

- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION-  
**Conversations that Connect Series – Week 3**  
**One heart to love with**

**Leaders note**

This session aims to

- Revise lessons learnt
- Consider of how God can use our past experiences to help us relate to and encourage different people.
- Reaffirm that connecting with people so as to share faith really is our God-given mission.

**GETTING STARTED + REVISION (20mins)**

**Testimony:** Did anyone find/make an opportunity to talk about God with someone this week? What happened?

**Reflection:** Last week we ended with three questions. Let's discuss these now and then pray, after which we'll look at this weeks study.

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?

**Revision: (15 mins if someone shares at Q4)**

1. What is the purpose of a 'hearing conversation'?
2. What is the purpose of a 'illuminating conversation'?
  - What three questions could be helpful to remember?
3. Can anyone remember, from the Sunday message, what the purpose of a 'uncovering conversation' is?
 

(To ask questions that dig for deeper intellectual, emotional or spiritual hindrances that might exist, from a desire to encourage the person. For example, if all a persons given objections have been answered what is still holding them back?)
4. Does anyone here feel they had such a more emotional hindrance that held them back from following Christ at one time? What happened that

helped you past it? Where other Christians showing compassion and care a part of the equation?

**TEXT: Reflection on two Scriptures: (15mins)**

**5. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.** For what reason does Paul suggest God can comfort us in our troubles?

**Comment:** Note that we can help both Christians and non-Christians because of our experiences. These experiences can be shared amongst conversations with non-believers.

6. To help us connect with this - how about we each share one area in which we would be able to relate to someone else's struggles *because we've been there*.

(Note, don't make people share, and ask for very short answers. The point is merely to illustrate that God has allowed us to have different experiences, and there might be purpose to this).

7. While none of us like to suffer, what other benefits are there to suffering and pain?

- They **test and strengthen our faith**, as we must choose to either truth God or linger in doubt.
- That **we gain experiences with which we can help others** has been already mentioned.
- Our **character is developed** (See Romans 5:1-4. What two things does he thank God for? 1. Salvation through Christ 2. Earthly sufferings! Why? They produce perseverance, character and hope – for we grow to trust God irrespective of trials, and are also caused to place our values in the coming Kingdom because we look forward to its perfection / absence of suffering)
- We **learn humility** (for we discover we are not immortal or immune to weakness)
- For the same reason, suffering **often draws people to saving faith**, or back to it.
- And more...

**8. See 2 Peter 3** (maybe reading only the verses suggested below)

- a. What is the topic that is being discussed in this chapter?
- b. Read v8-9. When Peter says here that the Lord doesn't want anyone to perish, for what reason did Peter say this? (He is

- clarifying that is the reason why Christ hasn't yet returned)
- c. Read v15. How could you summarise this in different words, so as to make its meaning fresh?
- Can you think of any other Scripture that also says the timeline for Christ's return is determined by the spread of the Gospel? (Try Matthew 24:14).

9. A challenging question: If your pain were to bring just one person to salvation, and thus it had a purpose in that one person received eternal salvation through your testimony, would that be worth it?

### 10. A conversation role play (only if you have spare time)

- Ask for two volunteers – one playing a sceptic, and one a Christian.
- Give the sceptic the below 'stated' and 'heart' objection – but don't let the rest of the group know what these are.

**The sceptics 'stated' objection:** '...what Christians believe is only their version of the truth anyway!'

**The sceptics 'heart' objection:** Bitterness at a hypocrite who hurt them.

To begin: The sceptic states their stated object, and the conversation begins.

- The Christians job is to ask questions that could help draw out the real issue, and address it.
- Please start with the 3 great questions
- Others in the group can help if the conversation gets stuck.
- Hopefully through the first discussion using the 3 questions there is something that suggests the deeper issue, proving a door for that issue to be uncovered and therefore discussed.

(see note at bottom for quick ideas).

### APPLICATION (10mins)

We can't reach people with the Gospel if we're not willing to talk with them:

1. Who will you seek to start a conversation with this week?  
Consider even the 'Zacchaeus' who you may not normally talk with.  
Please be bold to take opportunities that come.
2. Prayer for each other and those we would like to encourage toward faith.

### Help for with Question 10

**Objection:** '...what Christians believe is only their version of the truth anyway'

**Real heart objection:** Bitterness at a hypocrite who hurt them.

**Sour note / Truth to consider:** This is the same as 'all religions lead to God'

- They believe truth is relative – which is illogical (and depressing, as there is no moral foundation, no basis for human worth, no hope for a future beyond suffering and 'evil'...)
- They might think the religions actually say the same thing – which is mis-information

**Possible questions:**

1. What do you mean 'their version of the truth'? (**an 'investigating'/'hearing' question**)
    - Why would you say that? How many versions of the truth can there be?
  2. What led you to that conclusion? / Where did you get that idea from? (**a hearing question**)
  3. Have you considered the religions are fundamentally different – and even contradictory? (**illuminating question**)
- If their reply seems heated at this point you could say...
4. You seem to feel strongly about this. Is there a reason for this? (**This is an 'uncovering' question**)
  5. What was your experience?
  6. [It would then be appropriate to discuss that topic with similar questions, yet sensitively and with a heart to encourage].

### POSSIBLE SCENARIO

What if the sceptic says something that really doesn't make sense – and it seems they might not want to talk about religion?

- Ask them, "Are you avoiding talking about religion?"

### Why ask this?

- This is also an uncovering question.
- It would reveal their insincerity or avoidance, if that is the case.
- Now that both they and you know they are bluffing, **you are positioned to have a REAL conversation together about whatever the REAL issue might be, which may be something entirely different to anything you've discussed so far** (because they were only being polite thus far).

Aka, calling their bluff is also an uncovering question, and would be necessary in such a situation if you are ever to discover and discuss the real issue/hindrance.

**The lesson: If we aren't bold to ask these 'uncovering' questions with a goal to hear what they are really thinking, we may never get to the root of the issue for them so as to help them see an important perspective (the truth of the gospel of Jesus) that is different to their own.**