

The background is a wooden wall with a vertical grain. A large purple triangle is cut out from the top right, and a teal triangle is cut out from the bottom left. The text is centered in the purple area.

Daring to share your faith

Alison Fenning

Intentional Engagement

Do you ever wake up and think I think I am going to look for intentional engagement today? I do....

We all have a desire to talk about what we love and desire are passionate about, football, clothes, cars, movies and so on. We can clearly communicate about these topics. When we were stuck in our addictions we were great advocates for the drugs, alcohol, music and party scene. We can be great advocates at sharing our faith.

Sharing our faith can be as simple as that. The problem comes when we are not sure how to have a conversation or we try and over think about what to leave in and what to leave out. I have trained lots of teams over the years and then taken people out on the street and they become a different person who seems uptight and comes across as unsure of what they believe.

I often use my experiences in Africa / stories / outreaches I have done over many years to engage conversation with people. What you can speak about will be different to me, have a think about what's unique about your life that you can chat about? What are you up to at the moment and how is your faith helping you?

Making friends with the people down your street by saying hello when you walk the dog or are in your garden can be a great first step to connecting with people. It gives you a chance to begin to be a witness without being weird. Have a think about the normal places you go, local shops, cafes or groups you are part of outside of Church life. Then be the light in those places and to those people.

Immersing into Communities: Examples of outreaches

When my dad was unwell last year and I went to help him there was a local café I found. I decided to visit it most days to give me a break from caring and to intentionally make friends with the owners. When I left I went to say goodbye and thanked them for being a respite for me. We are now friends on social media which enables me to bear witness through that outlet. Immerse into a community and watch God use your going.

Evangelism and mission outreaches I have started or have been part of have been various. Don't be afraid to step out and try new things within communities. The best approach to mission and sharing is through the medium of serving the community. I led a Church

to reach out on a housing estate in Greys, Essex using Christmas as an opportunity to take food and prayer. We kept it simple and raw so I had to model how to knock on a door and be open and friendly. Most people invited us in for a cup of tea and to pray. We were able to invite them to the Christmas service and a team kept going to build relationships onto the estate. Simple things work.

Destiny healing fair was set up as an outreach into the spiritual world by a friend of mine. I took a team of people and we had a prayer place for healing. Most of the team had not prayed for people to be healed before and felt out of their depth but God moved through them. When we step out in faith God is always with us. We prayed and then told them about the source, most people knew about God but had never heard about Jesus. A great opportunity to then have a conversation about the person of Jesus and give them an opportunity to connect with Him.

The Church I am based in Suffolk in 2004 I helped the people who had the vision for the youth of the town to start a youth outreach as the Church had very little youth work going at the time. Went to the areas where they hung and met some young people saying we were from the local Church and then quickly began a weekly youth meeting place for them to hang out, do some games like pool and so on. That ministry is still going and has changed shape and is now running evangelist events every month as well as discipleship groups. Evangelists can pioneer and Pastors build.



Connecting into the world of prostitution street, off street and the Internet. Making first connections with those we wanted to reach and then building a team, networking with Churches, sending a letter to a premise's opened the door for praying with the owner whom I supported pastorally until she sadly died. I have met many women over the years who have come and gone in and out of the industry and have continued to meet up and be witness too outside of their working life. Some of the reason we do this is to show them windows of normality. Modelling life and how to have a faith journey will rub off on those who we are reaching out to. Sometimes I take women out with me who are searching for God and have them as my ministry team - they see it and do it. It's powerful and is a Jesus shaped model.

God has opened many doors over the years. A willing heart is all that is required on our part to go. A door opened through a request from a friend in Africa to begin a missions training forum for Church leaders / evangelists / church planters that come from Congo, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda to equip for mission adventures. Mentoring evangelists into action. Out of those sessions we have done of which have been to create time for conversations on theology and mission, many new outreaches have begun. This kind of forum allows for ideas to come from everyday people like you and I of how we can reach our areas and have a sense of we are in this together. I wonder where each person in your

Church has on their heart. It is so worth allowing the local Church to be creative in its mission approach.

