

Part of a series of messages I wrote to equip and encourage new Online Missionaries

## Part 2 – Writing a better first response

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**Keep it short** - especially for your very first communication and especially if they have left no comment. It is also good to take note of the web site they visited. If the extension is “mobi” (e.g. 4stepstogod.mobi) then they are very likely using a cell phone and this may be their only internet access. They will find it quite difficult to read your 500 word epistle on a tiny phone screen.

Even in a short message, many Online Missionaries try to include at least one website so the person can explore the gospel further even if they choose not to write back. (E.g. LookToJesus.com or 4Laws.com). Or many try to include at least one Bible verse.

**Make it personal.** We have probably all received e-mails which use our name in the greeting or subject line. But on closer examination we can tell that the message is an impersonal text generated by a merge from a database. Try to include something that will convince them that a living human being, who cares about them, is writing to them.

When I write to people located in Africa I let them know that I lived on that continent for many years and I worked as a high school teacher. (I don't generally mention that I was also a missionary). If I have ever visited their country, or if I know someone who has, I will try to make some mention of that. If I am writing to someone in Minnesota in January I might tell them that I am located in Florida where it is 80° *“but I bet it is not so warm up there.”* Yes (ha, ha) this is pretty lame but at least they'll know there is a real person writing them (a person with a questionable sense of humor, perhaps, but still a real person).

One online missionary suggests using an informal greeting like *“Hey”* and maybe *“Talk to ya later!”* instead of “Sincerely” Especially for younger contacts.

### **Ask Questions, Pray for them in the text of your reply.**

*What is life like in <their country>? How did you find this website? Your name is Emmanuel? Did you know that means “God with us”? I am going to pray for you now. “Lord Jesus I ask you to strengthen.....Amen.”*

**Refer to what they wrote in the comment field.** No matter what they have selected from the “drop-down” decision field, their optional comments may give you the best idea of where their heart is. And new contacts who have taken the time to write a comment also have a greater likelihood of responding back when you write to them. You could even say something as simple as, *“George, you asked about such and such. This is an important issue but I need to know a little more about you so that I can best help you... Etc,”*

**Tweak the Subject Field.** When you click reply, our system will automatically create some text for the subject field. If at all possible, try to edit this to sound more personal and friendly. In

some sensitive countries (see the list of these countries in the ARC Training Manual) you should be careful about saying anything overtly Christian in the Subject field. Your goal is to say something that will allow them to know this is not spam, but an actual response from a real person to their visit to the website.

**Pray.** Whatever words we might use, no matter how powerful our computers and slick are our websites, behind it all is a spiritual battle for souls. Prayer changes things and prayer also reminds us of the true nature of our work. Before I click SEND I might simply pray “Lord, You know <name> and You know where their heart is. Please encourage them and guide them in the truth. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

**Respond quickly.** A goal is to try to respond within 48 hours if possible. If you know you are going to be away or busy and will not be able to respond promptly to new contacts, please let your community leader know. Your account can be placed on “vacation” so you won’t receive any new contacts automatically. However be aware that your current contacts may still be writing back to you.

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If you have questions about ARC or about your online ministry:

- Review the ARC TRAINING VIDEOS and MANUAL
- Check the Volunteer Website. (<https://www.gmovolunteers.com>)
- Ask your COMMUNITY LEADER. (In ARC Mail, click on SETTINGS > GENERAL for your Community Leader’s name and e-mail address.)

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