



SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR
ORDINARY PEOPLE

Start **extraordinary** conversations that
lead people to Jesus



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A Missional Community Handbook



Foundation to human relations are the conversations we hold with one another. The richer and fuller our conversations, the stronger will be the bonds that unite us.

Are you tired of engaging in small talk that never progresses beyond the weather or other superficial topics? If so, you're not alone! A recent study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* reveals that many people desire more meaningful interactions with strangers. Unfortunately, the fear of awkwardness often prevents them from initiating deeper conversations.

Barna Group illuminates an interesting statistic: only 25% of Christians shared the gospel with someone outside of their immediate circle in the past year. People are open to spiritual conversations if Christians take the initiative.

In Luke 12:8-12, we are commanded to be bold in acknowledging Jesus. We are not alone, but we are given a helper (John 15:26-27) who will lead, guide, teach, counsel, and be our advocate, giving us words to speak when we do not know what to say. This booklet will equip you with four practical steps to foster successful and enriching spiritual conversations.

ASK YOURSELF...

Are you ready to learn and put them into action?

“For the Christians, conversation can be the most effective tool for loving our neighbors and advancing the Kingdom of God.”

- Chuck Colson

[Christian leader, prison ministry]

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What are **SPIRITUAL** **CONVERSATIONS?**

Spiritual conversations are dialogues that help direct people's attention towards the spiritual world. These conversations are often entry points into further discussions about one's faith background as well as the Gospel message.

In the Western world, God is perceived to be antiquated. This recent change is rooted in a movement known as scientific materialism, which is the belief that nothing exists beyond the physical world and every question of science can be addressed through natural processes. Scientific materialism is the primary philosophy taught in public schools and has led many people to dismiss the possibility of the spiritual realm. Others have simply never had the chance to explore this part of life.

Spiritual conversations are valuable opportunities to connect with nonbelievers and align ourselves to where God is already at work. When we follow the Holy Spirit's guidance, we enter into a conversation that is already occurring between them and God. In these conversations, we share our personal stories, talk about our experiences with God, spread the good news of Jesus, study the Bible together, and expose others to fellowship with the greater body of Christ.

In the following pages we will provide four easy steps to making a spiritual conversation a natural part of your day. Imagine the impact of millions of Christians joining non-believers in spiritual conversations about God and the Good News of Jesus Christ.



“Let your speech always be gracious, season with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”
Colossians 4:6

LIVING WITH CHRIST IN YOU

- Living as a Christ-follower comes with a calling to know Christ and make him known. This has set apart the Navigators since 1933.
- You don't need to know the whole Bible – just the gospel. Jesus declared “For God so loved the world that He sent His only son that whoever believes in Him will not perish, but have eternal life” in John 3:16.
- Making disciples means building loving relationships rooted in servanthood and teaching people to obey all that Jesus has commanded.

How do you know when God's calling you towards disciplemaking?

Let's look at the next step!



WHEN TO TALK



towards a spiritual conversation

Navigating a spiritual conversation can be likened to driving a car. Talking about deeply personal beliefs just doesn't happen in the first 5 minutes. Just as driving grants freedom and opportunities, engaging in meaningful spiritual discussions allows us to be used by God. However, like driving, it demands a thorough understanding of the "rules of the road" to avoid doing harm to oneself and others.

Regrettably, many Christians approach spiritual conversations like driving zero to 60 in 10 seconds, often disregarding the impact on those around them. This has instilled fear in non-believers, shows low listening skills and frustration among both unbelievers not being understood or seen and Christians striving to share their faith effectively.

Do you struggle with conversing with non-believers? Do you notice reluctance in discussing faith topics with others? If you answered yes to either, consider this crash course on spiritual conversations.

While automatic cars dominate today's roads, the era of manual transmissions is not forgotten. Shifting gears in a manual car demands conscious attention to the vehicle's movement and the surrounding driving conditions. Similarly, **spiritual conversations require awareness and finesse.** Embracing this analogy can guide us through meaningful exchanges on matters of faith.

- Starting off with 1st gear with **Small Talk**
- Seeing an open door and shifting into 2nd gear by **Asking a question/ Spiritual statement**
- Shift into 3rd gear with intentional **Dialogue** by asking good questions and listening
- And if the Spirit leads, head into 4th gear by scheduling a **Follow-Up** time

Step 1: SMALL TALK

“A plan in the heart of a man is like water in a deep well. But a man of understanding draws it out.” Proverbs 20:5

Small talk refers to casual and light conversation that serves as a way for people to break the ice, establish rapport, and maintain social interaction. It typically covers noncontroversial topics and doesn't delve into deep or personal subjects. Small talk is often used in social situations to initiate conversations, maintain a friendly atmosphere, or simply fill in moments of silence.

