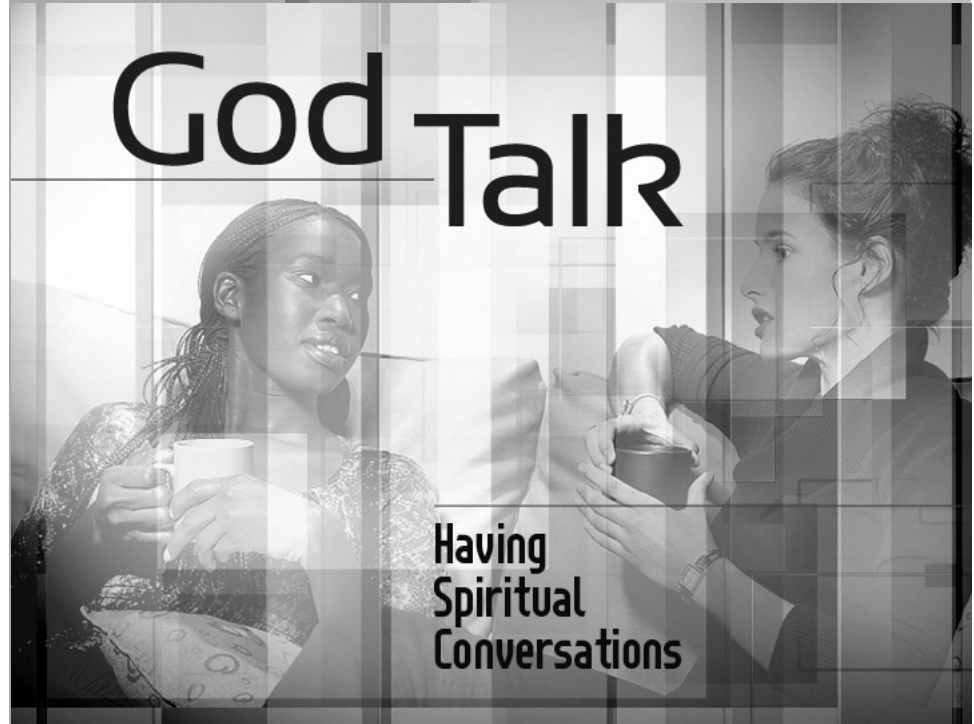


God Talk



**Having
Spiritual
Conversations**

BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

For Personal and
Small Group Study



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INTRODUCTION

Talking to people about God or spiritual topics can be a touchy thing; we are often afraid of either babbling like an idiot, unintentionally offending those around us, or coming across like a religious nut. Join us as we embark on a four-week study to learn about some practical tools for engaging in spiritual conversations with those we rub shoulders with ... in a manner that is consistent with who God made us to be ... naturally!

Directions

There are four studies per week: one small group study and three personal studies. We encourage you to spend time in prayer and reflection in light of what God is speaking to you during your time in his word.

You can also download the PDF from our website, www.ucov.com.

We would love to hear your feedback — what works, what doesn't, and suggestions and ideas for next time! May God bless you as you engage in his word!

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Note

Personal study commentary paragraphs on the readings are from **The Life Application Bible**.

PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY QUESTIONS

Read Philippians 2:1-11

1. Reading between the lines, what do you think was the problem with the church in Philippi?
2. What are four motives from this text for living in unity?
3. How do you think unity is related to humility?
4. How does this passage show that Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time?
5. How do you think this passage informs our witness to other people?