In 2014 we began the Freedom project in Rwanda that reaches women in the sex industry through evangelism. We provide discipleship and rehabilitation through skill training and mentoring. This project is affecting a whole area known as “ the place where nothing good comes from” it is raising up a community of believers bringing the gospel. It came into being as I noticed a fight one day in a slum. Women beating women up. I asked to meet them. Shared about Jesus with my story wrapped inside. They really connected with the story of Jesus dying for them as many had never heard of such love from a man before.

I am sharing these stories to demonstrate ideas of what God can do through your gift to the Church for good. I have a skill set from all my experiences and I can use it to bring freedom to others. God turns our mess into a message. My entire life is a story that can be turned over. Some projects I now just observe from a distance and think that's great, others I have fully handed over.

Wherever you are in the world there will always be opportunities to immerse and infiltrate. Build into a community. Find Gods person of peace, empower them so they can build on your pioneering ability.



The Jesus way

From reading the gospel's we can notice that Jesus had a certain way of doing his mission.

1. Gather and equip he invested three years with a group of people who would spread the message across nations
Matthew 4:18-22

2. Jesus taught the team about the kingdom: training in truth, faith, relationships, justice, love, forgiveness, dealt with issues of the heart Mathew 5 -8

3. He modelled His prayer life, loving one another, how to pray with the sick and set them free of oppression.
Mathew 8-10

4. Sent them out first the 12 and then the 72 (Jesus did not go with them) love and send. If the leader is always there people will not grow in confidence and learn the how to.

5. He debriefed them when they came back with late night chats and sharing Luke 9-10

6. He empowered them for the day he would leave, he gave them his full approval and authority as God had done at the baptism of Jesus. John 16:17-33

“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28: 19

Jesus chose twelve. He built a team of regular people, taught them, nurtured them and shoved them out to have a go. Later eleven of those original twelve became founders of the early Church.

We don't need to get stuck on numbers but the concept of taking a group of believers teaching them kingdom truths and then giving the opportunity to evangelise and be on mission. as Jesus equipped the twelve we equip the Church through teaching and then having mission adventures alongside for a season.

Evangelism in an urban setting

1. Preparing the people: prayer meetings, idea sharing, getting the Church to tip outside of the walls. Facilitate good works and witness.

2. Use Christian calendar events as a tool to engage in outreach - go out before inviting people to an event. There is nothing like the power of a personal invitation. People will come because of you and the relationship you have.

3. Think about an outreach you can do to serve the community and use as a point of contact - brings credibility and shows authenticity
"love your our neighbour as yourself."

4. Prepare the Church to do random acts of kindness - opens our hearts to people.

5. Street outreach - the Church can have a presence on the street, offer healing prayer/ prayer station. Think creatively what you can offer. You can only ever go as far as what people have faith and vision for and the main teaching thread of the Church will facilitate this.

6. Identify the connectors in the Church and help them communicate the message through various pathways. Equip them to find opportunities to connect people to Jesus and give witness his message in a clear way.

7. Training through a course then take them out and let them try it out all the time building a group of people who will function in sharing their faith.

8. Post evangelism and outreach that follow up / discipleship is in place for growth and nurture. Use a course / small groups that incorporate people into the body of the Church.

One to One: Sharing your faith

Last year I took a group of Bible students to the streets in a town in the UK. Their task was to go and make connections with people and share their faith in a way they felt comfortable to do so. I had done some training the week before on the how to. Whilst I was waiting for them I noticed a man with a billboard strapped on him so I went over and had a causal chat with him. Mainly I listened to his story asked a few questions then dropped in about my faith story. I left him with a book to mull over, noted his name and said I would say a prayer for him that night. A very moving experience for us both.

