



STUDY 3

DEEPEN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

Last week we saw how we need to be honest with our friends and neighbours about who we are as Christians. But that doesn't mean we always need to be trying to convert our friends by shoving the gospel down their throat every time we see them. The Bible provides an alternative way to reach our friends with the gospel.

READY TO GIVE AN ANSWER

1 Peter 3:15-16

¹⁵ 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, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

Colossians 4:2-6

² Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. ³ And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. ⁴ Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. ⁵ Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Read 1 Peter 3:15-16 & Colossians 4:2-6

1. How are we to act towards those who don't know Jesus?

What will this hopefully lead to?

2. Both Peter and Paul suggest the way we live and engage with others will lead people to ask questions about the hope we have in Jesus. Has this been your experience? Share some examples where that has been the case. What was it specifically that led to that person asking you a question about Jesus?
3. What attitude do Peter and Paul say we need to have when answering other people's questions about the hope we have in Jesus? What does that look like practically in your interactions with friends and neighbors?

DEEPEN YOUR FRIENDSHIPS

As we've seen in 1 Peter and Colossians, often the best way to share the gospel is by being ready to answer our friends questions about Jesus and the difference he makes in our lives. But often those opportunities are few and far between. How do we get to a point where our friends are asking those types of questions? How do we 'earn' a conversation like that?

Sam Chan suggests that we earn those types of questions by first deepening our friendships. In the following video, Sam provides some helpful advice about how to ***deepen your friendships*** so that conversations about Jesus and faith will flow more naturally (visit mpc.org.au/friendsforlife).

4. How can we make it more appropriate and natural to talk with people about 'private things', like our deepest beliefs?
5. How can it help to 'go to their thing' before inviting them along to church or an evangelistic night?
6. What are some invitations you could say yes to this month? List and share some ideas.



Deepening Your Friendships

7. Is time a major obstacle for you? If so, what could you change to make sure you allocate more time to deepening your friendships with those who are not yet Christian?

Simple things like investing time and energy into our friendships, and showing genuine love and interest in the lives of your friends will create opportunities for deeper conversations about our faith and what we value.



Listening To Their Story

Watch Sam's video for more helpful tips on how to first invite your friends into 'private space' and the importance of ***listening to their story*** before sharing yours (visit the website at mpc.org.au/friendsforlife).

8. Do you agree with Sam's assessment of the private/public divide? Have you found it hard to raise 'value' topics in a public context? Why do you think that is?

9. Do you agree with Sam's comment that listening to someone earns you the right to speak? Have you ever experienced that to be the case in the past? Think of specific times.

10. How would you go about engaging a friend in a conversation about their faith?

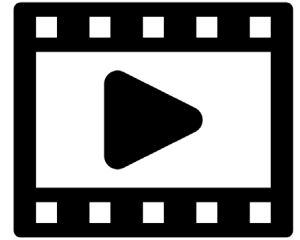
EARNING A QUESTION

The best way to continue engaging with your friends about Jesus, is not necessarily to start talking about him straight away, but to first listen to their story. Simply put, deepen your friendships - show a genuine interest in their lives, invest in their interests, and actively find ways to love them. In deepening our friendships, deeper conversations will begin to flow, and perhaps there will be opportunities for you to share your story in response.

Watch Rosaria Butterfield's story about how the 'surprising' love of some Christian friends, changed her view of Jesus and opened up opportunities for her to ask questions and meet the real Jesus (mpc.org.au/friendsforlife).

- Rosaria says it was 'so wonderful' that the overtly Christian Ken and Floy Smith didn't immediately share the gospel with her or invite her to church when they first met her, because it spoke volumes to her that she wasn't just a 'project'. What was it that eventually led to her hearing the gospel and coming to find Jesus?
- What do you think it would look like to 'show up' in the lives of your non-believing friends?
- This week, find an opportunity to ask someone about their story, and see what opportunities that might lead to.

Pray for each other, that we'd each make space in our lives for deeper relationships with our own non-believing friends, and find opportunities to humbly and lovingly share Jesus with them.



Earning A Question