

## **Tips for Starting and Continuing Conversations**

### **1. Be a good question-asker**

- Lead with questions instead of declarative statements
- Demonstrate a desire to learn about the other person
- Don't expect the other person to carry the conversation
- Have some good questions ready to ask at all times

### **2. Be a good listener**

- Let the other person talk first; Encourage them to keep talking
- Show an interest in what they are saying; Ask follow up questions to learn more
- Use active listening techniques to help draw out the other person's story  
eg. "What I hear you saying is..." or "It sounds like you really feel..." or "That's amazing!  
You must be...(fill in an appropriate emotion)"

### **3. Only share information about yourself when invited, or when it seems appropriate**

- Avoid "conversation walking" – focusing the conversation on yourself rather than the other person
- Read body language to learn if you are saying too much  
eg. Eyes darting back and forth, fidgeting, tense body posture, etc.
- Share only small pieces of your story at a time; Avoid launching into long stories about yourself that need a lot of explanation

### **4. Some Starter questions to get things going—**

- What do you do for a living? What do you enjoy the most about that?
- What are some of your favorite things to do? What do you enjoy most about those things?
- What is your family like? What do you enjoy doing together?
- What's your favorite movie (or book or song or musical artist or ...)? What do you like about it or them?
- What would be your dream vacation? Where? Why?

## **Ideas for Growing a Friendship with a non-believer**

### **1. Start by doing things that friends do**

- Invite him or her to coffee or lunch
- Do something you both like to do together
- Sit next to him or her in class (if you're a student)
- Go see a movie together or do some other fun activity
- Join a community organization together

### **2. Use the Starter questions to get to know him or her a little better**

- Be careful not to overwhelm with questions
- Work at building rapport; Establish common ground
- Show a genuine interest in who he or she is as a person

### **3. Look for opportunities to introduce spiritual topics**

- Listen for statements that indicate spiritual questioning
- Take note of comments that reveal either an interest in spiritual things or a wounded-ness from past encounters with believers
- Be ready to ask probing questions or to respond with empathetic statements

### **4. Examples of comments or questions to move things along—**

- "Wow. I'm sorry to hear about that experience. I can understand how you'd feel hurt by that."
- "What troubles you the most about religious people?"
- "What has been your experience with church or with Christian people?"
- "Are you interested in spiritual things?"
- "How would you describe your spiritual beliefs?"
- "What do you believe about God?"
- "What is your opinion of Jesus Christ?" "What do you think of some of the things that he said?"
- "What do you think is the significance of Jesus's death on the cross?"
- "What would it take for you to be convinced that Jesus actually rose from the dead?"
- "What keeps you from putting your faith in Jesus?"