



GOSPEL CONVERSATION

A Senior Adult Study *First Baptist Church Jacksonville*

The following study has been prepared by Dr. John Sullivan and Linda Hodges and is taken from sermons delivered at First Baptist Church Jacksonville, Florida on Sunday mornings in August 2017. Preachers heavily quoted: Doctor Heath Lambert, Doctor John Sullivan, Pastor Daniel Savage and Pastor Jeremy Pellum.

Resources also used: *Sharing Jesus Without Freaking Out*, Alvin L. Reid, B and H Academic, 2017, *A Gospel Primer for Christians*, Milton Vincent, 2008. Paul D. Tripp, stories of faith series, Wednesdayswords@parultrippministries.org

A WORD FROM DR. SULLIVAN

Dear First Baptist Member:

It is God's design, the command of Jesus, and the desire of our Pastors that we all participate in having gospel conversations with lost people "as we go" our separate paths and encounter people Jesus died to save. Sharing our faith in Jesus is the truth of the gospel. It is God's purpose for us. This brings honor and glory to Him. If we make God's purpose for us, our purpose, He will be the priority of our lives. The Holy Spirit of God will overcome our reluctance to witness. Others need to see Jesus through us as we show we care. Can we change? Can we overcome our inhibitions to do what we know we should do? I believe this is possible for even the most timid, the oldest, and the most limited people in our ministry.

This step-by-step 10-week devotional, Gospel Conversation Preparation, is for everyone who wants to please the Father by sharing His Son. Every day read the scripture for the week. Consider the items introduced and commit to do the action plans. Pray daily for what is offered as suggestions. Each new week will build on the previous week. Soon our eyes, ears and heart will begin to open. We will see and do what Jesus did. Your church staff and Sunday school class will be praying for you. "As we go" let's do it! Love God! - Love People.

Dr. John Sullivan
Executive Pastor of Education for Senior Adults

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INTRODUCTION

Many in the American church today are too comfortable. We are often blind to the problems of others who do not know Jesus. We do not see the vastness of the harvest God has called us to. Sometimes we feel uncomfortable talking about Jesus, so we do not. If God does not change our hearts and send us out as workers, we will not go.

We are supposed to be like Him and be growing more like Him every day. We do not do what Jesus did. Jesus saw people by being among them. He was out looking for them. Jesus spent time talking with people about life and death, sin and forgiveness, healing and restoration. Jesus, who was truly holy, did not despise people or accuse sinners and avoid them.

Jesus saw people with eyes of compassion. He was filled with sympathy for the lost because He looked for and saw their distressed and dispirited state. Jesus always sees the long-term consequences for a life of sin and He was broken for the distressed and dispirited. He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. Sheep without a shepherd die. Jesus saw the future and their death. He knew that their souls would live forever in hell.

The price for sin must be paid and the price is death. Jesus paid this price for all of us. Some of us do not know this amazing fact! It is impossible to be made right with God unless Jesus does it. This is a gift from God, a gift we are to share.

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PRAYER

Pray this prayer often during this study. It was prayed on August 20, 2017 by Dr. Heath Lambert, First Baptist Church Jacksonville.

Father, please forgive us for thinking the people around us are just people. Please forgive us for thinking that our server is just a server, our mailman is just a mailman, our neighbor is just a neighbor, our boss is just a boss, and our employee is just an employee. Forgive us for our failure to see distressed and dispirited people who are sheep without a shepherd. Open our blind eyes and break our hearts with the compassion that is characterized by Jesus, Himself. Father forgive us for our sinful silence. Give us boldness to talk about Jesus, boldness to be workers in the field, boldness to remember that heaven and hell are realities that will characterize every one of us forever.

Father, help us, change us, save our city. Save boys and girls, men and women, save Jacksonville. We do not want to watch you as you do it without us. We want to be in the fight and in the field. Father I pray you would use your Word and your Spirit to change our lives forever, starting now.

In Jesus name, amen.

WEEK 1

THE GREAT COMMANDMENT

“Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And He said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the great and foremost commandment. The second is like it, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets.” Matthew 22:36-40

THINK ABOUT

God loves people and Jesus had great compassion for all people. Jesus knew that without a shepherd, people were headed to death and an eternity in hell. Jesus saw no obstacles in approaching people to share the love of God and the solution to their brokenness, whatever the cause.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Look at people and see them as Jesus sees them, sheep without a shepherd and heading for a cliff and an eternity in hell.
2. Jesus has great sympathy for lost people. Begin this week to look at people as lost unless you know otherwise.
3. Realize that people are just like you were before you came to know the Lord.