Small talk is an important social skill that can help build relationships and make people feel more comfortable in social situations. Here are some tips to make small talk more effective:

1. Start with a simple greeting or introduction.
2. Ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation.
3. Use humor and positivity to keep the conversation light and enjoyable.
4. End the conversation gracefully when it comes to a natural conclusion.

If you're looking for easy ways to connect with others and build instant points of commonality, try starting with these questions or something similar:



- Are there any interesting shows that you're currently watching on TV or Netflix?
- How do you like to spend your free time?



Signs Small Talk is Opening a Door to More Meaningful CONVERSATIONS

Small talk can be a useful tool to determine if someone is open to having a deeper, more meaningful conversation. You might be surprised by how many people are willing to engage if you take the time to initiate small talk.

Here are some signs that someone **MAY** be interested in deeper conversations:

- Open and Engaged Body Language
- Active Listening
- Maintaining Eye Contact
- Enthusiastic Responses or Expressive Answers
- Initiating Questions to You
- Sharing Personal Information
- Smiling and Positive Expressions
- Maintaining Proximity
- Eager to Continue the Conversation

If they show no signs of wanting to end the conversation and may even express a desire to continue talking, keep going deeper.



ASK YOURSELF...

Am I ready to ask them about their faith?
“Do you have a faith background?”

Signs Small Talk is Hitting A Closed Door

Not everyone can be open to being vulnerable to their spiritual reality or free to speak about their faith background. Here are some signs that someone **MAY NOT** be interested in deeper conversations:

- Limited or One-Word Responses
- Lack of Eye Contact
- Closed Body Language
- Fidgeting or Distraction
- Unresponsiveness
- Comments to End the Conversation
- Sighing, Yawning or Looking at Their Phone
- Physically Moving Away from You

ASK YOURSELF...

When you've become uncomfortable in a conversation, what seemed to help YOU?

When you see an obvious sign that they may not be interested in continuing the conversation, pause and pray. 9 times out of 10, it is not you or what you said.

Smile, continue to listen and suggest meeting up at another date/time. Remember, we are called to love and serve others and this is God's work through the Holy Spirit. We are called to introduce them to Jesus and let the Spirit do His work. In regards to timing, again, it's not up to our timeline but God's. When engaging with people, some will be quickly receptive towards talking about their faith, while others may take years. Don't give up if you're in small talk for years!

"Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples." John 4:15



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PEELING THE ONION

Getting to the heart of the matter

“The purpose in a man's heart is like deep water, but a man of understanding will draw it out.” – Proverbs 20:5 ESV

Each person is like an onion, with layers upon layers of life experiences, beliefs, events, thoughts, and emotions. A skilled conversationalist knows how to delicately peel away these layers to uncover the true heart of the person. **Jesus** exemplified this mastery in His conversation with the woman at the well (John 4). In this encounter, He asks questions, uncovers the woman's life of sin, and reveals to her that He is the Messiah she has long waited for.

While unraveling these layers may take time and patience, most conversations can be distilled into four key questions:

- What do you believe?
- How did those beliefs form?
- Why do you hold those beliefs?
- Who do you believe you are?

The "why" question often reveals a person's core identity and where that person finds it, either by science, religion, sexuality, social connections.

Finding out a person's real God-given identity of who He has created them to be is the heart of everything we aim to discover. Jesus saw a woman at a well, engaged in a conversation to learn of her identity and offered the truth of salvation. We can, too!





ASK YOURSELF...

- Do I recall their first and last name?
- When I frequent where I see them, do I seek them out/ask for them specifically? (waitress, bank teller, mechanic)
- Am I open to having coffee or lunch with them?
- Am I sensing the Holy Spirit's prompting to ask deeper questions about their faith background?

**If you said yes,
transition to
step 2**





Where Small Talk Can Lead

Roger's story

Roger Van Noord, a 55-year dedicated Navigator staff, entered his bank one day before the Covid era. Initially planning for a quick in-and-out visit, he found himself prompted by the Holy Spirit to engage in a spiritual conversation with the assistant manager ([step 1 small talk and then assessing an open or a closed door to keep the conversation going](#)).

Going into deeper, more personal questions, Roger asked, **"I was wondering, do you have a faith background?"** ([step 2 going deeper](#)). He discovered that the young teller was enthusiastic and eager to share a recent transformative experience in their faith journey.

Delving deeper into the discussion ([step 3 dialogue](#)), Roger discovered his faith background by listening and asking more questions to uncover what he truly believed.

