style by judging them or pointing out all that is wrong with it. How does that work when someone tries to do that with you?

There can be serious discussions and friendly debate but at some point any debate or conversation is useless if the other person doesn’t hear a clear presentation of who Jesus is and what He did for us.

For me the Kennedy Question has been the golden key to many, many people. It is the giant salt lick.

It opens doors that I have found closed and it can do it quickly. It doesn’t open the door to accept Jesus but it opens the door to hear about Jesus. It continues to amaze me!

I don’t use it all the time with all people, but I would guess I use it two-thirds of the time. I just use the first Kennedy question. I rarely use the second. There is rarely need to. The first question is, “Have you come to the place in your life where you could say for sure that if you were to die today you would go to heaven?”

When I get to the moment or point of asking the Kennedy Question, I always prepare them for it. I don’t beat them over the head with it. I will ask it at some point when I get to the M of FORM. (I explain FORM a little later.) I prepare them by saying, “I’d like to ask you a thought-provoking question. It makes you stop and really think. It is pretty deep.” Then I calmly ask the KQ. Most often they say “No” or “I’m not sure.” **That is what I want to hear**. If that is the case for them, that sets us up to move forward.

Then I ask them, “If you could be sure would you want to be?” I haven’t had anyone say NO yet. I don’t use this with atheists. There is a twist in it with them. I’ll explain that later. I don’t use the Kennedy Question the way Evangelism Explosion teaches and uses it. They use it “on the spot” in order to share Jesus right then in a short presentation. It is most often done with strangers at their door, in a park, at the beach, etc. My goal is to set up the IAAR presentations for another time. The KQ is just ONE tool that will often help me do that.

I KNOW that most of the people I’m interacting with outside of the church NEED to hear the Gospel. I’m prepared. I need to take the initiative. I need to salt the oats. It needs to be intentional. I need to be looking. I need to be willing to ask, to offer, to be rejected if that be the case. But the interesting thing is that with this approach, more often than not, people are interested.

Before I use the Kennedy Question, I normally go through FORM with others. That is, we show genuine interest in them. We don’t talk about us, our church, our preacher, etc. We start with talking about them. I’ve used this FORM to start conversations with people I’ve met in all kinds of places and situations. It is such a great help to me. I just follow the outline.

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ach time it is a little different depending on the person and their responses. Relax. I’m not in a rush.

The FORM might take 20-40 minutes depending on how they answer and what they say. I go with them in the conversation. This helps me learn a lot about them and I’m showing interest in them. I ask about their:

F-family - where they live, how long they have been there, if they have much family around, etc.

O-occupation or line of work. What is their line of work, how did they get into it, what do they do?

R-religious background. Do you have any religious background? We just listen.

M-message. Our message is to find out if there is need and interest in hearing the IAAR. This takes five minutes. This is where the Kennedy Question or one of the other methods is used. I teach that the approach is often more important than the message. Now the message of Jesus is obviously the most important but if my approach is poor, it might ruin the opportunity to share the message. If my approach is too aggressive, I will scare them off. If my approach is too gentle and I never really get down to brass tacks, they will likely not sense the need. Jesus told his disciples when He was sending them out to preach to “be crafty as a serpent and gentle as a dove.” We need to be crafty. That means be smart and wise about what we are trying to do and how we approach people. And be gentle. Don’t give anyone reason to fear you due to your approach any more than they would fear a dove.

Using this approach I’m talking about here is crafty. It is salting the oats. It is gentle, if done right.

If people don’t sense or feel they are LOST, why would they ever be interested in hearing how to be SAVED? If they aren’t thirsty how are we going to get them to drink? If using the Kennedy Question will help insure that, I’ll use it. If there are other ways or better ways, use them.