The incarnation was the act of the preexistent Son of God voluntarily assuming a human body and human nature. Without ceasing to be God, he became a human being, the man called Jesus. He did not give up his deity to become human, but he set aside the right to his glory and power. In submission to the Father's will, Christ limited his power and knowledge. Jesus of Nazareth was subject to place, time, and many other human limitations. What made his humanity unique was his freedom from sin. In his full humanity, Jesus showed us everything about God's character that can be conveyed in human terms. The incarnation is explained further in these passages: John 1:1-14; Romans 1:2-5; 2 Cor. 8:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Hebrews 2:14; and 1 John 1:1-3.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

1. What are the essential characteristics of salt, of light?
2. What do you think Jesus meant when he called us to be salt and light?
3. How can a believer use his or her "saltiness?"
4. How can someone be "no longer being good for anything" (v.13) even though Jesus still loves them?
5. How can you be salt and light to the people God has placed in your life this week?

Can you hide a city that is sitting on top of a hill? Its light at night can be seen for miles. If we live for Christ, we will glow like lights, showing others what Christ is like. We hide our light by (1) being quiet when we should speak, (2) going along with the crowd, (3) denying the light, (4) letting sin dim our light, (5) not explaining our light to others, or (6) ignoring the needs of others. Be a beacon of truth—don't shut your light off from the rest of the world.

Read 1 Peter 3:13-18

1. According to verse 15, how does this text say we are to live? What do you think this means? (See 1 Peter 1:15-16 & 2 Peter 3:11-12.)
3. What seems to be the context of this reading? In other words, in what setting does this conversation take place?
4. What commands do you see?
5. Why do you think gentleness and respect is so important in sharing your faith?
6. Which phrase or concept from the reading highlights an area you need to work on today?

Some Christians believe that faith is a personal matter that should be kept to oneself. It is true that we shouldn't be disrespectful or obnoxious in sharing our faith, but we should always be ready to give an answer, gently and respectfully, when asked about our faith, our life-style, or our Christian perspective. Can others see your hope in Christ? Are you prepared to tell them what Christ has done in your life?

Read John 4:1-26

1. How do people satisfy their hungers and thirsts in life?
2. Through what place did Jesus have to travel?
3. Why do you think the text says, he "had to"?
4. Why was the Samaritan woman surprised that Jesus spoke to her?
5. What did Jesus say would be the result of the water he offered?
6. Where have you found vs. 13 and 14 to be true in your life?
7. According to this text, who did Jesus claim to be?
8. When did you respond to Jesus' invitation to receive his living water? What difference has that made in your life?
9. How can you encourage others to "quench their spiritual thirst" through Jesus this week?

After the northern kingdom, with its capital at Samaria, fell to the Assyrians, many Jews were deported to Assyria, and foreigners were brought in to settle the land and help keep the peace (2 Kings 17:24). The intermarriage between those foreigners and the remaining Jews resulted in a mixed race, impure in the opinion of Jews who lived in the southern kingdom. Thus the pure Jews hated this mixed race called Samaritans because they felt that their fellow Jews who had intermarried had betrayed their people and nation. The Samaritans had set up an alternate center for worship on Mount Gerizim (John 4:20) to parallel the temple at Jerusalem, but it had been destroyed 150 years earlier. The Jews did everything they could to avoid traveling through Samaria. But Jesus had no reason to live by such cultural restrictions. The route through Samaria was shorter, and that was the route he took.

Read I Thessalonians 1:1-10

1. What did Paul remember about the Thessalonians?
2. How did the believers of Thessalonica receive the gospel?
3. How were the Thessalonians lives a model for others?
4. Verse 8 says, "The Lord's message rang out and your faith became known everywhere." What do you think is the difference between the Lord's message and their personal faith? How is that similar?
5. What do you think the Holy Spirit is saying to you, through these verses today and how can you act on it?

The gospel came "with power;" it had a powerful effect on the Thessalonians. Whenever the Bible is heard and obeyed, lives are changed! Christianity is more than a collection of interesting facts; it is the power of God to every one who believes. What has God's power done in your life since you first believed?

The Holy Spirit changes people when they believe the gospel. When we tell others about Christ, we must depend on the Holy Spirit to open their eyes and convince them that they need salvation. God's power changes people—not our cleverness or persuasion. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, our words are meaningless. The Holy Spirit not only convicts people of sin but also assures them of the truth of the gospel. (For more information on the Holy Spirit, see John 14:23-26 and John 15:26-27.)

