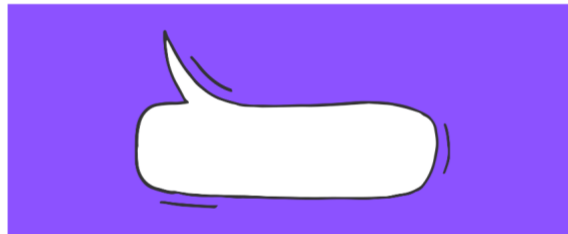




HOW TO TALK ABOUT JESUS



...DEVELOPING PERSONAL EVANGELISM

Growth Groups Material
(5 studies to help us develop our personal evangelism)

March 2023

LEADERS BOOKLET

Booklet Contents

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Important Note

This material is adapted from studies prepared by St Luke's Anglican Church, Miranda and used with permission.

The content is loosely based on the book, How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy), Sam Chan, Zondervan Reflection, 2020.

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Introduction

Jesus' words at the end of Matthew's gospel are world-changing! They give our lives direction and purpose:

*16 Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. 17 When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and **make disciples of all nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:16-20)*

With these words, Jesus includes us in the eternal work of God to see people find life and joy in him, and we now have a responsibility to not just enjoy the benefits of life and faith for ourselves but to share them with others. This is a wonderful joy and immense responsibility. **This all beckons the question; how do we actually do it?**

Over the course of these studies, we will explore ways that we can all begin to reach out with the good news of Jesus and help our friends and family come to know him. These studies are based on the book *How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)* by Sam Chan. You might like to buy the book and read it as you work through the studies. It's an easy, light and at times, funny read.

These studies are designed to help everyday people like you and me to get better at talking about Jesus. They are for the hesitant, anxious, rusty, and awkward among us and those who are more comfortable in this space. They will give you some helpful tools to see how an everyday person like you can go about helping someone come to know Jesus.

As we begin to think about how we talk to our friends about Jesus, it's important to remember evangelism is a team sport, not an individual sport. It's cricket, not

tennis. This is helpful to remember for two reasons; on the one hand, it's a great comfort because we are reminded that we don't do this alone; there are 500 other people at Jannali Anglican who are participating in helping your friends and family know Jesus. On the other hand, it's a reminder that we all do have a part to play. We are all in the game. There are no spectators in evangelism.

While these studies focus more on how we do the work as individuals, it's good to remember that a lot of the work we do is in tandem with others. On the next page you can see a calendar of our combined evangelistic efforts as a church. Take a few mins to read over the calendar and familiarise yourself with what we are doing as a church and think about how you can be involved and utilize this combined work to see your friends come to know Jesus too.

P.S. The things on the calendar list our 'over-and-above' activities. We also have a bunch of regular activities like Its Music time, ESL, JAC Youth Friday Kids Club, Connect and Create and Insight.

I'm praying that God will you use to see many people come to find life in Jesus.



Ross Collins
Connect Director

Connect Calendar:

Month	Event	Extra Details
July	All For Jesus Night + Life Boat List Launch	All for Jesus is an opportunity to get everyone from church together to think, pray, strategize, and get excited about evangelism for the year ahead. Our Life Boat Lists are lists of three people we are praying for and trying to invite evangelise too.
August	Prayer and training month.	A month dedicated to praying for our LB lists and a 4 week opt in immersion training in evangelism.
September	Spring Outreach Events	A month of targeted outreach events at specific subcultures in our church. Men, women, Mums, dads, parents, YA etc
October	Life Series	A five-week evangelistic course to help people look into what life with Jesus looks like. This is our key activity in helping people become Christians.
November	Establish Series	Establish is program designed to help people who have come to faith in Jesus become established as Christian. It's like a 'life a Christian' 101 course.
December	Christmas outreach events	This includes, Connect and Create Christmas party, Family Gingerbread, Wreath making, Outdoor Carols, Christmas services.
January	Summer Church	A month of more relaxed church services.
February	Prayer Month	A month to pray for people to come to share life and come to know Jesus.
March	Share Life	Four weeks of evangelistic church services.
April	Easter Outreach	Easter services + any additional outreach events.
May	Life Series	Connect people in from Share life + easter
June	Establish Series	Connect people from Life series.

A Word to Growth Group Members...

Before you launch into this fantastic material, there's a few things you should know. This material will feel different to 'normal' growth group material. Whilst we're definitely asking you to open your bibles, there's also more of a 'training' feel to things. There are some excerpts from the Sam Chan book, and plenty of opportunities to brainstorm about how to put things into practice! You will also find there is a lot of questions to work through. No one expects you to do it all. Feel free to skip some questions and focus on what's working well for your group!

It's also important to be aware that these studies don't correspond to the bible passages or themes being preached in our weekend gatherings. So you can use this material at any time! We thought that the Share Life Month of evangelistic gatherings (March 2023) was a good opportunity to think about personal evangelism in our growth groups.

Lastly, we've prepared a website with some additional material that you might find helpful. There's a link to purchase the book, and a stack of podcasts and videos where Sam Chan has discussed the ideas explored in this material. Individuals can check out this material at their leisure, or you might like to make use of it during your group time. It's up to you.

For the leaders: all the additional leaders notes are the grey-shaded dot points.

- Leaders notes look like this. Everything else is you see is in the members booklet.

Additional Material

You can find links to some additional materials including videos and podcasts at our series website:

<https://jannalianglican.org.au/howtojesus>



Study 1 | Understanding two worlds (page 8 members booklet)

THE BIG IDEA

The ideas in this study emerge from the first two tips in Sam's book.

Tip 1: Merge Your Universes (Evangelism is a lifestyle change). Here Sam explains that modern people, in a post-Christian society like Australia don't tend to form beliefs in the way we imagine – by analysing information and forming objective conclusions. On the contrary, people need to see and experience things, in order for ideas to become 'believable'.

Tip 2: Go to their things (and they will go to your things). If we're genuinely spending time with our non-Christian friends and investing in their lives, then the idea of inviting them to a church event won't feel so foreign.

The common theme to these two tips is that our unbelieving friends must see our faith integrated with our life – and that this will make the claims of Christianity more believable – or at least less weird.

