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Everyday Spiritual conversations

Small Group Study | WEEK 4

A message, not a massage



Discussion 4:

A message, not a massage

(Building bridges to the gospel)

Note to discussion leader

This message and study has four application points. Some pastors may choose to preach the messages that accompany this discussion guide over two weeks – in which case we recommend that you do the same.

Some teaching content is included in this discussion guide for your own reading, to help you bring direction to the discussion.

You will have no trouble filling an hour of with discussion and revision here. Use two weeks if you can.

We hope this series has helped

Dave Mann



Example 4: They believe that all people have done wrong. What might you ask that might help them to reflect on how this might hinder our connection With God?

- **Question:** Do you have quite a high standard of right and wrong for yourself? Do you live up to your own standard all the time? Do you think God's standard would be higher or lower than your standard? So, if God exists, would you accept that you and I both would be falling well short of his standard?
 - o **Result:** From within their own worldview they recognise that – if God does exist – they fall short of his standards.



Comment: The above demonstrates how we can encourage people to consider the existence of God, and of their own sinfulness before Him, on the basis of what they already believe. It is rare that the message of Jesus can be communicated the same way. Hopefully this is useful

APPLICATION

Just to note it – a very simple discipleship tool may have been mentioned. It's the 10daychallenge.co.nz – which you can also find at the app store (search 'Why Jesus?'). Maybe we can look at this another time (noting the 3min training video for it at <https://alltogether.co.nz/10-day-challenge>).

Pray: I think the right place to finish would be to pray for those around us who do not know Christ, and for opportunities to converse with them.

Plan: Looking ahead, It would be useful if we revised some of the things we've learnt this month at a few points through this year. What do you think?

- Note the Supplementary page. Plan a few dates on which you will revise the applications learnt.

Example 2: They believe in the existence of a God of some kind – but not a knowable God. Instead, all religions are basically the same. God is found through them all. What could you ask?

- **Question:** The world's religions say opposite things on the big things - like does God exist or not, does actual good and evil exist or not, what is salvation, how is 'salvation' attained etc. So they can't all be right, right? How do you reconcile that?
 - o **Result?** They might realise that the claim that all religions are the same makes no sense (only unless all religions are wrong).
 - o **Result?** They might realise that applying their intelligence to work out which religion explains reality better is now worth their effort.
- **Question:** Do you think it possible that the complexity of our relational nature (coming from the 'software' in our psychology/brains) might also be an evidence that the God who created us is relational?
 - o **Result?:** They might comprehend how this actually infers that the Creator is relational just like us – and therefore could possibly be personally known (laying a foundation for revelation on the purpose of Jesus' life)

Example 3: They believe in the existence of right and wrong – but not in a God. What could you ask?

- **Question:** Where do these definitions of right and wrong come from? If they come from us, doesn't that make morality relative? If morality is relative – doesn't that mean it is made up – so the words 'right' and 'wrong' actually have no *real* meaning?? (I mean – you could think murder is wrong and I think it is fine. Neither would have any right to judge the other right?)
- **Question:** If morality is relative – on what basis do we say pedophilia is wrong, or the moral code chosen by Germany in the time of Hitler? We kill animals we don't want (like black sheep), so why can't we kill people – or unwanted babies, or disabled babies? (As a personal statement - I'm not convinced that this belief - that morality is relative, is healthy for a society).
 - o **Result?** For a moral law to exist there must be a moral law-giver
 - Design also demands the existence of a designer
 - Intelligence demands the existence of an intelligent source

LAUNCHING

Opening game: The question game
In pairs, engage conversations in which members are

- only allowed to ask questions (no statements)
- and in which the questions must be a logical continuation of the conversation, ideally without pauses. How long can you sustain the conversation?

(See the bottom of the discussion guide #2 for an example)

Q1. Did anyone manage to engage a spiritual conversation of any kind with someone this week?

Q2. What do you think the relationship is between meeting people's physical needs (charity) and the sharing of the gospel? Can we have one without the other? Which is the most important? What is the relationship between the two?

GUIDING

Today we are going to revise four areas that were covered in our Sunday message.

Q3. THE MESSAGE IN 4 WORDS: On Sunday, we heard a summary of the gospel message in 4 words. Can anyone recall what these were?

Q3b. What is meant by each word

Q3c. **ACTIVITY:** With these 4 words it is possible to summarise the gospel message in about 30 seconds. In pairs, practice doing this.

