



GOAL: Live out your faith by offering spiritual solutions (alongside practical serving and wisdom) with your neighbors.

When crisis hits, your unchurched friends have very few, if any, people in their lives who can offer spiritual solutions. Your task, alongside serving and offering wise counsel, is to be their spiritual friend! Have faith that this is a time when living as an openly spiritual person is going to be a distinctive and refreshing thing to many.

PRACTICALLY You can learn how to authentically move into more overtly spiritual conversations, so that your neighbors can see and experience how Jesus changes lives today.

HUNGRY FOR HOPE

With the coronavirus in everyone's thoughts, there is a huge amount of negativity and oppression weighing down on people. Your neighbors likely are weary and heavy burdened by it all - because whatever your wealth, job, status, or education, everyone is being impacted.

As a result, this is a time when people are fearful, disoriented, and confused. As one of our neighbors declared to us the other day, *"We need someone to offer us hope and inspiration!"*

Maybe Jesus has deployed you into your street for that exact purpose! Since you have a relationship with the God of perfect peace who is our living hope, He'd love to steer you into all sorts of spiritual conversations in the weeks ahead!

JESUS' EXAMPLE

In John 4 we read how Jesus encounters the Samaritan woman, and their conversation ended up with not only her, but the whole town, coming to faith. Notice several key elements:





- Jesus begins with a simple conversation opener (v.7), but is attentive to where there might be a spiritually responsive heart.
- When the woman gives a more meaningful response (v.9 - she doesn't just stay at the shallow level of offering a drink), the conversation rapidly becomes more weighty.
- Jesus then probes her openness to the things of God by initiating some overtly spiritual dialogue (v.10-15), to which she responds with great interest.
- Jesus deploys a Word of Knowledge - a form of prophecy (v.16-18), which proves to be arresting to the woman due to its accuracy. (To learn more about prophecy, check out our book [Hearing the Voice of God](#) on Amazon.)
- At the same time, her answers do dance around her personal response (v.19-20) - but Jesus presses her, presumably under the prompting of the Holy Spirit.
- Out of that, the conversation moves to her being invited to receive Jesus as her Messiah (v.21-26).

While clearly not every conversation is going to move through all those stages in one go, this passage does helpfully lay out the different steps that most people seem to take.

THE 6 GEARS OF CONVERSATION

To analyze this further - in order that each of us can step with more confidence and capability into sharing our faith - we describe this process as being like moving through the gears on a car.

- 1st Gear is **CASUAL conversation**, where you simply chit-chat about the ordinary stuff of life. This is not a bad thing to do! Small talk often helps establish a relationship. However, if that's all that ever happens, it is not going to be a relationship into which you should invest deeply.
- 2nd gear is **MEANINGFUL conversation**, which is where you step into more meaty topics. People begin to open up about what is going on in their world, and to be receptive to reflective questions.
- 3rd gear is **SPIRITUAL conversation**, when you are able to directly talk about the difference Jesus can make in the situations about which your neighbor is sharing.



- 4th gear is **SALVATION conversation**, the phase where you are able to share the full content of the Gospel, and invite someone to commit to Christ as their Savior and Lord.
- 5th gear is **MATURITY conversation**, when you help those committed to Christ to intentionally grow stronger and deeper in their faith, even when it's costly to do so.
- 6th gear is **LEADERSHIP conversation**, where the assumption is that everyone is on a certain level of Christlikeness and understanding, and the conversation flows freely as a result.

Of course, sometimes you will need to drop down a gear or two in order to move the conversation car up a steeper relational incline... and the other person always has the right to jam it into reverse and back right out of that topic!!

MOVING FROM CASUAL TO MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

Living in a time of crisis makes it much easier to have meaningful conversations - many people go there without even being prompted. Ask questions such as,

- How are you doing?
- How are the rest of your family/ community?
- Do you need anything right now?

When you're not in a time of crisis, examples of questions that take a casual conversation to the next gear are things like

- What do you do for a living? What is it about your background that makes you good at that job?
- What do you like to do in your free time? What do you most like about that??
- Have you always lived in this area? Where did you most like living? Why?

When talking with others, make sure you are genuinely interested in the person (ask the Lord for help if necessary!), and listen. People will notice if you're distracted or not paying attention (after all, you spot it if they drift away!) Be sensitive and aware of body language, and be prepared to back off if someone seems defensive or unwilling to share.



MOVING FROM MEANINGFUL TO SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS

- Share part of your personal story. For instance, if a conversation naturally leads that way, you could make a comment about a spiritual aspect of your life. An example might be:
 - *"I've been aware of fear bubbling up in me at unexpected times in the past weeks - I totally resonate with what you're saying - and so I've been praying a lot more than normal. Amazingly I've found that God has given me incredible peace, even though our external circumstances haven't yet caught up with that reality."*
 - *"I completely get how frustrating it becomes when you're stuck at home all day trying to work, and your kids are being hugely disruptive, and you just want to zip tie them to a yard fence halfway down the street! But in the midst of that tension, I've also been aware of what I call God-nudges, where I've been so aware of Him encouraging me to show extra patience with them, that they are probably acting out their own anxiety, and it is important that I be a calm and stable presence for them. I know I can't do that under my own steam, so I've been praying regularly - sometimes multiple times a day - for Jesus to give me what I need to parent well."*
- Invite your neighbor to an event - for instance, a street prayer gathering, or a home church.
- Ask them if you can pray for them (regarding whatever topic it is that you're talking about).
- Ask the miracle question: "If God did a miracle in your life right now, what would it be?"