Giving people our time without trying to hit people over the head with a Bible is the best gift we can give anyone. That encounter gave the man and God something to build on.

Philemon 6 "I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ."

There are five main ways to bring the Kingdom of God to be seen for people. Dialogue, demonstration (acts of kindness), written, preaching, signs and wonders.

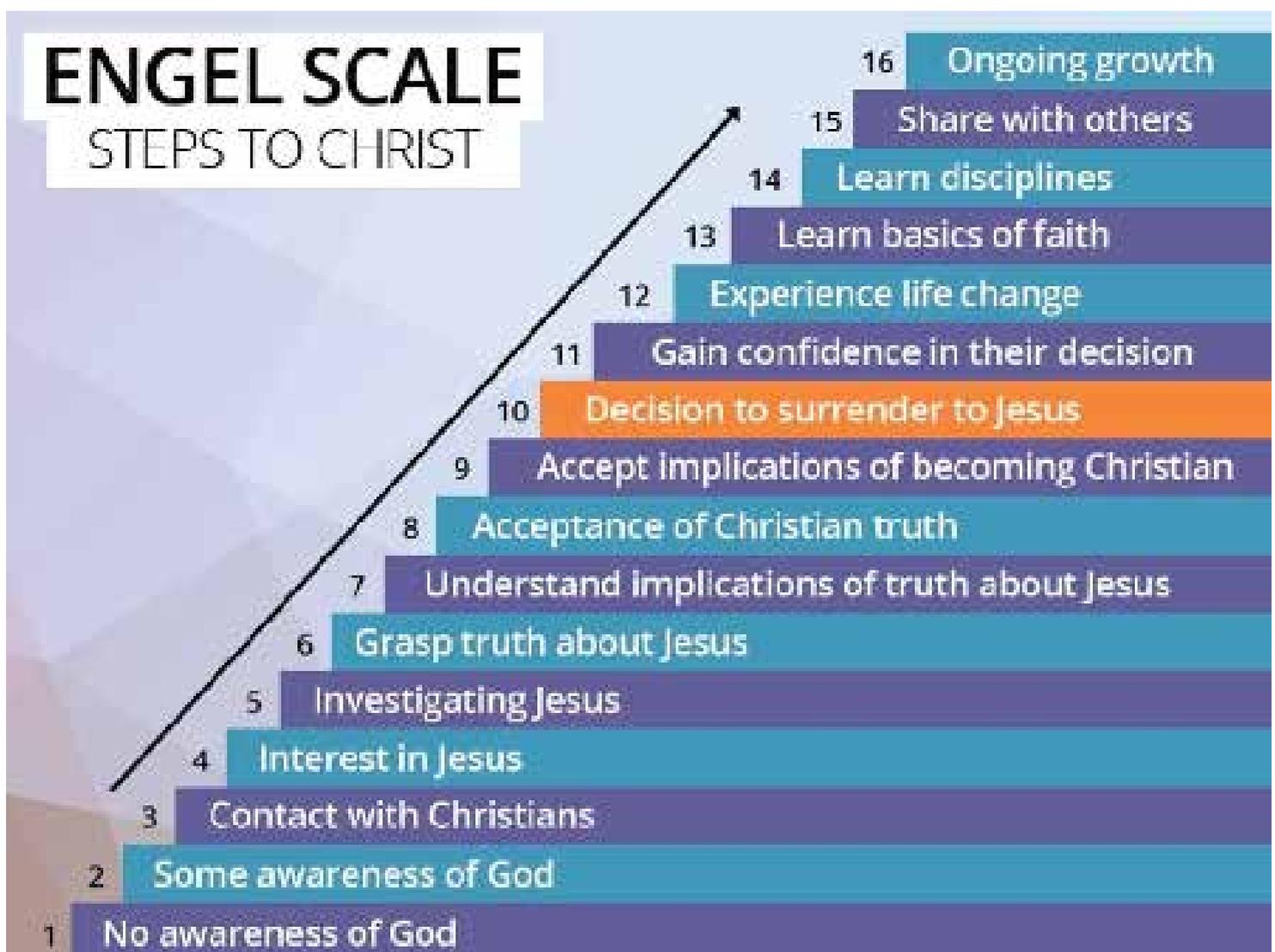
I used to share my faith as a child without realising what I was doing by give postcards of Jesus picture to children in my class. Always took them to CU as I was searching for God at a young age and then got distracted. Ended up involved in the party scene of the 90's and addicted to alcohol. Ending up with an eating disorder, up to all sorts and wanting to change. That was when I felt drawn to go to Church searching for something and that search led me to God the father.

