

HARVEST Lesson 3: Breaking the Ice



Take a moment to allow a couple of people to share what they learned while writing out their testimony from last week.

The exercise from the workbook may seem simple to our older generations that have grown up with an understanding of certain rules of social etiquette and conversation. These people may need to have patience with some of our younger generation who have not learned the same rules for communication. Carrying on a conversation is no longer a commonplace ability. It must be learned, so let's help one another to do this well!

Q: Is it easy or hard for you to jump into a conversation with someone? If you find it easy, how do you usually initiate a conversation? Sometimes talking to people is unavoidable, but other times you may need to be intentional about making it happen. How many people do we pass every day without taking time to notice or value them? We should nurture a lifestyle that not only notices other people, but shows them that someone cares. Conversations can start over the weather, sports, a question, an observation, an expression of sympathy, or whatever someone is think about at the time. For some it's easy, others its not, but if we want to be influential in other people's lives, we'll need to step into their world.

Q: What is the conversation that we need to have before having a conversation about God? People don't care what you know until they know that you care. We want to be sure and make valuing people our highest priority. We should show people the love of God before we tell them about His love. If we fail to do this, it really diminishes our ability to communicate something that we aren't living out in our lives. The conversation we are talking about explores their view of God and how their view came to be formed. **1 Corinthians 16:14** tells us to *"Do everything in love."* **1 John 4:19** says, *"We love because He first loved us."*

Q: When you are talking to someone, how can you discern where they are at in their spiritual life? What clues might you look for? Some people know the right "Christianese" terms if they've grown up in the church, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they have a solid understanding of God's grace. If people think they are "good enough" to get into heaven, that would be a red flag. If people think they are Christians because their parents made them go to church, then their faith has not been made personal. If they don't attend church, if they've never read the Bible, if they don't feel comfortable praying... These can all be indicators that they need someone to bless them with a good dose of the love of God! We don't judge them by this; it just helps us to know where to start.

Q: Do you think that people really are generally interested in talking about God? Why or why not? Consider **Romans 10:14-15**. It can be a controversial topic for some people, but everyone wants to know why they are here and how they got here. They want to talk about it with people that they can trust with their thoughts and emotions, and people who's opinion they respect. The challenge for us is to demonstrate to them that we are trustworthy and respectable. This often takes time, though some people may be hungry to learn or just looking for an opportunity to express their opinions.

Q: What are some ways that we can show people that we care in a conversation? Do you think it has to do with the words we say or is it something else? Read **Galatians 5:14** and **Luke 6:31**. The best way to show someone that you care is to start by really caring! Ask God to give you a love for people. It sounds strange, but if we're honest, some of us have a hard time loving others. We can also show them that we care by our posture, our facial expression, our words, how we treat them, by listening and offering an empathic response, by not monopolizing the conversation. Words are important, but it is the rest of our being that communicates what we really think and feel. The Mehrabian rule says that 7% of our communication is through our words, 38% through our tone, and 55% through our body language! Try to put yourself in their shoes and treat them in the way that is best for who they are.

Q: What subtle indicators in a conversation might convey that people are interested or not interested in continuing a conversation with you? If they are constantly looking at their watch, not making eye contact, getting irritable or judgmental, have that deer-in-the-headlights stare... They may not want to talk. It may not be the right time for a conversation, but God may want you to push through the pushback to plant some good seed in ground that needs to be broken up a bit. We shouldn't be offensive or arrogant, but there may be a time to stand firm, be bold, and to speak the truth in love as in **Ephesians 4:15-16**. To know when to back off or to push through may require some discernment and perhaps some prayer.

Q: Is it possible to love someone that lives a lifestyle or acts in a way that we do not approve of? How do we get past our perspective of seeing people as a hopeless cause? They say that love is an action and not an emotion. We can choose to love those who live in sin, just like God chose to love us despite our sinful nature. If we keep our hearts humbled like the tax collector in **Luke 18:9-14**, we will be reminded that we are no more deserving of God's grace than the next sinner. In every person there exists the nature of God; they are eternal beings. They are created to have a relationship with God and He loves them unconditionally. As long as God allows them to breathe, He is not done offering them the hope of repentance.

Q: Have you ever looked at someone and thought, "I'd bet that they are a Christian"? What makes some people exude this kind of presence that causes people to be attracted to them? Sometimes their convictions lead them to dress in a way that indicates their faith (perhaps a cross necklace, a scripture tattoo, modest apparel, etc.). Even more notable, however, is when Christians overflow with the joy of the Lord. Our countenance can be attractive and it can be repulsive. Because of our love for God, we should shine forth a countenance that is generally joyful, caring, and noteworthy. Consider **1 Thessalonians 3:12-13** and **Romans 15:13**.

Class Assignment: Share your testimony with at least three people.

Memory Verse:

Luke 10:2 - *"The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

PRAYER REQUESTS: