# The Conversations that Connect series

*Jesus talked with people, with an ear open to the Spirit*

1. Two ears to hear with (Hear): The Samaritan woman

2. One spirit to listen with (Illuminate): Nathaniel

3. One heart to love with (Uncover): Zacchaeus

**4. One mouth to speak with (Build): Jesus’ teaching**

**Credits** for the overall direction of this series go to Dr Norm Geisler & Dr David Geisler, from their book ‘Conversational Evangelism’ (see [meeknessandtruth.org](http://www.meeknessandtruth.org/)). We have partnered with Dr David in a couple of things, & have summarised (with permission) a number of points from his Conversational Evangelism material among the content of the three chapters in Dave Mann’s book, ‘Because we care’ that address this topic area. This book can be purchased at [bigbookpublishing.co.nz](http://bigbookpublishing.co.nz/).

**For the preacher to note:** In this series, the application section includes solid, practical teaching on how to apply the Biblical principles today - not merely brief directions regarding this (in the way that is more common in our preaching). Time thus needs protecting in the earlier parts of the messages so this most-important part of the message is not cut short. There is probably too much content in each message outline for most to use.

**TITLE**: One mouth to speak with

**SERIES TITLE:** Conversations that Connect

**TEXT** : Luke 14:25-35

**OBJECTIVE**: Having discussed possible ‘sour notes’ we might consider there to be in other people’s worldviews, and how to address these, this message turns to consider the ‘sour notes’ there might be in many of our own worldviews, as Christians. Then it turns to bring a very practical conclusion, showing members how they could very simply share the gospel, were an opportunity to arise. It is essential that we teach this, the most basic of all evangelistic knowledge areas.

**INTRODUCTION**: This is the final message in our four-part series, during which we’ve been looking at the way Jesus conversed with the people around Him every day. Today we are going to to finish by coming back to the gospel. God has given us a message to take. It’s the most important message in the world to get out there!

**TESTIMONY:** Any testimonies of conversations you had with others about faith this week?

**REVISION** (Optional) In this series we have discussed the idea of ‘sour notes’ – things that might seem contradictory to us in people’s worldviews, these being gateways for meaningful conversations about spiritual things. For example [select however many suit you to mention]

* All religions are essentially the same (this makes little sense if you know what the religions actually teach)
* What about ‘truth is relative’ (this statement is self-contradicting, because it is a truth statement itself! The belief that ‘truth is relative’ must also be relative).
* Many people believe ‘morals are relative’ (but this is a terrifying view, because there is no fixed definition to STOP us determining what is right and wrong for ourselves. We’ll choose differently – and without belief in a Creator God there is nothing to say human life is sacred. Consider Nazism and Communism (atheistic secularism) which resulted in more deaths in the past 100 years than all the religions combined in the last 2000! With no moral compass there is nothing left to stop evil. Human nature is not good. Standards will invariably slide!
* A number of people deny that a God even exists (the radical and inflated claims of evolution are mind- blowing. In the world around us we do NOT see complex things ‘creating themselves’. Given our biodiversity, this should be common place (why are specifies becoming extinct while we’re not seeing new species being ‘created’ to similarly replace them?). To suppose that our biology did this all by itself, when even much simpler things do not, does not make sense) [If there was ‘big bang’ it needed a first cause. Consider the fine-tuning of the universe. Consider the *existence* of morality, or our ability to love and comprehend beauty. There are stories of all of these things leading known atheists to faith).

**READ Luke 14:25-35** Let’s take a brief look through this passage, highlighting a few points.

V25-26

* Sometimes it’s a popular thing to do to follow Jesus. Sometimes all our friends are all Christians, or our family are. It was like this on this day – see v25
* Sometimes, the Christian life is really fun. Sometimes we’re part of a vibrant Christian community. And maybe we sometimes misunderstand all this and think that the purpose of our Christian faith is all about helping us feel fulfilled in life - when in reality it is all about laying our lives down for the purpose of Christ in this broken and temporary world.

In v 26

* Jesus went straight for the jugular of those who followed Him with joy, and reminded this crowd of what it would cost to truly follow Him.
* Note: ‘hate our parents’ is a comparative statement/a figure of speech.
* God wants us to be head-over-heals in love with Him / in love with Him more than any other person or thing.
* If we commit to follow Christ, wholeheartedness is expected! (e.g. see Luke 9:57-62)

**Jesus then illustrates this with two stories.**

STORY ONE: v28-30 - a man who makes an investment calculates before hand whether he can complete it.

