

Evangelism Training

First Steps

*What is
evangelism?*

*What do we do
and what does
God do?*

*Can I really do
evangelism?*

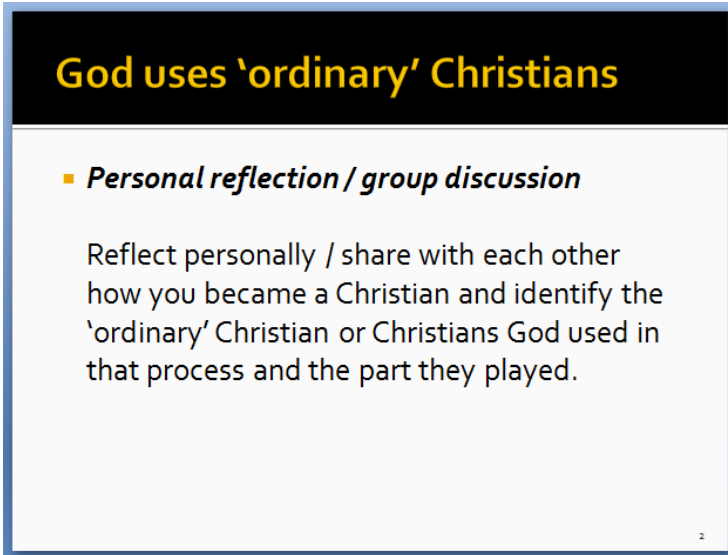
*Why is evangelism
the Church's
priority?*

*What is our
motivation in
evangelism?*

PART ONE

Fundamental Principles

God uses 'ordinary' Christians



God uses 'ordinary' Christians

- *Personal reflection / group discussion*

Reflect personally / share with each other how you became a Christian and identify the 'ordinary' Christian or Christians God used in that process and the part they played.

2

In almost every person's conversion, somewhere in that process of coming to personal, saving faith in Jesus, God has used an 'ordinary' Christian or Christians. It may have been a friend who explained the gospel to you. It may have been a friend who invited you along to an evangelistic event or church. Reflect personally / share with others in your group how you became a Christian, and, in particular, identify the 'ordinary' Christian or Christians whom God used somewhere in that process.

God uses 'ordinary' Christians

- God used an 'ordinary' Christian in bringing us to faith.



- God wants to use us – 'ordinary' Christians – in bringing other people to faith.

3

Our own experiences remind us that very often, God uses an 'ordinary' Christian somewhere in that process.

Here's the point:

God used an ordinary Christian in bringing us to faith.

God wants to use *us* in bringing other people to faith.

A biblical understanding of evangelism

A biblical understanding of evangelism

- What is evangelism?
 - What do we do and what does God do?
 - What is our motivation in evangelism?
 - Why is evangelism the Church's priority?
- 2 Corinthians 4:4-6 (p.1,160)

4

It's vitally important that we have a clear biblical understanding of what evangelism is. This is an essential foundation for everything we do in relation to personal evangelism and corporate evangelism as a church.

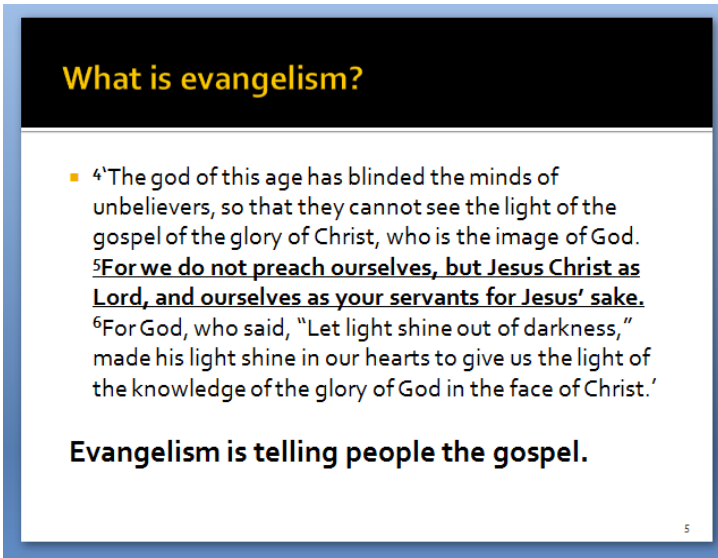
Here are four 'key' questions:

- *What is evangelism?*
- *What do we do and what does God do?*
- *What is our motivation in evangelism?*
- *Why is evangelism the church's priority?*

We're going to look at two Bible passages. The first is 2 Corinthians 4, verses 4-6. Please read these verses in your Bibles. We'll use them as a basis for answering these 'key' questions.