The four words are:

i. Creation – God created everything God, and humans as the best thing in his creation

ii. Fall – God gave us free will so we could love, but we used it wrongly, and brought selfishness and suffering into the world

iii. Redemption – but God loved us enough to provide a solution through Jesus

iv. Restoration – and if we will receive that solution, his plan for us is that we join him in his greater plan of restoring not only people's lives, but the entire creation.

Q4. DELIVERING THE MESSAGE IN PIECES: In the second part of Sunday's message the illustration of a pizza was used. Can anyone remember what the point of this was? What do we learn? Does this make sense to you?

For the discussion leader: The pieces of the pizza are like the different parts of the gospel. If you offered a friend a piece of pizza they might like one – and maybe then a second. However, if you tried to force them to eat the whole pizza, it might be too much at that time. This is sometimes what sharing the gospel is like in our everyday conversations. We Dialogue with people with a view to Discerning where they are at spiritually. We then Discuss the relevant part of the gospel with them. I.e. We don't have to share the whole gospel every time. We share the relevant piece. 'We help people every day, and in every way, to take steps toward Jesus.' (A quote from David Geisler from *Conversational Evangelism*)

Q5. COMMUNICATING THE WHOLE MESSAGE CLEARLY:

Sometimes when in a spiritual conversation an opportunity comes up to explain what we believe as Christians (aka – the gospel). In the third part of Sunday's message we learnt how we could share the gospel in under 2 minutes. A drawing was used – to help us remember what to say. Let's revise this now.

Option 1: Use the video – then practice in pairs

WEBLINK: <https://alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members/>

VIDEO: #4 – How to Share the Gospel

LENGTH: 4:30mins (The actual sharing of the gospel takes 90 seconds in this video – though most would need 2 minutes to say the same)

Option 2: Have someone demonstrate – then practice in pairs.

Q6. BUILDING BRIDGES TO THE GOSPEL BASED OFF WHAT PEOPLE ALREADY BELIEVE

Sunday's message concluded by encouraging us that it is possible to help people understand some parts of the gospel *on the basis of things they already believe* – without ever needing to refer to a Bible verse or teaching. This is especially so in the areas of understanding God's existence, and of accepting that we all have a 'fallen nature' / are sinners. This makes explaining the Christian solution easier, and easier for them to understand.

So – what questions could we ask in the following situations that might help a person take a small step toward faith in Jesus?

Example 1: They believe in existence of a spiritual realm – but not yet the idea of one specific God. What could you ask?

- **Question:** Do you think the design and complexity suggests design?
 - o **Result?** They might move from believing in a 'higher power' to the possibility of a 'God'
- **Question:** Do you believe there are good and evil forces in the spiritual realm? How are you to know that the spiritual forces you are engaging with are good? Is it not the nature of deception that we would be deceived?
 - o **Result?** They might realise that a spiritual experience cannot be assumed to be good just because it feels or seems good. Other evidences need considering



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Supplementary 4



CONVERSATIONAL
EVANGELISM
SERIES 1

Everyday Spiritual conversations

Small Group Study | WEEK 5+

SUPPLEMENTARY

Simple ideas that can enable real change



**Outreaching
CULTURE**

A Leadership
Strategy by

all together
Consulting

Points for future revision...

...that could be covered through a series of 5 to 10 minute '*revision and vision*' times at the end of a dozen small group session during the year, before praying for those you'd each like to encourage to consider faith.

1. Why engaging conversation with questions

might be important to have as our 'default' approach to personal witnessing (Ask – don't tell).

2. How to respond in the face of disagreement

(Discuss – don't disagree)

- (Applaud the good – ask questions about what you 'don't understand' – with examples)

3. Some questions to ask to investigate a person's view, and turn the conversation (Converse – don't confront)

- What do you mean by that?
- Where'd you get that idea from?
- Have you considered...?

(Consider some examples)

Regarding the gospel (A message – not a massage)

4. The four points that summarise the gospel, and how to share the gospel in 30 seconds

5. The idea of giving people one 'piece of pizza' at a time – and why

6. How to share the gospel clearly in under 2 minutes (the gospel drawing)

7. Questions that could help people embrace parts of the gospel from within their own worldview – like those who do not believe in God, or that they are relationally separated from God due to their sin, to potentially come to these conclusions *from within their own existing beliefs* (use examples from study 4).

APPLICATION

- Q7. For the bold: Who might you meet in the course of the coming week, who you could ask one of these questions?
- Q8. For all: If we can get others talking – then we have **the context** within which a meaningful conversation might take place.
- Who could you take a selfless interest in this week, asking some open-ended questions, for no other purpose than to listen and know their story a bit more?

To do: Make a short list of friends you would like to reach out to.

Pray: Pray for them each week during this series – and for ideas for how to best connect with them.