I encounter MANY situations where I probably will NOT have another encounter or meeting with the person. That MOMENT might be the only one I will have for the rest of my life with them. So I don’t want to ATTACK them but I don’t want to lose the opportunity either. I know that if I ask them if they want to learn more about Jesus or learn about our church they are going to say no. (I’ve been doing this out there for 40 years.) **The KQ helps me cut through hours, days, weeks or maybe months of just getting together and hanging out in the name of “becoming a friend” so I can share Jesus. In these cases I won’t have that opportunity.**

But this is so cool. I can come away from a 30-90 minute, first time meeting over coffee or a meal with someone having set up a time to get together again to do the IAAR. They don’t feel forced or pressured. They are interested. I’ll drive to where they are. I’ll fly to where they are. I’ll do it on skype if it is too far.

I always give them my phone number. **SO if they wake up the next morning and are thinking, “What did I do in saying yes?” they can call me and cancel. In 30 years of doing this I haven’t had that**

**happen yet**.

I don’t start the first lesson at the time I use the question or I use any other approach. I set up a meeting for the next week, or whenever it is possible. In the case of my cousin’s daughters was a few months down the road. There was no other way for them at the time. I wasn’t going to force it to be earlier. A few months later is better than never. I don’t want to lose the opportunity by pressing to do it in my agenda and time frame.

I prefer doing the presentations live, that is face-to-face. That makes it much more personal. I have done it on Skype when there was no other reasonable option. We still see each other. That can work and it has.

I will often use the Kennedy Question in a first conversation when:

1. Believe I won’t see them again, or for a long time.
2. Their background story sets them up for it.

If it is someone I will be seeing frequently or occasionally I will often wait for succeeding meetings/encounters before using the KQ. That is a gut call at that point. There is one variation of the KQ I will use with atheists and agnostics which I’ll share later.

I am a sensitive person toward outsiders. I don’t like offending or scaring off people. But learning how to use this question has given me many opportunities I’m confident I otherwise wouldn’t have had: Cab drivers, doctors, dentists, chiropractors, rock singers, hit men, drug addicts, alcoholics, house wives, rich, poor, educated, poorly educated, religious etc. You name it. It is like a knife. You need to learn how to use a knife skillfully. One can use a knife to kill or one can use it as a sharp scalpel to perform a delicate operation. Used poorly or aggressively the Kennedy Question can kill the conversation and opportunity. You could actually apply that to our entire approach to others. Used carefully it can perform a delicate operation, offering the Gospel to people. It cuts through the chaff and gets to the heart of the matter. It comes out of relationship. It comes after going through FORM. I don’t want to talk about churches, that is for later. I don’t get off into apologetics at this point. The need for that might come later.

I have dozens and dozens of stories where it has served me and my goal well.

I humbly ask Christian leaders, “How is your method working?” Do what works but if what you do or don’t do doesn’t work why keep doing it? I’m not saying my way is the only way. That isn’t true. I’m not saying it is the best way. All I know is that it works. I was taught this and then learned through trial and error.

I often ask people, “When is the last time you heard your preacher share a personal evangelism story with people who aren’t attending the church? Their neighbors, relatives, associates, etc., that they have lead to Jesus?” The common response is, “I can’t remember one.” I’m not talking about people who came forward in a service. I’m talking about people who have never attended the church. My buddy Jim Larsen talks about in the past doing what he now calls “hyena evangelism.” He has changed. He asks, “Have you ever watched a pack of hyenas hunting on TV? Who do they go after?” The answer is the weak, the old, babies, injured or the isolated. Jim said that is what he used to do.

“The family that walked into the service for the first time? Easy pickins. The kids they sent off to a week of camp and came home inspired? Easy to dunk them. Easy pickins.”

While we don’t discount those folks, it is tragically limiting us in getting to all the lost who never walk into our facility. I know there are many ways to skin a cat. Do what works for you. Share it with me. It might help me! If someone has something better, please tell me so I can start using it.

**OTHER WAYS TO BRING UP AND OFFER THE IAAR PRESENTATIONS**

I attempt to get to where I can ask or offer: IF YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED … When I ask it that way, the others understand something really important. I am saying to them I will only be sharing with them IF they are interested. If they aren’t, it won’t be happening. I won’t be forcing it on them. This puts them in control. They like that. They appreciate it. That is being respectful, gentle and kind.