What is evangelism?

First, *What is Evangelism?*



What is evangelism?

- ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'

Evangelism is telling people the gospel.

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Notice how this passage begins and ends. At the start (verse 4) Paul describes non-Christians. All of us *by nature*, as being blinded by Satan, the god of this world. He keeps people from understanding who Jesus is, from responding to him and seeing his glory. That's the first book-end if you like: people are lost because they are blinded by Satan.

But see how the passage ends (verse 6). God opens blind eyes, shining his lights into the hearts of men and women, enabling them to see the glory of God in the face of Christ. It takes a miracle, something Paul compares to the creation of light in the beginning, but God's power can overcome Satan and grant spiritual life. That is the other book end: people converted, and given new spiritual sense.

The key for us is to see what bridges the gap between these two points. What means does God use to move someone from blindness to seeing the glory of Christ? Paul says that it's the preaching of the gospel, verse 5: **"For we do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake."**

It is as the gospel is preached, the good news about Jesus, that God works and opens blind eyes. This preaching is humble rather than self-centred, and it is backed up by lives of service. Nevertheless the focus here is on Paul's preaching of Christ. **What then is evangelism?** Evangelism is telling people the gospel. That is how people come, by God's power, to see his glory in the face of Christ. Living godly lives and impacting people by how we live and what we do is *not evangelism*. Such loving action *authenticates* our evangelism, but we need to remember that evangelism is *telling* people the gospel.

What is evangelism?

- Telling people the gospel, using the Bible
 - Preaching
 - Reading the Bible with someone
 - Explaining the gospel to someone
 - Giving our testimony, pointing people to Jesus
 - Answering people's questions, pointing people to Jesus
 - 'Salty' comments, pointing people to Jesus
- Backing it up by the way we live ('servants for Jesus' sake')

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Expanding this a little bit, we need to say that evangelism is telling people the gospel *from the Bible*. By this I do not mean that we always have to have an open Bible in our hands. The point is rather that our content in explaining the gospel must be drawn from the Bible. Therefore genuine evangelism is possible in different forms. We could invite people to hear a sermon or a talk. We could read the Bible – something like Mark's gospel – together with a friend one-to-one. We could explain what God has done in our own lives, although a really good testimony is more about Jesus than it is about me. And a big part of evangelism (and our main focus in our 'First Steps' training), is about having simple spiritual conversations with people in the normal course of life through 'salty' questions and comments (see below). In all these ways we can explain the gospel to people bit by bit as we chat and answer questions.

What do we do and what does God do?

Moving on to the next 'key' question: **What do we do and what does God do?**

What do we do and what does God do?

- ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.
⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.
⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.'

We tell people the gospel, God opens blind eyes.

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Seeing the shape of these verses answers the question really clearly. Our role is to tell people the gospel. God is the one who opens blind eyes. That's really clear in verse 6 – *only God* can make light shine out of darkness and only God can enable the spiritually blind to see his glory in the face of Christ.

This is a very liberating thing to realise. We are not responsible for the *results* of evangelism. It's up to God to convert people. So when people reject the gospel, we'll not feel personally responsible (thus guarding us from discouragement). And when people *accept* the gospel, we'll be encouraged (there would be something wrong if we weren't encouraged) but we'll be clear that the individual's conversion was God's work. Only God can convert people. Our responsibility is simply to be faithful in telling people about Jesus. This truth also encourages us to pray as we go about evangelism. Unless God acts in a person's life nothing will happen.

What do we do and what does God do? We tell people the gospel and God opens blind eyes.

What is our motivation for evangelism?

What is our motivation in evangelism?

- ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the **glory of Christ**, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the **glory of God** in the face of Christ.'

The glory of God

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Next question: ***What is our motivation in evangelism?*** There are three parts to this answer. First of all, and supremely, ***we are motivated by the glory of God.*** You can see that in the passage. People are naturally blind to God's glory – they cannot appreciate him or praise him or enjoy him. When God rescues someone though, and opens their eyes, all of a sudden what do they see? They see the glory of God in the face of Christ. This is our motivation. We want people to appreciate Jesus and make much of him.

What is our motivation in evangelism?

- ⁴The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.⁷

The good of men and women

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Secondly, though, we are also motivated by a concern for the **good of men and women**. On our own all people are lost, blinded by the devil and under his power. This is a miserable condition and it leads to a miserable end. This is why it is such wonderful news that God has sent his Son to break the power of the devil and pay the price to set us free. People need to hear this gospel if they are to find forgiveness, liberty and safety, both now and for eternity.

