



Starting a Faith Conversation

Stonecroft Evangelism Tools



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Stonecrock Evangelism Tools

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Introduction

As a follower of Jesus, you will have the opportunity to engage in conversations with your friends about faith and share the Gospel. There's no formula for starting this dialogue. Every opportunity will be different because each person and situation is unique. The most important thing is that each conversation is covered, no, make that *saturated* with prayer.

As we talk with God about our upcoming faith conversations, anticipated and unanticipated, we can pray the following requests and respond to His lead:

- that God opens the door
- that God opens our friends' hearts and minds
- that God opens our mouths—at the right time and in the right way

Pray that God opens the door

Pray to become aware of the people around us and follow the Holy Spirit's prompting as opportunities to start a conversation appear. If we listen to the Holy Spirit, He will give us the when to speak and the what to say.

These opportunities can be with family members, close friends, co-workers, casual acquaintances, and even strangers. Sometimes our relationships are nurtured during long periods of time. Sometimes they're infrequent meetings such as waiting in line at the coffee shop or getting our hair cut. Other relationships can be sudden—for that particular God moment. Each type of relationship relies on the same distinct skill—listening.

Acts 14:27 reminds us how God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles: “On arriving there [Antioch of Syria], they gathered the church together and reported all that God had done through them and how he had opened a door of faith to the Gentiles.” This verse tells us Paul and Barnabas shared how they delivered the Gospel to both Jewish and non-Jewish people in what is now the country of Turkey. On this trip, Paul's first missionary journey, they saw how God changed the hearts of individuals who would influence their communities and establish Christianity in that region.

Discuss Together:

See Acts 13 and 14. What were the circumstances surrounding the open door?

What does an “open door” look like to you?

Describe a situation when it seemed like God opened a door for you to start the conversation to share the Gospel.

Pray that God opens our friends' hearts and minds

Our most important faith conversation skill is listening. By listening to what our friends have to say, we can detect if there's a need to be met before they are open to what we have to say. Maybe they're hungry, needing food. Maybe they're in a situation requiring information on where to get help. Or they could just be having a rough day and need to vent and seek encouragement. John 9 tells the story of a man who had been born blind. Jesus healed him with the gift of sight. By meeting the physical need first, Jesus knew the healed man would then be at a place to believe in Christ as Lord.

The art of listening helps us move the talk to a spiritual level at the right time. As others tell what's going on in their lives, ask open-ended questions about how they feel or why something happened. Do this without judging. This opens their hearts. Asking questions doesn't just keep our friends engaged in the conversation; it allows us to connect with them and discover ways that our stories intersect. We listen for similarities in what our friends are going through and how God helped us through a comparable situation. And, remember, the Holy Spirit will help us know when it's the right time to ask permission to tell our faith story or to share the Gospel.

Acts 8 tells how Philip encountered an Ethiopian official in his carriage reading Scripture. Following the Holy Spirit's prompting, Philip asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" From that simple question, Philip started the conversation that led the official to receive Christ.

John 4 is a great example where Jesus asked questions of the woman at the well. He went to her for a physical need knowing that He had the answer to her spiritual need.

Discuss Together

What do you learn from John 9 about spiritual conversations?

What do you learn from Acts 8 about spiritual conversations?

What do you learn from John 4 about spiritual conversations?

What have you heard recently from a friend that made your heart ache?
How did you respond?

If you heard the same story today, what would you do differently, if anything?

How might you graciously “steer” a conversation toward your faith story or sharing the Gospel?

Pray that God opens our mouth—at the right time and in the right way

Our spiritual story certainly includes the account of how and when we started our Christian journey. But it's more. Our story has many chapters. As we grow in our faith, the episodes that reveal God's glory will increase. Be ready to talk about these parts that connect with your listener.

We should think about our story ahead of time. Is it personal? Passionate? Engaging? Is it believable? Does it paint a beautiful portrait of Jesus that draws others to Him?

Don't be afraid to talk about failures, shortcomings, sufferings, and weaknesses. After all, it's God's story of how He was strong in our weakness. Don't mentally prepare a story that focuses on all the messy details. Instead, focus on how God showed up. He is the hero of our story!

Discuss Together:

In what episodes of your life has God appeared?

Can you describe one instance in an engaging way without giving all the messy details?

How has God shown His strength in your weakness?

Stonecroft Evangelism Tools

Stonecroft equips you to share your faith by offering you these and other resources:

Sharing the Gospel Through Your Story

Starting a Faith Conversation

Answering Difficult Questions

Community Discovery Through Prayer

Facilitating a Stonecroft Small Group

Contact us at connections@stonecroft.org or call 800.525.8627 to learn more.