# Conversations that Connect Series – Week 1 Two ears to hear with

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Leaders notes:** This small group discussion seeks to:

* Give an introduction to the topic of evangelism
* Encouraging us to consider who we want to reach out to - and to identify their beliefs
* Affirm the benefits of a conversational approach.
* Discuss the idea of *sour notes* of our culture

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 culture's common questions are easily found online. (In NZ consider the Faith Q&A videos at 10DayChallenge.co.nz)

Suggestion: Keep the pace going in the earlier parts of this discussion, so time is preserved for the application discussion and role-plays.

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**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? (...even though loving people in both actions and words are inseparable for the Christian).

**About evangelism**

1. On a scale of 1-10, how strong would you say you are in the area of evangelism right now?
2. On the same scale, would any of you say you were stronger or weaker in this area than you were five years ago? Why?
3. 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. Revision - Part I (5mins):** Can anyone remember what Sunday’s message was about? How might you summarise it?

* (It was 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’. It included the concept of ‘Sour notes’\* - see footnote on the next page).

**1b. Introductory comment:** For this session, and the next three, we’re going to be considering how we can become better conversationalists, specifically that we might use our conversations to encourage people toward faith. (We’re going to all of this through guided discussion today - there is no formal Bible study / this is about how we could apply Sunday’s sermon).

**2. Exercise to connect with the heart (10mins):** If you have not done so already in the current year, each take a few minutes to write down the names of the top five to ten people you know whom you would like to encourage toward faith in Jesus.

* Then, 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 - both personally and for this small group)
* Each share the first name only of one of these people you have listed, and what one of their hindrances might be
* Then all pray briefly (at the same time) for for those you have mentioned..

**General discussion (20mins):**

**3. Exercise: Identifying the ‘sour notes’**

**3a. Revise the idea of ‘sour notes’ again** (Note the footnote\* on the next page, if needed).

**3b. Exercise**: 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\*\*

(Note: If help is needed, there are a range of possible ‘sour notes’ in the footnotes on the next page)

**Encouragement:** Good answers exist for all the various matters raised today. There are also a core of 10 to 20 questions/objections people will have - so the amount of things we might need to learn is not huge. With a small bit of research / discussion, we could become familiar with the 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 by some means with those who were your neighbours or colleagues in the previous place?). It is therefore important we grow and become more proactive in encouraging faith in others.

Asking questions to initiating and engaging conversations is an easy place to start.

**Let’s 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 simple, open questions about them.

**Footnotes**

**\* Sour notes**

...are underlying beliefs that we hear coming through in things people say, that are illogical to us. They are great doors for conversation - through which we can encourage people toward faith. I.e. When there is disagreement about religoius things - that isn’t the problem. That is the doorway for a meaningful conversation *if we know how to engage it.* In this the *manner* with which we discuss things is very important. Rather than ‘confronting’ a view - which quickly ends conversation, we ask open-ended questions, trying to understand what they believe and why. Through this we are positioned to ask additional and even more-meaningful questions that could help them discover a different way of thinking to their own - thus taking a possible step closer to faith in Jesus.

**\*\* Re identifying the ‘sour-notes’ in the 4 examples (The exercise at question 3)**

* **Help with 1.** They don’t believe in the Bible and/or in the existence of a supreme God (So this is the issue to address - with more questions).
* **Help with 2.** They don’t believe that truth exists or can be known / They have rejected the idea of truth, logic and reason are applicable to the area of religion. (So this is the issue to address - with more questions)
* **Help with 3.** They don’t believe that truth exists - even though their belief is actually self-contradictory, because if everything is true, everything is false (because various religious beliefs directly contradict each other - like believing God does and doesn’t exist). As it turns out, the world's’ major religions are majorly different in the major areas. (So this is the issue to address - with questions).
* **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). Maybe they haven’t connected with the thought that if God is good He must also be just, and so the reality of God’s love does *not* mean everyone goes to heaven. God’s love meant He paid the ultimate price to make our forgiveness possible – because He is just, and sin actually is a problem (So this is the issue to address - with questions).

# Conversations that Connect Series – Week 2 One ‘spirit’ to listen with

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**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, to converse at all - some conversational skills are needed. These skills - applied to spiritual conversations, are what this series is about. But love must be the motive. Our actions must be undergirded with prayer. And our attitude must recognise that, without God’s help we can do nothing! Only God can turn a heart. In all of this, we are fully dependent upon God’s help and leading.