I notice when I am listening to people share their life with me that the questions they are asking right about will come out in conversation. After all the Bible does say what's in a person's heart comes out of the mouth. I was once in a bar in a nightclub asking people what they thought about Jesus? I was searching and looking for answers and that is what we will need to listen for as people speak.

The Engel Scale

The scale is a directive to help us think through as communicators where people we are engaging / talking to are on the journey of faith.

Once we have discerned where someone is at on the scale we can look to move him or her up the scale. Sometime the Holy Spirit will direct you to go for it and seal the deal.



Making a connection

I am a naturally a connector as I am generally interested in people and like being around them. Jesus was a great connector wherever he went he noticed people and engaged with them "Jesus went around speaking of the Kingdom" But he did something first; He connected.

Think about the culture, body language, voice, smile, language – think about these aspects of communication. People often go with a message but fail to think to notice the context. If you look at the sales teams on the street they have message to share but often if you sit back and watch them they fail to connect on a personal level.

Firstly, we must make a connection. Eye contact is important as you can sense a synergy between you and a group/ individual and if you sense it you can comfortably sit back and make some in roads. We can open a conversation with a smile and comment use what you see to direct you. I have developed a great sense of empathy so I tune in and use that skill to know when to speak and more importantly when to listen. Remember to use a word of knowledge / prophetic revelation if it there. Try to share it in a non - spooky way.

I was once leading a street team doing a survey of what people thought about the local Church and what

the community needs were. We approached a man and asked him a few survey questions then the conversation became less formal. As he was chatting I suddenly said "how long have you been a scientist then?" The man looked in horror and said "how did you know that?" "You just told me a moment ago," I replied. "No, I didn't" and the person who was with was also looking shocked and saying "he never said that." Turned out the man was a scientist and I had heard a word of knowledge.

My point with this story is words of knowledge happen all the time we are so used to saying them in a mystical way with language such as I feel God is saying and so on but how much more effective is it when we just slip them into conversation naturally. It captures people in a shocking way that they never forget and opens their minds and hearts to the possibility that there may actually be a living God who speaks today.

What's the starting point to making a connection?
Simply sometimes to ask a question.

Hello, how are you doing?

I have been thinking about this as a concept

Do you ever pray? I have been praying about...

Do you think it is possible to see miracles today?

Do you ever think about what's beyond what we see, feel, touch?

Follow statements with an open question...



Have you ever had a spiritual encounter is a great opener. I once had lunch with a colleague I was working alongside on an outreach project they mentioned seeing the spirit of her grandparent and we went on to have great conversation around God and spiritual encounters. Don't be afraid to have conversations with people who are not believers just tune into their language on spiritual things. The connection was made through working together and my faithfulness to the women on the street. She saw that and was intrigued by it. People are watching us all the time.

Your openness as a person and how you come across will either shut down the conversation or enable a flow to occur. If you are angry, timid, unsure then you will come across as strange. Try and be as natural as you can and don't be nervous. There is no shame in having a faith.

We have to train ourselves slowly over time to think through whom we are meeting and be appropriate in how we present and what we say. Try and ditch jargon and use real day to day language. Ultimately be yourself as God made you unique and uses our diversity to reach different people.

