

Because We Care

Series II



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

For the discussion group leader

- **Preparation:** Some guides have more questions than needed. Select those you need.
- **Please reserve time to do the activities suggested:** Studies show that a month after hearing a lesson people will potentially remember 10% of what they hear, but 40% of what they say and 70% of what they do.
- **The bigger picture:** Series II builds upon Series I. Series II therefore does not include teaching on the gospel itself or how to share it as this is covered in Series I. We encourage leaders to **revise** key points from the prior videos during this series, to help these points shift to long-term memory and application. What Series II does add is equipping on how we could better create the *context* within which meaningful conversations take place. Many struggle to create this context. This series will help!

Because We Care - Series II

1. Why Christianity is good news - not bad	5mins
2. Conversations move at the speed of trust	5mins
3. How to start a NORMAL conversation	5mins
4. How to disagree without disagreeing	5mins
5. The power of a testimony	5mins

The format of discussions

HOOK	- Questions to gain attention and get people talking freely
BOOK	- Something from the Word of God
LOOK	- Discussing what we can learn
TOOK	- Application

(The wider series)



The current 'Because We Care' series

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Series I – Reaching your world one conversation at a time

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. If we don't who will? | 5mins |
| 2. This is the gospel (How to share the gospel in 30sec) | 5mins |
| 3. How to start a conversation | 4.30mins |
| 4. How to share the gospel (How to share the gospel in 2mins) | 4.30mins |
| 5. The power of prayer | 5mins |

Series II – It's all about the conversation

- | | |
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| 1. Why Christianity is good news - not bad | 5mins |
| 2. Conversations move at the speed of trust | 5mins |
| 3. How to start a NORMAL conversation | 5mins |
| 4. How to disagree without disagreeing | 5mins |
| 5. The power of a testimony | 5mins |

Series III – Conversation in a hostile environment

- | | |
|---|----------|
| 1. How to be effective in a hostile environment | 5mins |
| 2. Answering questions with questions | 5mins |
| 3. Avoiding the quotable quote | 5mins |
| 4. When it's right to confuse people | 5mins |
| 5. How to say nothing (unless you really say something) | 5.30mins |

All videos come with matching small group discussion guides, free online.

1. Why Christianity is good news, not bad

Discussion guide – Series II



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It's all about the conversation
SERIES II



HOOK:

- Today we're discussing the way Christianity is good news, not bad. Out of interest, has anyone had any good news recently?
- To what extent would you say that coming to faith in Christ was good news for you?
- If you had to summarise the gospel in one word, what word would you choose, and why?
- **Activity:** Write on a white board / screen a list of positive things the Christian faith brings (1) in people's lives, and (2) to entire societies. (Record this to look at again during future discussions).

BOOK:

- When Christians explain this good news to people, sometimes they seem to hear the message as if it were bad news. Why do you think that is?
- **Read John 3:16 and 17.** Is telling people they are sinners separated from God good news?
 - Is this a part of the gospel message, and if so why?*
- **Read Romans 3:22-24.**
 - What does God give us?
 - Through whom is it given?
 - By what is it received?
 - By saying it is received by faith – what is the intended contrast? (It is not received through good works / the law).
 - How many is this gift relevant to?
 - How many could its benefits be available for?

LOOK:

- What is the most important point in the gospel (noting John 3:16 above, or the 4 points from Series 1 – Video 2 used to summarise the gospel message: Creation, Fall, Redemption/Jesus, Restoration)?**
 - What is the most important point to make with a person when trying to explain this message to them? (How about whatever point they don't understand or see reason to believe!)
- Do you think most people in our nation already understand they are separated from friendship with God because of their sin – or does this need explaining to them?
- Are people generally happy to be told the Bible says they are 'sinners who are therefore separated from God and going to hell' – or are they prone to being offended by this? Why might some feel offended?
- How could we help people understand this idea of 'broken relationship due to sin' without somehow making them feel they are being judged by us?
- In John 8:7 Jesus wanted to point out that those accusing a woman of sin were also sinners. But, instead of accusing them, he wisely asked a question that caused them to assess it for themselves ('Whoever is without sin cast the first stone'). What is the difference between these two approaches?