Discuss

1. What do you think are some of the biggest barriers to people you know becoming Christians? Is it a matter of pride? Access to the information? Is the Church itself perceived as a barrier to faith?
 - The aim of this question is to get people thinking about reaching people with the gospel. It is an open question with no right or wrong answers.
2. Which people in our society do you think are the most trustworthy? Do you think Christians/the church are seen as trustworthy? Why/Why not?
 - A 2021 poll listed the top 10 most trusted professions as 1. Doctors, 2. Nurses, 3. Paramedics, 4. Firefighters, 5. Scientists, 6. Police Officers, 7. Teachers, 8. Pharmacists, 9. Pilots, 10. Vets. "Religious ministers and priests" don't appear until spot 15.
 - If your group doesn't have a lot of discussion based on the two questions above, you might consider reading out the "Top 10 list" and asking, "what is it about these professions that makes them trustworthy?". They are all areas where people are perceived to be helping/caring for others. For Ministers to be so far down the list implied that we don't actually "help" as such. Whether or not we think it is "fair", Christians need to acknowledge that things like the Royal Commission into Institutional Abuse has tarnished our reputation.
3. In his book, Sam Chan talks about "Plausibility structures" (those things that determine whether someone/something is trustworthy or not) and the importance of building them with non-Christians. What is it that makes Christianity believable for you?
 - Plausibility is another word for believability. A plausibility structure refers to the social and cultural context in which an idea is received, considered and ultimately accepted or rejected. Talking about this stuff doesn't mean we've lost confidence in the bare facts of Jesus life, death and resurrection to change people. It's simply recognizing than in our 21st century times,

people's ways of thinking have changed. People value community consensus and personal experience for an idea to carry weight in their life.

4. The three main sources contributing to plausibility (or the trustworthiness of something), according to Sam, are listed in order, below. Does this order surprise you? How should this affect our approach to evangelism?

1. *Community - we trust friends and family.*
2. *Experiences - having some kind of experience with something makes it trustworthy, and*
3. *Facts - evidence and data.*

- Does this order surprise you? How might this order effect the way we approach evangelism?
- This might be a great opportunity to explore the testimonies of your bible study members. How did they come to faith? Were they brought up in a Christian household (Community)?; were they won over by coming along to youth group, or another activity (Experiences?); or did they do some independent study and come to faith through a conviction of the truth (Facts)?
- Getting the "facts" right about Jesus is vitally important, but it's worth thinking about whether we are investing enough in community and experience?

Optional extra: Listen to Sam explain this idea in his interview with Colin Hansen on the Gospelbound podcast at around 8.00. (see page 6 for details of additional materials)

Read and Investigate

- The aim of this short bible study (in the following questions) is to learn from the example of the Apostle Paul. What Paul describes in 1 Cor 15:1-9 broadly aligns with Sam's ideas. In other words, whilst the raw facts of Jesus resurrection were essential, the community and experience elements were present too. Along with the facts, God uses these elements of life to bring people to saving faith and help them become established as a growing disciple of Jesus.
5. In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul gives a passionate defence of the good news of the gospel. **Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-19** and try to identify where Paul appeals to community, experience and facts in his writing.
- In verses 3-8, Paul anchors this story in that of **community**. Jesus didn't just appear to Paul himself, but to well over 500 believers. In verse 6, Paul refers to these people as "brothers and sisters", framing them in the context of relationship. Furthermore, he points out that most of these people are still alive. As he writes, he is clear that this is a "community" of people who are known to the Corinthians.
 - Having anchored this story in community, Paul speaks of his own **personal experience** in verses 8-11. His self-deprecating speech is not false humility, but a means of showing how Paul himself experienced a radical change when he came to faith.
 - Finally, verses 12-19 ground Paul's experience in the **facts**. The community and Paul himself attest to something, but it is vital that the truth of that thing is held on to. Christianity can't just be "true for me", but must be something that is grounded in history, otherwise we are only deserving of pity!
6. Why do you think all three play such a healthy role in seeing people come to authentic faith? What might happen if people miss one of the three?

- Community, Experience, Facts: If you believe something because it's embraced by the community and you have a positive experience of a thing, but there are no facts behind it, this is the kind of thing that will eventually disappoint. Many cults push this line.
- Community, Experience, Facts: To have experienced change in your life and having solid evidence for your faith can go a long way. But without a community to invest in and belong to people are left isolated. Christians can exist in this kind of world (we hear stories of Christians in oppressive countries who go years without meeting another Christian), but it is unhealthy.
- Community, Experience, Facts: Finally, to create community and to have the truth of the gospel, but to have no evidence of change in our lives would create the stereotypical kind of church where people attend on Sunday but go about their "regular lives" during the rest of the week.

7. **Read Matthew 9:9-13.** Jesus made it a practice to invite "tax collectors and sinners" to eat with him and his disciples, often doing so at their houses. What was Jesus' purpose in doing this?

- Verse 13 gives us the main theological point of this event: Jesus came not to call the righteous, but sinners. He ate with these people in order to call them to trust him and be saved.

8. What can we learn from Jesus' example, in terms of the people we spend time with, and his approach to reaching people?

- For our purposes, Jesus' example reminds us of the need to spend time with people, getting to know them before we can call them to trust Jesus. It's important to we earn people's trust.

Discuss and Apply

9. Why do you think it is so easy to keep our Christian friends and our other friends in separate groups? Where do you think some natural points of connection might be in your life?

- See what your group has to say. For some it is a lack of confidence that the Christian message is enticing enough. Other times, it is simply easier to leave our lives compartmentalized. Other times, we might be worried that Christians won't get along with non-Christians, or vice versa. For some it may simply be that it has never occurred to them to "merge their worlds".
- Some natural points of connection in our lives might be school communities, sports teams, university classes, workplaces etc.

10. The second chapter of Sam's book is about "Going to their things". The more we show we are willing to invest in others, the more likely they are to come to something to which we invite them. What are some areas in your life where you might be able to invest in others?

