Witnessing to a “Believer”

John Purkins faces a dilemma at work. Three days ago, John and Seth Williams had met while helping out with inventory accounting at a northeast manufacturing company. Even though they had never seen each other, John and Seth had a common friend in another division of the firm. While working on the project, they had time to just shoot the breeze on topics ranging from sports to availability of apartments in the area. At the end of the day, John somewhat hesitantly asked Seth if he attends a church, to which Seth responded, “I am a believer and was baptized several years ago. I would like to get involved in a church but the time is just not there right now.”

John was baptized as a teenager over fifteen years ago. His “walk” has been quite uneventful in that, until recently, there has been a comfort level in his faith that had never envisioned situations like this interaction with Seth. Seth’s attitude was similar to his prior to joining the Bible study group and regularly attending church. In fact, the common friend with Seth is a member of John’s morning men’s Bible study group. The question John had asked Seth about attending church was intended to be just part of workplace chatter. Yet, as he thought about it more, this exchange with Seth highlighted a problem he was struggling with. It began one day on the golf course with a deacon from his church when John had half-heartedly asked, “Which of these people is the more complete Christian, the acclaimed theologian or the poor woman who regularly attends church but has never really studied the Scriptures?” The deacon had responded matter-of-factly, “Neither.”

Actually, the question, coupled with Seth’s answer, created a real challenge for John. He had accepted the answer from the church deacon at the time primarily because he was a very new believer and the deacon had been an active member of the church for decades. However, after his brief discussion with Seth, that answer seemed a little too hasty and perhaps not well thought out. Knowing that Seth was likely in a position similar to the woman in his example, how could I, thought John, tell him that there must be more? It would sound more like the requirement of works. Despite their short meeting, John felt sure that Seth could easily recall and recite at least one of several verses that are often used in this type of situation.

• [Romans 10:9] “…If you will confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”

• [Romans 3:28] “Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

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• [Romans 5:1] “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sure, John knows there is more to living in the light of the Good News. However, his main concern with Seth is that he appeared fully at peace with his life. John is mostly worried he would jeopardize their early friendship and his possible future mentoring of Seth if he came on strong with something in the mold of James 2:17, “…..faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.”

John knows that he needs some help on how he should proceed with Seth. He decides to ask you who also is in the Bible study group for advice on how to continue. He values your opinion because you have been there for him as an informal mentor since he joined the congregation. How will you respond? He will require concrete scripturally based advice on how to work with Seth. In giving that advice, you need to understand that it is not only Seth who may need help.

ASSIGNMENT

Using a structure from Biblical principles, specify the correct approach for John to deal with his colleague who professes to already be a Christ follower.
My Scriptural Research:

Group Scriptural Research:

Decisions / Recommendations:

Primary Scriptural References: