

Getting Ready...

You have just received some really good news. You got the position for which you interviewed! You are going to be a grandparent! You are excited and want to share this good news with a friend. Who would that person be? Could it be someone you recently met who is a refugee, or an immigrant? They need friends more than most of us.

As you think about your friend what is the history of your friendship? What are the qualities of that relationship that make the friendship special?

Briefly write down your thoughts. If you are studying in a group take a moment to share your thoughts.

Consider one further question. Does the history of your friendship include a spiritual connection? Are you and your friend members of the same church? Are they from a different country or culture? Did you have an influence on your friend coming to faith in Jesus Christ...or, did the friend have an influence on your faith development? Or did the word "lost" or "Christian", "unchurched" or "churched" enter into your thoughts about your friend?

The reality is friends and family members have a significant influence on how most people become Christians and find a church home. To ignore the spiritual dimensions of a friendship is a significant oversight in terms evangelism and spiritual growth through the church.

Allow me to share with you a personal assumption about friendship evangelism: It begins from the inside out.

Getting ready for friendship evangelism begins with a relationship of faith in Jesus Christ. As a matter of fact, I would suggest this might be thought of as a friendship. Read John 15:14-15.

Friendship with God begins and continues with a focus on the cross of Jesus Christ. It is sustained by the confession of sins and the wonderful assurance of forgiveness. Read I John 1:8-10. It is the mercy, grace, and love of God which you have received that you also share with friends in order to make a spiritual connection.

Think about evangelism from the inside out as you read Isaiah 6:1-8.

1. In verse 3, what two things do you learn about God?

2. Read Luke 11:2. How does Jesus' emphasize the holiness of God in His teaching?
3. Read John 15:8. How is the glory of God seen in the world today?
4. How does Isaiah describe himself as he perceives the presence of God? In verse 5, what does "Woe to me!" mean to you?

Note: Many Bible commentators define "Woe" as meaning "imperfect; not complete".

5. In verse 5, how does Isaiah acknowledge his sin?

His general acknowledgment -His

specific acknowledgment --

His identification with his culture (with all people) --

6. In verses 6-7, what is God's response? What is the good news?
7. In verse 8, as a forgiven man, Isaiah discerns the purpose of the Lord. God has a message for people. What is Isaiah's response?
8. Do you agree or disagree? Gratitude for the complete forgiveness of his sins motivates Isaiah's response. Why?
9. What similarities do you see between this experience in the life of Isaiah and the experience of Peter in Luke 5:1-11?
10. Do you agree or disagree? Friendship evangelism begins from the inside out. The good news I have received I want to share with a friend. Why?

Would you take a very practical step? Would you think through an acknowledgment of your own sins at the same three ways Isaiah did? Would you ask God to forgive you for Jesus' sake? Would you gratefully acknowledge your willingness to share that good news with a friend?

A closing prayer:

Father, I need Your forgiveness for the sin in my life. I know that Jesus died for that reason. Thank You for that incredible expression of love. What good news! Fill me now with an excitement to share that news with a friend. Here am I. Send me to (name of friend). In the Name of my Friend, Jesus. Amen.

Friendship Bible Study 2

Prayer For My Unchurched Friend...

The first step in friendship evangelism is prayer for your friend who is spiritually lost or simply unchurched, or someone newly arrived in the United States. It is God's gracious answer to your prayers on behalf of your friend that opens the door to sharing the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and extending an invitation to be part of your church.

It is important to remember that it is not prayer alone that brings a person into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

In his explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, Martin Luther wrote in his *Small Catechism*:

"I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel..."

In His grace the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of people through the hearing of the Gospel. Read Romans 10:17. A friend who is lost in sin...a friend who is unchurched...a Christian or non-Christian from another country is reached for Christ and His Church - when a believing friend shares the truth of God's love and the Holy Spirit creates a response of faith.

Take a moment to remember the beginning of your own faith...or a time when your faith was especially real to you. How did God's Word affect what was happening in your life...or, help you to understand what was happening in your life? If you are studying this book in a group take a moment to share your thoughts.