As you speak, be very attentive to how open they seem to spiritual matters. This will help you know whether to keep going, or to pause there (and maybe come back to it later). Just by making a comment in passing will cause your neighbor to make some sort of mental note - *"She's one of those crazy Christians!"* or *"Hmm, she talked about prayer changing things - that sounds weird but also interesting!"*

PREPARATION PRAYER

The reason you want to be openly spiritual on your street is to reflect the loving heart of God to your neighbors. This requires that you pray fervently for those conversations!



Some things to pray about include:

- Spotting those who are open to conversations that are both meaningful and spiritual.
- That God would show you which neighbors to intentionally reach out to.
- You can overflow with the love of Jesus as you listen and talk.
- You won't become God's defense attorney when a neighbor shares some flaky theology!
- For God to fill you with boldness in the moment.
- The Holy Spirit will give you the right words to say in the conversation.
- Your testimony will make a big impact upon others.
- That you will be able to pray with the person - and they'll see clear answers to prayer!
- During your conversations and prayer, neighbors will experience the presence of Jesus.
- These simple acts will pay great dividends for the Kingdom.

HOW TO BE OPENLY SPIRITUAL

1. Die to Self

There is no bypassing this: if you want to operate as a spiritual person on your street, you have to have resolved in your heart that you're not hanging on to pride and reputation.

For so many believers, the biggest preventer of being a witness is that they don't want to be thought of as weird, or risk any sort of rejection. If that's your priority, you'll achieve very little for God and His Kingdom.

Of course, we're not saying you should seek rejection - of course we love being friends with our neighbors! But, ultimately, to share our faith with gracious boldness, we have had to be at peace with the possibility that some will reject us and consider us no fun to be around.

So choose now to follow Jesus with complete abandon - that you will joyfully seek to talk about Him and operate as an openly Christian person, who overflows with love and compassion - and then see what Jesus can do through you!





2. Steps to Begin

We have found that being overtly spiritual with your neighbors starts with being present and intentional in these relationships. This means:

- Be proactive in checking in with people, seeing how they're doing, and if they need help (see *Topic 3: Serving Your Street*, especially the Practical and Fun Ideas sections).
- Ask the Lord for a heart of love and compassion. On many occasions the Bible says that Jesus was filled with compassion. That's a great starting place - your posture is so important! People will remember how you made them feel for way longer than what you actually said.
- Be interruptible - often conversation will come when you are on your way to something else. That can be annoying! But it was also the experience of Jesus and the disciples, so we should embrace those moments.
- Don't be the 'know it all', or the one with all the answers.
- Resist offering christian-lite platitudes, such as, 'I'm sure everything will be okay'. To do this is to emotionally shut down the conversation, and is not a fruitful path.
- Sometimes the Lord will give you a Word of Wisdom (which is a gift of the Spirit, and distinctly different to human wisdom), so be aware of that possibility. Share it in a humble and invitational manner.
- And definitely offer to pray! They will probably have several other friends who can offer help and advice, but you are almost certainly the only one who will pray with them.

3. Why Do I Want to Pray With a Neighbor?

When you pray with someone, you're ushering them directly into the Lord's presence. "*For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them...*" (Matthew 18:20). Essentially you're lifting the person you're praying with, and all of their needs, to the One who has all of the answers, to the One who is the bringer of supernatural peace.

We absolutely love doing this (well, now we know those initial nerves don't speak truth to us!)





People are almost always open to the idea, particularly if they sense your love, acceptance, and compassion. When you have finished praying, you'll find there's often an air of calm around your neighbor. Frequently people are genuinely moved - sometimes to tears - that you would care enough to stop and pray. They might not have vocabulary for this, but they have encountered the presence of Jesus in that moment - which, unsurprisingly, is awe inspiring!

4. How Do You Make the Ask?

Assuming that there has been some sort of build-up conversation - perhaps they've shared some fears, tension at home, or need for healing - then you may say something like:

- *"I'd love to pray and ask God to give you His peace right now - would that be okay?"*
- *"You know, I think Jesus would love to assure you of His protection over your family in these crazy days - could we take a moment to pray for that now?"*
- *"You know, financial stress is a big deal - but I believe God is really interested in this stuff. Could I pray for your finances now, that He would bless and provide for you all?"*
- *"This might sound crazy, but I believe Jesus would love to heal your body - could we take 30 seconds now simply to pray for that?"*

Obviously these are examples to help you see the idea, not a magic formula to cite by rote! However, if you're at home you could try saying them out loud (it always sounds different that way!), and then play with tweaking the language to make them more 'you'. By hearing your mouth say phrases like these, when you're in the moment and can pray for a neighbor there will be slightly less stumbling and mumbling in what you say!

