

## Starting Gospel Conversations

At Quest for Christ, we want to use our time with students to get to know them, encourage them and point them to Christ. This can and will be done by the large group leader while going through the Bible lesson. But it's also imperative that small group leaders use their time to connect with kids and point them to Christ during one-on-one and small group discussions.

Many things that come up in a conversation can be "bridged" to point the student to Christ. Keys to doing so effectively are:

- Empathize with the student (connect with the student on an emotional level, share how you have felt similarly in your life)
- Listen well
- Ask a God question
- Connect to Bible story/concept
- Use Scripture
- Point to the person of Jesus
- Get to the heart, not just behavior

Here are some examples for you to consider. There is not one "right" way to handle these situations but the possible solution is meant to give you an example of how a bridging conversation brings the student back to the person of Christ.

1. Shari arrives to Quest for Christ very upset. She refuses to remove her coat. After some coaxing, she explains that she's upset because her teacher got mad at her today for talking when it wasn't even her talking – it was actually another student. Her teacher told her she would lose her recess tomorrow. Now Shari wants to punch someone. How do you respond to her? (Hint: think about the Gospel message outline section "What to do now?")

Leader: I see you are very upset, Shari. I would be upset too if I didn't think I had been treated fairly. Can you think of anyone in the Bible who was treated unfairly?

Shari: Well I know Jesus was beat and hung on a cross and he didn't do anything wrong.

Leader: That's right Shari. Jesus was falsely accused, He was beaten and died on the cross. Do you know why that happened to him?

Shari: So we can be forgiven of our sins

Leader: Yes! You know your Bible very well. Jesus was punished for our sins, even though he did nothing wrong. And we read in the Bible that sometimes we will also suffer for things we haven't done. Do you know what Jesus did while he hung on the cross? He forgave the people who were hurting him. He said, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing (Luke 23:34)." Jesus loved them even though they treated him so badly. Now, you have a choice to make Shari. Do you want to be like Jesus and choose the path of forgiveness and healing. Or do you want to choose Satan's path for you and go punch someone and get revenge?

2. Dan is not wanting to participate in the small group discussion time. He's lying on the floor, goofing around and disrupting the other students. You, a Quest buddy, approach Dan to see if he wants to join you on the other side of the room. You ask Dan what's up – why doesn't he want to join in? Dan says he thinks it's boring. You ask, "What would you like to talk about?" Dan says, "I want to know where jaguars came from." How do you respond? (Hint: think about the Gospel message outline section "Who is God?")

Leader: So you like jaguars! So do I! They are so beautiful. What do you like about them?

Dan: I like their spots. Did you know a black panther is a jaguar with black fur and black dots?

Leader: Sounds like you know a lot about jaguars. But you want to know where they came from? Let me show you what the Bible says about where jaguars came from. The first thing the Bible says is "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1). Then it goes on to explain what God created and in what order. Let's jump down to verse 24 where it talks about what God made on the 6<sup>th</sup> day. Can you read that out loud to me?

Dan: Then God said, "Let the earth produce every sort of animal, each producing offspring of the same kind—livestock, small animals that scurry along the ground, and wild animals." And that is what happened. God made all sorts of wild animals, livestock, and small animals, each able to produce offspring of the same kind. And God saw that it was good.

Leader: So based on what you read, where did jaguars come from?

Dan: I guess God made them???

Leader: Yes you're right Why do you think so?

Dan: Because it says here he made wild animals and jaguars are wild animals.

Leader: And did you catch HOW God made the jaguars?

Dan: Ummmm....

Leader: Look at the first three words you read. "Then God said...." God used his words to create jaguars. He spoke them into being. Can you speak things into being?

Dan: No!

Leader: That's right, Dan. You and I can't do that. Only God is powerful enough to create something like a jaguar out of nothing. That's why we worship him as our Lord!

3. Spencer has been having a rough time at Quest today. He can't sit still and is poking his neighbor. During transition time, a ruckus begins and you learn that Spencer has stolen another boy's piece of candy, eaten it and now is taunting him with the wrapper. You pull Spencer aside – what do you say? (Hint: think about the gospel message outline section "What's the problem?" and "What's the solution?")

Leader: Spencer, tell me what happened.

Spencer: I didn't think he wanted his candy, so I took it and ate it.

Leader: Anything else?

Spencer: Then I threw the wrapper at him.

Leader: What were you thinking when you did that?

Spencer: I don't know. I like candy. He had my favorite kind and I wanted it.

Leader: I know what it feels like to want something someone else has too. My neighbor has the most beautiful flowers in her front yard and every time I see them, I want some in my yard! Do you think that means I should go over and dig her flowers up and plant them in my yard?

Spencer: Well duh....you can't do that. But this was just a stupid piece of candy.

Leader: Yes, I agree, a piece of candy isn't as big of a deal as digging up flowers. But the truth is, we all have desires and urges that are wrong. That's because we're all sinners. We all choose to do things that go against God's laws. Do you think God has something to say about taking something that doesn't belong to us?

Spencer: (Shrugs)

Leader: He does. Look right here in Exodus 20:15. What does that say?

Spencer: "You must not steal."

Leader: That's right. God tells us directly that he doesn't want us to steal. Not candy, not flowers. We all break God's laws at some point. And when we do, that sin separates us from God and needs to be punished. Do you like punishment?

Spencer: (Shakes head no)

Leader: No, I don't either. But I have good news! God knew we were sinners, and even though we do bad things, He still loves us and wants a relationship with us. In fact, He wants that so badly that He sent Jesus, his only son, to earth to take our punishment for us. Jesus was whipped and hung on a cross to die to pay for all the times I do wrong things like steal. And all the times you do wrong things like steal. But Jesus didn't stay dead. He rose from the grave and is alive today. Jesus promises us that if we believe in who he says he is, repent (or say we're sorry and turn away) from what we've done and ask him to forgive us, he will do it! So we don't have to go around feeling guilty about the bad things we've done. AND, he gives us the power to not keep doing those wrong things over and over again. Do you have any questions about that?....Do you want to ask Jesus to forgive your sins?.....

4. During small group time, Beth tells you that her dad is in jail for selling drugs. She hasn't seen her dad in 4 years. Beth says her dad is a no-good loser and she hates him and never wants to see him again. Beth says, "My momma says there's no fixing him." How

do you respond? (Hint: think about the Gospel message outline section “What’s the problem?” and “What’s the solution?”)

Leader: Awww Beth, I’m sorry that happened to you. My dad died a few years ago and I miss him a lot. It’s hard when we don’t have important people in our lives. You know, sometimes people will let us down or leave our lives unexpectedly. It can leave us feeling sad and confused. But do you know who promises to never leave us?

Beth: God?

Leader: That’s right, Beth. God promises that he will never leave us. Look right here in Hebrews 13:5. Can you read it?

Beth: For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never abandon you."

Leader: We can always count on God to be with us. Especially when we’re hurting because our dad is in jail. Even though your momma says your dad is a lost cause, do you know what God has to say about him?

Beth: No, what?

Leader: God says NO ONE is ever impossible to reach. With God, all things are possible. The Bible is full of many people who did some terrible things – lied, cheated, stole and even murdered – yet God forgave them, brought them into his family and used them to do his work on earth. Even if your momma has given up on your dad, God hasn’t. Do you think we could say a short prayer together for your dad right now?