

Cross-Cultural Witnessing

This is a pattern for developing friendships with internationals in order to share Christ with them over a reasonable period of time (which could be weeks, if the person lives with you, or months, if you only see each other two or three times per month). You could move through this process in a short time, or only reach the ploughing stage in a year or two. The recommended questions give a track to run on, rather than fixing you in cement. Be considerate as you ask questions - hear and think about the replies (they provide the best clues for the next questions to ask). As you ask questions, do not hammer. You should have answers to what you ask. When you've asked enough, questions will be asked of you. Even if you don't know the answer, be willing to find one. Your Bible, pastor, or church leaders are available as resources.

Let your activities be natural, not forced. Changing the subject is urged because instead of burning like a laser, we should deepen a reciprocal friendship of mutual trust and respect. Joyfully share, do not force, Jesus.

Seek information over time, instead of impatiently giving it! Be patient. A Filipino friend told us about friends who fished one afternoon with little success. A boy came along, threw a handful of corn in the water, waited 10 minutes, and then threw in his baited hook. He quickly had five fish and left. The others still had none! Harvesting requires patience. Search for and notice tender shoots. Take care not to step clumsily all over them.

We pray for much fruit, especially that of the Spirit. All scripture is from the NIV...

Some preliminaries:

Phil 4:6 "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."

1. Survey the field thoughtfully. Ps. 46:10 "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth."

2. Work in a group setting such as:

- Picnics, BBQ's, Fellowship Dinners
- Trips / Activities
 - (i) Local and nearby (few hours or less)
 - Shopping
 - Strawberry picking
 - Tourism
 - Non-threatening church programs like music and drama, etc. NOT a revival or evangelistic service at the very beginning of the friendship unless the person is a born-again believer
 - (ii) Intermediate distance (few hours or more)
 - Tourism
 - Special Events
 - (iii) Long-distance (day or more)
 - Conferences / Retreats
 - Sight-seeing

3. Identify interested persons

4. Learn to exactly pronounce and use the name they prefer to be called

5. Be considerate of your friend's time (cults grossly monopolize their victims' time!)

Build a friendship

Be clear (remove obstacles)

2 Cor 4:4-7 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

John 3:27 To this John replied, "A man can receive only what is given him from heaven".

- Visit the international (but don't be a pest)
 - Neutral place
 - Their place
 - Your place
 - Respect their time requirements
- Include them in your activities and life
- Learn about your new friend
 - a. Ask gently about their beliefs
 - How amazing that we've met...
 - Could our meeting be chance or providential?
 - Is there a God?
 - Could/would He control these things?
 - How do your people view God?
 - What could be the meaning of Life?
 - Is there a hereafter?
 - Can one have peace with God?
 - b. Listen closely (**Prov. 18:13** He who answers before listening - that is his folly and his shame)
 - c. Be ready for differences
 - d. Never argue
 - e. Always be kind
 - g. Learn what they know about the Christian faith
 - h. Listen (**Prov 18:15** The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge; the ears of the wise seek it out)
 - i. Answer gently a few points
- Change subject
 - a. Talk about your family
 - b. Ask about their country, studies, amusing or peculiar customs they've discovered here
 - c. Be very general about their family
 - Are they well?
 - Large family?
 - I'm sure you must miss each other
 - They must love you very much to send you so far away for your career's sake
- Does your friend know what true Christians believe?
 - Interested to find out sometime?
 - Ever read a Bible?
 - Ever visited a church in this area?
- Respect their time
- Record discoveries after each conversation

Some pre-evangelism questions

Ploughing - Prov 20:4 'A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing'.

- Gently ask open questions. **Pr. 20:5** The purposes of a man's heart are deep waters, but a man of understanding draws them out. (i.e. avoid YES / NO type questions).
 - Examples of open questions:
 - a. What did you like about ...?
 - b. What was hard to understand?
 - c. What was least interesting?
 - d. Why? How so? Why not? What do you think?
 - e. What is the implication of ...?
 - f. Does it matter?
 - g. How? Why not? Explain to me...
 - h. What other meanings could there be?
- Listen carefully.
- Answer a few points thoughtfully. **Pr. 16:3** A man of knowledge uses words with restraint, and a man of understanding is even-tempered.
- Change subject.
 - a. Studies progressing?
 - b. Heard from home lately?
 - c. Have you written home?
 - d. Have you bought winter clothing?
 - e. What are your favorite sports?
 - f. Have you visited a British home?
 - g. What do you think it would be like?
 - h. Would you like to visit one sometime?
- Offer to help with a specific need that has been mentioned, where you can genuinely be of service. **WARNING:** Be careful about giving a general offer to help (If I can be of *any* help, just let me know...) Some students have interpreted this to mean you will pay college costs!
- Watch the time - don't dominate the person.

Witness

Sowing - Ps 126:5 Those who sow in tears will reap with songs of joy.

Isaiah 55:11 So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

Gal 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

- Discuss sin
- Its consequences
- Can one sin against God?
- Is it forgivable?
- Who can forgive sin?
- Ought we forgive others?
- Our need for forgiveness...

- Would God want to forgive us?
- How could He?
- Change the subject

Water patiently - James 5:7 Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains.

More questions to discuss when appropriate:

- How does man find peace with God?
- Who is Jesus?
- Why did He come?
- How could His death forgive my sin?
- What does resurrection mean?
- How could it be significant to us?
- If this is real, what must I do?
- How does one receive Jesus?
- What is the cost?
- Extend an invitation to receive Jesus

Encourage

Do it the Lord's way - John 21:5-6a He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?" "No," they answered. He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some."

Allow them to search for themselves - Acts 17:11 Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.

Continue your interest in your friend. Help out some way, but do not pester or badger.

Strengthen your friendship:

- Visit, enquire, assist, serve
- Encourage. Respect as a person
- Continue to invite to Bible study, etc.
- PRAY, PRAY, and ask others to pray

Reap - John 21:6b ... they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Gal 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

- Ask if your friend has thought further about these things?
- What costs are involved?
- Any questions?
- Answer as best you can...
- Invite again, gently, but don't beg
- Pray with the person to receive Christ

Teach

Process - Matt 28:20a ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you....

Heb 10:22-23 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful.

Heb 13:21 ... equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

- Invite them to a Bible study - with you or someone you respect, and build them up
- Invite them to a church where the main speaker is a good teacher and clearly understandable
- Invite to other activities with you
- Invite them to be baptised if this is appropriate

Store --Ps 119:11 I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you.

- Teach them to study the Scripture
- Help them to memorize Scripture
- Help them to mature in faith
- Teach how to serve others in love

Gal 5:13- 14 You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love. The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself."

Send

Resowing - John 12:23-26 Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honour the one who serves me".

- Urge them to witness to others
- Encourage them to think about home...
- Encourage the church to pray for them and lay hands on them before they go home. "Sending" them, by prayer, encouragement, follow-up correspondence, visits overseas from the congregation....

REMEMBER:

In all this be obSERVANT in the conversation

- Reduce or remove cultural or personality clutter or misunderstandings, or any other obstacles to seeing Jesus
- Share Christ through your actions as well as your words
- Ask deep, thought-provoking, questions
- Listen to the answers
- Don't try to answer for the person...

More thought-provoking questions:

- Can one know the Creator God?
- Is God Just? How can we have peace with Him?
- What of Heaven? Forgiveness? Sin?
- Is the Bible Trustworthy? Or True?
- Is there Life after Death?
- How do your people view Love? Are there different kinds of love in your culture?

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