

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
Conversations that Connect Series – Week 2
One ‘spirit’ to listen with

Note to leader:

Jesus conversed with intelligence and anointing with those around Him – and so should we. The natural and the spiritual always work together. However, conversational skills are learnt. That is what this series is about. With love motivating us, we can help our members get a handle on some basic skills that could make a really big difference. It always has, and always will, take people to reach people! We must empower our people! They need knowledge of their culture, and of the approaches that can best work in it

GETTING STARTED (20mins)

- 1. If you could hear from any person on this earth, who would you most want to hear from? (A long lost relative? A call from a famous musician?)
- 2. Do any of you feel God has spoken to you before? What did He say, and how did you know it was Him?
- 3. What is one of the most amazing things you’ve ever seen God do?

Today we’re discussing conversations again. This series being about looking at how Jesus reached out. He sometimes just stopped to talk with the people around Him, yet was effective in encourage them in faith.

- 4. The question game (5mins): Have a group play-off, where in pairs you have a conversation where you are only allowed to ask questions. The conversations must make sense, and flow naturally. The first person to make a statement / get stuck loses. Then the winners play the winners... until you have an ultimate winner.
- 5. Can anyone remember what Sundays message was about?
 (The calling of Nathanael – a conversation in which Jesus had two words of knowledge, with application of the message being in the area of ‘illuminating conversations’. I.e. both the Holy Spirit and general wisdom can help us in our conversations, so we can encourage others toward faith)

- 6. Have any of your ever felt God gave you a word of knowledge when in a conversation with a non-believer? Wow! Tell us about it

- 7. [Testimony] By the way – did any of your have any conversations about God or faith with others in your family or work place this week? (5mins)

DISCUSSION

REVISION: (10mins)

1. Our Pastor shared six benefits of a conversational approach to evangelism. Can you remember what some of them were?

Six benefits of asking questions before talking:

1. ...it creates space for you to *listen to them* before you speak
2. ...it creates space for you to *listen to God* before you speak
3. ...it potentially opens an *ongoing conversation*
4. ...it returns the *onus of proof* to them, if they have criticised
5. ...it is *non-threatening* – you can disagree without ever disagreeing
6. ...it can *cause them to reevaluate* their beliefs

2. We also heard about (likely through the video) three great questions that can turn a conversation. Can anyone remember what they were?

- What do you mean by...? (Clarifying WHAT)
- What led you to that conclusion? (Clarifying WHY)
- Have you considered... “ (Redirecting / Illuminating) [This question is where a small amount of knowledge is useful]

What do you think about these questions? Are they useful?

3. Lets try a two part exercise: (20mins)

First (a) we’re going to consider what the ‘sour notes’ might be in some common objections. And then (b) we’re going to role play a possible conversation, to see how through the use of questions, things that may be illogical can be non-offensively illuminated.

(a) Break into groups to discuss what the ‘sour notes’ might be in these three objections (3mins). Then share your conclusions with the group (3mins).

1. I don’t believe God exists – science explains everything.
2. I think all religions lead to God
3. It doesn’t matter what you believe. We’re just meant to be good

All they need to do is identify ONE 'sour note'. There are suggestions at the end of this study. They don't need to know (or even hear) all of those suggestions. They are there for your benefit, as the leader.

(b) Feedback or role-play: Have someone play the role of the person giving the objection in the course of a conversation, and then see if someone can – through the use of only questions [using the three questions] – gently *illuminate* (or reveal) the illogic or discrepancy to them.

[Reinforcing the relevance of this] (5mins)

4. Do you think that – if those conversations had been real ones, the sceptic might have been somehow encouraged one step forward in the journey toward faith in Christ?

5. Do you think these are real questions in the hearts and minds of those you know, who are not yet believers?

ENDING (5mins)

Thanks for your involvement today.

Close in prayer

- For one another, for a revelation of God's love for others, for willingness to learn and grow, for boldness, grace and wisdom to apply what is learnt in conversations this week.
- For those you listed last week who you want to see come to faith.

Possible homework: Here are three very soul-searching questions I want you to consider this week

1. How important is it to you that those you love come to faith in Christ?
2. How important do you think YOUR part might be in this?
3. If you are hindered in your evangelistic efforts, what do you think the greatest thing hindering you might be?

Idea for the leader: Maybe you could text or email these questions to them.

- Maybe they could be encouraged to each group-reply that email.
- You thus reserve your discussion time next week for other things.

RESOURCE FOR THE LEADER FOR QUESTION 3a

Note – they only need to come up with one.

This page is to help you as the leader.

Sharing all this with your members may overwhelm and confuse them.

1. Re they believe science can explain everything - science is actually unable to explain many things

- Consider such as the need for a very creative and intelligent cause for first life (that's a miracle),
- or the cause of the 'big bang' from which point science has shown both matter and time to have begun (a first-cause is needed),
- or how random chance could account for the insane complexities of what has been discovered to have been going on inside living cells all this time,
- or how the fine tuning of the constants of the universe came about,
- or of how the variety of creativity in the creation came about through random chance,
- or about the real lack of a fossil record to verify evolution, with no water tight fossils to prove the evolution of all species, one from the other
- or the lack of examples whereby positive DNA information was added through mutation (mutation being the current claimed means by which species have evolved *upwards* to greater complexity – noting there are a small handful of possible evidence, and the evidence of these is not strong – e.g. the bacteria that digests nylon (a common current example) was recently claimed as 'upward' development, but is now known not to be positive mutation. The point is, to believe everything that exists is just an accident *without God in the picture* is a most dubious claim, and certain in the light of current evidences takes more faith than it does to believe the logical alternative that there is an intelligent Creator.

There are thus many possible directions for a conversation, and it doesn't have to be complicated. Just as a builder needs a designer, so does this creation (which is many times more complicated).

2. Re they think all religions are the same – they don't believe / see reasons to believe that religious truth exists, or the illogic of their claim

- An illogical claim, for if everything is true, everything is false.
- Also inconsistent in that the religions are majorly different in their *major* areas. For example, God cannot both exist and not exist.

3. Re being good is good enough – They don't realise God's standard is perfection, or that most worldviews provide no foundation for defining any *actual standard at all* (aka, What do you mean by good, and what foundation do you have for that definition?)

- They've probably not considered how 'good' is defined, as Hitler considered it good to kill Jews. Is it really up to us to define right and wrong? If a single God who has revealed Himself doesn't exist, there is no basis from which to say any *actual* moral code exists. It is up to each individual or culture to decide for themselves – and different people and cultures may decide differently. Morality becomes something we created – and therefore that we could change. Hitler and communist leaders defined morality very differently to how we do on the basis of a Christian heritage – and people suffered terribly as a result!
- They may not have connected with the thought that if God is good He must also be just, and that the fact that God is loving does not therefore mean everyone goes to heaven – because God *can't* do anything (Specifically, He can't do something unjust /not-good).

However, God's love meant He paid the ultimate price to make our forgiveness possible – so He can't be accused of being unloving or uninvolved! (...and if this were then being discussed, you'd be sharing the gospel without really trying to share the gospel. I can all happen as a natural part of the conversation).
