

SESSION 1 – WHERE TO BEGIN

- Why don't Christians often share their faith?

WHO IS JESUS?

- When Jesus walked on earth who did people say that Jesus is?

¹³ When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” ¹⁴ They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” Matthew 16:13-14

- Today, who do people say Jesus is?

THE GOAL OF THIS TRAINING

To prepare us to be contagious Christians who are active in leading others to Christ.

THE CALL TO SHARE OUR FAITH WITH OTHERS:

Why Jesus came – *¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10*

What Jesus calls us to do – *²¹ Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” John 20:21*

Jesus's first command – *¹⁷ “Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will send you out to fish for people.” Mark 1:17*

Jesus is Great Commission – *¹⁸ Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:18-20*

Jesus's last command – *⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8*

The example of the early church – ¹And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria... ⁴Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. Acts 8:1,4

- When we help people find the forgiveness and leadership of Jesus, what are the benefits to:
 - To us?
 - To others?
 - To God?

THE PROBLEM OF PERCEPTIONS

- What comes to mind when you hear the words evangelism or evangelist?

Negative	Positive

COMPONENTS OF A CONTAGIOUS CHRISTIAN

Contagious Christianity is fueled by *love*.

¹⁴ For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 2 Corinthians 5:14

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3: 15

It flows out of _____.

⁵ "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. John 15:5

"Christians are to be good news before they share the good news." – Joe Aldrich

It's built on *relationships*.

It's expressed in both _____ and _____.

"Preach the gospel at all times, and when necessary use words." – St Francis of Assisi

"People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care."

¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth. 1 John 3:18

¹⁴ How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? Romans 10:14

⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 1 Corinthians 3:6

People don't usually accept the plan of salvation until it's presented to them seven times.

It's always a *partnership*.

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. 1 Corinthians 3:5

"A person's coming to Christ is like a chain with many links... there are many influences and conversations that proceed a person's decision to convert to Christ. I know the joy of being the first link at times, a middle link usually, and occasionally the last link. God has not called me to only be the last link." Cliffe Knechtle, *Give Me An Answer*

PRAYER

Much Prayer, Much Blessing
Little Prayer, Little Blessing
No Prayer, No Blessing

Pair up with another person and share the first name of the person you wrote down on your impact list, and what your relationship is to them. Take a few minutes to pray together for the people you've both mentioned. To help you know how to pray, follow the simple prayer guide on the right side of the prayer list.

PRAYER LIST

People To Pray For

FOR YOUR FRIEND

Ask God to:

- Open their eyes to the emptiness of life without Him
- Help them see their need for His forgiveness
- Remove the confusion they had about Him and the life He offers
- Help them grasp the meaning and importance of the cross of Christ
- Open their heart to God's love and truth and draw them to himself

FOR YOU

Ask God to:

- Help you live a consistent and attractive Christian life
- Make you authentic and honest as you deal with life's ups and downs
- Give you wisdom and knowing how to approach the relationship
- Expand your knowledge so you'll be ready to explain the gospel message
- Grant you an appropriate mix of persistence and patience
- Use you to soon lead this person to trust in Chris

FOR YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER

Ask God to:

- Caused depth and trust to grow between you naturally
- Show you how you can best love and serve your friend
- Open doors for ongoing spiritual conversations
- Guide those conversations in frequency, depth, and content

IMPACT LIST

My Friends Name

My Style(s):

Primary _____

Secondary _____

Next Steps

Things to Do Together

Possible Transition Statements

Best illustrations for my friend

Next step to reach my friend

SESSION 2 – STYLES

- Since we last met, what thoughts have you had about becoming more intentional and active in sharing your faith?

God intentionally built diversity into the church and didn't make us all the same.

¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 1 Corinthians 12:18

STYLES QUESTIONNAIRE

Directions

1. Read each of the 36 statements and record a number by each that reflects the degree to which you think that statement fits you. Your choices are from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest match to who you are, and 5 the highest. Here's a description of what each number means:

- 5 That's totally me
- 4 Pretty much like me
- 3 Somewhat like me
- 2 A little like me
- 1 That's not me at all

2. Transfer those numbers to the grid and total each column.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>___ 1. In conversations, I like to approach topics directly, without much small talk or "beating around the bush."</p> <p>___ 2. I have a hard time getting out of a bookstore without buying a bunch of new books that will help me understand what people are thinking.</p> <p>___ 3. I often speak out of my personal background or experience in order to illustrate a point I am trying to make.</p> <p>___ 4. I am a "people-person" who places a high value on friendship.</p> <p>___ 5. I enjoy adding or including new people in activities I'm involved in.</p> | <p>___ 6. I see needs in people's lives that others often overlook.</p> <p>___ 7. I don't shy away from challenging someone when it seems necessary.</p> <p>___ 8. I tend to be analytical and logical.</p> <p>___ 9. I often identify with others by using phrases like, "I used to think that too," or "I once felt the way you do."</p> <p>___ 10. People have commented about my ability for developing deep friendships.</p> <p>___ 11. To be honest, I often watch for situations in which someone "better qualified" can explain concepts to my friends.</p> |
|--|---|