1. Why Christianity is good news, not bad

Page 2



BECAUSE
WE CARE
It's all about the conversation
SERIES II



- **Learning point:** Here are three simple questions that could help a person understand the Christian idea of sin and how it separates us relationally from God:
 1. Do you have standards of behaviour that you expect of yourself?
 2. Do you always live up to your own standards?
 3. If this good and loving God exists, do you think his standards would be higher or lower than yours?

"...And that's all the Bible says. We're all falling short of God's standards for us – and this is a problem for us, because it's a problem to God!"

REVISION

- Is the Christian message really good news to talk about with others, and why?
- What parts of the message are more difficult to communicate, and why?
- Should people feel judged or critiqued when we communicate this message? If not, what are some keys to communicating without judgement?
- What other stories of Christian influence in people's lives and throughout history could we tell, to help people see more clearly how truly positive the results of the Christian faith and message are? (Revise the list you created at the start of today's discussion).

The over-arching point: We do carry good news, and with good people skills everything can still be said! (1 Peter 3:15.)

TOOK:

- What do you take away from this discussion today?
- **Activity:** List 5 non-church friends (if not done at the start of the year already) who you desire to encourage to consider the Christian faith this year, and discuss what you could do next to encourage them on this journey?

PRAY:

- ...for a deeper love for those who do not yet know the hope of Christ.
- ...for wisdom to find ways to open up meaningful conversation.
- ...for the 5 friends who you are praying will consider faith in Christ.
-

* Our sin and separation from God are not the good news, but instead the context within which the good news is understood. For revision: See video #2 in the first series, sometimes titled 'What is the gospel?'. It suggests 4 words that together represent 'the whole gospel message'. (The point of that video is to demonstrate how, by explaining each word concisely, the essence of this message can be explained to someone in just 30 seconds. The four words are Creation, Fall, Jesus/Redemption, Restoration).

** 'Jesus' is likely the most important. His life and offer are the message. This is the good news.

2. Conversations move at the speed of trust

Discussion guide – Series II



HOOK:

- **Starting activity:** Play the question game before starting discussion.*
- Have you ever met someone, and hit it off straight away in meaningful conversation? What was it about you – or them, that enabled this?
- Think of a time when a conversation was awkward. Without mentioning names, what do you think makes conversations with some people awkward?

REVISION OF VIDEO:

- What was the point of the bicycle illustration?
- Would you agree that for many Christians, conversational skills might be a greater need than gospel skills? Why?
- What is the meaning of the statement 'big talk follows small talk'?

BOOK: Luke 19:1-10 - Jesus at the table with known 'sinners'

A few tensions existed in the room, because not only were Tax Collectors corrupt back then, they were also considered to have sided with the Romans in their military occupation of Israel.

- Do you get the impression that Zacchaeus and friends were comfortable around Jesus, or do you think they felt judged by him, and why?
- What do you think must have happened in their conversations to get past possible initial awkwardness to a conversation that changed Zacchaeus' life?**

LOOK:

- How good are you at asking questions that get others talking about their own thoughts, experiences or feelings (rather than doing most of the talking yourself)?
- **Activity:** What sorts of interesting questions could you ask to get to know someone better? (Make a list) ***
- Consider these three scenarios:
 - Have you ever tried to engage a conversation with someone on a topic where they declined to engage the conversation? What happened and how did it make you feel?
 - Have you ever had someone initiate a conversation with you about something, but you didn't engage because you weren't interested?
 - Have you ever had someone engage you in a conversation about something you weren't interested in, but because of the way they talked about it you became interested? What happened?

SUMMARY COMMENT:

Because conversations move at the speed of trust, it's important that we learn how to enjoy 'small talk'. Without this we will not have opportunity to engage in much 'big talk'.

2. Conversations move at the speed of trust

Page 2



TOOK (Application):

Jesus' conversation with Zacchaeus only happened because Jesus first gave him time, and then engaged a conversation.