Here are some different kinds of situations we can encounter. This is just a short summary.

**Interested Prospects who have visited the church or some activity of the church.**

These are often the easiest. They have interest. They have taken the first step toward us. We didn’t GO, but they CAME. So after visiting with them and going through FORM, and I get to M, I ask, “If you would be interested I’d be glad to come back and take you through four presentations called IAAR. They are about 30 minutes long. We do one a week. They will show you what is at the heart and center of what we believe and teach as a church. Would you be interested in that?”

**Parents of children or youth attending.**

The kids come to something but the parents don’t. We need to try and visit the family in their home. While there, we express our pleasure that their kids are attending. We go through FORM with them. When we get to M, the message, we usually say, “If you would be interested we would like to come back and share four, 30-minute presentations with you about what we believe and teach. We like to share this with the parents of any kids participating with us. We have found that most parents would like to know what their kids are being taught and we feel it is important to share it. We have nothing to hide and want you to feel comfortable knowing what we are teaching your kids. Would that be possible?” That has worked many times. The kids often sit in on the studies, too. We have won families to Jesus where the parents had never attended the church first. It is pretty exciting. There have been times when I have used the KQ with the parents, too. It depends on what they say in response to the R-religion.

**The next situation relates to those you have known for a long time but never had a serious conversation with them about their faith or Jesus.**

I don’t need to go through FO with them of FORM. I know most of that stuff. So I go to something like the following. I have done this with relatives, my mechanic, and others. I look for an appropriate time to go in this direction in our conversation. If I’m looking for it, I will find it. Some time I might just need to jump in the pool and see where it goes. I’ve NEVER had anyone act offended by this. I think most are favorable to my even being interested in them and this area of their life. For many it becomes an invitation to share their beliefs, whatever they might be.

Here’s what I say, ”We have known each other for some time but I’ve never heard if you have or hold to any particular religion or not. Do you have a religious background?” And I let them respond. It is very interesting. Most love to talk about it even if they have none or have had a bad experience and dumped it long ago, which is a common scenario I run in to. I listen, and then from there I use one of the approaches, Kennedy Question or “Since you have become an adult …” I’ll explain that later when talking about atheists. The conversation may lead down another path but my goal will usually be to make the offer, “If you would be interested …” I have used this with many relatives, friends and acquaintances such as my mechanic.

**People of other religions.**

It depends. Often I use the Kennedy Question. I KNOW they can’t answer yes. No other major religion allows that. So then when they say NO, or YOU CAN BE SURE, I ask, “If you could be would you want to be?” They always say yes. Then I go on to make my offer. I also explain that God wants us to be sure, he doesn’t want us living our life out and dying in fear. I build on that. This includes Catholics. Catholic theology doesn’t not allow one to be sure they are going to heaven. I’ve done the IAAR with hundreds of people with Catholic backgrounds.

**Atheists, agnostics.**

Remember FORM. When I get to R and find out (if I didn’t already know) I will ask a few probing questions. I don’t attack their faith, beliefs or lack of them. I don’t go off into an apologetic defense of the FAITH. I will ask them a little about their beliefs, whatever those might be. How long have you believed that? What led you into those beliefs? How do your beliefs work in your life? What do you believe happens when a person dies? What do you base that belief on?

There are a couple different approaches I have successfully used with them. All of them are not interested but I have quite a number of friends who are ex-atheists who went through the IAAR and accepted Jesus. I have a friend who is building a new congregation of young people, most of whom were acclaimed atheists that he has taken through the IAAR.