Roger proposed the idea of continuing their conversation over lunch, asking, **"Would you be interested in sharing more about your faith background?"** Although initially hesitant, the bank teller agreed ([opening up the critical next step 4 of following-up](#)). This seemingly chance encounter eventually blossomed into a meaningful discipleship relationship, bearing abundant fruit from that initial conversation.

Small talk really opens the opportunity to connect with people around you and leads to investing in their lives.

Step 2:

GOING DEEPER

“After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions.” Luke 2:46

Transitioning from Secular to Spiritual Conversations

Moving from a secular conversation to a more spiritual one can be a delicate process. One way to do this is by asking if the person has a faith background. Most people who have a faith background are eager to share it and those without one will typically be as vocal. Using phrases like "I was wondering..." can help soften the question and make it more comfortable for the other person. Try using the following questions:

- I was wondering, do you have a faith background?
- If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
- I was wondering, what experiences have influenced your spiritual life?

Sharing Recent Spiritual Snapshots from Your Life

Sometimes you may already be aware of a person's faith background or perhaps you want to build on a previous conversation. In these instances, try using a spiritual snapshot from your life. “Last night, I came across this passage in the Bible. Can I share this with you?” Practice sharing something you've learned from the Holy Spirit, your daily Bible reading or even tell them you were praying for them and could pray for specifically if they had any requests.

The Importance of Listening

“Listening is such a simple act. It requires us to be present, and that takes practice, but we don't have to do anything else. We don't have to advise, or coach, or sound wise. We just have to be willing to sit there and listen.”

Margaret J. Wheatley

Step 3: DIALOGUE



When delving into someone's spiritual beliefs, it is essential to ask thoughtful questions that encourage them to open up. The greatest way to do this is to [pursue clarity in everything they say](#). Temptations to point out corrections in their beliefs or theologies may arise. It's best to hold off and listen, so you can better understand their belief system.

- Seek genuine love and express interest with statements like, 'That's fascinating! Could you share more about that?' or 'I haven't encountered that perspective before—please elaborate.' [Cultivate the art of authentic listening](#), for it is through these moments of genuine connection that we can engage in more profound discussions.
- When it is your turn to contribute, consider employing phrases like 'Have you ever considered...?' or 'How did you come to that conclusion?' These serve as gateways to deeper conversations and alternative perspectives. [Emulating the love that Jesus exemplified](#) not only establishes a deep connection with people but also cultivates an influence that becomes instrumental in conveying the Gospel.

ANSWERING THE PERSON

Not just the question...

REAL LIFE EXAMPLE: A renowned international evangelist recounts a poignant moment from his journey following his conversion from Islam to Christianity. He received a call from a woman who asked him, "Why did you leave Islam?" In response, Abdu passionately shared for twenty minutes about the truths he found in Christianity. However, after he finished talking the woman clarified her question, asking, "Was it worth leaving Islam to follow Jesus?" Abdu correctly addressed the question in his zeal to share his newfound faith but **missed the motivation** of the one asking the question.

This is a common trap of engaging with people on a faith-based subject and forgetting about the Spirit's leading.

SO WHAT CAN YOU DO? In communicating with people, **put your emotions on the sideline and respond critically, think logically and address the true issues at hand.** Use a great clarifying question of "that's a great question – can you tell me why you are asking that?"

Many spiritual conversations often carry deep emotional weight, throwing us off balance. Yet, as believers, we are called to

- embody the steadfastness of "Oaks of Righteousness," firmly rooted in Christ amidst life's storms
- exemplify the fruits of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control towards all people (Galatians 5:22-23)

Remember: **the question asked isn't always the question that needs answering.**



Step 4:

FOLLOW-UP



Lee Strobel famously said, "Many non-Christians are just one question away from faith."

It's always good to look for opportunities to connect with people on a deeper level, with the ultimate goal of sharing the Gospel and reading the Bible with them. Below are some ideas on how to follow up after initial encounters.

- Offer to pray for them on an issue
- Share your personal testimony
- Share the gospel message
- Invite them to read the Bible with you/group
- Meet for coffee or lunch

Remember, sharing the Gospel is not about forcing your beliefs on others, but rather showing them the love of Christ and the hope that comes with it.

Take time to invest in people's lives and wait on the Lord for the proper time to share the message of Jesus Christ.

ENGAGE YOUR UNIQUE RELATIONAL NETWORK

Through your missional community establish a weekly or bi-weekly ritual of meeting up and sharing your progress on building relationships and having spiritual conversations. Set a simple goal (for example, 1 conversation per week for a month). Record your progress here:

First name:	Steps Completed:	Follow-Up:



LIVE YOUR LIFE **spiritually** connected

Where do you get your hair trimmed?
Where do you buy your groceries? Coffee?
Have a favorite pub or restaurant?