Over the years I have found these four doors in myself to have open are helpful when sharing my faith.

1. Availability - we must be free in our heart and have time for people.

2. Vulnerability – Brave -we must be free to openly share our faith without shame or intimidation this requires a vulnerable person.

3. Love - we must cultivate a heart of love for people. We do this by constantly keeping our heart and relationship with God open. He keeps us soft hearted. Stay in touch with the father God.

4. Listen, listen, listen for the activity of God in someone's life and point it out. The Kingdom of God has come Mark 1:15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" God is already at work make the connection.

One of the most profound experiences I have had from street outreach was when I met a young woman on the streets. She stood outside a petrol station looking for work and I stopped and said "hi how are you doing?" "Oh I'm fine thanks how are you?" "Good thanks I thought I would just come and say hi, are you really ok?" I asked again. She looked flustered. I said "my name is Ali and I am from the Church and I work for a charity that helps people." She laughed and showed me her cross "I wear this a punter gave it to me and every time I work I put it on as Jesus loves prostitutes; people like me, doesn't he?" I was nearly in tears as I knew she had deep understanding of the love of God. God was already at work in her life.

As I got to know her over many years it turned out that God had saved her life once before saving her in car crash. God was already at work in her life and I just came along to remind her of his presence in her life and that he had not forgotten her. I had the privilege of knowing her and discipling her for fifteen years before she died. I am so pleased I stopped that day and listened to the activity of God in someone's life.

How to have a conversation

Need to discern the conditions of a person's soul for example Is he a sincere Nicodemus John 3? Ask yourself the question inside whilst you are having a connection. Look for good ground by listening. Some people are just not ready to hear.

Jesus told him the good news of how to follow and he discerned if Nicodemus had the heart of a true seeker or an arrogant teacher of the law wanting to argue. Jesus was clever and used the law to stir the need for a saviour. We may need to tune into a person to speak in a way they hear and understand like Jesus did in the story.

The woman at the well is another great example of a spiritual conversation in John 4 we see where Jesus uses the persons situation to enable freedom to come. He spoke directly about her area of vulnerability through

asking a question. He didn't condemn her ways but rather gently pointed out her need for something more. Jesus was genuinely interested in people rather than just the outcome. He enjoyed being with the people and gave them his full attention.

Conversation, Share stories of faith

I have chatted to social workers/ police / bank staff / gym staff / café owners about what we do in UK and Africa. They love and ask about how it's going. It's all laying a foundation to give a reason for the hope you have when people ask. I am intentional about it that when I chat to a person they will never forget the conversation. Those conversations can plant seeds of faith for people to then go on their own journey of finding God. This is where Alpha can be a great tool for people who are seeking to explore more.

Think about what God has been revealing to you lately. What happened when you last prayed for someone? Where was God's provision last seen in your life? Collect your own faith experiences to share.

I was my way home from America where I had been sharing at a conference and as I sat down this older lady sat down next to me. Over the course of the

next six hours I began to say where I had been and what I had been doing. I opened a conversation. The lady started to open up to me about her granddaughter and she was worried as she had just joined a group of people who now wanted her to go to Africa with them. The more she told me the more I smiled as I knew the organisation and was able to put her mind at rest. I also shared about Africa and how that's where I became a Christian. It was such a great flight home. Sometimes we are so caught up in the 'this is not what I am doing right now' that we miss the people God has lined up for us to meet and impact their life with a footprint. As Peter says always be ready in your heart for action.

“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

Having a conversation is just like opening a pack of cards and you take turns to deal your cards. Chat your story. Different elements with different people. Chat Jesus story weaved into your story. Pray for the person whilst you are speaking so the Holy Spirit guides you what to say and what not to say.