Read Matthew 13:1-9; 18-23

Complete the following chart.

Four types of soil	What characterizes each?	What happens to the seed in each soil?
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		

1. What soil most represents your "heart"?

2. What is one action you could do this week in regards to the way you listen to God's word?

This parable encourages spiritual sowers, those that teach, preach and share their everyday faith with others. The farmer sowed good seed, but not all the seed sprouted and even the plants that grew had varying yields. Don't be discouraged if you do not always see results as you faithfully "sow" the gospel. God alone brings people to faith — we are called to sow his seed.

Read John 3:1-21

1. Why did Nicodemus believe Jesus was from God?
2. According to the text, what is required to enter the kingdom of God?
3. According to this reading, why did God send his son into the world?
4. In verses 16-21, what verses are you drawn to, and which verses do you wish weren't there?
5. Why do you think Nicodemus came at night?

The entire gospel comes to a focus in this verse. God's love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in. Here God sets the pattern of true love, the basis for all love relationships—when you love someone dearly, you are willing to give freely to the point of self-sacrifice. God paid dearly with the life of his Son, the highest price he could pay. Jesus accepted our punishment, paid the price for our sins, and then offered us the new life that he had bought for us. When we share the gospel with others, our love must be like Jesus'—willingly giving up our own comfort and security so that others might join us in receiving God's love.

Read Isaiah 53:7-12

1. What kinds of human suffering are particularly abhorrent and difficult for you to watch?
2. What did Isaiah prophesy about the attractiveness of God's servant?
3. What would the wounds of the Messiah accomplish for all believers?
4. Read Luke 23:1-56. Where do you see Isaiah's prophecy, written 700 years earlier being fulfilled?

In the Old Testament, people offered animals as sacrifices for their sins. Here, the sinless servant of the Lord offers himself for our sins. He is the Lamb (Isaiah 53:7) offered for the sins of all people (John 1:29; Rev. 5:6-14). The Messiah suffered for our sakes, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. What can we say to such love? How will we respond to him?

Read Matthew 28:18-20

1. What did Jesus say about himself?
2. Why would it be important to obey the commands that follow?
3. What were the activities or commands the disciples were to be involved in?
4. What do you think it means to "make disciples?"
5. Where in your life and environment does the word "go" apply to?
6. What step can you take this week in the process of making disciples?

When someone is dying or leaving us, his or her last words are very important. Jesus left the disciples with these last words of instruction: they were under his authority; they were to make more disciples; they were to baptize and teach these new disciples to obey Christ; Christ would be with them always. Whereas in previous missions Jesus had sent his disciples only to the Jews (Matthew 10:5-6), their mission from now on would be worldwide. Jesus is Lord of the earth, and he died for the sins of people from all nations.

We are to go—whether it is next door or to another country—and make disciples. It is not an option, but a command to all who call Jesus "Lord." We are not all evangelists in the formal sense, but we have all received gifts that we can use to help fulfill the Great Commission. As we obey, we have comfort in the knowledge that Jesus is always with us.

Read Luke 5:1-11

1. When have you participated in a project in which everyone worked very hard, only to experience failure?
2. What did Jesus suggest to Simon following this passage?
3. How do you think you would feel if you were Peter, when Peter responded to Jesus' request? What do you imagine his tone and attitude were like?
4. Why do you think Peter responded the way he did when he saw the huge catch of fish?
5. Why do you think Jesus says, "Do not fear," before he tells Peter and the others that from now on they would catch "people"?
6. How does this study encourage you in being a witness for Jesus Christ?

There are two requirements for coming to God. Like Peter, we must recognize our own sinfulness. Then, like these fishermen, we must realize that we can't save ourselves. If we know that we need help, and if we know that Jesus is the only one who can help us, we will be ready to leave everything and follow him.