- _____ 12. I find fulfillment in helping others, often in behind-the-scenes ways.
- _____ 13. I do not have a problem confronting my friends with the truth even if it strains the relationship.
- _____ 14. In conversations, I naturally key in on questions that are holding up a person's understanding or progress.
- _____ 15. When I talk around the locker room or the drinking fountain, people really listen.
- _____ 16. I would rather delve into personal life issues than abstract theoretical ideas.
- _____ 17. It is not unusual for me to attend special events or concerts and bring along a carful of friends.
- _____ 18. I would rather show love through actions than through words.
- _____ 19. I think the world would be a lot better place if people would stop being so sensitive about everything and just speak the truth!
- _____ 20. I enjoy discussions and debates on difficult questions.
- _____ 21. I intentionally share my mistakes and struggles with others when it will help them consider solutions that could help them.
- _____ 22. I prefer discussing a person's life before getting into the details of their beliefs and opinions.
- _____ 23. I tend to watch for worthwhile events to bring people to (such as enriching seminars, retreats, classes, or church services).
- _____ 24. I have found that my quiet demonstrations of love and care sometimes help people open up and become more receptive to what I think.
- _____ 25. A motto that would fit me is: "Make a difference or a mess, but *do* something."
- _____ 26. Often when listening to teachers or TV commentators, I mentally (or even verbally) argue with their positions and logic.
- _____ 27. People seem interested in hearing stories about things that have happened in my life.
- _____ 28. I enjoy long talks with friends, and it doesn't matter much where we are or where we're going.
- _____ 29. I am always looking for a match between the needs and interests of my friends and various books, classes, and programs that they would enjoy or benefit from.
- _____ 30. I think the world would be a better place if people would talk less and take more action on behalf of their friends and neighbors.

- _____ 31. I sometimes get in trouble for lacking gentleness and sensitivity in the way I interact with others.
- _____ 32. I like to get at the deeper reasons for opinions that people hold.
- _____ 33. I am still amazed at how God has worked in my life and I would like others to know about it.

- _____ 34. People generally consider me to be an interactive, sensitive, and caring kind of person.
- _____ 35. A highlight of my week is when I can take a guest with me to a helpful learning event, including church.
- _____ 36. I tend to be more practical and action-oriented than philosophical and idea-oriented.

	<i>Direct</i>	<i>Intellectual</i>	<i>Testimonial</i>	<i>Interpersonal</i>	<i>Invitational</i>	<i>Serving</i>
	#1 _____	#2 _____	#3 _____	#4 _____	#5 _____	#6 _____
	#7 _____	#8 _____	#9 _____	#10 _____	#11 _____	#12 _____
	#13 _____	#14 _____	#15 _____	#16 _____	#17 _____	#18 _____
	#19 _____	#20 _____	#21 _____	#22 _____	#23 _____	#24 _____
	#25 _____	#26 _____	#27 _____	#28 _____	#29 _____	#30 _____
	#31 _____	#32 _____	#33 _____	#34 _____	#35 _____	#36 _____
TOTALS						

DIRECT STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ in Acts 2

Characteristics:

- Confident
- Assertive
- _____

People who probably have the style:

THE INTELLECTUAL STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ in Acts 17

Characteristics:

- Inquisitive
- Analytical
- _____

People who probably have the style:

TESTIMONIAL STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ and John 9

Characteristics:

- Clear communicators
- Compelling storytellers
- _____

People who probably have the style:

THE INTERPERSONAL STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ in Luke 5:29

Characteristics:

- Relational warmth
- Conversational
- _____

People who probably have the style:

INVITATIONAL STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ in John 4

Characteristics:

- Hospitable
- Relational
- _____

People who probably have the style:

THE SERVING STYLE

Biblical Example: _____ in Acts 9

Characteristics:

- Other centered
- Work behind the scenes
- _____

People who probably have the style:

Read through the information for your primary evangelism style and check the boxes of any items you think apply to you. If the first style does not seem to relate, then look at your second style.

From the same information, identify one idea for developing your primary style that you think could apply in your life, as well as one caution to watch out for. Circle or underline them.

DIRECT STYLE

Biblical Example: Peter in Acts 2

Theme Verse: 2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.

Traits

- Confident
- Bold
- Assertive
- Skips small talk, gets right to the point
- Has strong opinions and convictions

Cautions

- Be sure to seek God’s wisdom so you will be appropriately sensitive and tactful.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to restrain your desire to come on strong.
- Avoid judging or laying guilt trips on others who approach evangelism with a different style.

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- Ask friends for feedback on whether or not you have the right balance of boldness and gentleness. Keep in mind Paul’s phrase in Ephesians 4, “speaking the truth in love.” Both truth and love are essential.
- Prepare yourself for situations where you will stand alone (read about Peter in Acts 2 and other Scripture). The nonbeliever you confront with the truth will sometimes feel uncomfortable. Even nonconfrontational Christians who are with you will sometimes feel that discomfort. That’s okay. Under God’s guidance, challenge people to trust and follow Christ, and he will use it.
- It is critical that you listen and value what others say before telling them what you think they need to hear.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

INTELLECTUAL STYLE

Biblical Example: Paul in Acts 17

Theme Verse: 2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Traits

- Analytical
- Logical
- Inquisitive
- Likes to debate
- More concerned with what people think than how they feel

Cautions

- Avoid getting stuck on academic points, arguments, and hair-splitting points of evidence. These are mainly to clear the path back to the central gospel message.
- Remember that attitude is as important as information. First Peter 3:15 says to have “gentleness and respect.”
- Avoid becoming argumentative.