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Identify at least three people you encounter this week and begin to pray for them. Write their names down.

2. Pray for God to help you love people as He does, especially those you wrote down.
3. Pray for boldness to approach these people with the purpose to show them God's love and to get to know them better.

WEEK 2

THE GREAT COMMISSION

“But the eleven disciples proceeded to Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had designated. When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some were doubtful. And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’” Matthew 28:16-20

THINK ABOUT

We are to be like Jesus. He went everywhere proclaiming the Good News of God’s love to all kinds of people. God’s way of sharing His message with the world was to involve us, His faithful children, in sharing the Good News of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The message: We are all sinners and separated from God. God is real. Jesus is real. The cross happened. The price for sin is death and must be paid by someone. Jesus died in our place to pay the full price for our sin. He died and rose from the dead three days later. He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father. Anyone who believes in Jesus should not perish but have everlasting life, restored to God. Not everybody knows this! This is real, recorded history.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Begin to look at every conversation you have as an opportunity for ministry.

- 2. You are on mission right on your own mission field.
- 3. Watch this week for God to lead you to a passage of scripture or something in a devotional that may benefit someone you know. Share what you learned. You can start the conversation with “God brought you to my mind this morning when I was having my devotional time with Him.”

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

- 1. Ask God for awareness this week as you study His word, for a way to use it in your life and in the life of another.
- 2. Ask God to fill you this week with His love for others.
- 3. Ask God to give you an opportunity to share His love with someone you meet or speak with this week.

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WEEK 3

“Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness. Seeing the people, He felt compassion for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd. Then He said to His disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest’” Matthew 9:35-38

THINK ABOUT

Jesus went everywhere, including little villages, big cities and everywhere along the way. In the synagogues, He would explain the text of the Old Testament. With crowds along the way in His travels, He would proclaim the truth of the gospel of the Kingdom of God: God is alive; He rules over all kingdoms; He is real; belief in Him is required to enter. Jesus healed individuals with every kind of disease, even touching the untouchables. Jesus saw no barriers nor obstacles to seeking out souls, spending time with the lost and touching them with the love of God.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Go out of your way to travel a different path, to go to a new place, or to spend time meeting new people.
2. Go with a friend to explore a new senior citizen center and meet some new people.
3. Each day this week, speak the words of the gospel to yourself. Write the gospel out in your own words.

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WEEK 4

“My life is worth nothing if I do not do the work assigned to me by the Lord Jesus Christ. The work of telling others the good news of God’s wonderful kindness and love.” Acts 20:24 NLT

THINK ABOUT

The church is declining in numbers and is declining in influence. Who is to blame? Neighborhoods are declining. They are not as nice as they once were. Other churches are “stealing” our people because they are more hip and trendy or have “better” music. People do not want to hear truth; they want to have their ears “tickled.” Our culture is hardened against Christianity and people will not let us talk about Jesus like they used to in “the good old days.” It used to be good for one’s business to go to church, but now it can be harmful. Mention Jesus and you can lose your job. Mention Jesus and you could lose a friend. All of these are factors in the decline of the church and excuses we use not to share the gospel, but none is the real reason for the decline.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Tell two people this week about your Sunday School Class and First Baptist Church Jacksonville.
2. Invite someone to come with you on Sunday, on Tuesday morning to Bible Study or to a special event.
3. Demonstrate to someone this week that you are proud to be a Christian.
4. Write down the details of how you were led to the Lord,

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WEEK 5

"I will continue working toward the day when I will finally be all that Jesus saved me for and wants me to be." Phil. 3:12b NLT

THINK ABOUT

The problem with decline in God's church is not our culture or lost people. The problem is the harvest is plenty but the workers are few. We are God's workers, but we are not sharing Jesus as we should. We sin when we disagree with Jesus and blame the poor harvest on the lost and not on ourselves. We are the workers and are not going into the fields as we should. We sin when we do not love lost people, or look for them as Jesus taught us to do. We need to beg for forgiveness and earnestly pray for workers to be sent.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Make a special effort this week to look for lost people. You know some, but you may encounter many.
2. Think of everyone as lost until you know otherwise.
3. Make a special effort to speak with someone just to share God's love with your actions. Pray for this person.