1. Engaging: Be an attractive person, passionate, embracing, look the part and feel it. Jesus captivated people. I saw a homeless person in London with a sign "Smile it doesn't cost" she had bright blue eyes and an open joyfulness about her – she captivated me. Intentionally noticing people.

2. Be interested in others, observe, and listen, read people. Jesus watched and understood the needs and questions. Be prepared for people as Jesus was.

3. Be a positive influence: offer prayer, stories of how God works with you or others stories you have heard.

4. Trigger phases for engaging in spiritual conversations. "I had a spiritual experience or encounter", "discovered I was wrong", "I work with an organization that helps people who" – "I had a life changing experience" "I go to Church to do you?" be open about going to church and not ashamed of about it.

5. Doing door to door or market place outreach is good as it trains you up in not being afraid.

Try developing the art of speaking about Jesus and his kingdom. In the gospel's it is recorded that Jesus spoke to people "the kingdom of heaven is near you." He taught about kingdom values in the beatitudes. We are part of God's value system so we live differently and with different perspective. People notice that we are different and will comment and ask why. That provides an opportunity to begin to share about Jesus.

There are many ways to share your faith and the how you do it will depend on the environment and the person you are communicating with. Below are a few pointers.

1. Share your story of transformation and pack God's story inside yours. Collect your God encounters. I have a book of dreams and note them down so when they come to pass I can talk about my relationship with God. Richard my husband has a book of prophecies for the same reason. We can share stories. God is not stuck in a book he is living and active. Journal God's activity.

2. A tree talk that you can share one to one, on the radio, to a group. The tree has a core thread God throughout and then branches of truth that shoot off the side

3. Speak about the power of Jesus and his work of paying the price. Colossians 1 and Ephesians 1 & 2. I once had to share the gospel from a demonic perspective as they were caught up in some very dark and dangerous stuff and had made a blood pact with the darkness. I shared from the above Scriptures that the only blood pact that could break the one made

to the darkness was by receiving the one made by Jesus. It seemed crazy at the time and I went on to really unpack those scriptures. The person rejected Christ at the time and then found me five years later to apologise for a few things. I was astounded as they remembered exactly what I had said and thanked me.

We can forget how powerful God is and the reality of who Jesus is and the actions he took for us can really set people free who are in real darkness and danger. Asking the question do you realise who Jesus is can be a great opening question to ask ..

He is God revealed in human form John 14:5-14

The significance of his death. Jesus opened a door to have eternal life so when we leave our body in death we stay alive in our spirit and be fully with Jesus.

The cross and its provision to break addictions, free from demonic torment, break the eternal curse of separation from God and forgiveness from things that leave us heavy (sin).

4. Pray for people. Very few people refuse prayer. Speak about Jesus life on earth, miracles, love to others, acts of justice, teachings- whatever you have got inside you about him let's get it out. Those stories build faith. I once asked a woman I knew from outreach if she would like to have communion one day and pray. She liked the idea so I took round the bread and the wine and checked that she knew why we were doing it. No, she didn't understand the real reason behind it. I did smile and thought great. I shared about Jesus and we prayed together as she accepted love of God toward her then we took communion. I have

never brought someone to Jesus through communion before and may never do again. My point is asking the question gave the opportunity.

5. Ask the awkward questions. Why is there so much suffering in the world then listen to a person response and bring your perspective which is Gods perspective. The Bible has lots to say on the causes of suffering in the world and injustice. Jeremiah 17:9 -10 is just a couple of verses on a popular topic people want to know the truth about.

“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; Who can understand it? “I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, According to the results of his deeds.”

Have you ever had to forgive someone for something? How did you do that? Then bring your perspective or a story in.

It is Jesus who forgives our selfishness and behaviour and brings freedom from guilt and shame. We can speak about how the garden of Eden happens every day in our lives and we need to choose Jesus to break the power of sin in our lives. Until we are in Christ we are not free to be good.

Don't be afraid to think deeply and answer your own questions. If we are thinking about why some people get healed and others don't so are other people.