Please note also that the goal of these discussion-guides is to prepare group members for application. The need for outreach has been discussed at length in many a sermon. Yet, no greater honour can be given God’s Word than the choice to believe and obey it. It is with this in mind that these are intentionally application-focused discussions, rather than Bible Studies.

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**GETTING STARTED (20mins)**

**1. 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 without long pauses. The first person to make a statement / pause for too long / ask a question that is not connected to the flow of the conversation, is out.. Then the winners play-off until you have a final winner.

**Note: We will play this game each week, because (a) learning to think in terms of questions and (b) gaining confidence in asking questions, are VITAL skill-sets for Christian witness in today’s world.**

2. Extra Question: If you could receive a phone call from any person on this earth, who would you most want to hear from? (A long lost relative? A famous musician?)

3. Extra Question - part 2: Do any of you feel God has spoken to you before? What did He say, how did you know it was Him, and how excited were you?

4. Testimony: By the way – did anyone manage to engage a conversations about God or faith with others this week? (5mins)

**Prayer** - Thank God for the way he speaks to and lead us in life, and helps to make us fruitful.

**Introduction: Today we’re discussing conversational skills** again. This series being about looking at how Jesus reached out. He gave time to people; he asked carefully considered questions; and he listened for the Holy Spirit’s promptings!

**5. Revision:** Can anyone remember what Sunday’s 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. Then three great questions - which the group will look at in more details soon. 1. What do you mean by…? 2. What led you to that conclusion? 3. Have you considered…?)*

**DISCUSSION**

**6. Read** John 1:44-49.

Comment: The main reason Jesus was so amazingly effective in impacting people’s lives was because he listened to the whispers of the Holy Spirit. In these verses Jesus has two words of knowledge regarding Nathanael - and it results in Nathanael changing very quickly from being a sceptic of Jesus, to being a believer..

Question: Have any of your ever felt God gave you a word of knowledge when while talking with a non-believer? What happened?

**7. Regarding the ‘3 great questions’**

* Revise again what they are
* What do you think about these questions?
* What is the point of each of the questions (1. Clarifying what, 2. Clarifying why, 3. Redirecting / illuminating - this being the question where a small amount of knowledge is useful, to convey something meaningful)

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

**8a.**  **Break into groups to discuss what the ‘sour notes’ might be in these three objections**

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

**Then share your conclusions with the whole group**

All they need to do is identify ONE ‘sour note’. *(There are a range of suggestions at the end of this study - only for the benefit of the group leader).\**

**8b. Role-play of a possible conversation - to see how through questions conversations can be opened up:**

Have someone play the role of the person giving the objection. Then have one person - or the group as a whole, considering **questions** that might *gently* ***illuminate*** (or reveal) the assumptions within their stated beliefs, while also revealing an alternative way of thinking/seeing things.

**[Reinforcing the relevance of this] (5mins)**

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

10. Do you think that conversations like these are possible - and can make a difference?

**Close in prayer**

* For one another - for a revelation of God’s love for others, and God’s help to learn and grow so as to become more effective in reaching those we love
* For those you listed last week who you want to see come to faith.

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**Possible homework:** **Three very soul-searching questions**

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 (recognising that it is also fully their choice)?
3. If you are hindered in your own outreaching 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 group members.
* Maybe members could ‘group-reply’ that email - to help everyone reflect
* You thus reserve your discussion time next week for other things.

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**\* RESOURCE FOR THE LEADER FOR QUESTION 3a**

The below is to resource you, as leader.

If you shared this with your members it might overwhelm and confuse them.

1. Re the belief that science can explain everything: Science is actually unable to explain many things

* Consider first life - that needs a very creative and intelligent (and able) cause.
* Or the beginning of the universe - which point scientists believe was the beginning of time, space and matter - logically requiring a cause that is outside of time, space and matter).
* Or how random chance could account for the insane complexities of what has been discovered inside living cells
* Or how the fine tuning of the constants of the universe came about,
* Or of how the variety of creativity in the creation (bio-diversity) came about (explanations appealing to random chance do not actually explain this),
* Or about the actual (often unreported) lack of a fossil record to verify evolution, with no water tight fossils existing at most times to prove the evolution of species, one from the other (which one atheist named ‘the trade secret of palaeontology’)
* Or the *complete* lack of examples whereby positive (beneficial) DNA information was *added* through mutation (there are a few examples of improvements through mutations - but none that have added *newly written* information to the DNA code. This leaves naturalistic-evolution without a defensible mechanism for the ‘creation’ of the vast amounts of information needed for life - and in all its diversity ).