What is our motivation in evangelism?

- The glory of God
- The good of men and women
- *Plain obedience*
 - Matthew 28:18-20 (p.1,001)

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So we are motivated in evangelism by the glory of God and the good of men and women. There is one more thing to say though – we evangelise out of plain obedience to Jesus Christ. The second Bible passage we'll look at is Matthew 28:18-20. 'Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus left his church with a clear commission, to go out and make disciples of all nations. This is a *command* to engage in evangelism. Some have tried to limit this command by saying that Jesus was only speaking to his original disciples. That cannot be right. Look at the accompanying promise: "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." As this promise runs down the years to us, so Jesus' command runs to us as well. If Jesus is our Lord then we must fulfil the task he has given us – we must obey him.

Why is evangelism the Church's priority?

The final 'key' question: ***Why is evangelism the Church's priority?*** Matthew 28 helps us to answer this as well. What is God's plan? The Bible is the story of God's wonderful rescue plan, drawing men and women into the restored life of his perfect kingdom. All that has been fractured by our human rebellion he is putting back together under the rule of Jesus. This plan goes forward – God *is* building his church – and we play our part as we tell others the gospel and urge them to come under Jesus' rule.

Why is evangelism the Church's priority?

- God *is* building His Kingdom – His wonderful rescue plan for men and women.
- Our role in God's plan is evangelism.
- Making evangelism our priority aligns our priority with God's priority.

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So the basic explanation as to why evangelism is our priority – as individual Christians and as a congregation – is that this brings us into line with God's priority. It's important to realise that priority does not mean sole concern, but it does mean priority. God is building his kingdom and we need to be wholeheartedly on board with that.

Now we have answered our four basic questions.

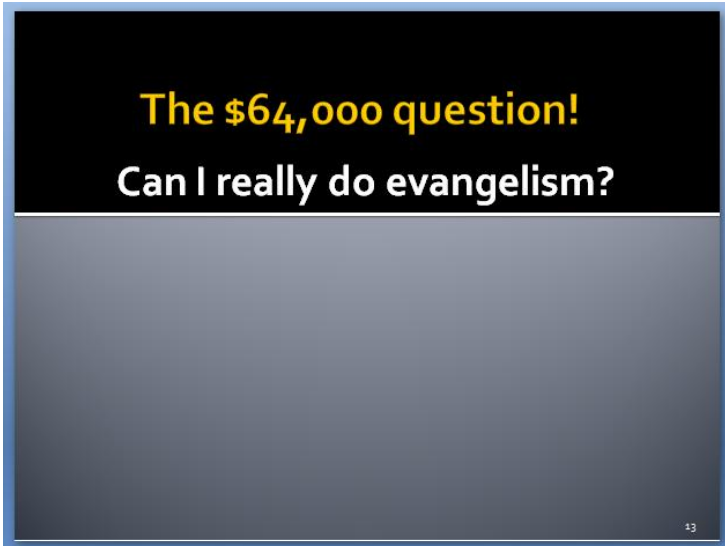
Summary

- What is evangelism?
Telling people the gospel
- What do we do and what does God do?
We tell people the gospel, God opens blind eyes
- What is our motivation in evangelism?
Glory of God...good of people...plain obedience
- Why is evangelism the Church's priority?
Aligns our priorities with God's priority

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PART TWO

Can I really do evangelism?



What we've seen so far lays out the theory of evangelism, but what about the practice? "Can I really do it?" – that's the \$64,000 question.

