

# How to Share Jesus with Others

## Lesson 3: Meeting new people

In the last lesson, we learned how to be a good friend to others and encourage them in our conversations. We also learned the importance of being a good friend and the impact this can have on how our friends respond to the Gospel. Last week we made a list of people we know but we've never shared Jesus with them. For homework, we asked you to reach out to them or spend time with one or two of them during the week and just practice loving people.

Share any good news about the time you spent reaching out to someone from your list.

If you continue reaching out to people you already know, you will reach a time when you've shared Jesus with all your family and friends, and you need to meet new people who've never heard the Gospel! In this class, you'll learn where and how to make new friends.

### **Begin with prayer**

Before you hit the streets to make new friends, take time to invite the Holy Spirit to help you and lead you to the people he wants you to meet. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to the people you will encounter each day this week. If there is a particular area where you want to meet people – a neighborhood, your school or work, a library, coffee shop, or store, go to that area and go on a prayer walk. Ask the Lord to bring open people into that place who don't know Jesus and are genuinely seeking a relationship with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to open a door for you to meet them. If the Lord puts someone right in front of you to talk to, do it! If you don't have time for a prayer walk, just ask the Holy Spirit to put someone in your path that day who really wants to know God. Now, expect the Spirit to send you someone! Be open to whoever the Lord brings you as a new friend.

Take a minute to pray that the Lord will send you someone this week who is open to friendship and genuinely seeking to know God.

### **Meeting people as you go**

For many of us, meeting new people and making new friends can be intimidating. You might be wondering, "Where do I begin?" We're probably used to going about our day minding our own business, and maybe we're the ones with earbuds in our ears! We live busy lives, and it seems like every day is a race to get everything on our lists completed, only to do the same thing the next day. Because of this, some ministries and churches set up a time each week for "outreach." While this is reasonable and allows us to make sure that we've spent time sharing Jesus with others, this can sometimes feel forced and unnatural – to us and to the people we're meeting! We're *not* saying "Don't do this," but we're exploring ways to share Jesus in a way that is natural and fun and can be incorporated into our daily lives.

Are you the kind of person who talks easily with people you don't know? If yes, describe what that looks like. If not, describe how speaking to new people makes you feel.

Even if you rarely speak to new people, the Holy Spirit can help you overcome your fear. Just know that everyone experiences some fear, but the more we step out, the more we'll experience the joy and fun in making new friends. Here are some tips:

**Smile and say "hi":** If you're shy, just start with smiling and saying "hi" to the people you encounter during the day. Decide to do this for an entire day to everyone you pass! This will loosen up your mouth, your face, and your heart. If we're walking around with a frown or no expression, why would anyone want to listen to the "truth" we have to share? Paul says, "Rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4, NIV) and tells us that the fruit of the Spirit is joy and peace (Galatians 5:22). In Acts, the followers met regularly in the temple courts and were filled with gladness and sincerity of heart (2:46), and people around them became followers daily! (2:46-47). Others actually wanted the joy and life that these people had. So, a smile and some friendliness is a perfect way to get out of yourself and start loving people you don't even know. When I was going into my apartment, I happened to see a young man I'd never seen before. We both said, "Hi," and he just happened to be my neighbor! I invited him for dinner with my husband, and he agreed. We exchanged phone numbers, built a friendship, started studying the Bible together, and now he's a member of our house church! And it all started with a friendly greeting.

**Stop, relax, and engage:** If you see an opportunity, ask a person you encounter, "How are you today? How's your day going?" This is a great way to start a conversation. Listen to what the person says and ask them questions about what they share. We were at the grocery store, and a man with a Buddhist necklace shared that he had broken his wrist. After listening to his story and showing compassion, we asked if we could pray for him. He said, "Sure!" After we prayed, we had him test out his wrist. He was healed of his pain simply because we had stepped out and asked, "How are you?" If we stop, relax, and engage, God will open doors for us!

How do you go about your day? Do you smile, say "hello," and talk to people? Explain.

**Show interest:** Sometimes people respond well when you show interest in them. You might notice something about them that draws you toward them. Perhaps you ask them about their lives and discover an interest. Sometimes, I take my work to a Yemeni coffee shop where I see many internationals. I often notice people on their computers and love to ask them what they're working on. They typically welcome the break to talk to another human being! One man shared how he was applying to medical school. We began to connect over his interest in school, and I asked how I could pray for him. He let me pray right there for his need! I asked him if he'd ever read the Bible, and we began having a spiritual conversation. Another time, I met a young woman doing online classes. She then asked me what I was doing. I happened to be writing a Bible discussion, and we got into a spiritual conversation. I was able to give our Gospel handout to both people I met and invited them to connect with me. When I was at a Yemeni restaurant, I asked the waitress if she was from Yemen. She shared that she was from a special people group in Pakistan and began to share her passion for their history. I wanted to hear more, so I told her I'd return during her break, and she could tell me the whole story! She was so excited about this and was encouraged that I took such interest.