You already have favorite places you frequent... Why not shift into being intentional with the people you already cross paths with. Get to know the people who serve you.

Recognize them, listen well, request their table, remember what they shared with you....

They matter!

CONVERSATION TRACKING



Spiritual conversations are a journey, not a destination. Each conversation builds trust and creates opportunities for God to work in people's hearts.

Use this section to keep track of your interactions, reflect on them, and stay intentional about follow-up. Remember, the goal is not to 'win' a conversation, but to faithfully plant seeds, trusting the Holy Spirit to grow them.

- **Name of Person** you had the conversation with
- **Date of Conversation:** Keeping track of dates helps you follow up at appropriate times.
- **Location** where you met (e.g., coffee shop, workplace, online, etc.)
- **Conversation Summary:** Briefly describe the main topics discussed. Did the conversation lead to sharing the gospel, addressing questions about faith, or listening to their personal story?
- **Key Points to Remember:** What stood out during the conversation? Did they express interest in something specific, share doubts, or mention personal challenges?
- **Next Steps/Follow-Up:** Will you follow up with a specific resource, prayer, another meeting? Note any agreed-upon action.
- **Prayer Requests:** List specific ways you can be praying for this person
- **Reflection:** What you learned from this conversation. How might the Holy Spirit be leading you in the next step? Did anything surprise you or challenge you?
- **Date of Next Contact:** Setting a date helps maintain momentum in building relationships.

Name	
Date	
Location	
Summary	
Key Points	
Next Steps	
Prayer Requests	
Reflection	
Next Contact	

“Understand this, my beloved brothers and sisters. Let everyone be quick to hear [be a careful, thoughtful listener], slow to speak [a speaker of carefully chosen words and], slow to anger [patient, reflective, forgiving];.” James 1:19 Amplified

Name	
Date	
Location	
Summary	
Key Points	
Next Steps	
Prayer Requests	
Reflection	
Next Contact	

“Conduct yourself with wisdom in your interactions with outsiders (non-believers), make the most of each opportunity [treating it as something precious].”

Colossians 4:5 Amplified

Name	
Date	
Location	
Summary	
Key Points	
Next Steps	
Prayer Requests	
Reflection	
Next Contact	

“I am giving you a new commandment, that you [f]love one another. Just as I have loved you, so you too are to love one another.” John 13:34



Connecting to a Missional Community

Missional communities are groups of 2 to 12 ambassadors for Christ who intentionally

build relationships and look to engage in daily spiritual conversations. The mission over time is to effectively communicate the Gospel message to all.



A beautiful summary of Jesus' life can be found in Matthew 20:28 where we learn He came to serve and give His life as a ransom for many. This Gospel message is central in our lives.

The Mission given by Jesus before His return to heaven in Matthew 28:18-20 finds Jesus tasking his disciples with the mission of making disciples in all areas of life. We, as believers, are commissioned to make disciples and teach them all of Jesus' commands, as well as to spread the Gospel to those who have yet to hear it.



Key characteristics of these groups include, but are not limited to:

- Being filled and led by the Holy Spirit
- Rooted in daily time with God
- Never ending prayer
- Overflowing with the Word of God
- Daily practice of spiritual conversations
- Direct and honest accountability

ASK YOURSELF...

What is keeping me from mentioning the Gospel in a conversation?

“Be wise in the way you act towards outsiders,
making the most of every opportunity.”
Colossians 4:4



Missional Communities meet in person ...or online



The Bible teaches that God is an eternal triune **community**, and as humans created in His image, we too are communal beings. Interestingly, Jesus' first objective in his ministry was to establish a community of disciples. It was within this community that Jesus trained the next generation of disciplemakers to reach those who were lost. **Is this you?**



Meeting regularly to hear stories, challenges, praises and updates can give members new ideas or encouragement. **Prayer** is an essential part of a community as well. **Learning** new skills and being able to **practice** them on a regular basis is key to growth.

If you are looking to reach the lost and have spiritual conversations, we encourage you to find the support of others and **join a missional community**.

Spiritual conversations are an essential component of making disciples and finding opportunities to share the Gospel.



GREAT RESOURCES

- How to ask Great Questions Karen Lee-Thorp
- Evangelism as a Lifestyle Jim Peterson
- The Complete Book of Questions Garry Poole
- The 9 Arts of Spiritual Conversations Schaller and Crilly
- 42 Seconds Carl Medearis
- Tactics Gregory Koukl
- God Space Doug Pollock
- The Insider Peterson and Shamy
- The Practical Art of Spiritual Conversation Shultz, James Harrison, David Rogers
- Turning Everyday Conversations in Gospel Conversations Jimmy Scroggins and Steve Wright

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