Though it is always the Holy Spirit working through the sharing of the Gospel that builds faith, it is prayer that prepares the way for your friend to hear and come to faith.

Think about the relationship of prayer and evangelism as you read the following:

1. Romans 10:1. Why might Paul's prayer for the Israelites be called passionate?
2. Matthew 9:38. Who is the Holy Spirit calling to the "harvest"?
3. Acts 4:29-31. How did the apostles pray that they might declare God's Word?

Acts 16:25-34. Why might you conclude that Paul saw an opportunity to share the Gospel in this circumstance?

4. Romans 10:9-15. How might you know that God desires for all to come to faith in Jesus Christ?

Summarize how these verses of Scripture become a prayer list for yourself as a friendship evangelist.

The Bible also helps us know how we might pray for a lost or unchurched friend to come to a place of interest concerning the Gospel or an invitation to your church. This “interest” is not faith. It is simply a time of change or disappointment or hurt when your friend has questions concerning the circumstances of life. For your friend you may want to pray that:

1. Your friend begins to ask “honest” (or thoughtful) questions. Examples might include: How can you know that there is a God? How can you be sure Jesus rose from the dead? Why am I finding it so hard to live my life? Read Psalm 19:1. How can this Psalm verse be helpful in answering “honest”/thoughtful questions?
2. Your friend will feel troubled because of sin. Examples might include feelings of guilt, fear, anxiousness...especially related toward God. Read Romans 2:15. How does the Gospel help to calm the feelings related to sin?
3. Your friend would ask, “How can I deal with my troubles?” Examples might include issues related to family: trouble with a child, trouble in a marriage, for someone new to the US, getting a green card. Read Luke 17:13. How does your experience of faith help you in similar situations...or, what is the counsel of the Word of God for your friend’s difficulty?
4. God will open your friend’s heart and mind to the Holy Spirit’s work. Read I Corinthians 12:3. Why is this declaration of faith of such significance?
5. The lies of Satan will not find intellectual acceptance. Examples might include thoughts that represent cultural acceptance or personal rationalizations that are contrary to a relationship with Jesus Christ and the teachings of His Word: consensual sexual relationships outside marriage, substance abuse, use of pornography, abortion, dejection over loss of family or friends, etc. Read II Corinthians 4:4. How do you understand the mind as the battle ground of spiritual warfare?

Summarize how these verses might become a prayer list for your lost or unchurched friend. Will you begin to pray for your friend each day concerning these things? And, will you be available

to your friend for times of support, encouragement, and witness that brings the Gospel of Jesus Christ into the context of your friend's life?

A closing prayer:

Father, I have a special friend who is lost (or unchurched). Help me love that friend with such passion that I am available for the moment when my friend's heart and mind are open to receive my love and hear the wonderful Gospel of Your love. Let that moment be soon. In the Name of my Friend Jesus. Amen.

Friendship Bible Study 3

Who Will I Reach?

Before you begin this chapter of the *Friendship* Bible study, take a moment to write down the names of the first twenty people that come to your awareness that you consider friends or family. Include friends from a culture different than your own.

Now review your list. How many are Christians who have a church home? How many are unchurched? How many are not Christians?

Most adult Christians know 8 to 20 people who are functionally unchurched. The names of unchurched people and lost people are those you can reach for Christ and His church. Those names go on your prayer list of unchurched friends.

Friendship evangelism sees relationships with the unchurched and the lost as valuable relationships. Lost people matter to God. Read John 3:16. Your friendship with someone who is unchurched or lost can be a powerful spiritual connection and a pathway into the church.

It works like this...read John 4:1-26, 39-42. As you review verses 39-42, how do you understand the woman's friendships becoming spiritual connections? Did her relationships with friends become a pathway to knowing Jesus Christ? What happened along that pathway that introduced Jesus Christ?

Think about how Jesus valued relationships with the lost as you read Luke 7:36-50 (please notice the comment in verse 39) and Luke 19:1-10 (please notice the comment in verse 7).