STORY TWO: v31-32 - a king who goes to war calculates beforehand whether he can win.

**But then Jesus comes to the punch line.**

V33 *“In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple.”*

* Who could say they have given up *everything* they have?
* We have discussed ‘sour notes’. Here are some ‘sour noted’ in Christianity:
* A Christian who doesn’t share the gospel
* A Christian who hoards wealth – it shows their heart.
* A Christians who hates, lies, steals, cheats, look at pornography, or commit fornication or adultery, - Jesus’ teaching is clear.
* Are we really following Jesus?

**What about these possible sour notes of Christianity?**

* A Christian who thinks all beliefs are the same / all roads lead to God
* A Christian who thinks morals can be relative, and thus that things like sex outside of marriage is OK
* Let us be reminded – there is a straight and narrow path that we are called to walk on
* We need our Bibles
* We need the Holy Spirit – to make up for our weakness
* And we need commitment in our hearts

There is a cost / a ‘cross’ to carry

and there is a call – to make Christ known

This is our PRIMARY mission

It is the MISSION of the Church, and of every church group and of every church person

It is the reason for which Christ’s return is delayed.

It is therefore the primary purpose for our existence at this time, as followers of Christ.

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**Could it be that we’ve allowed the things of this world to cloud our minds, and to ensnare our hearts?**

* We are concerned about our financial well being and assets
* We are concerned about our many hobbies and pleasures
* We are concerned about our own families

but so much so that we give little diligence to our mission – while, all the while, our neighbors and colleagues and friends are going to an eternity apart from Christ. They are all around us every day, yet we say near to nothing about it.

**Jesus finished the teaching as recorded in v34-35.** These are fearsome and sobering words

* What if a faith without works really is dead?
* What if our so-called Christian lives are declared ‘void’ if we aren’t willing to live out the faith we claim to follow?
* What if we are saved by faith alone, but the sincerity of the commitment in our heart really is a condition that follows (Lordship).
* What if you actually have to follow Jesus to get to heaven – and a simple prayer or half- effort is not actually enough.

**Absolutely we need the grace of God**

* Because (absolutely) we’ll never be perfect
* But God wants sincerity. He wants our devotion – including our devotion to His mission ...because He loves all the people who are around us more than we can imagine
* ...and He died for their benefit as much as He died for ours.

The point of the passage: There is a cost to embrace. It is not an option. It is what we committed to when we first gave our lives to Christ *and this includes a resolute commitment to our mission.*

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**CONCLUSION TO THIS CHALLENGE:** Evangelism is not an optional extra in Christianity

* It is core business
* A right response to this (at this time) is to consider seriously how we might apply what we have discussed in this series.
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**APPLICATION – SOME VERY PRACTICAL POINTERS**

If we are going to be witnesses for Christ, the most basic thing we need to know is

1. What the Gospel is.
2. and how to share it (clearly).

**What is the Gospel?** You could view the video at <http://alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos/#video4> until 2.40 mins. Or teach these points yourself:

1. A message of love
2. Sin
3. Righteousness
4. Judgement
5. Jesus as Saviour
6. Jesus as Lord
7. Give some evidences (noting the reason for including this point).
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**ALTERNATIVELY**: If we were discussing what the *whole* Gospel is, I’d say it is

(A) Creation – The existence of a single, knowable Creator God who is good

(B) Fall – Our use of the freewill God gave us to go our way, instead of His way

(C) Redemption – What God has done for us in Christ so we can be restored to relationship with Him.

(D) Restoration – God’s greater vision, including our use of our lives, skills, resources and opportunities to bring about God’s ways of love on earth, completed at the return of Christ.

How could we share it? See <http://alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos/#video5>. *The presentation itself starts at start at 1.38mins, end at 4.36mins*

Or concisely demonstrate whatever your preferred ‘method’ for concisely remembering and communicating this message is.

**CONCLUSION:** In 1 Peter 3:15 it says *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...”*

* Honestly, I believe any of us could be ‘always prepared’ (1 Peter 3:15) if we would make being prepared a commitment of our lives - and it is not difficult to do.
* I encourage you to review this in your small group.

