

Session 4

Finding Common Ground

A blind person in prison can hardly be expected to initiate a friendship that will lead toward Christ. It's up to us to make the first move. In this session, we'll

- Start learning how to cultivate by taking the initiative and developing common ground with unbelievers
- Look at reasons why we resist making friends with unbelievers
- Explore way to overcome those barriers

1. What are some of the average ways common ground was established in this video?

- An experience that touched their common humanity
- Helping out a neighbor
- Hobbies and interests, like fishing
- Having their neighbors in their home
- Walt drawing Raz out by asking him questions



2. What keeps believers apart from unbelievers?

Fear of rejection, failure, and contamination

3. What keeps unbelievers apart from believers?

Fear of judgment, alien ways, feeling as if they have to give up something.

4. Despite barriers, how is it possible for us to make real friendships with unbelievers?

Friendships are possible if we as children of God are willing to take risks and overcome fears. We can disarm unbeliever's fears by treating them with respect, acceptance, and love. We can put our own fears in the hands of God and seek the support of other believers as we venture into potentially unpleasant or tempting territory. We can look for the things

“Frequently the unsaved are viewed enemies rather than victims of the Enemy. Spirituality is viewed as separation from the unsaved. The new Christian is told he has ‘nothing in common’ with his unsaved associates. Quite frankly, I have a lot in common with them: a mortgage, car payments, kids who misbehave, a lawn to mow, a car to wash, a less-than-perfect marriage, a few too many pounds around my waist, and an interest in sports, hobbies, and other activities they enjoy. It is well to remember that Jesus is called ‘a friend of sinners.’”

*-- Joe Aldrich,
Life-Style Evangelism*

we have in common with unbelievers, rather than focusing on the spiritual gap between us.

5. What do you think Jesus would have done in Jackie’s situation at her party?

Made everyone feel welcomed in His home.

He would have been sensitive to His guest’s feelings vs. His own.

Jackie resisted a friendship with her neighbors because she feared contamination of her children, her home, and herself, but others of us are more afraid of rejection or failure.

6. How do you feel when you make a friendly overture toward someone and the door is slammed in your face?

It’s time to try another angle

Use God as a resource

Remember it is Christ who is being rejected, not me

7. How do you think God views people who do their best to build a friendship and pray for their friend, but fail to win the trust needed to take the next step?

For a believer who is taking a step in faith, He will build their character to allow them to take the next step as they submit to Him

“Most of us fear that who we are inside just isn’t enough. So we cover up our honest questions and doubts thinking we won’t sound spiritual. But in doing this, we forfeit our most important asset in evangelism – our real person. Not to accept our humanness means we lose our point of authentic contact with the world... When we get a good look at Jesus, we will see that it is not our humanity we need to fear.”

-- Rebecca Pippert, Out of the Saltshaker and into the World.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it on a its stand, and it give light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:14-16

Going Deeper

Friendship 101

If you ask believers why they aren't building friendships with the unbelievers at their workplaces, in their neighborhoods, or among the parents of their kids' friends, they will often reply, "I've tried, but we have nothing in common." It can seem true. Believers are interested in spiritual matters or issues at church, while unbelievers may be indifferent to anything of eternal significance. The topics that interest non-Christians may seem shallow to those of us with a deeper perspective. However, the fact is that we have a lot of things in common with unbelievers.



Family

We may have children. If your children are grown, maybe you know of young couple who would appreciate your taking an interest in their children.

Work

If you are a professional, you might make connections with others in your profession. If you are a secretary, seek out other secretaries with whom you can go to lunch or after-work aerobics. If you are a mechanic, seek mechanics. There's no law that says lawyers and mechanics can't be friends, but if you're afraid of having nothing in common, look for people who are guaranteed to share similar interests.

If you work with someone, you have something ready-made in common. It's sad that so often workplace socializing stays on the surface level. Christians need to develop the art of drawing people out. You may feel afraid of grilling people with questions about themselves; it seems nosy. But most people enjoy talking about themselves, their families, where they grew up, where they've lived, and so on. Past history is usually a safe subject and can lead to surprising connections: "You used to love fishing? Wow, so did I! Let's go fishing sometime."

For Further Reading

Jim Petersen, *Living Proof*, chapters 5, 6, 12, 17

Joe Aldrich, *Life-Style Evangelism*, chapters 3, 10

Joe Aldrich, *Gentle Persuasion*, chapters 6-8

Richard Peace, *Small Group Evangelism*, chapter 3

Rebecca Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker and into the World*, chapters 6-8