1. Where did Jesus spend time with the lost?
2. What implication might that have for sharing Christ friend to friend?
3. What do you think might have been the reason others criticized Jesus for his compassion for the lost?
4. What implication might that have for sharing Christ friend to friend?
5. In Luke 19:10, how does Jesus' describe His purpose on earth?

As I think through this last question I am impressed that Jesus was very intentional about His purpose. He actively sought out the lost. I believe lost people matter to God. Therefore, they must matter to me, and I will actively seek them out.

Allow me to share with you some practical thoughts about friendship evangelism and the list of unchurched and lost friends you created previously in this lesson:

1. Pray for those friends daily. Review chapter two for suggestions how to pray for them to come to faith.
2. Contact those friends weekly. Take time to make a telephone call...meet them for lunch...play a round of golf together. Be part of their lives.
3. Remember them monthly. Bake a loaf of bread...send a "thinking of you" card...send them a book or a tape. Let them know that you are thinking of them and value their friendship.
4. Invite them to church or an appropriate church activity. This means know them well enough to know their interests and needs. Perhaps a worship service is a very appropriate place to invite your friends; however, a marriage enrichment class might be better...or a musical concert...or a social evening, like a ball game. If your invitation is declined, ask again on another occasion. Remember, "No" really means "not YES yet!"

Just a closing thought...learn to value your friendships with those who are unchurched or not Christians. If you have few unchurched or non-Christian friends be intentional about seeking people out where you work, where you live, where you shop, or where you play. Find someone new to this country; they especially need our love and support Be their friend. You will be following the pattern of Jesus. And, God can use your relationship to bring that friend to faith in Jesus Christ and spiritual growth in His church. Begin now with the friends on your list you just wrote.

A closing prayer:

Father, thank You for my friends. Today I especially thank You for those who are unchurched or simply lost in their understanding of Who Jesus is and what He means for their lives. I think especially of (names from your list). Use me to help them know You. In the Name of My Friend, Jesus. Amen.

Friendship Bible Study 4

What Will I Say?

Can you remember the first time you ever had to speak in front of a large group? Maybe you had a part in a Christmas program at your church...or, maybe it was a speech class in high school or college...or, maybe it was a power point presentation to professional colleagues.

How would you describe the experience? What were you feeling? If you are studying this book in a group take a moment to share your thoughts.

Those feelings you have just revisited are the same feelings many Christians get when they think of evangelism. It seems to me many people are more concerned with what they will say than to whom they will speak -- and, of Whom they will speak -- so, they say nothing at all.

Read Acts 1:8. Think through this important verse. It is the last thing He would say to His disciples. That alone makes the words very significant.

1. What does Jesus say His disciples (followers) are?
2. What does this word mean to you?
3. What is the source of power for this sharing?
4. What implications does your baptism have for this empowerment?
5. What is the scope of this sharing?
6. Do you think the word "Jerusalem" implies only a specific culture or geographic location or includes relational networks, in other words, the friends who are closest to you?
7. What are the implications of your conclusion?
8. Read Acts 2:47. Do you agree or disagree? The church began to evangelize where Christians had established "good will" (friendships) with others. The result was explosive numbers of people being saved. Why?

But, what do I say? What is the message or story that I have to share with others?

I want to suggest an exercise that is best completed when it is written out. The discipline of writing your answers to these three questions will help you to stay focused on your story of God's grace in your life. If you studying this book in a group and the group is just seeing these questions for the first time, allow a few moments for thought and then share answers to question 1. If the group has prepared in advance, allow each member to share, but let the group members pick the question they are most comfortable sharing.

If this is an individual study, I strongly suggest that within 48 hours of completing these questions that you find a close Christian friend and share what you have written with that person. It allows the friend to give you positive feedback. You will appreciate that! It allows you to practice sharing your faith story. You need that!

Friendship evangelism is one friend sharing with another friend the truths of the Gospel in a faith story. Please write your answers to the following:

1. How has my faith in Jesus Christ affected my life?
2. Why do I have an essential need for a Savior? How did God meet that personal need?
3. Was there ever a time in my life when Jesus Christ was especially important to me? Why was that time of special importance?