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 the belief that all religions are the same: Those with this belief they don’t believe religious truth exists

* An illogical claim, for if everything is true, everything is false. This is an irrational way of thinking, because it is logical that a specific answer to life’s greatest questions (origins - morality - meaning - hope) exists.
* This is also inconsistent in that the religions are majorly different in their major areas. For example, God cannot both exist and not exist.

3. Re the belief that being good is good enough: Those with this view don’t realise that, for God to be good, he must also be just. Also that God’s standard is perfection.

* Most other worldviews provide no basis on which to actually define any *real* standard of morality to exist. Humans get to make up what they want to be ‘right’ or ‘wrong’). Consider how Hitler considered it good to kill Jews, blacks, gypsies and the disabled. Is it really up to us to define right and wrong? If so, isn’t that a terrifying prospect? (Who can we ever accuse of doing wrong - when it is only our opinion?)
* Regarding God’s goodness - like how a *good* judge in a court must see justice is done, so must a good God. The great news in this picture is God’s solution to human evil and wrong-doing: God’s love meant He made a way for our forgiveness by paying the ultimate price to make our forgiveness possible himself. So God can’t be accused of being unloving or uninvolved! (…and if this were being discussed in a conversation it would be notable that the gospel would be being shared naturally, as part of the conversation).

# Conversations that Connect Series – Week 3 One heart to love with

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**Leader's 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.

Suggestion: Keep the pace going in the earlier parts of this discussion, so time is preserved for the application discussion and role-plays.

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

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

**Feedback on members’ personal reflection times:**

Last week we ended with three questions that you were encouraged to take home to reflect upon.

Let’s discuss these now and then pray, after which we’ll look at this week's study.

The three questions were:

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? (Recognising that only God can convict a heart, and the person still gets to choose)
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 person’s given objections have been answered what is still holding them back?)*

**To hear a story or two**

1. 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: Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4: (15mins)**

**5.** 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.

**6**. Share one area each in which we would be able to relate to someone else’s struggles *because we’ve been there (one sentence is sufficient).* (Note, sharing must be voluntary - Encourage people to only share what they feel ready to share)

**7.** While none of us like to suffer, what other benefits are there to suffering and pain? (Write suggestions on a whiteboard)

* E.g. **They** **test and strengthen our faith**
* E.g. **We gain experiences with which we can help others**
* **Our** **character is developed** (See Romans 5:1-4. What two things does he thank God for? 1. Salvation through Christ 2. Earthly sufferings - because they produce perseverance, character and hope… ...which bears fruit through the way we then become able to live and love)
* E.g. **We** **learn humility** (which makes us more useful to God - and a better person)
* E.g. **Suffering often draws people to saving faith,** or back to it (so it is a saving grace!)
* Etc.

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

* What is the topic that is being discussed in this chapter?
* 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)*
* 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 extra person to salvation through Jesus - because you grew to stand in faith and shared your testimony with them, would that be worth it?

**10. (Optional) A conversation role play:** Ask for two volunteers – one playing a sceptic, and one a Christian. Give the sceptic the below ‘stated’ and ‘heart’ objection. They then begin the conversatoin with the ‘stated’ objection. The goal is for the Christian to discover what the ‘heart’ objection

**The skeptics ‘stated’ objection:** ‘…what Christians believe is only their version of the truth anyway!’

**The skeptics ‘heart’ objection:** Bitterness at a Christian hypocrite who hurt them.

* 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).

(If you wanted to play this ‘role play’ game again - you could come up with your own sets of ‘stated’ and ‘heart’ objections

* The skill-set being revealed here is powerful!)

**APPLICATION (10mins)**

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

And we often won’t be able to connect with people’s hearts unless we really listen (‘hearing conversations’) so we can be positioned to ask some powerful questions.

1. Who will you seek to start a conversation with this week?

* Might there be people around you that you haven’t noticed before (like‘Zacchaeus’ up in the tree?)

1. Prayer for each other and those we would like to encourage toward faith.

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**Help for with Question 10**

**Stated objection:** ‘…what Christians believe is only their version of the truth anyway’

**Heart objection:** Bitterness at a Christian hypocrite who hurt them.

**Sour note / Truth to consider in their ‘stated objection’:** 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?

1. What led you to that conclusion? / Where did you get that idea from? ***(a hearing question)***
2. Have you considered the religions are fundamentally different – and even contradictory? ***(illuminating question)*** If their reply seems heated at this point you could say…

**However, noticing that they have particularly strong feelings on this - you could ask...**

1. You seem to feel strongly about this. Is there a reason for this? ***(This is an ‘uncovering’ question)***
2. What was your experience?
3. [It would then be appropriate to discuss that topic with similar questions, yet sensitively and with a heart to encourage].