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- Set time aside to study. This style, more than the others, relies on preparation. Take serious action on what it says in 1 Peter 3:15:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.
- Avoid doing all your preparation in an academic vacuum. Get out and talk to others. Try out your arguments and answers on real people, and make refinements as needed.
- Develop your relational side. Talk to people about everyday events, and what is happening in their life and yours.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

TESTIMONIAL STYLE

Biblical Example: The blind man in John 9

Theme Verse: 1 John 1:3a

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

Traits

- Clear communicator
- Good listener
- Vulnerable about your personal life, ups and downs
- Overwhelmed by the account of how God reached you
- See links between your experience and that of other people

Cautions

- Be sure to relate your experience to the life of your friend. You need to first *listen* to them to be able to connect your story to their situation.
- Do not stop with merely telling your story. Challenge them to consider how what you learned might apply to their life.
- Don't downplay the value of your story because it seems too ordinary. Ordinary stories relate best to ordinary people!

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- Practice so you will be able to tell your story without hesitation.
- Keep Christ and the gospel message as the centerpiece of your story. This is an account of how he changed your life.
- Keep your story fresh by adding new and current illustrations from your ongoing walk with Christ.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

INTERPERSONAL STYLE

Biblical Example: Matthew in Luke 5:29

Theme Verse: 1 Corinthians 9:22b (NLT)

I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ.

Traits

- Relationally warm
- Conversational
- Compassionate
- Friendship-oriented
- Focuses on people and their needs

Cautions

- ⊠ Beware of valuing friendship over truth. Telling people they are sinners in need of a savior will test relationships.
- ⊠ Do not get so involved in the process of building friendships that you forget the ultimate goal: bringing people to know Christ as forgiver and leader.
- ⊠ Don't get overwhelmed with the amount of needs your friends might have—do what you can and leave the rest to God.

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- ⊠ Be patient. This style tends to work more gradually than others. Look and pray for opportunities to turn conversations toward spiritual matters.
- ⊠ Continually create and plan opportunities to interact with friends and new people through social events, sports, etc. This will put you in a place where your style can flourish.
- ⊠ Practice telling the gospel message so you will be prepared when the opportunity arises.
- ⊠ Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- ⊠ Other: _____

INVITATIONAL STYLE

Biblical Example: The woman at the well in John 4

Theme Verse: Luke 14:23

Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.”

Traits

- Hospitable
- Persuasive
- Enjoys meeting new people
- Enthusiastic
- Spiritually opportunistic

Cautions

- Don't let others do *all* the talking for you. Your friends and acquaintances need to hear how Christ influenced your life. In addition, they have questions you could answer concerning the implications of the gospel.
- Carefully and prayerfully consider which events or church services you take people to. Look for ones that are clear with truth but sensitive to the needs of spiritual seekers.
- Do not get discouraged if people refuse your invitation. Their refusal could be an opportunity for a spiritual conversation. Also, their “no” today may become a “yes” tomorrow.

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- When inviting people, try to get written details about the event into their hands (either preprinted or handwritten). Whenever appropriate, offer to pick them up and do something together before or after the event.
- At events, mentally put yourself in the place of the other person. Ask yourself if you were that person whether the event would relate to your concerns and mind-set. Reinforce the positive aspects to the person you invited.
- Offer constructive feedback to the event sponsors consisting of specific and realistic ways you think they could improve the event and make it more compelling to the people you bring.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

SERVING STYLE

Biblical Example: Tabitha (Dorcas) in Acts 9

Theme Verse: Matthew 5:16 (NLT)

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Traits

- Patient
- Others-centered
- Sees needs and finds joy in meeting them
- Shows love through action more than words
- Attaches value to even menial tasks

Cautions

- Remember that although “words are no substitute for actions,” “actions are no substitute for words” either! In Romans 10:14 Paul says that we must verbally tell people about Christ. You can do this in many ways as you point to him as the central motivation for your acts of service.
- Don’t underestimate the value of your service. It is your style that will reach the hardest to reach people. Acts of loving service are hard to resist and difficult to argue with.
- Be discerning as to how much you can do realistically, without depriving yourself or your family of needed care and attention.

Suggestions for Using and Developing This Style

- Find creative ways to communicate the spiritual motivation behind the service you offer. It could be through a word, a card, or an invitation.
- Seek God daily for opportunities to serve others for eternal purposes. He will open your eyes to areas you might have missed. Be ready to follow his leadings, even if they seem a bit out of the ordinary.
- Be careful not to impose your service on others. Pray for wisdom so you will know where to invest your efforts in ways that will be strategic for the kingdom of God.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

THREE CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

1. God knew what he was doing when he made you.
 2. God knew what he was doing when he put you in your circle of non-Christian friends.
 3. God knew what he was doing when he put you in our church.
- What did you learn from this discussion?

Turn back to the *Impact List* and in the upper right-hand corner write down your primary style as well as one or two secondary styles.