5. What Do You Do If They Say No?

- Don't take offense! Be gentle and kind, and say something like, *"Okay, that's not a problem! I totally respect that."*
- If the relationship feels robust enough, with a twinkle in your eye you might say, *"But just so you know, I'll be praying for you when I'm back home this evening!"* (and make sure you do!)



- Then move the conversation on, so that you own any awkwardness, and they don't leave feeling guilty or embarrassed to be with you.
- Remain upbeat and positive!
- Still operate out of a posture of love for them. When they replay the incident in their minds later, ensure the *feeling* that bubbles up in them is that they were loved in that moment. That will be powerful and not easily shaken.

6. What Do You Pray?

We've looked at what to do if your neighbor declines your offer (which is extremely rare in our experience), so let's turn to consider what and how you pray when they receive your invitation.

- Generally your prayer should be fairly short (around 30 seconds to 1 minute). However, this is not a strict rule - occasionally the Lord will lead you in a different direction... BUT make your default a short, sweet prayer!
- Start by giving thanks for the person. Then bring their needs before the Father. End by asking for a blessing and/or His peace to be upon the person.
- Use your regular voice and normal vocabulary, and avoid religiousy language (that doesn't impress the unchurched!)

Here are a couple of examples of how we might pray:

- *"Jesus, thank you for Tim. Thank You that you love him so much! You know what's going on in Tim's life right now - you know the emotions, the difficulties, and the stress that the fear of catching coronavirus is causing him. We pray that You would bring your peace right now into Tim's heart! Bless him so much! We thank you that you are our Creator and closest friend, and that you are the God of all peace. Bring your peace right now we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen!"*
- *"Heavenly Father, thank you for Taylor, and for providing for her every single day of her life up to now. Please would you draw her close to You in this time of financial stress, and provide for her in all sorts of wonderful surprising ways that reveal Your love. Turn a shortage into an abundance, and a lack into a surplus! Thank You! In Jesus' name, Amen!"*



- *“Lord God, thank You for Chris, and that you created him so wonderfully. Please bring Your healing power into Chris’ body, and heal him completely and instantly of this sickness. Make him whole and fully healthy, and banish this sickness out of his body. In the mighty name of Jesus Christ, Amen!”*

As you can see, these are just ordinary prayers - which is the whole point. We come as we are into God’s presence, and simply talk about what the situation is, and ask for His help. And for your unchurched neighbor, simply listening in on this interchange will be fascinating and eye-opening.

And for those of you who love to lay on hands when you pray - God knows the limitations of the current health climate, and He can still heal without the laying on of hands! In Matthew 8 we read about Jesus healing the Centurion's servant. The Centurion's faith was commended when he said to Jesus, “Just say the word and my servant will be healed.” The same is true for us.

For more tips in this area, check out our free video, [How to Have a Spiritual Conversation](#).

NEXT STEPS CHECKLIST

What are your specific next steps?

We have created a checklist on the next page to help, but you might want to adjust it to make it fit for your context. The main thing is - GET TRYING STUFF!!

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.” (1 Peter 3:15)



CHECKLIST

SKILLS:

- Which of the 6 Gears of Conversation comes most naturally to you?
- Which one do you need to most grow in?
- What are some questions you could ask to take the conversations up a gear?
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PREPARATION:

- What do you need to pray in preparation?
- Where do you need to die to self in order to better bear witness for Jesus?
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PRACTICALLY:

- Who do you need to be proactive in checking in with in the weeks ahead?
- Will you ask God for a chance to pray with an unchurched neighbor this week?
- What language sounds most natural to you for making the ask?
- Practice what you might pray if you have the chance.
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Thank you for reading (and hopefully responding to!) this resource!
We hope that it will be a blessing to you and to your church.

But there's more!!

YOUR NEXT STEPS...

This resource is part of a much larger 7 part kit, called **Church in Your Street!**

Designed by Alex and Hannah Absalom, it is based on their two decades of living as pioneers in missional practice, thought, and coaching. This whole kit has been especially constructed to help churches respond to the huge cultural chaos - and possibilities - created by the coronavirus.

The 7 topics in **Church in Your Street** are:

**Pray for Your Street | Support Your Street | Serve Your Street |
Be Spiritual on Your Street (this doc!) | Hold an Outdoor Prayer Time |
Start a Simple Home Church | Online Home Church**

PLUS a comprehensive implementation guide for pastors

If your church buys **Church in Your Street**, you'll be licensed to copy and share the material as many times as you wish within your church - and will be given editable versions to customize!

TO FIND OUT MORE - including pricing, discount codes for smaller churches, and a high value coaching package option - [please visit us online by clicking here!](#)

Praying for you,

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