Ordinary Christians – *real fears*

- Rejection
- Embarrassment
- Loss of face
- Lost for words

Learning through difficulties

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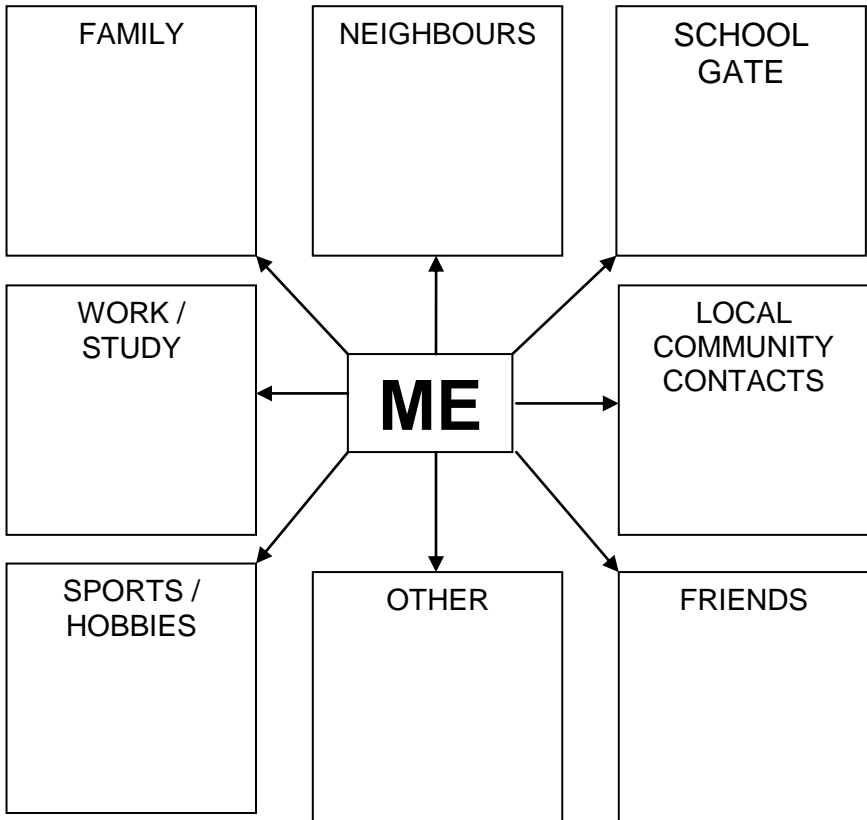
I guess most of us feel daunted by the prospect of talking to others about Jesus. We fear being thought of as weird, or intolerant. We fear rejection. Our friends seem fine without the gospel. And for most of us, most of the time we just don't know what to say....we're lost for words. Ultimately it's also a spiritual battle.

But what we need to see is that speaking to others about evangelism is something we learn and grow in as Christians. We won't become star witnesses over night, but we can make a start. And as we step out, little by little, we will learn and grow. Even through difficulties, God will increase our capacity to speak for him. I hope that's clear: the point of this training is not to turn each one of us into out-and-out evangelists – God has made us all differently and gifted us all differently. But we can all begin to take small, manageable steps to start having spiritual conversations with people around us.

One myth that surrounds churches is that Christians are largely cut off from non-Christians. In reality, the majority of Christians have various networks that give them opportunities for evangelism eg work, families, neighbours, friends, sport, university, school etc. Christians are connected to lots and lots of people over whom they could exert a spiritual influence.

Spheres of influence exercise

Think about friends and acquaintances who are not Christians and write as many names as you can in each box below.



[This Spheres of Influence diagram is adapted from Agapé's 'Mind the Gap' evangelism training material.]

How do we start influencing these people for Jesus?

Beginning to influence these people for Jesus

- Praying specifically for a few people
- Finding ways of spending time with them
- Finding ways of being kind to them
- Thinking about ways of socialising with Christians and non-Christians together

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With all these various people in mind, in all these different areas of life, the question we now need to address is how to actually start influencing people for Christ. A good starting point is to focus our prayers on three or four people, asking God to open up spiritual conversations and opportunities with them. Practically, this means thinking of ways that we might increase the time we spend with them, or doing things for them as an expression of our faith. And maybe ways of mixing our non-Christian friends with our Christian friends. These are things we could all manage, and through such simple actions we really could begin to exert a spiritual influence on these folk.

Beginning to influence these people for Jesus

- *Personal reflection / group discussion*

Take a few minutes to think of three or four people you could pray for. Reflect personally / discuss as a group ways you could increase your contact with these non-Christians.

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Take a few minutes to think of three or four people you could pray for and think through yourself or discuss as a group ways you could increase your contact with these non-Christians. For example, think about ways of socialising with Christians and non-Christians together.

Taking the vital first steps in speaking about Jesus

We cannot love people into the kingdom. We need to get beyond the contact, the socialising, the acts of kindness and begin to speak to them about Jesus. At some point we need to explain to them what we believe about Jesus. Some people find it easy to open up such spiritual conversations, but most Christians find it difficult.

Taking the vital first steps in speaking to them about Jesus

- Opening up a spiritual conversation
 - what you say
 - how you say it

- *Personal reflection / group discussion*

For each of the situations in your notes, read the list of suggested responses. Reflect personally / discuss which you like, which you don't like, and why. Can you think of a better response?

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What we need to look for, then, are opportunities to have useful spiritual conversations with people. These will allow us to see where people are coming from and begin to explain the gospel bit by bit. A good way of opening up such a conversation is by asking a thought-provoking question or responding to a comment by injecting a salty comment or your own. Have a look at the examples overleaf, and for each situation read the list of suggested responses. Think through / discuss which you like, which you don't like, and why. Can you think of a better response?