Under this person's name where it says *Next Steps*, write what you think they most need in order to move forward in their spiritual journey. Is it first for you to simply spend time together to deepen the relationship? Is there a way you can naturally apply your evangelism style, or evolve another Christian with a different style? Should you offer them a book or CD, or introduce them to a ministry that can help them take next steps forward?

Prayerful consider and write down on your *Next Steps* what you think God would have you do.

DISCUSSION

Based on our discussion in this session, the *Styles Questionnaire*, and *Styles Affirmations* which you just read, tell the others in your group:

- What you think your primary evangelistic style is, and why it describes you
- One caution you need to watch out for related to your style
- One idea you can use to develop your style

SESSION 3 – DEEPENING RELATIONSHIPS

- What thoughts or experiences have you had, related to your particular evangelism style or styles?

¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.” Luke 19:10

- What is a witness?

¹⁹ Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. John 5:19

Finding out where God is working and joining him in it.

- What often holds us back?

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20

Courage, the willingness to do what is needed in the face of fear. The only way to overcome our fear is to put them in the hands of the Lord and trust him. We need to yoke up with the master, learn to witness and the power of the Holy Spirit, and join God in what he's already doing. Jesus invites us to join him in His fishing excursions. If we will just join him, we'll have nothing to fear. But don't go out and try this on your own.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

If building authentic relationships provide the context in which we can best reach others for Christ, then where can we initiate these relationships? We'll look at these three places:

1. People we _____ know

- Include them in activities were already doing.
- Take an interest in what they're already doing.
- Throw a “Matthew Party.”

2. People we used to know

3. People we'd like to know

Go to where people are – including repeatedly visiting the same restaurant, gas station, stores, etc. – to become a contagious _____.

KEY POINTS ON RELATIONSHIPS

Key points to keep in mind when building and deepening relationships:

- Let the Holy Spirit lead you.
- _____ first!
- Mention spiritual matters early.

We need to initiate spiritual conversations because most people won't bring them up. John 4 It was Jesus who initiated the spiritual conversation with the woman at the well. He took an everyday topic, getting a drink of water, into a deeper subject of drinking living water.

START SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

Three approaches to starting spiritual conversations:

1. Bridging

Turns the conversation by using the topic being discussed as a bridge to a related spiritual topic.

2. Questioning

This is similar to bridging, but instead of making statements, it evokes a response by asking questions.

3. Inviting

Turn the conversation toward spiritual topics by inviting our friend to a spiritually orientated event or gathering we think they might relate to.

Regardless of the response, your invitation can naturally turn into a conversation about spiritual matters.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Starting Spiritual Conversations

Directions

1. Glance through the three scenarios described.
2. Imagine you are spending time with the person on your impact list. Choose the scenario that would most likely fit your interactions with that person.
3. Write down a couple ideas of things you can actually say to transition the conversation, using the bridging, questioning, or inviting approaches. Write these in the box after the words, "You Might Say."

Scenario	Possible Transitions	
<p>1. You're out in nature talking to a friend, and you can't help noticing the beauty of the trees, the blues guys, and the sounds of the birds.</p> <p>Sample Transition: "God must have quite an imagination to create all this beauty."</p>	You Might Say:	Other Ideas:
<p>2. You're talking to a work associate about an upcoming holiday like Christmas or Easter.</p> <p>Sample Transition: "I'm curious, do you observe any family or religious traditions around the holiday?"</p>	You Might Say:	Other Ideas:
<p>3. You are with some friends talking about popular TV shows, movies, news programs, songs, or books.</p> <p>Sample Transition: Another song I enjoy on the radio is _____ by _____, a singer who is a Christian, and really has a lot to say."</p>	You Might Say:	Other Ideas:

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Update Impact List

Directions

Take a moment to review the transition statements you just wrote down. Then turn to your impact list to write one or two ideas that might be effective in transitioning a conversation with your impact list person, under possible transition statements. This is not so you will become mechanical, but will help you think through some useful options ahead of time.

KEY POINTS ON SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

- **Take initiative.**
Too often we wait for others to initiate a topic of conversation. Be willing to take the lead.
- **Talk to people one-on-one.**
As a general rule, we get a lot further and spiritual conversations if we talk to people one-on-one.
- **Engage in dialogue; not monologue.**
Most people are open to 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 daily conversational turning points where we see an opportunity and ask ourselves, should I or shouldn't I? The choice we make determines whether we talk about our faith and actually influence others for Christ.

THE HAND GOSPEL



GRACE

Thumb (hitchhiker, free ride)

Heaven is a free gift, is not earned or deserved.



MAN

Index Finger (points out sin)

Man is a sinner, he cannot save himself.



GOD

Greater Finger (greatest being in the universe)

God is merciful and doesn't want to punish us, God is just and must punish our sin.



CHRIST

Ring Finger (bride groom)

Christ is both God and man, he died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the penalty of our sins and purchase a place in heaven for us.



FAITH

Little Finger (faith of a mustard seed)

Faith is not just head knowledge, nor is it just temporary faith, true saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for our eternal life.

SESSION 4 – TELLING YOUR STORY

- Have any of you taken steps to deepen a relationship, Or maybe to initiate a spiritual discussion this last week?