And if you wanted to know how to create a SUSTAINED passion for the Gospel in your heart and life, consider these simple points:

1. Read your Bible – because God’s heart is for the lost. The Bible’s primary focus from the call of Abraham in Genesis 12 right through to the last chapter of Revelation, is that people will be saved!
2. Pray for the lost – because each time do you are forced to reconnect with God’s heart, thus encouraging you to re engage your shared mission.
3. Meet with a group you can team up with to reach out to the lost

 - This could be the small group you are a part of in Church

 - Or a gathering you initiate with other Christians at your workplace or school.

Whatever the case, make (a) praying for those who don’t know Christ, and (b) discussing what you could do as a group to reach out to them, a regular part of your agenda when you meet together.

4. Finally, find people, speakers, authors, and even videos that inspire and motivate you to reach out to the lost. Because the reality is that we all ‘leak’.

**RESPONSE**: Who is willing to make a fresh commitment to Jesus’ mission?

* If so, what is it that you are going to do?
* If you know what you’d like to do, I’d love to pray for you!

- SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION -

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

**For the leader:** This session is primarily about revision. Revision is important for memory. Without it lessons learnt have little chance of being applied. If we are to be effective in discipling our members (to see noticeable change in this area) we need to teach our members with the same wisdom our school educators demonstrate when they create ‘spiral curriculums’ that intentionally repeat content to remind and reinforce it, and only then to build upon it with additional knowledge. Why? Because it works! ☺ We encourage you to see that revision of applications is very important in discipleship.

**INTRODUCTION: (15mins)**

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

**2. Series revision and informal evaluation**

1. How do people in our culture think differently today, compared to maybe 40 years ago? (i.e. about postmodernism / multi religious culture)
2. Why is a conversational approach beneficial for our evangelism?
3. What do you think is the best end goal to be aiming for from an evangelistic conversation, such as we’ve been talking about? (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’?

**Comment:** Today we talk about ‘bridging conversations’ : How could we establish common ground with a non-believer so as to make it easier to turn a conversation to a discussion about the Gospel?

**DISCUSSION:** **About ‘bridging conversations’ (10mins) [OPTIONAL – YOU MAY NOT HAVE TIME FOR THIS]**

**Comment:** Teaching on ‘bridging conversations’ was not included in the Sunday message in this series, because the goal in the service was to show us all how we might share the gospel with others. Can I just read you something?

**Read/summarise book excerpt attached** below

1. So, could someone summarise, what is the purpose of a ‘bridging conversation’?
* (To establish common ground of which we can turn the conversation to a discussion on, or sharing of, the gospel. Aka – find the gospel concepts you agree on, like those mentioned in the excerpt just read).

**2. Discussion regarding sharing the Gospel (20mins)** Can anyone revise for us what the basic Gospel content is?

1. **A message of** love, sin, righteousness, judgement, Jesus as Saviour, Jesus as Lord, then share some evidences – noting the example of the Apostle Peter’s when preaching of the gospel in Acts 2 and 3 included evidences so the message was connected to observed realities / didn’t come across as just ‘pie in the sky’)
* The gospel drawing method helps us remember all these points except to give some evidences.
* Evidences could include testimony, Bible reliability, existence of God, miracles, prophecy etc.).
* Note the video at alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos/ - though these videos each come with a study (downloaded from that webpage), so you could save them to use another time.
1. **ALTERNATELY:** The outline to the pastors included a second option for how to explain the content of the whole Gospel, summarized as (A) Creation, (B) Fall, (C) Redemption, (D) Restoration.

3. 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?

**4. DEMONSTRATION:** If someone said yes, ask: Would you be willing to demonstrate?

If not, you could demonstrate yourself, or play a video such as www.alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos/ Video #5.

**5. PRACTISE 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, you can remember what to say by remembering the picture from the ‘drawing method’.*

Well done, everyone!

**APPLICATION: (15mins)**

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

**2. 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 who are serious about ‘cracking this nut’. Evangelism is quite often in the ‘too hard box’. This book shows us how we could realistically and sustainably get it out (and includes 9 small group studies throughout the chapters)! .
* Or see a Christian bookstore for general books on evangelism.

**3. Discussion on next steps:**

* What do you think our next steps are?
* 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?