- See notes above question 9 above. The challenge for us to be willing to invest in the lives of our non-Christian friends. Perhaps ask if anyone in your group has personal experience of being a good friend to an unbeliever – e.g. – "going to their things", and then seeing that reciprocated by the friend coming to a church event

11. What do you think it looks like in our day to day lives to make Christianity a “plausible” life choice for our friends/work mates?

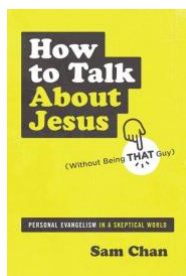
- This is an open question for group discussion. To put it simply, people living ordinary godly lives of love, care and Christ-like qualities – will have an impact on people. On the other hand, if our friends see us mixing with other believers in community, and serving sacrificially, with joy, it will generate curiosity. Most non-Christians don't have a good sense of what the Christian life looks like. If we can bust a few myths by the way we live, that helps!

12. Are there activities that you do solely with friends from Church? What would it take to make it an activity to which you'd be keen to invite some non-Christian friends? How do we avoid the situation of looking like we're trying to “set people up” for evangelism?

- For discussion. Brainstorm as a group the kinds of activities where our Christian and non-Christian worlds can mix.

Pray for opportunities and diligence to ‘merge’ your Christian and non-Christian worlds, and that we'd live in such a way that makes our Christian faith “plausible” to others?

- The Extra Reading segments in each study (like below) are there to help you grasp the ideas of the study, and/or extend people. You could read them with your group and share reactions, ask people to read it for homework and share reactions next week, or not use them at all. Do whatever will help your group have a fruitful discussion.



Extra Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Page 19

Rico Tice, a gifted UK evangelist, talks about three cultural phases of evangelism in the West. The first phase was in the late twentieth century, the time when Billy Graham was giving his talks. His audience was Christianised. Even though they weren't believers, they had Christian friends and had grown up in Sunday school. Billy's talk only had to be twenty minutes because he was asking them to believe what they already knew to be true.

The second phase was in the early twenty-first century. Here the audience sort of knew the gospel. But they also had "defeater beliefs" that stopped them from believing this gospel. For instance, what about other religions? What about science? What about evil? Here our job was to remove these defeater beliefs and clear the way for them to believe the gospel.

The third phase of evangelism is where we are now. Today, our audience is in a completely different universe. They don't know of the gospel. They don't even know why they should care. It's of no relevance to them. And deep down, they suspect that the gospel is a tool of oppression used by those who used to be in

power. They are hermetically shut off from the good news of Jesus.

This is why we need to merge our universes. It's one of the most powerful ways our friends can come into contact with the gospel.

Study 2 | Coffee, Dinner, Gospel (page 12 members booklet)

THE BIG IDEA

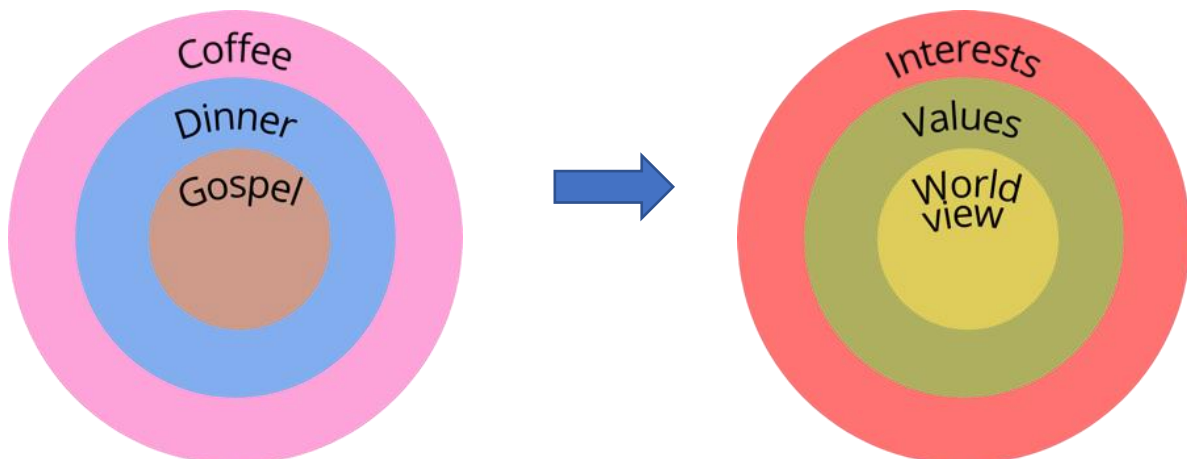
The ideas in this study emerge from the third tip in Sam's book.

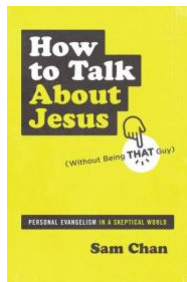
Tip 3: Coffee, Dinner, Gospel (Find Creative Ways to Do Hospitality). How do we even begin to talk about Jesus when the conversation with our non-Christian friends remains pretty 'safe' and superficial. The key is to understand, and using, the three layers of conversation.

Discuss

1. Do you feel like asking a friend about their views of Jesus would be like going from 'zero to one hundred' (to use a car racing metaphor)? Why is this the case?
 - This is an open question, inviting people's own reflections. Many people feel like bringing Jesus into the conversation with a non-Christian feels awkward and out of the blue. This is the problem that this study aims to address. But not by pushing people to toughen up. On the contrary, we need to learn how to progress our relationships with people to a deeper level, so that gospel conversations won't seem so out of place .
2. Have you ever had a gospel conversation go badly? Why do you think that happened?
 - This is simply another opportunity to invite people's reflection on their own experiences. Feel free to skip it if question 1 generated lots of discussion.
 - The graphic and block of text below are really important to read and digest. It describes the three layers of conversation (or depth of engagement) that we often find ourselves in. Sam's big point is that we need to listen carefully to people and ask questions which will nudge the conversation into the next layer.
 - Take note that the box of text below the graphic is 'essential reading', not 'extra reading' like elsewhere in the studies

The three layers of conversation





Essential Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Summary of pages 36-38

In the third chapter of his book Sam unpacks the “three levels of conversation”, which he calls “Coffee, dinner and gospel” conversations.