¹⁵ But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

YOUR STORY MATTERS

Your story really does matter. Here are three reasons why:

- Your friends will be interested.
- Real friends want to understand each other's thoughts, values, and backgrounds.
- They'll be able to relate to it.
- Your story is hard to argue with

*The skeptic may deny your doctrine or attack your church, but he cannot honestly ignore the fact that your life has been changed.
Chuck Swindoll, *Come Before Winter**

HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR STORY

Paul's Story: Three Handles		
Handle 1	Handle 2	Handle 3
BC	+	AD
Christ	Christ	Christ
<p style="text-align: center;">Acts 26:4-11 <i>"I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus.." (v. 9)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Acts 26:12-18 <i>"I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven... and I heard a voice..." (v. 13-14)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Acts 26:19-23 <i>'So then...I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven.'" (v. 19)</i></p>
<p>Concluding Question: "Do you believe the prophets?" (v. 27)</p>		
<p>Unifying theme: Paul's intense passion for serving God (first without Christ, then as a follower)</p>		

DEVELOP YOUR STORY

SIX QUESTIONS

FIRST HANDLE: BC - BEFORE CHRIST

1. What was your early spiritual background, and how did it affect you as you grew up - your feelings, attitude, actions, and relationships?

Story tip: _____

Examples:

- Our family was superstitious. We based on our beliefs on things like horoscopes, so I lacked any solid foundation for what to believe.
- My parents taught me that there was no God - so we were taught we were on our own to figure out what our lives were all about and to decide right from wrong.
- I was from a religion that taught positive things about Jesus, but denied his claim to be God and a savior of the world.
- We were a religious family, but all I remember were the rituals and the rules - so when I got away to school I rejected the whole thing and went on my own way.

If you becoming a Christian as a young child, you may not have any real BC background to talk about. So you might say something like this:

- I grew up in a family where the Bible was taught, I can't remember ever not believing in God. So I grew up with some sort of a simple belief in him.

My Story (Question 1)

2. What caused you to begin to consider following Christ?

Examples:

- A friend at school was a Christian, and she challenged me to look into the evidence of Christianity.
- I reached the point where I'd hit bottom. I knew the only hope for me was God - so I cried out to him for help.
- I got to know this guy who was different - in a positive way - and I finally asked him why. He told me about his relationship with Jesus.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might write something like

- Most of what I saw in my parents, teachers, and friends at school reinforced my confidence that what I was hearing about God was true.

My Story (Question 2)

MIDDLE HANDLE: † MET CHRIST

3. What realization did you come to finally motivate you to receive Christ?

Story tip: _____

Examples:

- After a long time of looking for help in the wrong places, I finally reached out to the God I sensed was there, and asked him to come and rescue me.
- My reading and interaction with Christians convinced me that the teaching of the Bible were true, and I just quit resisting.
- After years of spiritual ups and downs, I realized how foolish it was to keep trying to run my own life.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might say something like:

- I don't know exactly when it happened, but along the way I understood that Jesus died to pay for my sins. Even though I hadn't led a wildly rebellious life, I certainly knew that I done things that needed forgiving.

My Story (Question 3)

4. Specifically, how did you receive Christ?

Story tip: _____

Examples:

- I was at a concert where a guy explained that it wasn't enough to believe Jesus died for my sins - We need to ask him to apply that payment to our lives. So I went and prayed with someone afterward, asking Jesus to forgive my sins and lead my life.
- After years of loneliness I learned that God wants to walk with me throughout my life. So I asked him to remove my sins and to become my very best friend.
- It was hard to admit it, but I can conclude it that Jesus really is the way, the life, and the truth - and I asked him to forgive my sins and to begin leading me.

If you came to child as a Christ, you might say something like:

- Even though I was quite young, I gradually realized I had done things that needed God's forgiveness. I began trusting in him, and have been experiencing his forgiveness and leadership now for many years.

My Story (Question 4)

THIRD HANDLE: AD - AFTER CHRIST

These answers should address the problem or situation mentioned in your answer to the first question.

5. How did your life begin to change after you trusted Christ?

Examples:

- It's hard to describe the difference God made in my life. It wasn't just external; it's like my heart was transformed. Overnight my desires began to change.
- I can hardly put into words the release I felt. I knew my sins have been forgiven, and it was a huge weight off my shoulders. For the first time I felt true joy.
- My life isn't perfect. I still do things I regret. But my overall course has been turned from being self-centered, to really caring about God and the people in my life.

If you came to faith as a child, the emphasis in these final questions should be on the difference Christ makes in your life compare to what it might have been like without him. This can be determined, more or less, by reflecting on the times when you were not close to him, by considering areas of weaknesses, or perhaps by observing the lifestyle of old friends and classmates who didn't follow Christ. You might say something like this:

- Knowing Christ makes a difference every day of my life. I know myself well enough to realize the mess I'd be in if it weren't for God's guidance. And even with that I sometimes mess up. That's when I'm most thankful for his forgiveness and grace.

My Story (Question 5)

6. What other benefits have you experienced since becoming a Christian? Especially think of the ones that would best relate to the person on your impact list.

Examples:

- Following God has given me purpose - knowing that I'm here for greater reasons than just working, eating, sleeping, and doing it all over again. God wants to use me.
- I used to live with fear and insecurity. Why still worry occasionally, that sense of despair has been replaced with a calm confidence that my life is in God's hand.
- God has replaced what I used to think of as fun in my life with a kind of joy and happiness that really last.
- I've always had good friendships, but never with the depth I found in some of our church family. Those people are closer to me than any friend ever was before.