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Ask God to lead you in actions that show genuine care for another.
2. Ask God to open doors for you to speak.
3. Ask God to remove all fear and all reluctance to inject His joy into the life of another by your actions and words.

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WEEK 6

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1 Peter 2:9

THINK ABOUT

God has uniquely placed you with your experiences, your life, talents, gifts and resources, at this time, in this place. Your purpose is to bring glory to Him and to share the joy of His love and Good News with those He puts in your path. Martin Luther said, “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.”

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. List three reasons why you do not share the gospel with others.
2. Look for ways these three reasons could be worked to your advantage in sharing.
3. Jesus will ask you, “What did you do with the time, talents, resources and the Good News of the gospel that I left with you?” Plan your answer.

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Ask God to turn what you consider limitations into opportunities to seek people and to share your faith.
2. Ask God to help you use all of the talents and gifts He has given you for His honor and glory.
3. Thank God for the talents and gifts He has given you

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WEEK 7

“Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you are also to love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” John 13:34

THINK ABOUT

Why was Jesus so personal, so hands on with people? He wanted to show people the heart of God. He touched everyone: hypocrites, harlots, and those contagious with disease. He touched sinners and broken people so we would see that God loves everyone. Jesus loves everyone.

It is not our culture, other churches, or the lost who are responsible for the decline of the church. It is the harvesters, those of us who are saved, who are not doing our job of sharing the love of God.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Write two questions that you would like to ask someone that could start a conversation and show you care about them.
2. Listen for ways people show they care for you and write them down. What kinds of questions do people ask you to get you into conversation?

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Ask God to fill you with His love for people and to show you how to share it.
2. Ask God to draw you to someone you might not

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WEEK 8

“...but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;” 1 Peter 3:1

THINK ABOUT

In John 6:1-15, we read the story of how Jesus felt the pain of the crowd's hunger and knew their real need was spiritual. He planned to feed the 5000. Jesus used a small boy and his small lunch to feed thousands of hungry people. “We will never know which little person God will use, and how. That means that we are never without anything to offer. We never know who the Lord will claim and use in ways that we cannot predict, or have not intended.” (Paul D Tripp article). Stay in a place of preparation with Jesus as your first priority and wait for God to use you.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. If Jesus is number one in your life, everything goes better. Is Jesus #1 in your life? What are your #2 and #3 priorities?
2. Watch for times when God may be using you in the life of another. This may be as simple as a kind word to someone who needs encouragement.
3. If the gospel is not clear to you, ask someone who could explain it.

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WEEK 9

“We will all be called before Christ to be judged. We will each receive whatever we deserve for the good or evil we have done in these bodies.” II Corinthians 5:10

THINK ABOUT

Do you want to be all that you can be for God in the time you have remaining on earth? Do you really believe that heaven and hell are on the line for those you do not talk to? They are. Do you want to have the heart of Jesus for lost people? Do you want to participate in the harvest? Do you want to be able to thank Jesus for showing you His heart of love and compassion for people and tell Him your stories of sharing His love and the Good News of the gospel when you meet Him in heaven?

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Change is a miracle of God. Do not expect to change under your own power.
2. Ponder the direction of your life and turn to follow Jesus. Psalm 19:59
3. Work to keep Jesus #1 in your life.
4. Write down two ways to remind you each day that Jesus is #1.

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Ask God to push your old priorities, passions, and plans, aside and reorder your life by Jesus, your new #1 priority. He has promised to take care of those who are touched by our move to Him.

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WEEK 10

“The earnest prayers of a righteous person have great power and wonderful results.” James 5:16

THINK ABOUT

It will take a miracle to accomplish the change needed in us, to put and keep Jesus #1, and to become so much like Him that we are actively seeking people to introduce to Him. It is a miracle accomplished only by prayer.

ACTION STEPS TO BEGIN THIS WEEK

1. Review the previous weeks and identify how you have changed in any area.
2. List some action you have taken that allowed you to show God’s love.
3. If you have shared the gospel, tell your Sunday School Teacher and your class.

CHANGE IS A MIRACLE ACCOMPLISHED ONLY BY PRAYER

1. Thank God for the faithfulness to complete this study.
2. Thank God for each change you have seen in your gospel conversation behaviors.
3. Thank God for His answer to prayer.
4. Ask God to continue to grow in the actions you have studied.