Coffee conversation focuses on surface level or “interest” based things. People are more likely to describe their interests. Subjects at this level might include things like weather, sports, or what you are watching on TV.

Dinner conversation is where you move to the next level and begin to discuss values. At this point, people are not only describing something they like, but are willing to prescribe an actual value to things. This is the moment where people might share why they like one show, but they don’t like another, what the thought process behind a particular decision they made was, or how a particular thing made them feel.

Finally, there are **Worldview** conversations. These are the deeper conversations where people share elements of how they make sense of the world and what things mean to them on an existential level. Most of the relationships we have start at a surface level before we delve a little deeper. Often it is only those closest to us to whom we are willing to open up about our world views.

Read and Investigate

- The aim of this short bible study (in the following questions) is to learn from the example of the Apostle Paul. His approach to evangelism in Acts 17, broadly aligns with Sam’s ideas. His example demonstrates that in contexts where people don’t share our religious background (i.e., the pagan Greeks as compared to the Jewish Paul), we need to find areas of common ground before we can launch into a direct presentation of the Christian gospel
3. **Read Acts 17:15-34.** What are the different groups of people that Paul has discussions within this passage?
 - Paul starts with the Jews and God-fearing Greeks in the local synagogue as well as moving to discuss with anyone who would chat with him in the marketplace. After this he has a discussion with some Epicurean and Stoic Philosophers who then invite him to attend the Areopagus where lots of Athenians and foreigners discuss all of the latest ideas.
 4. Looking at the three different groups that Paul conversed with, what ‘conversation level’ do they appear to be on. Why do you think that might be the case?
 - Paul appears to be reasoning with the Jews in the Synagogue. He has a lot of shared history with them and it is clear that as people who are anticipating the Messiah that he would have permission to jump straight to a “deeper” conversation with them. In the marketplace Paul

gets into a discussion with the philosophers who, no doubt, would be keen to understand the values that he had. Finally, the people meeting at the Areopagus enjoyed discussing everything and anything. It would be reasonable to assume that, with nothing clearly in common with the people on the Areopagus, Paul would need to start at the broadest “Interests” level

- As a super-broad explanation: Epicureans believed that pleasure was the supreme virtue that shaped their lives, while Stoics believed in avoiding emotional highs and lows as one pursued virtue as the supreme good]
5. While it is not a “conversation” as such (it’s only Paul’s words that are recorded), Paul’s speech in the Areopagus displays a masterful way of moving from “interests” to “values” before landing at a “worldview” statement. Look at v.22-34 and discuss how he does this.
- You might consider printing out a copy of the passage as a whole so that people can make notes, underline and highlight the different aspects of the passage.
 - V22-23 is a wonderful way of noticing something that was right in front of him and using it as a way of affirming their current interests. Having noted something that the Athenians appear to be interested in, at the end of v23, Paul declares that the very thing that they want to know about, he is about to declare to them! This is a masterful way of moving from the “interest” level to the “value” level. They say they want to know this thing and he says he will tell them!
 - V24-29 paint a picture of a God who is bigger than the temples, idols and other means by which the Athenians have previously defined their Gods. Again, note that he doesn’t openly mock or disparage any of these things, he simply notes that the God of the universe is bigger than anything they may have been tempted to worship up until this point. If they have been “interested” in these other gods, how much more will they be interested in the God of everything and everyone!
 - Finally, at the end of the passage, Paul pushes that to believe what he has outlined actually requires more than just an interest in this, it requires a change in world view.
6. In v.29, Paul challenges the mindset of the day that was caught up in idol worship. The people of the day could almost be said to “collect gods”. What do you think are the idols that people are most likely to get caught up in today?
- In some ways, we are no different to the people of that day. You are still likely to visit someone’s house and see a stone buddha in the backyard, crystals in the living room and other paraphernalia around the house. However, in much of the postmodern world, the idol is no longer the thing outside us, but within. If Copernicus was the first scientist to truly “get” that the earth isn’t the centre of the universe, then our job is to convince people that THEY are not the centre of the universe.
7. How might we paint a picture of a God who is bigger than these idols?
- For discussion. It would be great to get the group thinking about how knowing and serving God is so much more meaningful than worshipping idols

Discuss and Apply

8. Where are the areas in your week-to-week life where you have regular “coffee” type conversations? How could you take the next step with these people towards “dinner”/“values” conversations?

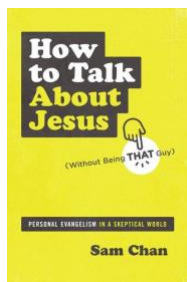
9. Brainstorm some questions you could use to encourage people to talk about values/beliefs?

- The intention of questions 8 and 9 is to get very specific and practical. Have the group identify those people in their lives whom they have a relationship with, but a relationship that hasn't progressed beyond small talk (e.g., a work colleague, another family from school) What would it look like to progress that level of engagement from *interest* level, to *values* level?
- Question 10 gives us one of the answers to questions 8 and 9. Being hospitable towards people, by having them in your home, or eating together, creates excellent opportunities to 'go deeper' with people. You might like to read Mark 2:15-17, as an example of Jesus doing this very thing!

10. Hospitality can be very helpful in 'going deeper' with people? How did Jesus use hospitality as an evangelistic tool (see e.g., Mark 2:15-17)?

Pray for opportunities to have deeper conversations with people, and that we would be prepared to speak of Jesus, when the opportunity arises.

- The Extra Reading segments in each study (like below) are there to help you grasp the ideas of the study, and/or extend people. You could read them with your group and share reactions, ask people to read it for homework and share reactions next week, or not use them at all. Do whatever will help your group have a fruitful discussion.



Extra Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Pages 43-45

The Secret Sauce of Evangelism

As an Asian kid, when I was growing up, I never noticed roof racks on cars. That's because Asian parents aren't big on roof racks. They have no need to own roof racks because they don't go surfing or camping. [...] But once I took up surfing and found myself in need of a roof rack, I realized that roof racks are everywhere. Why hadn't I noticed them before? Because I wasn't looking for them. It's the same with hospitality. It's everywhere in the Bible

[...] But what's the big deal about hospitality? The three simple steps of evangelism--coffee, dinner, gospel--are actually hospitality in disguise. Hospitality provides the space and permission for gospel conversations to occur. In almost every other area of life, it's difficult to have a conversation deeper than small talk. Sometimes deep conversations are inconvenient--your friend has a bus to catch. Sometimes deep conversations are inappropriate - your friend should be working and not talking to you. [...] But the whole point of eating together is providing a space to talk together. Eating together isn't about the food; it's about connecting, relating, and talking.