**What if they then seem disinterested in discussing this?**

Maybe theysay some things that really doesn’t make sense – and it seems they might not want to talk about religion?

* Ask them, “Don’t you like talking about religion?” (to ***uncover*** what their real thoughts or motives are in the conversation)
* Why is that?

***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 point of discussing the real issues.***

* ***We want to impact lives***
* ***If we can HEAR what people are saying from behind their words (like Jesus did,*** 
  + ***...then, with QUESTIONS, we can see conversations opened up, and connect with the heart!***

# Conversations that Connect Series – Week 4 One mouth to speak with

SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

**For the leader:** This session is primarily about revision.

* Revision is important for memory. Without it lessons learnt have little chance of being *applied*.
* We encourage you to hold the view that the revision of conversational skills learnt in this series is very important, because it has the potential to enable group members to engage in their mission where they have previously been unable to.
* Helping people to *“...obey Jesus’ teachings…”* is what true discipleship is really about (Matthew 28:18-19)!
* The study of God’s word *without application* is a disrespect to God’s Word - while *the greatest respect we can give God’s Word is to believe it and obey it!*
* What would happen if a growing number of your members started regularly engaging other people in spiritual conversations?

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**INTRODUCTION: (15mins)**

**1. Testimony:** Did anyone have an opportunity to talk about faith with someone this week?

**2. Series revision and informal evaluation: How would you answer the following questions**

1. How do people in our culture think differently today, compared to maybe 40 years ago? *(i.e. about how we’ve become a postmodern / multi-religious culture etc.)*
2. Why is a conversational approach beneficial for our evangelism?
3. What do you think the best end goal is for from an evangelistic conversation? (How about to have encouraged or helped a person to take a step closer to Jesus?)
4. What is the purpose of a ‘hearing conversation’?
5. What is the purpose of an ‘illuminating conversation’, and what were the easy three starter questions we looked at?
6. What is the purpose of an ‘uncovering conversation’? (What sort of question might illustrate?)

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***3. Optional introduction to ‘Bridging Conversations’ (Or give them an article to take home and read. Check it out).***

***Comment:*** *Before we look at the topic of sharing the gospel, I’d like to mention a fourth type of conversation: ‘bridging conversations’*

***To review*** *i. Hearing conversations - to discern a person’s worldview*

*ii. Illuminating conversations - to help them assess their views, and consider other ways of thinking*

*iii. Uncovering conversations - to draw out why they might avoid talking about something, or be disinterested, or have strong/aggressive views about something, or...*

*iv. Today - Bridging conversations*

*The goal of a ‘bridging conversation’ is to establish common ground with a non-believer, to make discussion about the gospel easier for them to understand and the message easier to receive.*

***Read the book excerpt attached below OR summarise it for them OR give them copies to take and read at home***

* *Then ask: Could someone summarise the point this brief article is making?*
* *Does this make sense?*

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**4. Discussion regarding sharing the Gospel (20mins)**

4a. Let’s say you were in a conversation, and the person you were talking with asked you *‘So, what do you believe as a Christian anyway, and why?’*, who here feels they could answer that now?

**4b. VIDEO**

Let’s review what the gospel is, **and/or** how we might very simply share the gospel and lead a person in a response?

* We note ‘What is the gospel?’ (5mins long)
* and ‘How to share the gospel?’ (4.30mins long)
  + Both found at [www.alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos](http://www.alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos)

**4c. Demonstration / practice in pairs**

Let’s break into pairs now and each practice sharing this Gospel message, beginning with the questions, “Could I show you the basics of what Christians’ believe about that?”

*Note that, even if you do not have paper, the gospel can be articulated by remembering the parts of the ‘gospel drawing’.*

To note for your conversations: In Acts 2 and 3 we see Peter’s example when preaching the gospel. On both occasions *he included evidences that were relevant to his hearers - to give them reasons to believe in the truth of what he was saying*.

* We are wise to do the same, including testimony, reasons for believing in God, things that amaze us and cause us to look up, miracles, prophecy …
* If wisely chosen, sharing these things can intrigue them, open conversation up, and further validate the message.

