

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

As you've been practicing friendship evangelism, giving a gospel presentation and even thinking about giving a Bible Study, you've probably wondered how to take normal, everyday conversations and make them something spiritual that will help lead someone towards Jesus. Well, that's exactly what this lesson is all about.

Imagine you have just invited someone over to your house for the very first time. This is someone you barely know and are wanting to develop a better relationship. You are planning to have them over and share a meal, but when planning the menu for the evening, you find out that they absolutely hate a certain type of dish or food. What if the particular dish hated by this individual happens to be your "go-to meal," would you change the menu or cook the meal? How would you handle this situation?

Our lesson today will focus on how to have a spiritual conversation in a Secular Age.

There is no question that the society we find ourselves in is becoming increasingly secular. Merriam-Webster defines secularism as,

"indifference to or rejection or exclusion of religion and religious considerations"

This means that more and more people are choosing to reject anything that resembles religion or religious thought. Prominent thought leaders have coined the term "Post Truth" to define the predominant worldview of modern society. How is anybody of faith to evangelize within such an apathetic and indifferent society of peoples? Thankfully Jesus always has a way! Remember the lesson on "Christ's Method?" This method works especially in a secular context.

Look at the 5 parts of Christ's method and how they can help us converse about Jesus in a secular context.

Mingled: We mingle all the time! At the grocery store, at a birthday party, wedding, or any social event. To mingle is to mix together. Jesus often mingled with people. He would converse with them, tell jokes and stories, as well as listen to others. How have you mingled this past week?

Sympathized: Jesus was often sympathetic to the needs of those around Him. If He saw a need He would take note and seek to meet their need. When Jesus intentionally sought out a Samaritan woman at a well and saw that she was coming to draw water. Read the passage in John 4:3-29 and write down how Jesus Sympathized with the woman.

Met their needs: Jesus could see past this woman's façade of a good life. He knew that human beings all have needs, whether they are physical, emotional, or spiritual. He knew that at the core of every human being there are a set of needs. Jesus would often focus on these needs, using the physical and emotional to point to satisfaction in the spiritual. What is the progression Jesus uses to meet the woman's underlying need?

Won their confidence: Jesus knew that without the confidence of those who He was trying to reach, He'd never be able to ask them to follow Him. Look at how the woman responds when she now trusts Jesus. Read John 4:28, 29.

Then invited them to follow Him: The effect of Jesus' conversation with the woman is what allowed Him to reach the real point of the interaction: an invitation to follow Him and surrender their lives to Him for salvation. John 4:39-42 shows the effect of Jesus' Method. This method still works today! In fact, this method is the truest way to show the love of Jesus and invite others to follow Him! It's what He did!

Now, go back to the first illustration. You've invited someone over for the first time. Someone who has a secular worldview, they don't follow Jesus. You have found out that the meal you were planning to make happens to be filled with food that this new prospective friend hates. Instead of maybe hoping that your cooking will persuade them into now loving that particular food, you apply Christ's Method. You cook something different, maybe it involves learning a new dish, maybe you order takeout. You focus on mingling (friendly conversation) noting anything that might allow you to see the needs of your new friend. You have an amazing time. You invite your friend back for another meal the following week. You focus on mingling again. You see each other several times, each time paying attention to see if there are any needs (physical, emotional, spiritual). Finally, you know that you are pretty good friends, and you've been meeting an emotional need of friendship the whole time. Now you can test to see if they will trust you enough to give you a chance to cook that one meal. The meal they'd hate because of a particular food in it that they strongly don't like. Because of your friendship and mingling, they give you a shot to cook it. You have the opportunity to change their entire mind about this particular food!

It is the same with presenting Jesus. Once they trust you enough as a friend, you can ask them about their belief in God, you can ask them about their view of Jesus, and you can answer with your belief and your view. And all because of their relationship with you, they may be willing to give Jesus a chance.

BASIC POINT

Building secular friendships leads to opportunities to talk about God.

Who are some individuals in your life who you could apply Christ's method into that relationship? I think it's important to note that this doesn't mean it's a shallow friendship simply to win people to Jesus. These will be friendships that will last forever! The goal of the friendship is NOT just to lead someone to Jesus. Your goal is to be a friend to them, and in the process, Jesus will use your love for Him to shine in that friendship and open opportunities to speak to them about Him.

What about secularism?

Now you may be wondering what all this has to do with Secularism. The human needs have been the same regardless of which "ism" is prominent in society. We're created for relationships so when you act normal, and don't push, but are intentional, winning their confidence, then you can present your gospel presentation. Knowing that through you, God has been working.

The bible says,

Proverbs 19:22: "What a person desires is unfailing _____."

While our society is less and less a Christian society, talking about Jesus becomes rarer and rarer. That doesn't mean that it's any harder, it just means that it has to be more and more intentional for it to happen. It means that in this age of secularism, Jesus won't naturally come up unless His name is being used as an expletive. But as you actively build relationships and friendships with people, you'll see how easy it is to share Him with someone else that may never know Him without you.

May you see the opportunities that God gives you to share Him with others.

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. Who are some individuals that you have a friendship with that you can use Christ's Method?
2. What is your reaction to using this method?

LESSON 4: SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