[...] by far our most fruitful universe has been the *playgroup* universe at our local church. At 10:00 a.m., the parents drop their

children off at the playgroup at one end of the church fellowship hall. Then they sit down at the opposite end of the room to have coffee and enjoy small talk for an hour. Because an hour of adult conversation is not enough, my wife then invites the parents to our house for lunch. Now that they're engaging in adult conversation in the privacy of our home, the conversations drift toward values. People linger.

Study 3 | Tell a better story (page 16 members booklet)

THE BIG IDEA

The ideas in this study emerge from the fourth and fifth tips in Sam's book.

Tip 4: Listen (The Golden Rule of Evangelism: Evangelize the Same Way You Want to Be Evangelized). *This tip reminds us of the crucial importance of listening to others before we speak. People want to (and should) feel heard. Listening is essential to understanding other people*

Tip 5: Tell a Better Story (Make them Wish That Christianity is True) *The life changing grace and power of the Christian message addresses all of our deepest needs. We ought to work hard to show that Jesus is the solution to the longings of our non-Christian friends. Stories of changed lives, i.e. personal testimonies are very powerful.*

Discuss

1. Who is the best storyteller you know and why?

- For discussion. Do any of your group members have something to share. This introduces one of the themes of this study: that we want to be able to tell the gospel to others – using stories – including our own personal testimony.

2. Sam Chan quotes author John Thiessen, saying: “Evangelise the same way that you want to be evangelised. Probably the most important way we can do this is by listening to the other person talk first.” Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

- For discussion.

3. Thinking about someone you know well who is not a Christian, do you think you could explain what their belief system is well enough that they would agree with you?

4. Why might listening and understanding someone else's perspective be a valuable first step for both you and the person to whom you are speaking?

- Questions 2-4 are all different ways of getting to the same point – namely the importance of truly listening and understanding others in our evangelistic efforts.
- You might like to discuss whether people find it easy or hard to listen to other people well
- It is good for any relationship for both parties to move deeper in their understanding of each other. For the person you're listening to, it may be valuable for them because they are more likely to feel heard and if they feel heard, they are more likely to be in a position where they will listen to you.

- **Sidenote:** One great danger when it comes to evangelism as a whole is the temptation to be so focussed on the opportunity to share the gospel that we are inauthentic when it comes to actually caring for the people to whom we are speaking. One of the most basic ways we can do

this is, rather than listening attentively, we find ourselves simply “waiting to talk again”. In evangelism and in any authentic relationship that we have, the practice of “active listening” is a great way of making sure that we’re being attentive to the people to whom we’re speaking. There are three parts to active listening.

- *Hear*: We are able to demonstrate that we have *heard* what our friends are saying.
- *Understand*: We are able to demonstrate that we’ve *understood* what our friends are saying by summarising their words into our own words, showing that we’ve engaged in some sort of analysis of what they’ve been saying. If the person you are talking to doesn’t acknowledge that you’re retelling what they said reflects *their* understanding, then maybe you haven’t understood well enough.
- *Feel*: Be able to demonstrate that we empathise with our friends by describing what they are *feeling*. You might listen to someone who appears to hold an illogical view, but when you understand a little more of what it means for them emotionally, things may make more sense.

Read and Investigate

- The aim of this short bible study (in the following questions) is to learn from the example of the Apostle Paul. We see in Acts 26 how he shares the gospel using his own personal story.
5. **Read Acts 26.** This chapter is largely taken up with the story of how Paul became a Christian (and why he finds himself in the position he is in). If you were to break up Paul’s testimony into sections, what would they be?
- By way of context: in Acts 21, Paul was arrested in Jerusalem, after arousing Jewish opposition to his Christian teaching. After several opportunities to plead his case before different Jewish and Roman officials, in chapter 26, Paul finds himself in speaking before Herod Agrippa II, the Roman installed Jewish King.
 - There are any number of ways you could break this passage up, but a big picture version would be as follows:
 - V1-3 – Introduction
 - V4-11 The life before: Paul explains the situation from where he has come. He was a “religious” person who was zealous, and he was an enthusiastic persecutor of anyone who followed the name of Jesus.
 - V12-18 Conversion: Paul hears the voice of Jesus and comes to see that the one whom he is persecuting is the one that he should be worshipping.
 - V19-25: The Climax: Paul now sees that his new life is living out God’s command in a more meaningful and powerful way. He is actually living out the gospel story, because he has put his faith in Jesus whom he calls people to follow in repentance.
 - V26-32 Conclusion: So, what does this all mean? It now means that even when threatened by Agrippa, Paul is confident that he is doing the right thing and whether Agrippa is convinced straight away, or sometime in the future, Paul prays that they too will come to be like him.
6. Research shows that most successful stories follow a similar patten:
- Introduction - the main character is introduced.*
 - The Mission - a mission is defined so that a goal can be achieved*
 - Bridge - The hero has an “aha! moment” when they redefine the goal and recommit to the mission*

Climax - The hero achieves the mission

Conclusion - We glimpse the hero in their new normal life.

How does Paul's story fit into this kind of structure?

- We have the introduction with Agrippa. Next Paul points out that he was a man on a mission and that mission was to be the best religious person possible. The body of Paul's work was working to find followers of Jesus and cast his vote against them, but then there was a bridge in his life when he met Jesus and came to realise that real "holiness" was found, not in what he did, but what Jesus had done, so now he calls people to repent and believe. The Climax of this is Paul is now in front of Agrippa, having preached in Damascus, Jerusalem, Judea and to the Gentiles. He sees his mission more clearly than ever. By way of conclusion, he is now willing to be bold (and appear insane) in the hope that Agrippa, either now, or sometime in the future, will come to a saving faith in Jesus.

