



30-minute discussion guides

Purpose

These videos are purposed to help equip people in churches and church small groups to engage those around them in everyday spiritual conversations, and also to communicate the gospel clearly and concisely when opportunity arises.

- They are deliberately short, suiting both in small groups use, and play during weekend services.
- The discussion-guides, like the videos, are deliberately concise and highly practical.

We hope they help!

Because we care — Series I

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|----|------------------------------|----------|
| 1. | You won't know until you ask | 5mins |
| 2. | What is the gospel? | 5mins |
| 3. | How to start a conversation | 4.30mins |
| 4. | How to share the gospel | 4.30mins |
| 5. | The power of prayer | 5mins |
| 6. | Disciples, not converts | 5mins |



Prior to discussion

We trust that you will break the ice, serve drinks, ask people how they are going, and generally get the conversation going.

If useful, the below 'conversation game' could help. The skills involved in this game are similar to those needed when engaging meaningful spiritual conversations with people who do not yet share the same spiritual beliefs.

The conversation game

Here is a simple game-idea that you could play each week, both for fun, but also because this game will actually train your young people in an important skill, without which they might struggle to ever really engage non-church people in *meaningful* spiritual conversations!

Instructions

- In pairs, two people have a conversation, but can only use questions
- They 'lose' as soon as one of them makes a statement
 - ...or pauses for an unusually long period of time
 - ...or replies with a question that doesn't make any sense within the conversation.

For example

Would you like to start the question game?...

...Do you realise you've already started it?

But would you like to choose the topic for it?...

...Can't you see that you've already chosen the topic?

Well – how is your game going?...

...How do you think its going

So it's going well?...

...It's great to be doing this isn't it?

Did you enjoy this session?...

...Do you mean the one we just had about question asking?

What other session have we had?...

...Don't you remember last week?

Aren't we supposed to be revising this weeks session now?...

...Isn't that what we're already doing?

Oh – are we still playing that game?...

For example

Would you like a Coke?...

...Do you mean from Coca-cola?

What do you think I mean?...

...Aren't there other types of Coke too?

Do you like a different drink?...

...Do you mean like Pepsi?

Pepsi is far too sweet, isn't it?...

...Don't you like it?

Wouldn't you prefer Fanta?...

...That's made by coca-cola too isn't it?

Do you have something against coca-cola?...

...Aren't you going to offer me the option of a coffee?

Oh - is that what you want?... Etc.

1. You won't know until you ask

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK:

- Have you ever been in an embarrassing situation where you mis-communicated because of a cultural difference?
- How long was your own journey from disinterested in Christ to faith in Christ, and at what point in that journey did you hear and understand the gospel?

BOOK:

Matthew 28:19-20 – our mission

- Summarise in your own words the mission Jesus gave us, and who's mission it is.

2 Corinthians 4:4 – Spiritual blindness

- Who or what is the god of this age?
- What has been blinded?
- What have they been blinded to?

LOOK:

- What do you think it is in people's thinking that makes them 'blind', or indifferent toward the gospel?
- What do you think of the idea proposed in the video that people can be *ignorant* of the gospel, or religiously *indifferent* toward it – and yet still be *interested* in investigating spiritual things?
- Would you agree that sharing the gospel in the West today is like cross-cultural communication? Is this perspective helpful – and if so, how so?
- If it is the 'mind that has been blinded' - is this something we address with prayer - or by challenging their thinking? Why?
- What do you think it is about a child that enables them to ask 'innocent questions' and get away with it, while others might not?
 - o Did Jesus sometimes do the same?
 - o What is it about *the person* that enables them to get away with asking something that someone else might not get away with?

TOOK:

- What can you take from this video and discussion that you can apply in your conversations this week?

Pray:

- Pray for God to show you people you could encourage toward faith.
- Pray that you will be helped through these videos to make progress in your ability to initiate and engage in everyday spiritual conversations.
- Pray for boldness and wisdom to ask innocent and honest questions.

2. What is the gospel?

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK

- Have you ever been given an important message to pass on, but then forgot what it was? Share with the group.
- Why is it important that we, as Christians, know the substance of the core message God has given us to pass on?