- Who are you going to give some time to this week to get to know them better and potentially open up a conversation?
- What questions could you ask your friends, to get to know them and their thoughts better?

PRAY:

- ...that your passion to be a positive Christian witness to others will grow.
- ...for the 5 friends you listed who you would like to encourage to consider the Christian offer of forgiveness, life and hope from God.

* In the 'question game', members engage conversations in which they are only allowed to ask questions. As soon as someone either (a) makes a statement or (b) replies in a way that would not be natural within a conversation (e.g. a random and unrelated question, or pausing for a very long time, etc.) they are out. Play an elimination game in pairs. Last person standing wins.

** Maybe Jesus engaged in 'small talk' without any hint of judgement. As trust built, he then continued to feed conversation through the use of stories and questions. Then, gradually, as trust grew, things opened up.

*** From the video – there were some questions about their background or current interests: Where do you come from? Tell me about your family? What do you do with your time? What do you do for recreation (hobbies / sports)? (*For credits - Caleb Leadership Course in New Zealand*). Another idea is to ask questions about a person's hopes and dreams: E.g. If you could change one thing in this world with your life, what would it be? If you could have any job at all – and anywhere in the world, what would you want to do, and where? If you could magically become any person on this planet, who would it be and why? Questions like this can reveal a lot about what's on a person's heart – and because questions inspire questions, they can open two-way conversations.

3. How to start a normal conversation

Discussion guide – Series II



HOOK:

- Did anyone manage to ask a friend some open-ended questions this week to get to know them and/or their spiritual beliefs?
- Have any of you ever been in a sales position, or had to 'cold call' people to ask them to help with something? Were you nervous? What is it about these roles that makes you feel nervous? What is it that helps you feel confident?

LOOK:

- Revise the four points made in this video.
- What do you think of the suggestion that, if we're struggling to engage spiritual conversations, we try removing the 'gospel agenda' from the front of the conversation? Is this useful, or a compromise? Why?

BOOK: John 4.4-16 – Humour and the Samaritan woman

- Do you think Jesus' question at v10 was serious, or might this have been humorous conversational 'banter'?
- Do you think her reply in v 11 was serious, or might she also have been humouring him?
- Do you think it possible that Jesus' comment in v13 – and also her reply in v15, might both have had a tone of humour in them?
- The conversation took a serious turn from v 16 onwards. What might Jesus have been trying to achieve in the conversation prior to this? (What obstacles stood in the way of them having an open conversation?)

TOOK:

- **Activity:** Play the question game to practice conversational skills.*
- What have you got out of our discussion today?
- Who will you attempt to engage in a conversation this week, to better understand their spiritual thoughts?

Pray:

- ...for a growing love for people, so you will be motivated to help and encourage others in their faith journey.
- ...for God to lead you to people you can engage in conversation to do this!

* The question game is suggested in connection with a few of these videos. In this game members stand and engage conversations in pairs, *but are only allowed to ask questions*. As soon as someone either (a) makes a statement or (b) replies in a way that would not be natural within a conversation (e.g. a random and unrelated question, or pausing for a very long time) they sit down. The last person standing wins.

4. How to disagree without disagreeing

Discussion guide – Series II



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It's all about the conversation
SERIES II



HOOK:

- Can any of you recall a time where you said something inappropriate or embarrassing in a group setting by mistake? What happened?
- Have you ever been in a conversation where someone said something, and you reacted to it – only to later realise you'd misunderstood?
- What was the main point being made in the video?

BOOK: Acts 17:22-31 - Paul at Athens

- What power does an idol have? (1 Corinthians 8:4).
- Why didn't Paul confront them with the truth that idols are nothing but bits of wood or clay?
- What did this approach achieve? What do we learn from Paul's example here?