Discuss and Apply

7. When we want to share the story of our own faith, whether we grew up in a Christian household or came to faith later in our lives, it is good to think of it as a story. Spend 5-10 minutes and see if you can frame the story of your faith in terms of the story framework above.

- You might not have the time to give this task adequate attention. You could consider setting this as a homework task.
- It's important to give members encouragement and support as they try to express their own journey with Jesus.
- Even those who never remember a time when they weren't part of God's family have an opportunity to think about how they moved from their faith being 'inherited' to the moment where it becomes 'owned'. When we think about our testimony as a story, we can give ourselves a healthier way to tell the story. Part of what this structure does too, is clarify where the celebration point is in the story. It's not uncommon for people to share stories where their life "before Christ" actually sounds really exciting and life afterward is pretty depressing. Landing on a spot where we have a new mission and one that makes sense and provides real fulfilment, is far more powerful.
- It's helpful to remember as well, that a personal testimony is not the same as a gospel presentation. Hopefully one leads to the other, and we can certainly weave gospel truths into our own personal story. But we mustn't try to do too much!

Optional extra: Listen to Sam explain his own testimony in his interview with Mark Hadley Episode 5 – Tell a Better Story in "Evangelism in a Skeptical World", from around 6.50 (see page 6 for details of additional materials)

8. This may be the moment where someone says to you: "yes, but what is a Christian?" Can you clearly explain what a Christian/what the gospel is? What Christian jargon words should we be careful to avoid if we're speaking to an unbeliever?

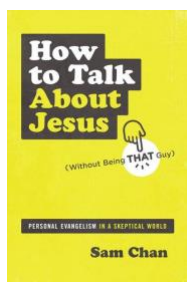
- Try not to treat this like a test. It will be really interesting to see how different group members articulate the basic Christian gospel. How would you do it? There are most certainly right and wrong answers here (unlike some other discussion questions in our studies). But I won't prescribe a particular form of words here. Some helpful online gospel summaries are: [The Bridge to Life](#) and/or [Two Ways to Live](#)
- Likewise, there is no 'official' list of jargon words to avoid. It's best to use our own judgment. Does a word or phrase sound like a big theological or churchy word that non-Christians wouldn't know the meaning of. Some examples might be 'justification', 'atonement', 'lamb of God' etc.

9. Imagine you tell your story, and someone responds warmly, but says they're happy for individuals to approach spirituality in whatever way which suits them, but they have a problem with the church. How would you respond to this?

- This is always tricky. See what different group members suggest. It's right to acknowledge that the church does not have a perfect record of caring for people well.
- It can be helpful to keep referring back to the accounts of Jesus, and/or our own personal stories and invite response to those things.

Pray that we'd develop confidence and clarity in sharing our own story of following Jesus!

- The Extra Reading segments in each study (like below) are there to help you grasp the ideas of the study, and/or extend people. You could read them with your group and share reactions, ask people to read it for homework and share reactions next week, or not use them at all. Do whatever will help your group have a fruitful discussion.



Extra Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Page 87

But What If I Grew Up in a Christian Family?

People often ask me, "Were your parents Christian?" When I answer yes, they immediately stop listening. They are thinking, Oh, that's why you're a Christian. You grew up in a Christian family, and it invalidates whatever I'm about to say next.

So I like to reply that, yes, I did grow up in a Christian family, but that makes it harder to be a Christian. Because nobody wants to inherit their identity from their parents. Teens go out of their way to be the exact opposite of what their parents want. In the same way, when I grew up in a Christian family, there was no way I wanted to be a Christian because that's what mommy and daddy told me to be. I needed to believe the claims of Jesus and the Bible on their own merits, and not because of what my parents told me.

Study 4 | Be their unofficial chaplain (page 20 members booklet)

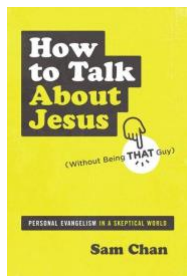
THE BIG IDEA

The ideas in this study emerge from the seventh tip in Sam's book.

Tip 7: Become their Unofficial, Defacto Chaplain (You are their connection with the sacred) We might not have our lives all together, but if we're known in our networks as someone who is wise, caring and calm we will earn the trust of others to speak about serious and spiritual matters.

Discuss

1. Who is the person you turn to when life is difficult?
 2. What do you think it means to be a "Chaplain" to people?
- These questions are designed to ease into the theme of the study – that we ought to work to be a bit like a chaplain for people in our network. If you can think of any chaplains you know (e.g., maybe in a school or hospital context) they are usually good listeners, caring types and they often find themselves conveying spiritual truth in times of crisis.
 - Perhaps a difference between a chaplain, and an out-and-out evangelist (think street preachers) is that the gospel opportunities are reactive (to situations with people we know) rather than proactive. God's worldwide mission needs both methods, of course. But the aim for this session is to think of ourselves as 'chaplains' to our unbelieving friends.
 - Take note that the box of text below is 'essential reading', not 'extra reading' like elsewhere in the studies



Essential Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan
Pages 107-108

Wisdom as the Key to Believability

Wisdom provides an entry point into conversations about our faith. But it's more than that. Our wise way of life also makes what we say more believable.

When we in the West were part of a Christianised culture, we used to argue and teach in this sequence: (1) what I say is true; (2) if it's true, then you must believe it; and (3) if you believe it, you must live it.

It's TRUE → BELIEVE it → LIVE it

While that may be the correct logical sequence, the way our post-Christian friends discover it is often the reverse sequence: (1) what you see is a wiser way to live; (2) but if it's a wiser way to live, then it's also more believable; (3) but if it's believable, you need to consider that it might also be true.