My Story (Question 6)

CONCLUDING QUESTION

It's best to end your story with a concluding question or a statement that requires a _____ from the other person.

Circle the following statement or question that seems most natural for you, or write your own.

- So, that's what happened to me. Can you relate to any of it?
- How about you - what's your spiritual background?
- Were you taught any of this growing up, or maybe I can ask, what do you believe?
- That's my spiritual story. I like to hear yours.
- Does it make any sense to you?

My Concluding Question:

UNIFYING THEME

This is the central issue in each of our stories that illustrates the difference it's made to know and follow Christ.

My Unifying Theme:

Story tip: _____

Examples:

Avoid

- Get into the word.
- You need personal savior.
- Make Jesus your Lord.
- You must be born again.


Use

- Read the Bible.
- You need to ask Jesus to be your forgiver.
- You need to ask Jesus to be the leader of your life.
- Jesus said we need to come alive spiritually by asking for his forgiveness and leadership in our lives.

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY:

Outline Your Story

- Referring back to your response to the six questions, circle a few key words in each of your answers that will help you quickly see the big picture of your story.
- Write the most important of those keywords in a space is provided under each question.
- Then copy your concluding question and your unifying theme in the places marked for those at the bottom of the same page. That way you'll have the full outline all in one place.

Paul's Story: Three Handles		
Handle 1	Handle 2	Handle 3
BC		AD
Before Christ	Met Christ	After Christ
<u>KEY WORDS</u>	<u>KEY WORDS</u>	<u>KEY WORDS</u>
Question 1:	Question 3:	Question 5:
Question 2:	Question 4:	Question 6:
<p>Concluding Question: “Do you believe the prophets?” (v. 27)</p>		
<p>Unifying theme: Paul's intense passion for serving God</p>		

GROUPS:

Telling Your Story

Directions

- Get with a partner.
- One of you tell your story, while the other listens and makes mental note of anything that was unclear or perhaps could be worded more clearly. For The one telling your story, feel free to look at your, my story, chart with the key words written on it - although you may find you won't even need it. Note: the listener needs to cooperate with the person telling his or her story.
- After the first person has told his or her story, the listener should provide some feedback on what worked well, and what areas might be made clear.
- Then trade places - the listener becomes the speaker, the speaker becomes the listener. Repeat the process.
- Each person will have four minutes to tell their story.

WRITE OUT YOUR STORY

Story tip: _____

Final story tip: focus on your friend.

THE HAND GOSPEL



GRACE

Thumb (hitchhiker, free ride)

Heaven is a free gift, is not earned or deserved.



MAN

Index Finger (points out sin)

Man is a sinner, he cannot save himself.



GOD

Greater Finger (greatest being in the universe)

God is merciful and doesn't want to punish us, God is just and must punish our sin.



CHRIST

Ring Finger (bride groom)

Christ is both God and man, he died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the penalty of our sins and purchase a place in heaven for us.



FAITH

Little Finger (faith of a mustard seed)

Faith is not just head knowledge, nor is it just temporary faith, true saving faith is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for our eternal life.

SESSION 5 – TELLING GOD’S STORY

GOD'S MESSAGE

The Five-Second Gospel¹

"God loves us,

We _____ it,

Christ paid for it,

We must _____."

THE FOUR KEY CHARACTERS

Character 1: God. "God loves us."

- God is **loving**.
God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. 1 John 4:16B
- God is **holy**
And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." Isaiah 6:3
- God is **just**.
The LORD is known by his acts of justice; Psalm 9:16a

Character 2: Us. "We blew it."

Humans were originally created good, but we became _____.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Romans 3:23

We deserve _____.

For the wages of sin is death, Romans 6:23a

We are spiritually helpless.

¹ The 5 second gospel was created by author and teacher, Judson Poling.
Session 1-6

All of us have become like one who is unclean, Isaiah 64:6a

Character 3: Christ. “Christ paid for it.”

Christ is _____ who also became man.

*Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, (was) made in human likeness.
Philippians 2:5b-7B*

Christ died as our **substitute**.

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. 1 Peter 3:18a

Christ offers his forgiveness as a **gift**

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

Character 4: You. “We must receive him.”

We must _____.

Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— John 1:12


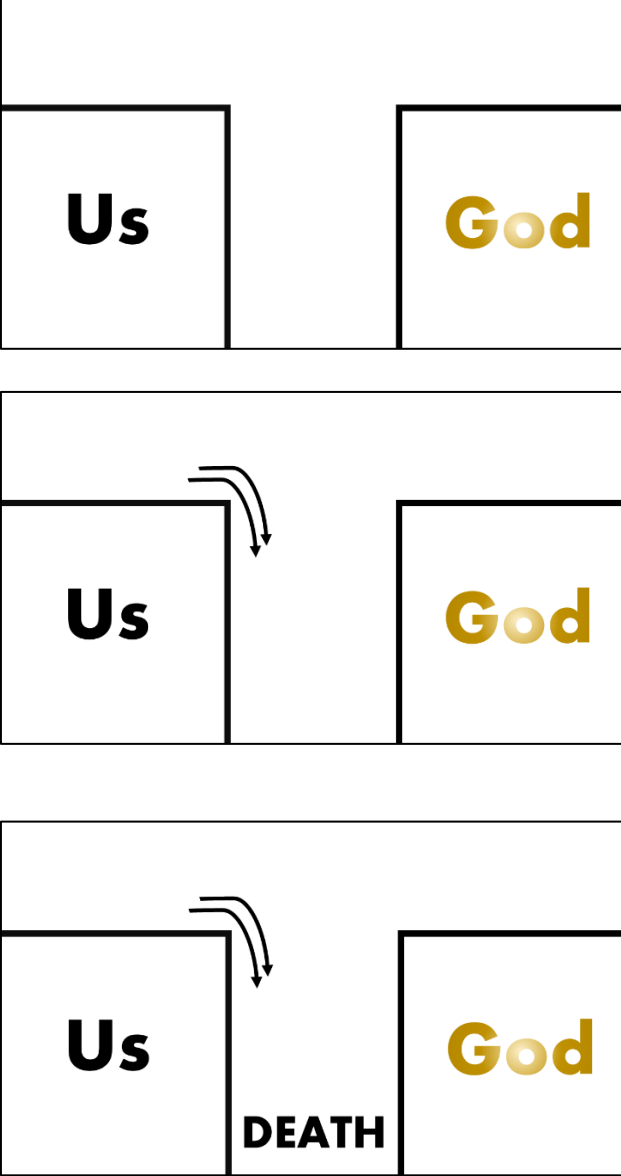
We receive him by asking Christ to be our **forgiver and leader**.

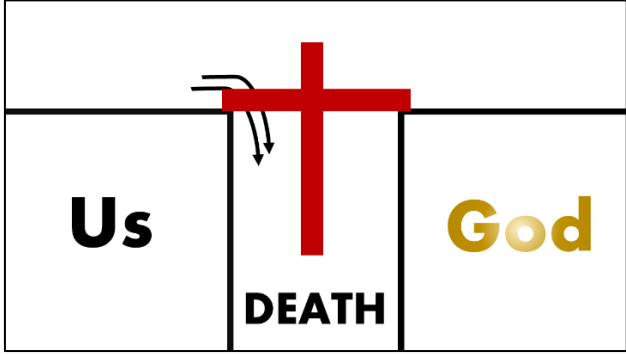
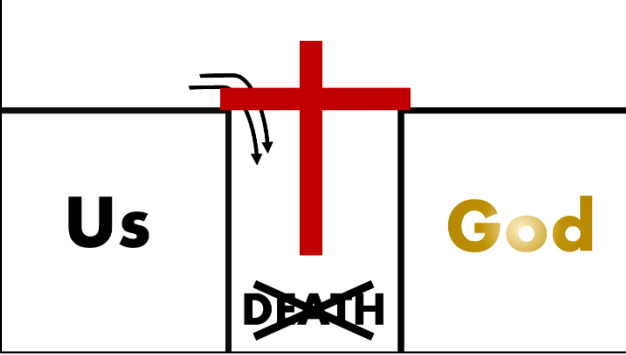
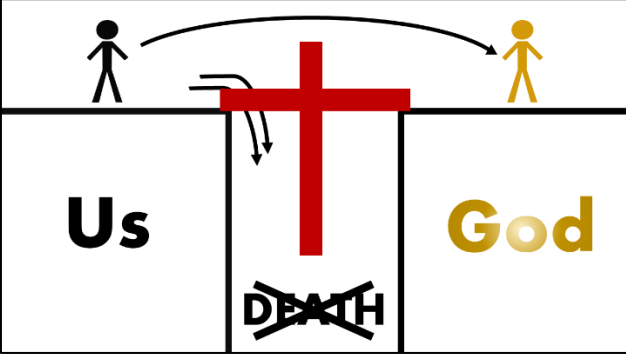
If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, 1 Peter 3:15

The result of receiving him is spiritual **transformation** by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 2 Corinthians 5:17

KEY CHARACTERS	NARRATIVE	PICTURE
GOD	<p>God loves us, and wants to have a relationship with us.</p> <p><i>Right “God” on one side and “Us” on the other side.</i></p>	
US	<p>However, we blew it by rebelling against him, and this broke off the relationship.</p> <p><i>Draw lines by both words to form walls on each side of a large chasm.</i></p> <p>Most of us are aware of this and do things to try to get back to God, but our efforts fail.</p> <p><i>Draw arrows going over the “Us” cliff; These represents our failing attempts to get back to God.</i></p> <p>Our sins have to be punished, and the penalty of spiritual death - which means a separation from God for eternity and a place called hell. That's the predicament we are all in - and there's nothing we can do in our own strength to change it.</p> <p><i>Write the word “Death” at the bottom of the chasm.</i></p>	

<p>CHRIST</p>	<p>But there's good news: God did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves, by building a bridge back to himself.</p> <p><i>Draw a cross so it touches both sides of the chasm.</i></p> <p>How? Christ paid for it by dying for us on the cross as our substitute. He paid the spiritual death penalty that we owed, and he rose from the dead to give us his life.</p> <p><i>Cross out the word death at the bottom of the chasm.</i></p>	 
<p>YOU</p>	<p>It's not enough just to know this. We must receive him by admitting that we have sinned against him and by asking for his forgiveness and leadership.</p> <p>Draw a person on the left side of the chasm; but then an arrow to the right side of the chasm; then a person on the right side of the chasm.</p> <p><i>Conclude by asking your friend where they think they are on the diagram.</i></p>	

PRACTICE THE BRIDGE

1. Get into pairs.
2. Decide who will go first.
3. Try drawing and saying The Bible Bridge illustration for each other. You will have 3 minutes each.

