

The key to great conversations is great questions

Typically we learn conversational skills from our parents and significant others. But what if a family doesn't model good conversational skills – while the kids grow up looking at screens? The good news is, conversational skills can be taught and learnt!

Conversational skills are vital to Christian outreach. A notable change in approach to outreach across the past few decades was from a didactic / telling approach to a conversational approach. At one time most people believed in a good God. Today most people question that. Christian witness requires more than an explanation of our message. It's about engaging in a journey with people, to help them every day, and in every way, to take steps toward Jesus.

Who could we learn conversational skills from? Fortunately for us, God's Son, Jesus, was a master conversationalist!

Were we to define Jesus' 'method' for engaging with people, we see that he (1) asked questions (2) with an ear open to the Spirit. It was a conversational approach, and a Spirit-led approach. To define the conversational dynamic further, he asked questions, told stories and made intriguing statements. To note it also, every conversation was different because every person was different!

A study of Jesus' conversations can reveal much.

Many people feel lost or stuck within their witness to others. Some, not knowing what to say, talk too much - while others remain silent. Both responses can be a problem. The key to great conversations is great questions. It is also possible to talk through questions with very little need for statements. This can be useful where views differ.

In considering Jesus' conversations, it's surprising to note how many times the Gospel writers (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) record him asking a question. Given these accounts are brief summaries of the conversations that took place, it reflects he really was a question-asker!

Some questions we could consider are: (i) What do you mean by that? (ii) Where did you get that idea from? (iii) Have you considered...? These three questions can open a conversation up. This helps investigate another person's beliefs, after which an alternative way of thinking can be

suggested. Many across our nation can already testify how learning in this area led to a new confidence in their witness.

What if we were to make an intentional choice as Christian believers and church leaders to become 'experts' in conversational skills suiting witness in our own nation? Equipping God's people to engage in their own nation is at the very core of what a church leader is there to do.

Resources:

- **Video series:** 'Because We Care' – a collection of 5min conversational – equipping videos suitable for playing during church services or in small groups with discussion guides – AllTogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members
- **Books:** *Because We Care* by Dave Mann, *Elephant in the Room* by Dave Mann, *Tactics* by Gregory Koukl, *God Space* by Doug Pollock, *Conversational Evangelism* by David Geisler.
- **Sermon and small group resource:** AllTogether.co.nz/sermons-studies
- **16 short bulletin-sized articles:** AllTogether.co.nz/printmaterial/