I can LIVE it → I can BELIEVE it → it must be TRUE

Optional extra: Listen to Sam explain things in his interview with Mark Hadley Episode 6 – Become their go-to chaplain in “Evangelism in a Skeptical World”, (see page)

Read and Investigate

- To understand the logic of reading and considering the following passages, we need to understand how we’re using the word chaplain. We’re not thinking of ourselves as ‘official’ chaplains, like the kind that are employed in schools or hospitals. Rather, our aim is to live in a way which demonstrates divine wisdom.
3. **Read Psalm 1.** Where does this Psalm see the source of wisdom being?
- There are two areas this Psalm suggests. Firstly, it is wise not to get caught up in wicked ways. If we walk/stand/sit with wicked people/sinners/mockers, we are likely to be like them. Secondly, the one who flourishes is the one who delights in the law of the Lord and meditates on it day and night.
4. What do you think the Psalmist means when he says this type of person will be “Blessed”? What kind of blessing do you think that might be?
- We need to be careful here. People who are godly don’t always end up better off than those who aren’t. As the Book of Job reminds us: innocent, righteous people do indeed suffer.
 - Having said that, the wisdom literature in the bible (e.g., Proverbs, and Psalm 1 is a bit like wisdom literature) says we can be blessed! If we believe that God is the author of creation, then reading his “instruction manual” will always be a helpful thing for live in this world. It really is a blessing to have a framework through which we can understand the world we live in, the behaviours we see in the people around us, and ourselves!
5. If we experience this kind of blessing, how might this encourage/challenge people around us?
- One of those questions that drives most people (either at a conscious or subconscious level) is “what does it all mean? How do I make sense/meaning out of the world? What is it all about?” For Christians, when we make our way through the world with a sense of purpose, meaning, or contentment, that is something that can be attractive to others.
6. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.** In this passage Paul contrasts the ‘wisdom of the cross’ and the ‘wisdom of the world’. Modern, worldly wisdom defines our value through what we achieve, or the success of attaining personal freedom. How does the message of the cross shape our identity?
- We are not the centre of our own universe. We are actually part of God’s universe, therefore, how we understand ourselves is in relation to our understanding of him. It is freeing to know that any other thing that the world values, though it may be important, is not the key to our identity. Whether it is freedom, sexuality, autonomy or anything else, the Christian can lose ALL of these things and still be confident that their core identity is secure!
7. How might this be a comfort/encouragement to people who struggle in the modern age?
- Levels of depression and dissatisfaction with life are as high as they have ever been despite all of the “worldly” changes that have been giving people more “control” in their lives. People

have been free to define themselves by any metric that they can produce, but it is never enough. There is comfort in knowing that cultural value markers change, but the Christian identity is unchanging.

- Another way of thinking about this is to acknowledge how compelling it would be to see someone who lives with deep contentment despite their circumstances, even despite their failures. That's not the way of the world these days – but it is the way of someone whose life has been changed by the cross!

Discuss and Apply

8. For many of us, we might feel like we're struggling for answers ourselves let alone being available to be the 'unofficial' chaplain to others. Why do you think the gospel might both challenge that mindset and empower us?

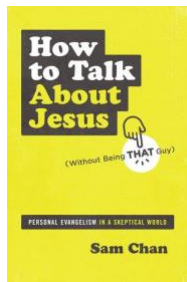
- There's lots we can learn from the gospel in this regard. On the one hand, we know that God uses sinful people (like you and me) to bring life changing news to others. That's been the case for every believer throughout church history – except in the case of Jesus. We don't need to be perfect, or 'have it all together' to be of help to others. We're simply one beggar, telling another beggar where to find bread.
- The gospel also ought to challenge us to be of service to others as Jesus was a servant to us. Even if it's outside our comfort zone, if we can do something to help another person, we should have a go!

9. Can you think of other ways that Christians can be an effective Chaplain/ supporter to friends in need?

- For discussion. This is a good chance for the group to demonstrate that they have caught the gist of what's been learnt in this study, and then translate it into real ideas.
- Caring for people's practical needs, making contact with them during hard times are just a few examples of things that we can be doing. This isn't sharing the gospel, let's be clear about that! But it can lead to opportunities, and when we do speak, or words will have weight if our friends have already witnessed our lives of love and wisdom.
- Asking people if we can pray for them can also be a powerful thing! You should also pray for people – if they say yes. Don't just ask and say you'll pray. That's not on!

Pray for particular individuals in your circles who you could care and support? Pray for opportunities to serve them and engage deeply with them.

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Extra Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Pages 113-4

Be Jesus

Every morning when I drive my boys to school, we take turns praying for the day ahead. When it's my turn, one of my usual daily prayer requests is, "Heavenly Father, help us to be Jesus to those around us today."

Our goal in being a chaplain to those around us is to be Jesus to them. Like Jesus, we are the calm, non-anxious presence. We are patient, gentle, gracious, generous, forgiving, and loving. We have wisdom.

Sooner or later, your friend will have a crisis. They will come to you, expecting you to speak on behalf of God. They will ask you to provide meaning and clarity. By coming to you, they are hoping to connect with the transcendent. And they will ask you to perform sacred rituals and prayers

Study 5 | Lean into disagreement (page 24 members booklet)

THE BIG IDEA

The ideas in this study emerge from the eighth tip in Sam's book.

Tip 8: Lean into Disagreement (For such a time as this) *The thrust of this tip is not that we want to pursue arguments, but rather in order to tell our friends about Jesus – we have to make ourselves vulnerable to disagreement. When we make room for disagreement we demonstrate the kind of unconditional love God shows us. Moreover, we can be confident that the logic of the Christian message, and its implications for life holds up under scrutiny!*

Discuss

1. Have you ever had a tense discussion or disagreement about Christianity? How did it make you feel?
2. What do you think the best thing is to do when you come across someone who disagrees with Christianity, or a particular part of Christianity?
 - Questions 1 and 2 are open questions for group discussion. They introduce the theme of disagreeing with people.
 - Question 2 will generate different ideas. That's ok. There will be occasions when it is crystal clear that people are just looking for a fight and the only outcome you will get from the disagreement is that you will feel frustrated and they will feel fueled. That said, we ought always a desire to see people come into a clearer understanding of the gospel. This means, as long as we feel safe and expect that there is some possibility of having a positive outcome, we ought to be willing to "lean into disagreement"
3. In 1975, the Pepsi company first ran a new campaign called the "Pepsi Challenge", where they would encourage people to do a "blind taste test" of both Pepsi and Coca Cola (over 40 years later, they ran the same campaign in Westfield Miranda!). They were confident to do so, believing that when people tried both drinks side-by-side, Pepsi would reign supreme. **Are we this confident about our faith in Jesus Christ?**
 - This is a fantastic, and highly relevant true story. You can find old Pepsi ads on YouTube if you're keen.
 - But the example demonstrates the confidence we ought to have. The Christian claims hold up under scrutiny, and comparison with other belief systems.
 - Our willingness accept disagreement with people can often be a sign that we're confident in the gospel.