**APPLICATION: (15mins)**

**1. Feedback:** Do you feel more equipped? / Has this series been helpful?

**2. Discussion on next steps:**

* What do you think our next steps as a small group are in reaching our friends?
* How could we sustain this focus?
* What could we to do help each other reach out more, and more consistently, to our friends and family?
  + (E.g. When in our calendar could we revise some lessons learnt?)
  + (E.g. How often will be ask for testimonies about opportunities to engage in spirtiual converastions? etc.)
  + (E.g. What topical area related to outreach will be study next - and when? Consider gospel skills, team skills, partnership with the Holy Spirit, or more on conversational skills)

**3. Further reading**: If anyone did want to learn more about evangelism there are two books that include the ***conversational content*** we’ve just looked at.

* *Conversational Evangelism* by Dr Norm Geisler and Dr David Geisler. [www.meeknessandtruth.org](http://www.meeknessandtruth.org/) (order via internet from overseas).
* *Because We Care* By Dave Mann [www.bigbookpublishing.co.nz](http://www.shininglights.co/). This summarises teaching on conversational evangelism into three of its sixteen chapters. It is a *comprehensive* book for Christians and Christian leaders.Evangelism is often said by churches to be in the ‘too hard box’. This book shows us how we could realistically and sustainably get it out. (9 small group studies included).
* *‘God Space’* by Doug Pollock (from the UK)
* Or see a Christian bookstore near you.

**Close with a time in prayer**

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**Excerpt on Bridging Conversations**

Adapted from chapter fourteen of *Because we care* by Dave Mann

The Apostle Paul said, ‘I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some’ (1 Corinthians 9:22). In Christian outreach, there is no one method that works for all. To the Jews Paul reasoned like a Jew, but to the Greeks he reasoned and spoke like a Greek. To the ‘weak’ he related with humility, sitting where they sat. To the ‘strong’ he no-doubt dressed in his finest clothes, and reasoned with authority.

In conversation we seek to find common ground with those we converse with... In conversation, the things we agree on become the foundation off which we can discuss the things we may disagree on.

**E.g 1: If we agree with a non-believer that there has to be justice for rapists and murderers *in the afterlife,* then we have a common ground:** God will meet out justice in the afterlife. Off this basis we have easy opportunity to share the Gospel, explaining the problem that we are all guilty before God, and therefore deserving of punishment. While also explaining the significance of what Jesus has done.

The common ground is thus the bridge across which we share the uncommon ground.

**E.g. 2. Imagine they believe there must be a God somewhere - because the universe and this planet are just too amazing…** you could say… *“We are so on the same page! I agree. Could I share with you why I believe that the God who behind all of this can be personally known?* ...and then share about your experience of God, which you connected with when you put your faith in Jesus.

**E.g. 3 Imagine they agree that the world’s religions really are very different - and therefore can’t all be true.** ...it begs the question ‘What is true?’ So ask humbly,*“Could I share with you for a minute what caused me to consider the claims of Christianity?”* ...and then share your experience of connecting with God, and what led you to conclude that Jesus was God’s Son, and the way to become connected with God.

**E.g. 4. Imagine they agree that it’s not faith itself that saves people, but what we put our faith in.** Ask, *“What do you think we could put our faith in to deal with the problem of our sin? Could I share what led me to think Christ is trustworthy for this?”*

**E.g. 5. Imagine you are simply talking about how amazing Jesus was as a man, in how he related to people and what he taught etc... and they agree** (which many would). You could ask, *“Could I share some things that caused me to actually accept some of the radical things Jesus claimed?”*

**E.g. 6. Imagine they agree that without God, some people find it difficult to find meaning in their life.** *“Can I share with you the difference Christianity has brought to my life?*  ...and then share a testimony of how this faith helped you, but also of why you believe it to be true.

In every example above, it could be comfortable to communicate gospel truths (or the whole gospel) as a natural part of the conversation - without ever pushing a view (which is what can quickly end conversations like this).

Through questions, we can establish common ground. These ‘planks to the gospel’ make it easier to then share the gospel *as part of the natural conversation.*

**In summary:**

Because we as Christians believe the gospel to be true, it is natural for us, and authentic of us to want to give people an opportunity to at least hear and understand the message - because the implications are significant.

However, there are ways of approaching this that can be more natural than others.

By finding common ground between the gospel and non-Christian’s worldview, we create links to the gospel that can enable us to share it as a part of the natural conversation, and also in a way that makes the message more understandable for them.

As we begin to identify the witnessing potential that sits within these ‘common views’ - every time we hear people express these views it then serves as a prompt for us to be bold enough to actually share the *whole gospel* too!