6. What about other gods. There are other gods and Christ reigns above them all. Ephesians 1:21 "far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come." Think about what other people believe and why. Then speak into those things.

7. Listen up. If we can share truth in a story format then people will listen. That's the culture we live in. This requires listening to what people are saying and then pointing out the activity of God in their lives. That then gives us a basis to share a story of when some similarities activity happened to us and the outcome - opens a door to ask people if they want more of Jesus activity in their life and seal the deal.

8. Holy Spirit John 16: 5-15 He has a role and it's his job to bring people to Christ, to convict of sin so we must work with him. Listen to his promptings and ask for discernment as you have conversations. We need wisdom and revelation. The spirit brings spiritual gifts for us to use 1 Corinthians 12:8 -10

9. Use resources. Carry books around with you and give them away. Carry prayer cards with you and give them away. Recommend websites, videos. Give Bibles away - in a recent survey it was shown that 4% of people in UK come to Christ through course and a higher percentage through reading the Bible. That told me that what gets promoted people want to read about.

10. Cross cultural context: Common Ground.

When you are sharing your faith into another culture think about what you are saying and how you say it. Learning about the culture and the faith of that culture can be helpful. I once took flowers as an act of kindness to a Chinese woman who worked in an off street premises she had not been in UK for very long. For me that was an act of kindness to her flowers mean death in her culture! We need to think about what we are doing and saying and be appropriate and look for bridges / common ground to begin a discussion respectfully.

If we can communicate that we are living inside God's story and that the universe is his and everything in it is under his rule and reign. The world's future is in his hands and there is an end to the story but we can be on the winning side for those of you wanting to reach new age thinkers we will need to have their language and understand their theology of God as the universe to share a different perspective.

I met two travellers in Rwanda once in a hotel by the pool and we got chatting about the book the "secret" they began to tell me the book is why they were out there. They had written their dreams down and now they were living them. They put it down to requesting from the universe and everything aligning in the cosmos to make their dreams come true. I listened and was intrigued after sharing about my own faith journey I left wanting to read The Secret so I could understand more how to communicate Jesus so they could hear.

Be creative in Conversion

Sometimes we have one off meetings with people and we can share glimpses of the faith story. There could a chance to pray with the person if you sense they would be open then go for it and ask. They can only say no, other times it's about relational evangelism building into people's lives through God's leading and direction.

Think about the gap between the conversation and conversion. I have used phrases like would you like to encounter / experience the God I have speaking about? Especially in a new age context. The first step is to speak with Him, an abstract concept but as people are used to meditation now they know how to sense a presence that you can then explain to them. Like the person we met at the new age fair who felt the heat go through her body when we prayed. Afterwards I explained about Jesus the source of the presence (heat) she felt.

Everyone I do that with I give them a copy of my book "Walking with God" to go through the next steps of relationship building. Think about the context and use a language people will get. With addicts you can be straight to the point. There are other times it will take a longer process.

Have a prayer that you are happy to pray with people for them to begin their journey with God. We are in a good place in history people are open as we live in a fear culture and people want something solid to believe again.

When we speak about Jesus it is good practice to also drop into the conversation about finding a community/tribe where people believe the same things so we can grow together and work out our faith journey together.

The world of the Internet and social media is great and can promote Jesus, add people you are sharing your faith with. If you have a relationship with the person you can also model faith. I take some of the women I reach out to when I am preaching, they run the bookstall, pray for people. It is about being inclusive and it encourages their faith to grow.





Be Ready

Think through about the kinds of dialogue you can have.

Some questions below to help you think about that in advance.

What difference does God make in my life?

How did I meet with God?

What difference does God make in my life?

Collect stories of other people meeting with God.

How can they meet with God today?

Remember it is often not a preach but a spiritual conversation. This is the world we now live in and we can all play a part in advancing the Kingdom of God by sharing our faith journey so far.

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