**Close with a time in prayer**

**NOTE TO LEADER:** You could create a sustained culture of evangelistic action through your group if you knew how. There are some notes for you to consider below the book excerpt below.

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**Excerpt on Bridging Conversations**

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 may be related with humility, sitting with them on the ground. To the ‘strong’ he may be dressed in his finery and reasoned with authority.

We thus 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 disagree on. 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, for it is a message that tells of how those they are angry with will get punished, but which tells a lot more also. The common ground is thus the bridge across which we share the uncommon ground…And by finding common ground we can also ‘earn’ the right to share.

**Some examples of viewpoints that could become common ground**  *[See footnote 1 for credits.]*

1. Imagine they agree that it matters what you believe because what you believe will affect how you live. A link statement could thus be – “I so agree with you – what we believe matters. Can I share with you for a minute what Christians believe, because I think it makes the world a better place!”

2. Imagine they agree that not all religious viewpoints can be right. “I agree with you – it's not really logical, is it? Could I share with you for a minute some of the things that caused me to consider the claims of Christianity, because I found this really interesting?”

3. Imagine they agree that faith must have an object to have merit. (I.e., it's not faith that saves, but what we have faith in) “What do you think could be a reliable object for dealing with the problem of our sin? Could I share what led me to think Christ is trustworthy for this?” (Then you could share why you chose to trust in Christ’s rather than some other belief)

4. Imagine they agree that Jesus’ claims are unique compared to the claims of any other religious leader (John 10:30; 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5). “Could I share some things that caused me to consider Christ’s radical claims a bit more?” (I.e. who you believe Him to be the Son of God).

5. Imagine they agree that the *proof* of Christ’s claims has no parallel among major religious leaders. “Can I share what helped convince me that it might hold some truth?” (And then share a testimony of how following Christ has change you - – so the evidence of experience is added to the evidence of reason).

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? (Then share a testimony of how it helped you, but also of why you believe it to also be true).

We could thus intentionally ask questions in conversation that help establish this common ground. Having put ‘planks to the Gospel’ in place it is then much easier to transition to sharing the Gospel as a part of the natural conversation. **- End quote -**

**In summary:** By finding common ground we create links to the Gospel that enable us to share it naturally as a part of the natural conversation, and also in a way that makes the message more understandable for them.

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**Ideas for Small Group Leaders**

to help sustain an evangelistic focus in a church small group

Possibilities could include…

1. A commitment to pray bi-weekly or monthly as a Small Group for those whose names you wrote out.
2. The planning of two to four small group events per year which are designed to attract the involvement some of those you are praying for, to encourage toward faith. Through these your ‘new friends’ could get to know other Christians. From these they could be invited back to other, more evangelistic, events – whether corporate Church ones, or small group ones like a Christmas Party at which someone shares what Christmas means to them (being intentionally clear about the significance of Christ’s coming).
3. Encourage your members to partner up with other Christians at their work places or schools whom they could (a) meet with, (b) and pray with, so as to(c) try to do a few things that might encourage colleagues toward faith.
4. As a group you could commit to revise some of the Gospel and conversational material in a month's time, and then in another month after that, and then 3 months after that… *Only by doing such will this material actually be learn – as opposed to having been a passing experience.* In doing this you could build an environment that chooses to enjoy the practical role plays, thus aiding memory and application skills.
5. Individually, members could find speakers, authors, groups and DVDs that inspire and motivate them, helping them sustain the focus on outreach.
6. Every month you could make it a point to ask for testimonies from anyone who has had an opportunity to share the gospel or to talk about faith with someone. Nothing builds success like success. Through this you will reinforce the message that this is an important and worthy focus, and your members will be encouraged forward as a result.

The above requires *intentional* leadership. We encourage the perspective that such leadership is NOT contrary to faith. God expects us to give our best effort to Him – while also being completely dependent upon Him. It is not 50% of each. It is not 100% of one and none of the other. It is 100% of both. Intentional discipleship takes effort – but produces results. The effort involved in considering applying a strategy such as is summarized in the above points is worth it – so long as we do not give up or become distracted easily from the most-important goal that this represents.

Sometimes we’re waiting for God to work, when He’s waiting for us to initiate!

*“Without God we cannot; without us God will not.”*

* St Augustine

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