For each of the situations described below, read the list of suggested responses. Discuss which you like, which you don't like, and why. Can you think of a better response?

1. Several friends are discussing a news story about an infamous murderer who has just been jailed. In general people are glad that this “monster” has been brought to justice.
 - A. “What do you think leads a person into committing crimes like that?”
 - B. “Do you believe somebody like him might go to 'hell' in the end?”
 - C. “I know what that man did was extreme, but as a Christian I feel a bit uncomfortable calling him a “monster”. I guess I'm just conscious of how far my own heart and life fall short of what they should be.”

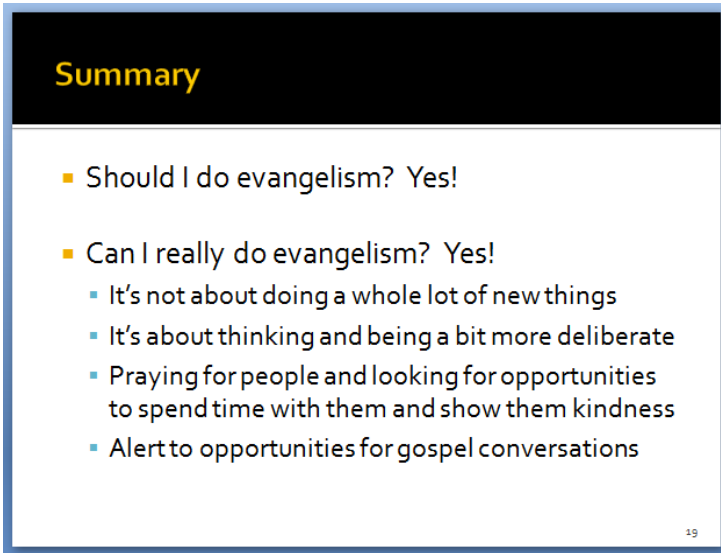
2. “I don't like Christmas,” says someone says to you. “There's such a build up – sell, sell, buy buy; stress all round; the pressure to overspend; the kids want this, and that.”
 - A. “Yes, all this commercialism does seem to obscure the real meaning behind Christmas. What do you think it should be about?”
 - B. “Yes, I wonder what Jesus makes of it all...”
 - C. “It's funny isn't it. Christmas is the highpoint of the year in terms of food, possessions and time with the family, and yet hardly anyone seems satisfied by that.”

3. You get your chequebook out to pay for some work you've just had done. The tradesman stops you and says, "I'll knock fifty pounds off the quote if you pay me in cash."
 - A. "Actually I have a friend who'd be really upset if I did that."
 - B. "It's very tempting isn't it, but what would happen if we all avoided taxes?"
 - C. "If it's OK with you I'd rather keep things on the level. I'm a Christian you see."

4. Someone tells you that one of their more distant relatives has just been diagnosed with cancer. "I don't know I'd cope if that was me," they comment.
 - A. "Yes, it makes you think doesn't it. Who would you turn to for strength in a situation like that?"
 - B. "I'm sorry to hear that. Do you know if he's a religious man?"
 - C. "It must be a real shock getting news like that and having to face up to one's own mortality. Is that something you think much about yourself?"

[Adapted from Agapé's 'Mind the Gap' evangelism training material]

Summary and prayer



The slide has a black header with the word "Summary" in yellow. Below the header is a white area containing a bulleted list. The list starts with two main points, each marked with a yellow square. The second main point has four sub-points, each marked with a blue square. In the bottom right corner of the white area, the number "19" is written in small grey text.

Summary

- Should I do evangelism? Yes!
- Can I really do evangelism? Yes!
 - It's not about doing a whole lot of new things
 - It's about thinking and being a bit more deliberate
 - Praying for people and looking for opportunities to spend time with them and show them kindness
 - Alert to opportunities for gospel conversations

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Here's a summary of the key principles we've been looking at.

- Becoming people who make an impact for Jesus in people's lives, and becoming a congregation that has an impact, is not a matter of suddenly doing lots of new things.
- We just need to think a bit more deliberately about who God has put into our lives at home, at work, around and about.
- We need to begin to pray for some of these people, that God would work in their lives and give us opportunities to spend time with them and show them kindness.
- As these relationships go on, we can begin to find ways of arousing curiosity, perhaps by asking questions or making comments. In time this may lead to spiritual conversations in which, little by little, we can help them understand the gospel message.

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