**So here is offer number 1:**

Since you’ve become an adult have you ever had the opportunity to sit down with someone and hear a serious presentation of what Christianity and Jesus are all about? (99 percent of the people I meet have not. So I’m pretty confident their answer will be NO, or not really.) “If you would be interested, I would be willing to get together with you over the coming weeks and share four 30-minute presentations that give an excellent explanation about it all. I normally do one a week just to spread it out. It would be a lot to do at one time. They aren’t about church or religion. They are just about what God has done and asks for from mankind. There is a lot of messed up thinking about that subject. This clearly lays it out. They aren’t high pressure. I’ll just show you what it says, leave a copy with you and go on my way till the next week. If you have questions, we can discuss them, too. Would you be interested in that?” I often follow that up with, “In the end you still might not believe it but at least you will know what it is all about.” This approach has worked with many.

**Here is approach number 2:”**

“What do you believe the Bible says a person has to do to go to the heaven it talks about and, thus, have eternal life?” Most all of them get it wrong. They often say something like, “You have to keep the 10 commandments, go to church, be good, keep the Golden Rule.” When I hear that my response is, “That is interesting. That is what many people think. You might be interested in knowing it doesn’t say that. In fact if it said that I probably wouldn’t be a Christian. The truth is no one can count on having eternal life that the Bible talks about through those ways. IF YOU WOULD BE INTERESTED, I would be glad to get together with you and share four 30-minute presentations that will clearly show you what it is all about. You might be surprised. There is no pressure put on you to do something you don’t want to do. In the end you still might not believe it but at least you will accurately know what you don’t believe. What you believe now is wrong and inaccurate. Would you be interested?” At times I even add, “If we get started and at any point you don’t want to continue just tell me and we will quit.” In 30 years of doing this that only happened once.

**Not everyone we make the offer to will want to.**

**Not everyone we share them with will accept Jesus.**

**Not everyone who accepts Jesus will stay with Him.**

**BUT APPROACH WE MUST!**

**BUT MAKE THE OFFER WE MUST!**

*There is particular concern about the appearance of a “love them and leave them” mentality in which people who do not respond are written off as we go out to carve other notches in our guns.  My perception from your presentations is that the offer to share arises out of relationship and that the relationship is not abandoned if the outcome of the sharing is negative.* I think I can say without fear of being wrong, those who use the IAAR are much less likely to “love and leave them” than those who use a one-shot method or those who steer everyone into a class offered at church. Once you have experienced it you will understand.

A side issue I teach about is that you **don’t have to become a friend with someone before you can share the Gospel but you certainly need to be friendly**. I have shared the Gospel with hundreds of people who were NOT friends, but we certainly developed various kinds of bonds through the process. Some have become friends whether they listened to the presentations, whether they accepted Christ or not. I can sit down with someone for 30-40 minutes in their home, in a restaurant or other place and leave with an appointment to start meeting with them the next week to do the IAAR. With most of them I would NEVER have the opportunity to spend enough time with beforehand to become a friend and then offer the IAAR. There aren’t enough hours in the week and in some cases it would be inappropriate or just impossible for any number of reasons. But after spending four meetings with people, normally in their home going through these presentations, you have likely grown closer to the people. h, I have so many beautiful stories of this happening!

We’ve hopefully gained their trust during the time that we set up the presentation and then did the four presentations. We likely will have IF we aren’t being pushy or obnoxious or religious or phony. They know they can trust me. They will listen. They see me as being kind and gentle. They might come back to you in the future knowing they can trust you. You know them better. They know you better. You have gone through the “nine months” of pregnancy with them in their spiritual experience of learning more about Jesus. Time will tell if the nine months was actually the four weeks of the presentations or if they need more time, say four months or four years. Now, granted some leave their babies on the steps of the hospital, but a sincere, caring loving Christian is not going to do that.

My course doesn’t deal in-depth with what else to do to maintain contact. It is a limited focus learning how to use the IAAR. There are hundreds of other books and programs as to how to help new Christians grow, how to get them involved in the congregation or group, etc. But hardly any of them train people in how to get people to Jesus, teaching them or sharing the Good News with them one on one first. Obviously a caring Christian is not going to drop them if they aren’t interested in the studies. Obviously a caring Christian is not going to drop them if they don’t accept Christ. It is a process. The people (like us) often have a lot of baggage to clear up, issues to clear up, questions to answer. Stay in contact with them. Help them through the process. Satan has blinded them. Help them see the light. Invite them to dinner, lunch, hang out with them, etc., if that is a practical or appropriate thing to do. Email, phone them, etc. Invite them to your group, congregation, events. Give them books to read, I almost always do that (“More Than a Carpenter,” “A Reason for God,” and articles that will help with issues they are dealing with).