LOOK:

- When people say things you disagree with, do you typically disagree openly – or stay quiet to keep the peace?
- Have you ever had someone who disagrees with you approach the conversation so gently that they not only opened up the conversation with you – but also succeeded in changing your view? (If group members cannot think of a spiritual, moral or political type of conversation, consider conversations in which their view was changed, consider with a sales person who was successful in convincing you to buy a product).
- Is it important that we always work to keep the peace? (Note that Jesus didn't.)
- What should our motives be, that determine whether or not we keep the peace? (When should we confront more directly?)

TOOK:

- **Activity:** Break into pairs and have some fun taking turns at asking various awkward questions, or making awkward statements, that the other needs to respond to without any immediate sign of disagreement. How could you (1) somehow compliment the person while (2) asking a question that might help you to better-understand what they have said?
 - Afterwards, share some of the things you said to open up these initially awkward conversations?
- What have you got out of today's discussion?
- Who could you engage in conversation this week to practice these skills?

Pray:

- ...for God to lead you to people at suitable times, to engage in meaningful conversation.
- ...for wisdom and love in your hearts, to help you engage freely and naturally.

5. The power of a testimony

Discussion guide – Series II



HOOK:

- Can anyone remember children's stories you heard when you were very young?
- Can anyone remember hearing a Christian testimony years ago, from which you can still remember details today?

BOOK: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 - Receiving comfort to give comfort

- As a simple reflection, what things could we learn or be encouraged by from these verses?

Revelation 12: 10-12 – How the saints overcame

- Who was hurled down?
- To where was he hurled?
- According to the text, who triumphed?
- By what two things did they triumph, and what might these mean? *
- From these verses, for how long might the challenges of this life affect the saints? (Do they continue forever?)
- These verses suggest that faith in Jesus, along with the encouragement of testimonies, can give us courage. How much courage, and why would we need it?

LOOK:

- What is it about testimonies that makes them so powerful for encouraging faith?
- From your experience, are non-church people generally interested in hearing spiritual stories? (If some non-believers seem not to be interested in hearing *Christian* stories, what might it be that is putting them off?**)

Comment: Beyond our testimonies, everyday stories about natural life events can also be used to communicate spiritual points. Consider Jesus' parables as an example.

TOOK:

- What did the video suggest as the three key points of a testimony? (1 - Beforehand. 2 - What God did. 3 - How I was changed).
- **Activity 1:** Make a list of your key 2 or 3 faith experiences that you could tell someone else about, to encourage their journey toward faith.
 - From these select an experience you feel a strong emotional connection to in terms of how it impacted your life - because you will naturally communicate that story better.
 - Write the story down in about 300 words, with a non-church audience in mind (300 words will take about 2 minutes to say.
 - Share this with the group.

5. The power of a testimony

Page 2



BECAUSE
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It's all about the conversation
SERIES II



- **Activity 2:** The #hopestory / #bestdayofmylife / #easterchangedmylife challenge.
 - Write your story again – but this time in 160 words, or less.
 - Record this very simply with your phone in under 1min.
 - Upload to social media with the above hashtags in the description.
 - Share this with a few friends who you'd hope to encourage to consider faith one day.
 - (At Easter, consider doing the same with #EasterChangedMyLife).
 - Then share this with some church friends – to challenge them to do the same!

Pray:

- ...for suitable occasions to ask people about their stories this week.
- ...for God to help you remember stories of your own which you could share concisely when in conversation, to encourage faith.

* 'Blood of the lamb' alludes to faith in what Jesus did at the cross. 'The word of their testimony' refers to the ongoing encouragement they received through hearing regular current stories about God was doing.

** I wonder if some non-church people who are interested in our spiritual stories stop being interested when they start to feel we're trying to convince them of or convert them to something. In other words, the attitude of our hearts is unavoidably in the tone of our words. When we have an agenda – people can tell. Remembers Series 2, Video #3 - 'How to start a normal conversation'. A point Raki makes in that video is that, "The freedom of the conversation has a lot to do with the dynamics of the conversation". We should desire to encourage people to embrace faith in Christ. However, the way we approach this needs to be sensitive. We talk with people, not at people. We ask questions more than we talk. And when we do talk, we should do so clearly and boldly – yet also with all gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15).

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