Read and Investigate

- The aim of this short bible study (in the following questions) is to learn from the example of the Jesus when he was questioned.
4. **Read Luke 20:20-40.** Is there anything in this passage that stands out to you?

5. In this passage, Jesus faces two questions, one from a group of “spies” hoping to catch him out, and the second by some Sadducees. What appears to be the purpose behind the questioners?
 - With the spies it is clear (v.20, 23) that they are not asking an honest question. Their intention is to create tension between Jesus and his Jewish listeners. Israel had a very tense relationship with their Roman rulers. By asking a question about Caesar, their hope is that Jesus will “incriminate” himself by coming across as either a Roman sympathiser or, failing that, he will insult Caesar and be liable for a charge of treason.
 - It’s not so clear what the intention is with the Sadducees in verse 27. But in the context, and given the complexity of the situation, we can infer that they might have been trying to trick Jesus. They present such an extreme scenario to Jesus that it’s basically impossible to answer.
6. How does Jesus avoid the trap each group of questioners tries to set for him?
 - In both cases, Jesus appear to see through the question – to the motivation driving the question. Jesus then comes back with his own questions.
7. What can we learn from Jesus, through the manner in which he answers these questions?
 - The “framework” of a question is important. When the spies ask the question (verses 20-22), the framework they are setting is a false one. “Jesus are you for Israel or for Rome?”. Jesus shows that the best way to answer such a question is to shift the framework. “Acknowledging earthly rulers is appropriate, but God is ruler over everything.”
 - Jesus also answers “outside of the box”. It is not uncommon for people to ask a question purely as a means of confirming their pre-existing views We’re not as wise as Jesus! But if we can turn a conversation on it’s hard and get unbelievers thinking about their views, that can be helpful. It needs to be done carefully though, with love and gentleness.

Discuss and Apply

8. Often Christian’s won’t be asked about detailed theological ideas. Rather, the questions will be about the moral or ethical positions we take. Sam suggests that a helpful response to lead with, in these scenarios, might go something like: “I hold the same view that Jesus does?” Do you think this is a helpful approach? Why or why not?
 - For discussion. This tactic can be helpful in grounding our views in something deeper than personal opinion.
 - There’s a danger though. We need to ensure that we do ground our opinions in Scripture. Christians ought to be willing always to look at themselves and ask, “is this a gospel matter, or am I taking something from my culture and turning it into the gospel?”
 - Last, it can’t hurt pointing people to Jesus – it might lead the conversation towards opening the Bible or discussing the person and work of Jesus with someone!
9. What are some possible ‘counter questions’ to the following common questions?
 - You could skip over this part if you’re struggling for time. The idea here is to put into practice what we’ve been discussing – the art of responding to a question with a question.
 - a. Isn’t religion just a crutch for people who can’t hack it?

- Your group may have lots of helpful ways to respond. One simple challenge to this might include “do you feel like you have life 100% sorted? Do you understand it completely?” We all need a framework through which we understand the world that we live in.

b. If God really exists, why is there so much pain in the world?

- One counter question to this is “if there is no God, then what does all the pain in the world mean?” It’s a real challenge from an atheistic point of view to acknowledge that if there is no God, there is no meaning and in the end, there is no remedy to the difficulties in life. A more liveable explanation of the pain and evil we experience is that God does care, and he plans to hold people to account for their wrongdoing.

c. Isn’t it arrogant to say that Christianity is the only way?

- The context to this question can really shape how one might reply. For those who are a bit syncretistic, one might respond: “Isn’t it arrogant to tell every single religion that they are wrong, and that God is just a mishmash?” For others, it might be helpful to say, “If it were up to us to find the way, then maybe yes, but the story of the gospel is about God reaching down and showing us the way. Wouldn’t it be arrogant to have God show us the way to know him, but to say that we, finite creatures, think we know better?”

10. Sam says that more than answering tough questions which make it hard for people to believe the Christian faith, what’s needed is to show our friends why they need, or want Christianity to be true? What are the best things about belonging to Jesus? How could you communicate that to an unbeliever?

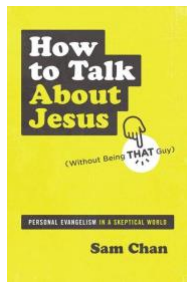
- This is another open question, inviting personal reflection. The lesson to be learnt from this question is similar to what’s repeatedly emerged throughout the course. We need to do more than answer the tough questions. We need to live and speak in a way that makes the Christian life appealing

11. Skim through the last 5 studies. Pick one thing that has stood out to you, in terms of developing in personal evangelism? What will you do to try to put this into practice?

- For discussion. Different people will have different answers to this question. Clearly one of the big ideas throughout the course has been that talking about Jesus with others requires much more than a one-off transmission of information. We need to live godly, attractive lives, pursuing depth of relationships with others, if we’re to get a chance to have a solid, effective gospel conversation. That all sounds like hard work. But it’s worth it! What’s the next step for each of us in being this kind of witness for Jesus?

Pray for God’s help in light of your answer to question 12

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Extra Reading

How to Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy) by Sam Chan

Pages 122

Gently challenge their worldview

I once heard a bi-vocational Christian pastor say that when he was in his secular work, he was constantly being bombarded with questions. He answered these questions as best he could in order to explain the Christian faith, but eventually he grew tired of always being on the defensive. So one day he switched it around. He started asking his work friends questions. Suddenly they were the ones having to defend and explain their positions.

Everyone is only two "why" questions away from not being able to give a rational answer. If we start asking questions, our nonbelieving friends will realize that much of their worldview is based not on rational arguments or evidence but on brute-force statements that they believe at face value without evidence.