**Be funny:** Sometimes, we just see funny things! While walking in a park near my home, a man was scraping mud off his shoe after a long rain. I laughed and said, "It'll never come off!" He laughed too and we started to walk together. When we were about to part, I asked him if he'd ever heard the Gospel or message of Jesus. He said, "No," and he allowed me to share Jesus and my testimony. He

was very moved, almost to tears! Since he was from out of town, I gave him the Connect the Nations website and invited him to check it out. Another day, I was coming out of the grocery store and noticed a young woman with sunglasses sunning in a bright blue “hot rod” convertible. As I passed by, I laughed and said, “That’s a cool car!” She said, “Oh! You have to come sit in it!” I knew that was the Lord because I’d just prayed to meet open people! After laughing together and talking for a while, I invited her to go for coffee sometime, and she gave me her phone number. We met a few times, and I had the opportunity to share my testimony and Jesus with her.

Have you ever had an experience where you made a new friend simply because you started a small conversation? Share your story!

**Be curious:** Do you ever notice people doing interesting or strange things and you say to yourself, “I wonder what this person is doing!” God can use our curiosity to help us to engage with others. One day, I was walking in the park, and I saw a beautiful woman with an interesting hat and scarf around her head reading a book while she was walking. So, I spoke up and said, “You are so talented!” She stopped, turned to me, gave me a huge smile, and began a conversation. I asked her about the book she was reading, and it was about relationships. She was Muslim and began asking me for dating advice. We began meeting regularly to talk more, and I was able to share my life and Jesus with her. Another time, I met two Chinese girls drawing in the park. Out of curiosity, I asked them what they were doing. This led to conversations and even exchanging phone numbers. This week, one of the women invited me to lunch and hiking and invited all her 300 friends in her local Chinese group chat to join us! I think that was God too. 😊

One day when I was in the store, I overheard a woman speaking Farsi. Over the years, I learned a few Farsi phrases – another way to connect to people – and I asked if she was Persian. When I began speaking a little bit of Farsi with her and showed interest in her country, she got really excited. We exchanged numbers, and now my husband and I meet with her regularly and her husband to discuss life and Persian history in the Bible! Many of my relationships have birthed from curiosity. Sometimes you have to be a little nosy and step into the world of others, but most people welcome this and are excited to share their activities, life, and interests with those who express genuine curiosity.

Have you ever seen something interesting that made you stop and want to know more? Maybe you wanted to ask a question but were too shy. Or perhaps you did start a conversation. Describe.

**Be helpful:** Keep your eyes open for people who need help or look lost. Jesus said that “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve.” Look around and make yourself useful whenever possible. I enjoy walking and biking through a forest near my home, and I usually see someone at the park’s map trying to figure out where they are and where they want to go. I typically stop and ask, “Is this your first time in the park?” They usually say “Yes,” and I explain to them how the park is laid out and how not to get lost. One conversation ended up in an opportunity to pray for the people I’d met and share the Gospel. Another time, I saw an Indian woman with a baby carriage and no baby! She looked a little distressed, so I asked if she was okay. She explained that she’d lost her husband and daughter in the park. Trying to assist her, I began a conversation that led us to exchange numbers and making plans for a walking date! My prayer and plan is to walk regularly with my new friend.

**Listen for the Holy Spirit:** Devote a day just listening for the Holy Spirit. To Job, God said, “Pay attention, Job, and listen to me; be silent, and I will speak.” In other words, Job had to be silent for a while and listen for the Lord to hear his voice. Sometimes we’re so busy and our minds are so filled with the tasks of the day and the worries of life, that we fail to listen for the Lord. Isaiah also reveals the benefit of silence: “Be silent before me, you islands! Let the nations renew their strength!” As we humble ourselves in quietness, the Lord begins to reveal his plans and do things we could never do on our own. I remember having surgery, and my body was exhausted. The Lord spoke to my heart and told me to take a day of pure rest. So, I rested my mind, took the day off, and headed for the bookstore to relax and enjoy books! While I was there, the Lord spoke to me and said, “Go talk to that girl.” So, I stopped and gently moved toward her. I noticed that she was looking at Bibles! So I asked her, “Do you need help finding a Bible?” She turned to me with a bright smile and said, “Yes!” I discovered that she didn’t know God and wanted to learn about him. I shared my testimony with her and ended up buying her a journal that day so she could take notes when she reads. I put my number in the journal and told her that if she wanted to study the Bible together, she could call me. That afternoon, she called me and asked me if we could study together! All this happened because I listened to the Spirit.