BOOK: Ephesians 5:15-17 - Make the most of every opportunity

- Do you think you are ready to make the most of every opportunity that presents itself to encourage others toward faith in Christ? Or, to what extent are you ready?
- If you are not ready, what things might you need to learn, do or change so as to become ready?
- How important is it that we are ready? I mean – don't we sometimes get second and third opportunities in life? [See footnote]

LOOK

- Revise the four points given in the video, to summarise the whole gospel message.
 - o In your own words, what would you say is the core message of the gospel?
 - o Which of these 4 points could be said to be the context?
 - o Why are all four points important?
- Practice: Break into pairs and each communicate the core 'content' of gospel with the other *in less than one minute*. (Note: While different opportunities suit different things, being able to share a one-minute summary of the core Christian message is a good skill, and not one that we should over-complicate)

TOOK:

- Discuss how much you think our general failure to share the gospel is a heart issue - as compared to a skill or perspective issue. Which do you think it is for you, and why?
- Where and when might you revise these four points so that they stay in your long-term memory? What could you do that might help you to retain this ability to communicate the gospel in under one-minute?

Pray

- Pray for those you would like to see come to faith in Jesus.
- Pray for God to stir His love in your heart for others.

Footnote: For reflection, while we might sometimes get a second chance to share with someone if we failed to utilise a previous opportunity, it remains that most people need to take a number of steps toward faith before they are ready to embrace faith in Christ. So – when an opportunity is missed, it can leave a person a step 'further back' than they might have been otherwise.

Every opportunity actually only comes once – which is why we are exhorted in Ephesians to make the most of every opportunity. It is important that we really do try in this area!

3. How to start a conversation

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK:

- Has anyone been in a situation where someone has said something that created a really awkward situation? What happened – and how do you think the tension could have been broken?

BOOK:

Luke 20:1-8 – Jesus asked a difficult question

- In a tense situation, instead of answering a question what did Jesus do?
 - o Why might he have done this (Why not answer the question)?
 - o What did this achieve?
- What did Jesus' question achieve in Luke 20:20-26?
- What did Jesus' questions achieve in Matthew 22:15-22?

LOOK:

- Revise the three questions given in the video.
- What is the point/purpose of each question?
- What are some of the benefits of asking these questions? What might these specific questions help us learn? How might they also help us avoid potential awkwardness in a conversation?
- **Activity:** Play the question game (Have conversations in pairs where you are only allowed to ask questions – and not allowed to make any statements. However, every question must also somehow be a sensible reply to the previous one. See an example in the footnote*).
- **Role-play:** Break into pairs, with one being a Christian, and the other not. Bring up a topic on which views will differ –and then practice using these questions in that conversation, with the goal of opening up the conversation *in a non-threatening way*.

TOOK:

- Would you be willing to use these questions in at least one conversation this week? (It doesn't have to be a spiritual topic).
 - o Who are you meeting this week that you might talk with?

Pray:

- Pray for a deep love for others that will enable you to take a selfless interest in them, and to ask questions naturally
- Pray for God to lead you to people who will be willing to discuss their spiritual views in a 'safe' conversation.

Footnote: Would you like to start the question game? Do you realise you've already started it? But would you like to choose the topic for it? Can't you see that you've already chosen the topic? Well – how are you? How do you think I am? So you are well? It's great to be here isn't it? Did you enjoy this session? Do you mean the one we just had about question asking? What other session have we had? Don't you remember last week? Aren't we supposed to be revising this weeks session now? Isn't that what we're already doing? Oh – are we still playing that game?...

4. How to share the gospel

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK:

- Have you ever had to give a speech to a group of people, and been really nervous?
- What do you think the key is to being relaxed and natural when communicating something?
- Tell us about one of your best or worst experiences in sharing the gospel?
-

BOOK: 1 Peter 3.15 – Always be prepared... ..with gentleness and respect.

- If someone asked you to share what you believe – prior to watching this, could you have done it clearly and concisely?
- If someone asked you to share why you believe this message to be true? What sort of things would you say?
- What is the manner with which we are encouraged to communicate our faith, and why is this important?

LOOK:

- On a whiteboard or paper, review the presentation you just saw as a group including (1) the drawing, (2) the 3 transition questions and (3) the 'abc' summary/prayer.
- Practice sharing this message in pairs, using the questions, and summary prayer.
- (Note: If someone is already competent in communicating this message using a different 'method', freely use that other method).

TOOK:

- When during this week could you pause to revise this drawing by yourself – to help it get into longer-term memory?
- When will you revise this drawing as a group in the coming year, to help it get into your long-term memories?
- Is there anyone you could ask this week if you could show them a great summary you've just learned of the core Christian message?

(Note: Remember to share concisely, aiming for under 3 minutes like in the video, and then ask *them* some questions to understand where they are at, so they talk too).

Pray:

- Pray for wisdom to know how to get this into your long-term memories.
- Pray for God to grace you with a few opportunities to initiate and engage spiritual conversations in this coming week.