By definition a Christian is a person with a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Tell your story to your friends in your own way and your own words. Trust the Holy Spirit to empower you and use that story as a step to building faith in the life of your unchurched or non-Christian friend.

Think of your story like this: Read John 9:1-7, and 18-25. This is the simple, very simple witness (story) that led to the conclusion that Jesus is God.

Could you possibly ask for more for a friend who would hear your faith story? Why?

A closing prayer:

Father, please use my faith story to help my friends (names) to come to the conclusion that Jesus is God, their Savior and Lord. Prompt me to know when it is appropriate to share. Then help me share my faith story without hesitation...boldly! In the Name of my Friend, Jesus. Amen.

Friendship Bible Study 5

Unsolicited Acts of Kindness...

Remember this old cliché: “People don’t care how much we know until they know how much we care”? Friendship evangelism recognizes that unsolicited acts of kindness -- caring for others - opens the door and gives huge credibility to the message of God’s love which we bring.

Sometimes the very thing that keeps a person from coming into the church or considering the Christian faith is a perception that churches are self-centered, cliquish, and cold to outsiders. Unsolicited acts of kindness break down that stereotype.

Think about the importance of this as you consider the life of Jesus Christ. Read Mark 10:43-45. Do you think it is accurate to say of Jesus: He lived a life of care for others; He did no miracle for Himself, only others; He died and rose again for others of all times and places? Why?

Take a moment to write down an unsolicited act of kindness which Jesus did for another. If you are studying this book in a group share your example with the other group members.

What are the implications of these thoughts for your relationships with unchurched or lost friends?

Allow me to share with you an assumption concerning evangelism: It is more a cultivation of care, love, and trust with another person than a onetime encounter under awkward circumstances. Think about unsolicited acts of kindness as seeds sown that produce the fruit of relationships that serve the purpose of friendship evangelism as you read the following:

1. Ecclesiastes 11:6. What does this suggest about unsolicited acts of kindness?
2. Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23. How do unsolicited acts of kindness help to “prepare the soil” to receive the seed of God’s Word? And, what is the result of “fertile soil”?
3. John 12:24-26. How does this picture of the seed relate to unsolicited acts of kindness?
4. I Corinthians 3:5-9. How does this text suggest evangelism is more of a cultivation of relationships than a onetime encounter with a stranger?

In his book *Conspiracy of Kindness* by Steve Sjogren, he suggests the following formula for friendship evangelism = Deeds of love + words of love + adequate time.

Think about the friends you have listed previously who are lost or simply unchurched and for whom you are praying. What kind of circumstances in their lives allow you opportunity for an unsolicited act of kindness? What could you do as an unsolicited act of kindness if a friend was:

1. Recently divorced --
2. Unemployed -3. Single parent -4. Parent of a teen -5. Recently retired -6. First year of marriage --
7. Grieving the death of a loved one -8. Just moved into your neighborhood --

If you are studying this book in a group take time to share thoughts about unsolicited acts of kindness toward people in circumstances like these. This is especially important if people in the group have friends in these life situations.

Now is the time to take action! In your own worship and devotional life your sins are forgiven and your faith strengthened by God's grace in Jesus Christ. You have identified unchurched and lost friends for whom you can pray. You have a basic action plan to pray daily, contact weekly, remember monthly, and invite appropriately. You have thought through your faith story to share boldly. You are ready to consistently demonstrate thoughtful unsolicited acts of kindness, friend to friend, with those who need Jesus' love.

In closing, read John 13:12-17. Reread verse 17. Are you ready to begin?

A closing prayer:

Father, the greatest act of unsolicited kindness was giving your Son, Jesus, to die for someone like me. Through His death my sins are forgiven. Through His Resurrection I have the gift of eternal life. Use my acts of unsolicited kindness for my unchurched and lost friends to help them discover the same great reality. Help me begin today. In the Name of my Friend, Jesus. Amen.