

SHARING OUR FAITH: BEYOND OUR FEARS

Leaders Guide

Welcome and Prayer:

- Open with prayer, thanking God for salvation and the way that He has promised to use us to awaken others to his presence and promises. Ask the Holy Spirit to fill the hearts and minds of those gathered, so that they will be empowered to be witnesses for His glory.

Ask: What are some common fears about sharing your faith with another person?

Some frequent responses:

- **Fear of rejection** – Isaiah 53:3 says Jesus was despised and rejected. As his followers, we should expect to be despised and rejected by some. Read John 16:33.
- **I don't know my bible well enough** – The Samaritan woman at the well probably did not know Scripture well, as women were not given the luxury of learning and studying in the first century, as were men. Yet John 4:39 says that the townspeople of Sychar “believed in him (Jesus) because of the woman’s testimony...” Your testimony is your story of what Jesus has done for you. In this, you are an expert.
- **I wouldn't know what to say** – It's good to share information about Jesus with others, but what you are really sharing is a relationship. You are simply introducing Jesus to a person who doesn't know Him. Do you have trouble talking with people about your kids or grandkids? Not at all, because you are eager to share who they are and what they have accomplished and all the attributes that make them special. Why should it be different when it comes to sharing Christ?
- **I may not be able to answer their question** – Why not reply that you'll look into it and then consult some trusted sources, including your pastor? Sometimes unbelievers have genuine questions and sometimes the questions are a way to keep Jesus at arm's length. But one thing is for sure – people are not going to be “argued into the kingdom.”

Spirit-Initiated, Prayer-Driven Discipleship

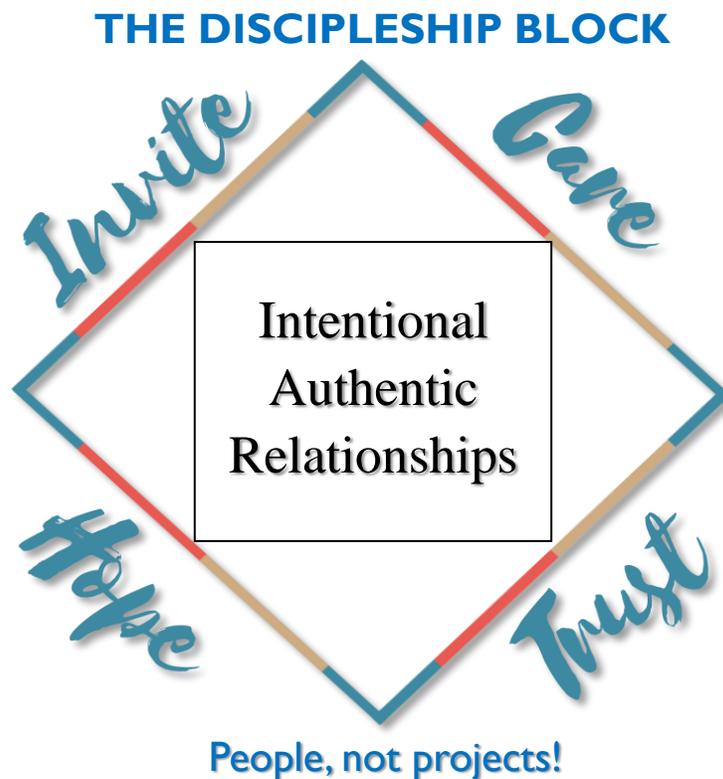
Perhaps it helps to know that it is not you who initiates, empowers, or makes faith-sharing successful. It is the Spirit of God, guiding and leading you.

- Luke 11:9-13 – *“...how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”*
- Ask the Holy Spirit to FILL YOU so that there is no room for doubt, fear, apprehension.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to use you and lead you to the people he wants you to DISCIPLE. Sharing our faith is good. Witnessing is great. But we are not “finished” when a person comes to faith, gets baptized, or joins the church. Discipleship implies continuing to help people take the next step in their faith. Who are you intentionally meeting with who is ahead of you in Christian maturity? Who are you bringing along who is not yet where you are?
- Acts 8:29 - *Then the Spirit said to Philip, "Go up and join this chariot."* (see also Acts 10:19-20, Acts 11:12)
- Learn to hear the Spirit's voice and sense the Spirit's “nudge”
- Story about Ali, a Somali Muslim who came to faith in Jesus and was baptized on Easter Sunday because John, a believer in Jesus, helped him when he was stranded on the side of the road, fixed his flat tire, and began an intentional relationship with him. Later, when Ali asked, “Why are you being so kind to me?” John told Ali about Jesus. And it wasn't the first time someone had witnessed to him. Others had planted seeds, but God used John to reap the harvest.
- Pray that God will lead you to the people he wants you to disciple.

- Notice the people with whom you interact in the community – the bank teller, the store clerk, the server at the restaurant. Build relationship with them.
- An idea – when you are out to eat, tell your server that you are going to pray in a moment, and ask them how you might pray for them. (Story about a server who began to cry, then took her break and came to sit down at the table with us. She was pregnant by a man that didn't treat her well and to whom she was not married). She needed someone to listen, care, and point her to Jesus as the source of eternal hope.

“Walk around the block”

- Every encounter is an opportunity - see life as divine appointments
- Be intentional where you go, pay attention to who God is putting in your path
- Build Authentic Relationships – People are not projects
- It may take 25 Encounters for someone to come into a relationship with Christ (Billy Graham)
 - You may be the first or last encounter
 - Be ready and know how to **walk them around the block!**



- **Invite**

- John 1: 38-39 – *“Come and See” “Come with me”*
 - Invest in people with whom you have a connection (or make a connection!)
 - God has put them in your path
 - Invite them into your life – make time for them
 - Invite them to do the things you like to do
 - Intentionally build a relationship

- **Care**

- John 15:12 – *“Love each other as I have loved you.”*
 - Listen to them – what are their joys, hurts, and hopes?
 - They are teachable
 - Be honest, even disagree
 - Be genuine in your care for them, but don’t build dependence
 - Allow God to love them through you

- **Trust**

- Mat 5:16 – *“let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds...”*
 - They will express doubt
 - There is something attractive about your life; they are drawn to Jesus in you
 - They will be frustrated, because this is a risk for them
 - Be honest, and even disagree; don’t fall into the trap of people pleasing
 - There will be Conflict “Can I trust you?”
 - “Am I a project or a friend?”
 - Trust is earned
 - Don’t go away, even as they test you and push you away

- **Hope**

- 1 Pet 3:15 – *“Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”*
 - They see hope and life in you
 - They want what we have
 - It is a crisis for them, their belief system is being challenged, maybe changing
 - They begin to own what they believe
 - Give them a Relationship with Jesus, not apologetics
 - it is not about the right answers but a right relationship with the Lord.
 - Reflect or accept their statements
 - Let the Holy Spirit lead

If they are not ready to take the next step in faith Invite them to “Walk around the Block” again

- Invite them to worship
- Connect them to other believers
- Invite them to be baptized

Are you asking God to open your eyes to relationships He wants you to have?

What keeps us from making this process (that Jesus and the apostles used) the primary activity of the church?

Many pastors, church leaders, and parishioners are so busy with church activities and other interests that they have little or know time left to develop intentional relationships for the kingdom. What kinds of things would you need to let go of in order to disciple someone the way that Jesus did?