Don’t overload them or inundate them with you or stuff but at least be there and be available. You might see other opportunities to get involved in their life. Be wise and careful, but be alert to opportunities to do so. Be careful about opposite sex situations. Don’t let others become an idol for you, or a “dragon,” taking over your life. Don’t YOU become the focus of attention. Keep Jesus at the center. Be careful not to get trapped in a help situation from which there is no escape. You are an Ambassador of the King, you are not the message. YOU do not have all the answers. YOU can’t fix all situations or rescue all from some of their predicaments.

“SEEKING ALLAH, FINDING JESUS” should be required reading for all. It is a great example of being a dear friend with someone for a long time before, in this case, they became a Christian. I read the book. It should be required reading for Christians. I use this quote in my class. Quote from a book by Nabeel Qureshi; Seeking Allah, Finding Jesus. This is a great read. It is the story of his becoming a Christian.

The following is a strong comment he makes. It follows his talking about stranger or street evangelism, that is, a Christian trying to share the Gospel with him and thinking he can convert him after a brief presentation.

***Unfortunately, I have found that many Christians think of evangelism the same way, foisting Christian beliefs on strangers in chance encounters.  The problem with this approach is that the gospel requires a radical life change, and not many people are about to listen to strangers telling them to change the way they live.  What do they know about others' lives?***

***On the other hand if a true friend shares the exact same message with heartfelt sincerity, speaking to specific circumstances and struggles then the message is heard loud and clear.***

***Effective evangelism requires relationships.  There are very few exceptions.***

***In my case, I knew of no Christian who truly cared about me, no one who had been a part of my life through thick and thin.  I had plenty of Christian acquaintances, and I'm sure they would have been my friends if I had become a Christian, but that kind of friendship is conditional.  There were none that I knew who cared about me unconditionally. Since no Christian cared about me, I did not care about their message.***

It can’t be stated any stronger than that, can it? Be with them. Love them. Listen. Always be praying and ready to take the next step with them.

DON’T GIVE UP ON ANYONE!

*But would you share a little more (as you have experienced it personally and corporately) about continuing to nurture a relationship of care and service for those you deal with whatever their response to the IAAR might be?*

I have actually been addressing this some in the part just above. I wrote a book years ago titled *“Smart Fishing.”*

5 groups of people.

You need a strategy in every ministry for each one or you have holes in your fishing nets. There are hundreds of books and programs on what to do with Christians moving forward. In fact, I wrote a book years back on having a balanced ministry. It is titled “Smart Fishing.” I address the issue that a congregation needs to have a strategy cover the five groups of people they will deal with and to not have one for each group is to have holes in their fishing nets. The five groups are:

* The LOST in their community.
* PROPSECTS, or those who visit their congregation or activities.
* NEW CHRISTIANS, or those they reach for Jesus.
* OLDER CHRITIANS. I define them as anyone in your midst who has been a Christian for more than a year. That isn’t a biblical idea, but what I use just for sake of illustration and planning.
* MIA’S. or missing in action. This applies to all those who have gone through the process but are gone

.

As we lay out a strategy for each area staying with people is a part of the whole process. The truth is, we do a poor job staying with those who even become Christians. Little one-on-one attention and equipping takes place.

My mentor in the ministry told me years ago, “John, what we do with new Christians is what they will spend most of their life in Christ doing.” And what do we do with them? We tell them “Sit and listen to me preach. Sit in my class and listen to me teach. Sit in my group and listen to me. Sit in my seminar and listen to me, etc. And what do they do? They sit in the pew the rest of their life doing very little and we spend most our lives trying to get them out of the pew.

I have a whole lot to say on that subject. I do workshops with churches on this issue.