

- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION -  
**Conversations that Connect Series – Week 1**  
**Two ears to hear with**

**Leaders notes:** This session seeks to:

- Give an introduction to the topic of evangelism, encouraging us to consider who we want to reach out to (A VERY PRACTICAL START)
- Help us together to recognise postmodern/multireligious ‘symptoms’ in those we love, along with a recognition of the benefits of a conversational approach. (PERSPECTIVE DEVELOPMENT)
- We then discuss some of the *sour notes* of our culture (KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT) ...before closing in a time of prayer and personal commitment.

The challenge exists that – if we want to be used by God to help people journey toward faith we will need some knowledge. Basic answers to many of our cultures common questions are easily found online. The Hope Project’s Gospel website, launched late in 2014, has videoed answers to common questions. Love for those outside our churches can motivate us to learn.

Suggestion: Keep the pace going in this session. There is a bit of content.

**GETTING STARTED: 15mins**

- 1. What is one of the most loving things anyone has ever done for you (excluding what Jesus has done)?
- 2. What do you think is the most loving thing a person can do for another person?
- 3. Read John 3:36. In the light of this Scripture, would you agree that sharing the Gospel may be the most loving act we could do? (Note this isn’t to say loving through actions are not also needed).

**About evangelism**

- 4. On a scale of 1-10, how strong would you say you are in the area of evangelism right now?
- 5. On the same scale, would any of you say you were stronger or weaker in

this area that you were five years ago? Why?

- 6. Now – the honest question – on the same scale, how much does it matter to you that you do, at some point, become motivated and equipped to share Christ with those around you? And why?

**DISCUSSION:**

1. Can anyone remember what Sunday’s message was about? How might you summarise it? (5mins)

(The message matching this study is about Jesus’ *conversation* with the Samaritan Woman of John 4, with the application being that our outreach can greatly benefit if we learn to ask good questions and listen to what people are really saying [aka ‘hearing conversations’]).

Comment: For this session, and the next three, we’re going to be considering how we can become better conversationlists, specifically that we might use our conversations to encourage people toward faith.

2. Exercise: If you have not done so already in the current year, each take a few minutes to reflect on the top five to ten people you know whom you would like to share the gospel with. (5mins)

- Next to each name list what you think might be the hindrances, holding them back from knowing Christ (these being for prayer and conversation)
- Then list some of their interests (these being bridges for relationship)

3. Each share about one person you would like to see come to faith (maybe use first names only), and what you think their hindrances might be. (5mins)

4. As a general discussion how close do you feel the people on your lists are to faith? (Q 4 & 5 – 20mins)

- How significant are their resistances?
- If you were to share the Gospel, how many do you think might be ready to believe?
- What do you think are the key hindrances? Are there any that you feel might be common to many of those on your lists?
- Do they believe a God exists, or might that be a hurdle that needs crossing first?
- Do any of them possibly think all religions are essentially the same? Do

people that you know really believe this?

- Do you think any of them might even see our Christian beliefs as a little offensive, because we believe our beliefs to be actually right?
- How do you deal with that?

(Provided our manner is graceful – and the criticism thus not justified – they are declaring that there is no actual religious truth. The problem is, that is a truth claim [It's self-contradictory]. Tolerance is not about forcing people to give up beliefs they don't like. It's about people not forcing their beliefs on others, and being tolerant toward people with different beliefs).

5. Now, many of those who are not Christians in our culture are not really interested in talking about their beliefs. Why do you think that might be? And how can we respond to that?

6. In the Sunday message, our Pastor talked about 'Sour notes'. What was all that about?

(Sour notes are viewpoints that are in some way illogical. They are great doors for conversation, enabling us to encourage people toward faith, one step at a time. However, we never criticize other beliefs. Nor do we openly disagree. With wisdom and tact we help them discover things for themselves through our wise use of questions, thus helping them take steps closer to Jesus, one step at a time).

7. Exercise (15mins): Now for some practice at recognising sour notes. Break into four groups, and each discuss what the real issue behind each of these objections might be (5mins only), then share your conclusions with the group (10mins):

1. I don't believe in heaven and hell
2. I think religion should be a private thing
3. I think all religions lead to God
4. I think we're just meant to be good people

**Help with 1.** They don't believe in the Bible and/or in the existence of a supreme God.

**Help with 2.** They don't believe that truth exists or can be known / have rejected the idea of truth, logic and reason are applicable to the area of religion.

**Help with 3.** They don't believe that truth exists, but the view is self-contradictory as if everything is true, everything is false. As it turns out, the worlds' major religions say majorly different things in the major areas.

**Help with 4.** They don't realise God's standard is perfection. They've never considered how 'good' is defined (e.g. Hitler considered it good to kill Jews, gypsies, handicapped people and blacks). They haven't connected with the thought that if God is good He must also be just, and that God's love does not mean everyone goes to heaven, because God *can't* do anything. Specifically, He can't do something unjust (not-good). God's love meant He paid the ultimate price to make our forgiveness possible – because He is just, and sin actually is a problem!

**Encouragement:** Good answers exist for all the various matters raised today. With a small bit of research / discussion, we could become familiar with a basic direction a conversation could go in to answer each question.

### **APPLICATION (Scripture and prayer) (10mins)**

**Closing encouragement – read John 4:35.**

**Comment:** The fields are ripe, and our opportunity is limited. How many times have you moved house or jobs, and not shared with those who were your neighbours or colleagues in the previous place? We've all done it. The point is this: Our opportunities can be short lived. It is therefore important we are active to do something to encourage faith in others. Asking questions to initiating and engaging conversations is an easy place to start.

### **Lets spend some time in prayer**

- Praying for ourselves, for willingness to learn and grow in this series
- Praying for our friends, that we represent Christ well, and they be drawn to faith in Christ.

**Final encouragement:** **Why not try this out** in a few conversations this week. Ask questions, listen for 'sour notes', and ask questions about them.