Have you ever made a friend because you stopped to help someone or because the Lord led you to them in a special way? Share your story!

You may have noticed that not all these stories developed into a Bible study or even an ongoing friendship. That’s normal, so don’t be discouraged if you don’t make a friend every time you talk to someone. In fact, typically it takes meeting 10 people to make one friend and 10 friends to find someone to study the Bible with. It then takes a few people studying to find someone who gives their life to Jesus. What does that mean? It means that we need to reach out to a lot of people if we want to obey Jesus’s command!

Meeting people around your neighborhood is one of the most natural way to make friends. You can always say, “Oh you’re my neighbor!” – which earns you the right to know them. 😊 You can also meet your neighbors by dropping off homemade cookies, helping new neighbors move in and get acquainted with the neighborhood, or hosting a neighborhood party. We recently co-hosted a movie night some of our neighbors and the Lord opened huge doors for spiritual conversations! Other natural places to make friends may be at school or work – anywhere you go on a regular basis and see the familiar faces.

### **Creating regular spaces to make friends**

If you’re still having a hard time meeting people and making friends, you can create a regular space to meet people and make friends. The first followers of Jesus did this by meeting together daily in the temple courts (Acts 2:46) where other Jews also gathered regularly. When starting a new church, Paul also attended synagogues regularly, spoke daily at Greek lecture halls, and attended public policy meetings at the Areopagus [ayr-ee-AH-puh-gus] (Acts 17:2, Acts 19:9-10). What might this look like today?

Think about your city or neighborhood. How could you create regular spaces to meet people and make friends?

For us today, we might meet new friends by taking a class; joining or even starting a club, group, or organization; attending city council events; joining meet-ups or a gym, volunteering, or attending events

at our local library. You can even set up a neighborhood prayer group or host TalkEnglish classes, especially if you're interested in reaching out to English-learning internationals in your community. Check out the [TalkEnglish instructor training](#) for more information!

### Now what?

So, you've started a conversation and made a friend, what's next? If you feel genuinely comfortable with the person, here are a few tips to help you grow and sustain your friendship:

- ☐ Find out what your friend enjoys doing. Set up a time to meet with them and do the activity together. You can also invite them to join you in an activity. This is a natural and friendly way to exchange contact information. It's best to bring a friend along with you initially or stay in public places. If they invite you into their home, we encourage you to bring a friend along.
- ☐ Offer your contact information and ask for theirs as well. Do this if you've made an authentic connection. If not, simply share your information and invite them to connect with you.
- ☐ Follow up with your friend with a text within 48 hours. This is very important and shows that you are a reliable and good friend who's genuinely interested in connecting.
- ☐ Be authentic. Don't hide your faith or avoid the name Jesus. Just speak naturally about who you are and what you're about. Be genuinely interested in their beliefs and ideas and learn more about their spiritual interests. "Be completely humble and gentle" (Ephesians 4:2). Never push; just share a little about yourself spiritually and allow them to share with you as well. For example, if they ask you what you did over the weekend, share what you did and include church or a spiritual activity you enjoyed. You can ask them in return, "Are you a spiritual person?" "Tell me about that." If you share a belief, invite them into the conversation by saying, "What do you think about that? How do you see God? What are some of your beliefs?"
- ☐ Don't worry about sharing the Gospel right away. Pray for the right time, but don't wait too long to share your spiritual life. If they turn away from you because you follow Jesus, don't worry. In our last class, we'll talk about what to do if people are not open to spiritual topics. In general, we're looking for people who don't feel threatened or become antagonistic over spiritual matters.
- ☐ If you're comfortable, invite your friend for coffee or dinner in your home. It's best to include a friend as well.
- ☐ For safety and security, we recommend exchanging contact information if the person is the same sex. If for any reason you're not comfortable exchanging this information, feel free to connect your friend with our website, so they'll have the opportunity to learn more about Jesus.

There are all kinds of ways to engage in conversations that can open the door to spiritual dialogue. Just be natural, and pray for the timing of what to share and when to share. Check out our [Meaningful Conversations](#) guide for ideas! Remember, *sprinkle* conversations with salt. Don't force the conversation, but pray that the Holy Spirit will create natural openings for you to share more.

### This Week:

1. Follow the suggestions about how to pray for open people in this study. If you have time, go on a prayer walk around your neighborhood. Expect the Lord to open doors!
2. Try out some of the tips in this lesson, and stretch yourself each day. Do your best to make a new friend by the end of the week.
3. Continue reaching out to the friends you listed in the last study and set up times with them as well.
4. Continue learning Jesus's teachings by reading Matthew or John.