PRACTICE DRAWING THE BRIDGE ILLUSTRATION HERE:

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for drawing the Bible Bridge illustration. The box is centered on the page and occupies most of the lower half of the document.

THREE OTHER GOSPEL ILLUSTRATIONS

1. THE SPIRITUAL EQUATION²

This illustration draws directly on the words of John 1:12. It's especially helpful for religious people who think that merely agreeing with the right facts makes them a Christian.

*Yet to all who did **receive** him, to those who **believed** in his name, he gave the right to **become** children of God— John 1:12*

This verse contains three operative verbs: *Believe, Receive, and Become*. Put into a spiritual equation:

BELIEVE + RECEIVE = BECOME

- **Believe**

It's important to **believe** the right things. The Bible presents certain truths that we need to understand and agree with.

- **Receive**

It's not enough just to believe these things. The Bible says that *"Even the demons believe... and shudder."* James 2:19

We need to act on what we believe and **receive** the forgiveness and life that Jesus offers.

- **Become**

When we sincerely believe in and receive Jesus's forgiveness and leadership, the Bible is clear at that moment we are forgiven of our sins and **become** his adopted son or daughter.

And by saying: "it's Believe + Receive = Become. Where do you think you are and this spiritual equation?"

² Adapted from how to give away your faith by Paul Little

2. THE JUDGE³

This illustration portrays God's justice in dealing with our sin, as well as his great love for us. Many people in our culture relate best to stories and this one presents the truth they most need to hear concerning Jesus and his work as our substitute.

A woman broke the law, was caught, and the judge gave her a penalty she couldn't pay.

A young woman was arrested for breaking the law. She knew she'd been caught red-handed and couldn't deny her guilt, and later stood in front of a judge's bench and admitted what she had done. The man wearing the robe was a kind man, but he was also a just judge, and he couldn't let her off the hook. She had broken the law. So he gave her the penalty prescribed by the law, which meant the girl was required to pay a steep fine - One that she couldn't afford - or else end up in jail.

The judge then came to her side and paid the fine.

But then the man did an amazing thing. He stood up, took off his judge's robe, walked around to the front of the bench where the girl was standing, pulled out his wallet, and lovingly looked in her eyes as he handed her the money she needed to pay her entire fine.

This story illustrates the situation between God and us. God is holy and just judge who said, you broke in my laws and sinned against me and the penalty is death. But he's also like a loving father, who said, I love you and will come down and pay the penalty myself, and then he took off his heavenly robe, came to earth and the person of Christ, and paid for our sins by dying on the cross. Now we have a choice to make, to humbly receive his payment, forgiveness, and leadership, or to reject his sacrifice and spend the rest of our lives, and eternities, trying to pay a debt we can never fully pay.

³ Adopted from more than a carpenter by Josh McDowell
Session 1-6

3. DONE VERSUS DONE

This final illustration is helpful for people who think they need to do good works to try to earn their way into God's forgiveness and favor.

- **Religion**
 - Is spelled D-O
 - Trying to do enough to please God

A lot of people don't realize that there's a big difference between religion and Christianity, it's in how they're spelled. Religion is spelled D-O (*it's helpful to write the actual word DO*) It even consists of trying to do enough good things to earn our way back to God.

- **The Problem**
 - Never know if we done enough
 - The Bible says we can never do enough

The problem is we never know when we have done enough. More than that, the Bible makes it clear that we can never do enough. *For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.* Romans 3:23

- **Christianity**
 - Is spelled D-O-N-E
 - Jesus did what we couldn't do. He lived a perfect life, and died to pay for our sins.
 - Christianity, on the other hand, is spelled D-O-N-E (add the letters N-E to the word D-O)

That's because Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we could never live. Then he died on the cross to pay for our sins we could never pay for, and he rose from the dead to offer us new life.

- **Our Response**

Must receive what he has done, by asking for his forgiveness and leadership

But it's not enough just to know this, we have to receive him and what he has done for us. We do that by asking him for his forgiveness and leadership and our lives.

Does this make sense to you? Have you received what Jesus has done for you?

INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY

Update Impact List

Perfectly consider and write down which gospel illustration you think would best fit your impact list person, whether it's the bridge, the spiritual equation, the judge, or do versus done.

GROUPS

Practice Choice Illustrations

Directions

1. Pair up with one other person, and briefly tell your partner your impact list person's first name and the nature of your relationship. (Neighbor, co-worker, relative, etc.)
2. Present the illustration that you think your impact list person will best relate to and say it like you're actually talking to that person.
3. After the first person has presented an illustration, the listener should provide feedback on what worked well and what might be improved.
4. Then trade places and repeat these steps.

THE HAND GOSPEL



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