



Faith: An Identity or Brand?

Is faith an identity or brand, and how do you bring it up in conversation in social settings – especially during the holidays?

Nick Blanchard and Elaine Szeto, leaders of CTK's Toastmasters Club shared their insights on this and more at the December 13, 2017 BELIEVES session.



The mission of Toastmasters International is to provide a supportive and positive learning experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth.

To set the stage for the discussion, Blanchard and Szeto first gave a brief overview of the ten Toastmaster Projects that people have the opportunity to work through in Toastmaster sessions:

Overview of Toastmaster Projects

- **Project 1, The Ice Breaker** – Let's see what skills you already have by telling us about a subject you know the most about: yourself.
- **Project 2, Organize Your Speech** – Every speech must have a clear opening, body, and conclusion.
- **Project 3, Get to the Point** – What is the point you are trying to get across by delivering your speech?
- **Project 4, How to Say It** – Be efficient, deliberate, and powerful with your word choice.
- **Project 5, Your Body Speaks** – Techniques such as working the room and using hand gestures can improve the effectiveness of your speech.
- **Project 6, Vocal Variety** – Focus on your voice tone and pitch to emphasize key points in a speech and to keep your audience engaged.
- **Project 7, Research Your Topic** – Carefully support your points and opinions with specific facts, examples and illustrations gathered through research.
- **Project 8, Get Comfortable with Visual Aids** – The use of props and slides can improve the effectiveness of your speech.
- **Project 9, Persuade with Power** – Persuade listeners to adopt your viewpoint or ideas or to take some action.
- **Project 10, Inspire Your Audience** – Appeal to your audience's emotions to inspire them to achieve higher levels of beliefs or achievement.

Of all the ten Toastmaster Projects, the projects Szeto and Blanchard felt were most important were: The Ice Breaker, Organizing Your Speech, Get to the Point, Your Body Speaks, Vocal Variety, and Research Your Topic.

“You would think it’s obvious but it is amazing how many people don’t do it,” Blanchard said when speaking about the importance of organizing your speech.”

Blanchard went on to state that his mention of the importance of vocal variety as an important project was especially geared towards guys.

“Vocal variety is particularly important for guys because typically we’re monotone.”

Szeto emphasized the Your Body Speaks project because she feels everyone is selling himself or herself when communicating.

When it came to emphasizing the importance of the “Research Your Topic” project, Szeto shared a rather personal story to illustrate based on the need to have to really know her faith.

“A lot of my family is atheist,” Szeto shared as she alluded to the challenges she faced when bringing up faith with her family and feeling confident and convicted to share her beliefs in conversation. “It’s not my job to sell faith – that’s God’s job. But people do come around. One day after many years my dad told me, ‘Tell me about Jesus?’”

Blanchard and Szeto dialogued further with the audience and then gave them the opportunity to practice speaking about faith with one another, advising everyone to keep the following key points in mind throughout:

Key Points for Holiday Event or Cocktail Party Conversation

- **Respect the viewpoints of the other person. Avoid arguments.**
- **Show genuine interest in the other person by asking them LOTS of questions and being a good listener.**
- **Smile and use techniques such as vocal variety to keep the other person engaged.**
- **Try to get the other person to like you. Have the mindset that if you are bored with the conversation, it is your fault.**
- **Use the techniques in How to Win Friends and Influence People by Dale Carnegie.**

BELIEVES kicks off the new year on January 10, 2017, with what is sure to be a thought-provoking panel discussion on “Can Prayer Exist in Business” featuring Chris Patton, owner of Mike Patton Automotive and founder/author of ChristianFaithatWork.com; Veronica Squires, Chief Development Officer at Good Samaritan Health Center; and John Diamond, an operator of multiple Chick-fil-A restaurants in Atlanta.

