

6. Starting Spiritual Conversations

Let's talk today about how we can actually start spiritual conversations with people who are far from God. This is really the turning point that will determine whether we will be effective witnesses who have a spiritual impact or not. Many Christians forget the importance of talking about Jesus and His message. They feel living a Christian life is good enough. The only problem with that is if we don't initiate spiritual conversations, other people will almost never bring it up!

Thankfully, we don't have to look further than the example of Jesus for inspiration. He went out of His way to spend time with spiritually wayward people. In fact, the religious leaders of His day (the Pharisees) tried to insult Him by calling Him a "friend of sinners." Instead, Jesus wore that label as a badge of honor. Jesus attended parties, weddings, home gatherings, and had meals with people who were far from God.

You might ask yourself, "Who should I talk to about spiritual things?" There are three opportunities all of us have without even feeling it necessary to walk up to a complete stranger.

- People we already know
- People we used to know
- People we want to get to know

If we would focus on the people in our life's sphere of influence, we would be amazed at the opportunities the Lord will set up for us to regularly share His grace and love.

Three Approaches to Starting Spiritual Conversations

1. Bridging

The most natural way to start a spiritual conversation is what we call "bridging." Bridging turns the conversation by using the topic being discussed as a bridge to a related spiritual topic. Jesus did this beautifully with the woman at the well. She was talking about

ordinary water, but Jesus interested her in "living water" that would never let her thirst again.

2. Questioning

The second approach to starting spiritual conversations is what we will call "questioning." It is similar to bridging, but instead of making statements, it evokes a response by asking a question. With careful and sensitive questions, followed by genuine listening and further questions about why they feel that way or how they reached that conclusion, many of them will open up gradually to discussing things that really matter.

3. Inviting

The third approach called "inviting" turns the conversation towards spiritual topics by inviting our friends to a spiritually oriented event or gathering we think they might relate to. Did you know that 1 in 4 of your friends would come to church if you just invited them? The better news is that four out of four invitations can turn into spiritual conversations.

Key Points on Spiritual Conversations

- **Take initiative:** too often we wait for others to initiate topics of conversation. Be willing to take the lead.
- **Talk to people one-on-one:** as a general rule, we'll get a lot further in spiritual conversations if we talk to people one-on-one.
- **Engage in dialogue – not monolog:** most people are open to our talking *with* them about spiritual matters – but they don't want us talking *at* them!
- **Present truth in doses:** ask God for wisdom and sensitivity to know how much to say, and when to back off and wait for another opportunity.
- **Make the most of split-second opportunities:** these are the daily conversational turning points where we see an opportunity and ask ourselves, "Should I or shouldn't I?" and the choice we make can determine whether we ever talk about our faith and actually influence others for Christ!