5. The power of prayer

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK:

- If you had a magic wand, what one thing would you change on this planet?
- Regarding your experiences with evangelism and prayer, have you prayed sincerely for opportunities or help – and God answered?

BOOK:

"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day." John 6:44

- Have you ever tried to convince a person of the Christian faith, but could not? Tell us about your experience.
- What does the above scripture say about the human heart, and how it responds to God's messages?

"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart." Jeremiah 29:13

- Explanation: This was said in the context of explaining God's blessings that would be toward Israel after their 70 years of exile – but this is also reflective of how God responds to all people.
- What does this verse say about how the human heart finds God?

LOOK:

- What do you think the relationship is between the above two points (...only God can draw a heart – yet people can choose)? They might seem to contradict each other - how might we resolve this? (See footnote)
- Have you ever talked with someone, and discovered during the conversation that God was already drawing them – even though they hadn't yet come to a full realisation of what God had done for them through Jesus?

TOOK:

- What is it that you will take away from this discussion to apply?

Prayer

- Pray for those you desire to see come to faith in Jesus
- Pray for the strengthening of your personal devotional lives, through which our ability to hear and discern God's voice is developed.
- Pray for eyes to see how God is already working in people's lives, so you can synch with what God is doing in your conversations.

Footnote: Jeremiah 29 reflects that it is possible for people to genuinely humble their hearts and seek God. To all who sincerely seek after him, God promises that they will find him, because God is already ready to reveal himself to people! However, it is likely that very few people would seek after God naturally/by themselves. Jeremiah 17:9 explains how *"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?"* This is why the greater effectiveness of our outreach efforts is really dependent upon God. God-alone can touch and 'draw' a heart to himself – giving them an improved opportunity of considering his love, and turning to him. Even for some who seek spiritual Truth, a divine revelation is needed for them to realise who Jesus is. This is why prayer and why sensitivity to God leading are important.

6. Disciples – not converts

Video-tutorial Outline



A helpful definition of an approach to discipleship today:

Discipleship is about **continued conversations** with **interested people**, with the **teachings of Jesus** in mind.

Some tips:

1. Disciple interested people, not just converts

We disciple toward conversion, not only after conversion

2. Be ready to give people your time

- The parable of the sower: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23
- When a person's interest in the gospel is sparked, there is a brief opportunity that must be taken
- Programmes don't disciple people – it takes people to disciple people!

3. Use a conversational approach rather than a teaching approach

4. What should we discuss?

- i. Show care first
- ii. Then discuss the spiritual questions they are asking
- iii. Then discuss what you have prepared

"...teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you..." (Matt 28:20). The Bible is our resource!

Areas to consider:

1. Loving God (Prayer, the Bible and the Holy Spirit)
2. Loving one another (the purpose of large groups and small groups)
3. Loving others (a ministry and a mission)

Resources that could help:

- The Bible!
- Printed Bible study resources
- Digital resources (e.g. 10daychallenge.co.nz)
- Group discussion programmes (Alpha, Christianity Explored etc.)

Conclusion:

Programmes don't disciple people – it takes people to disciple people!
Become one of those people!

6. Disciples – not converts

Thirty-minute discussion



HOOK:

- Who has been one of the most influential people in your life - other than Jesus, or your parents? What made them so influential?

BOOK:

"...and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:20)

- Is teaching people what Jesus' teachings say enough? Why is this understanding important?*
- How might you teach someone to obey – as compared to only teaching what Jesus says?***

"Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." (1 Corinthians 11:1)

- What dynamic does this add to how we might disciple others? (How would they ever get to see our example?)*
- Does this verse suggest that they were to follow Paul's example in everything he did?***

LOOK:

- What, to you, was the key point in this video?
- Why might we disciple interested people instead of just 'converts? (What is the difference?)
- Why is it so important that we are ready to give interested people our time? (Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23)
- Were the suggestion on how we might approach discipling someone helpful to you? (Is this something you could see yourself doing over coffee with someone?)

TOOK:

- (Possibly take a look at a resource or two that you could use, so you are at least a little-bit familiarised with it)
- If a friend this week expressed an interest in understanding the Christian faith better - having seen this video, what might you do?
- What would you discuss with them?

Prayer

- Pray that God would lead you to people who are interested to understand the Christian faith (whether seekers or new Christians).
- Pray that God would give you wisdom and perspective, to be able to see and embrace these very rare yet precious opportunities!

Footnotes

*It is about intentionally discipling obedience, which produces maturity, which brings about the possibility of multiplication (2 Timothy 2:2)

** It is unavoidably relational

*** Could it be that they were to follow his example *only in as much as he was imitating Christ?*