



## BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

### 1. Develop an attitude of awareness.

The first step to forming authentic relationships with unbelievers is an intentional and deliberate process of becoming aware of people – all people – and alert to opportunities to get to know them in a more personal way. Expand your thinking of them beyond categories such as brother-in-law, neighbor, cashier, waiter, sales rep or service technician. Each is a human being created by God whose greatest need is to have a relationship with Jesus. Your encounter with each one is a divine appointment. God wants you to interact with them.

This kind of awareness of people does not come naturally. You have to intentionally and deliberately decide that you're going to relate to them in this way. Jesus was alert to and aware of people everywhere. He cared enough to see people and to interact with them.

*“Make your own attitude that of Christ Jesus, who... emptied Himself by assuming the form of a slave, taking on the likeness of men...” Philippians 2:5-7*

### 2. Be willing to befriend.

Moving a relationship with an unbeliever from acquaintance to friend requires commitment. You must be willing to take the time, effort and risk to become a friend. This may require getting outside your comfort zone and becoming a friend to those you would not ordinarily choose to befriend. The lost act like ...well... like they're lost!

When Jesus looked at the people He encountered, He didn't see their lostness as a contagious disease but, rather, as a cry for help that He could satisfy. Your calling is a willingness to include lost people in your circle of friends, because God appeals to them through you.

*“Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, 'Be reconciled to God.'”  
2 Corinthians 5:20*

### 3. Construct circles of influence.

*One on One* is designed to help you plan the process of building relationships. In this step, consider what's called your "circles of influence."

In the space below, write your name and, around it, draw a series of concentric circles. Label the one closest to your name with the category of people you know best (probably "Family"). Write labels in the other circles according to your lifestyle. (Be honest. For example, in today's world you may feel emotionally closer to your work associates than to relatives who live far away.)

The purpose of this exercise is to identify the people you are now ready to talk to about how your relationship with Christ has changed your life. Next, think about the more casual relationships you could strengthen to the point of becoming a credible, effective witness. Then, think about new relationships you could establish – people you encounter whom you could actually befriend. These are your circles of influence. Don't assume they already know the Gospel. Remember, even in America's so-called Bible belt, Christians are a minority of the population.



**Using your circles of influence, list unbelievers God has already placed in your life.**

Family: \_\_\_\_\_

Relatives: \_\_\_\_\_

Neighbors: \_\_\_\_\_

Friends: \_\_\_\_\_

Work/School: \_\_\_\_\_

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## EXPANDING RELATIONSHIPS

Studies indicate that even in our modern world of instant and various means of communication people are lonelier than ever. The fields are ripe for harvest. In a lonely world, no one should be better at forming relationships than believers. Use this list to expand your relationships with those who may not know the Lord:

- **All you own.** Think about your home and all you possess. Use your home and property as a base for witnessing and cultivating relationships with the lost. Share all you own with others, invite people to your house, and share your life with them.
- **All you do.** Consider your talents, vocation, avocation, hobbies, sports abilities and other activities to build relationships with people. God can use it all.
- **All the times of life.** Use holidays and special events like weddings, graduations, births and birthdays as special times to reach out to others who need a friend.
- **All the times you can help.** Be aware of those around you who are going through stressful, life-changing times such as the death of a family member, a divorce, an illness, pregnancy or a job loss. In high-stress times of life, people are often more open to friendships and the Gospel.

## USING YOUR PASSIONS FOR GOD

List five activities you love to do.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_

Who are five unbelievers you could include in these passions?

Write at least one name beside each activity listed above.

## WITNESSING THROUGH YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

Building relationships is only half of the relational witnessing formula. From the cultivated relationship, you must move to sharing the Good News.

### 1. Become intentionally evangelistic.

Paul wrote:

*“For although I am free from all people, I have made myself a slave to all, in order **to win more people**. To the Jews I became like a Jew, **to win Jews**; to those under the law, like one under the law – though I myself am not under the law – **to win those under the law**. To those who are outside the law, like one outside the law – not being outside God's law, but under the law of Christ – to win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, in order **to win the weak**. I have become all things to all people, so that I may by all means **save some**. Now I do all this because of the gospel, that I may become a partner in its benefits.”*  
*1 Corinthians 9:19-23, emphasis added*

Paul's priority in life was to win others to the Lord Jesus Christ. He did that through establishing common ground with them, so he would then have the opportunity to witness. Don't build the relationship bridge then fail to walk across it. Be an intentional witness.

### 2. Share repeatedly over time.

The great benefit of relationship evangelism is having continual opportunities to witness to the same person again and again. Most people who become believers do so only after repeated exposure to the Gospel. Using relationship evangelism, you have the opportunity to see people warm to the Gospel message over time.

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## RED LIGHT ILLUSTRATION

### **Red Light: Stop!**

The principle of the Red Light Illustration is that you should stop if you sense you are offending your new friend. You may be at the place to stop if you feel like the person is distracted or unwilling to move forward in your discussion about Christ.

### **Yellow Light: Proceed with Caution!**

When you are moving forward, look for signs that you are nearing the end of your conversation about faith for the moment. Since you are building an authentic relationship, there is no need to rush the process if your friend is not ready. Slow down or be prepared to stop. Always end the conversation on a positive tone.

### **Green Light: Go!**

Continue the conversation, even to the point of asking your friend the **P.R.A.Y.** question again or other transitional questions, so you may have the opportunity to share the Gospel message. If your friend is willing, ask if he or she would like to start a relationship with Jesus Christ right now. Be ready to pray with and for your friend.

## HOW TO BEGIN A CONVERSATION

Sharing the Gospel one on one should be natural and conversational. The acrostic **F.O.R.M.** may be helpful to guide your conversation toward spiritual matters. In addition, it can help you determine your friend's openness to the Gospel. **F.O.R.M.** stands for:

- **Family** – begin conversing about the person's family. You may be able to gauge their openness to the Gospel and their attitude toward you, the witness. If they are unwilling to talk with you about their family or if they seem uncomfortable with the witnessing approach, they may not be ready to listen to the Gospel.

- **Occupation** – talk about your listener's job or how they spend their days. Are they willing to let you in to their personal world or is the door to their personal life shut?
- **Religious background** – you should be able to tell something of your friend's attitude toward the church and religion. Are they willing to discuss matters of faith? Is there a willingness to attend church? Is there a history of church affiliation and were the experiences positive or negative?
- **Message** – if the person is open to your message, move toward transitional questions like:
  - “Do you ever think much about spiritual things such as God, eternity, the Bible and heaven?”
  - “Have you come to a point in your life that you know for certain you have eternal life and will go to heaven when you die?”
  - “Suppose you were standing before God right now, and He asked you, ‘Why should I let you into My heaven?’ What do you think you would say?”
  - **“In your opinion, what do you think God requires for a person to go to heaven?”**  
(If you are using the **P.R.A.Y.** presentation, use this question.)

If at any point you sense or feel a yellow or red light, you can simply back off, pray, and wait for the Holy Spirit to open the heart of that person. Again, this is the great benefit of one-on-one evangelism. There is no rush if the person is not ready to receive the Gospel. It might take many attempts to initiate a discussion about the Gospel before you can actually share it effectively.

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