Read 2 Peter 3:9-18

1. What do we learn about God in this text?
2. Do you get frustrated at God's patience? How so? How is God's patience a benefit?
3. Since the "Day of the Lord" is coming, how ought we to live?
4. How does this passage speak to you about being a faithful witness?

The day of the Lord is the day of God's judgment on the earth. Here it is used in reference to Christ's return. Christ's second coming will be sudden and terrible for those who do not believe in him. But if we are morally clean and spiritually alert, it won't come as a surprise. For other prophetic pictures of the day of the Lord, see Isaiah 34:4; Joel 3:15-16; Matthew 24; Mark 13; Luke 21; Rev. 6:12-17. Realizing that the earth is going to be burned up, we should put our confidence in what is lasting and eternal and not be bound to earth and its treasures or pursuits. Do you spend more of your time piling up possessions, or striving to develop Christ-like character?

Read Revelation 20:11-21:7

1. What particular vision begins this portion of John's revelation?
2. How do you think John 3:16 and Ephesians 2:8-9 speak to the message of Revelation 20:12?
3. What does this text say will happen to those names who are found in the book of life?
4. How does the certainty of future judgment affect the way we live? Affect how we are inspired to share the gospel?
5. What do you think it means that God will wipe every tear from our eyes?
6. How does this scene at the end of our earthly life encourage you to be a faithful witness?

Have you ever wondered what eternity will be like? The "Holy City, the new Jerusalem" is described as the place where God will "wipe every tear from their eyes." Forevermore, there will be no death, pain, sorrow, or crying. What a wonderful truth! No matter what you are going through, it's not the last word—God has written the final chapter, and it is about true fulfillment and eternal joy for those who love him. We do not know as much as we would like, but it is enough to know that eternity with God will be more wonderful than we could ever imagine.

SMALL GROUP
BIBLE STUDY
QUESTIONS

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11-21

1. What are two motives for sharing our faith, according to this text?
2. Which of these two encourages you more to be faithful in sharing your faith?
3. Since the point you accepted Christ in your life, how would you say you have become a "new creation?" How has your life changed?
4. Who have you been able to invest in as an ambassador of Christ? (v20)

Video Teaching

Group Sessions, 1: The Single Greatest Gift, second segment, 11:00 (minutes)

Video Observations

1. What part of Brian's story had the greatest impact on you? Please explain.
2. As you think back on your own journey, who are the people who influenced you towards Christ?
3. How would you describe the way in which this person reached out to you?
4. What part of that experience was most affirming or encouraging to you?

Read John 1:35-51

1. What were the different ways that Jesus interacted with the people?
2. What kind of decisions did the disciples make?
3. Why do you think Philip only said "come and see" rather than trying to explain everything?
4. What does this text tell you about learning how to share your faith?

Video Teaching

Group Sessions, 2: Living in 3D, second segment, 15:09

Video Observations

1. What about this story made an impression upon you?
2. In what ways can you relate to various aspects of "Super Dave's" story? Several of them are listed below to jog your memory:
 - Negative religious experiences during adolescent years
 - Witness to close friends submitting their lives to Christ
 - Significant loss – for Dave, it was the death of his father
 - Lengthy journey to faith in God
3. Once you make the decision to connect with people outside the faith, as Bill did with Dave, why do you think it's so important to understand their story before trying to engage in spiritual discussions with them?
4. Share prayer requests of people you would like to engage in developing a friendship, discovering their stories or discerning next steps.

Read John 9:1-25

1. How does the man who was healed by Jesus share his story?
2. What kind of opposition does he get?
3. How does he respond?
4. What can you learn about sharing your faith from this story in John 9?
5. Romans 1:16 says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel because it's the power of God for salvation of all who believe." The gospel is story and there is great power in story. Let's watch this video segment to learn more about this concept.

Video Teaching

Group Sessions, 3: The Power of Story, second segment, 12:36

Video Observations

1. In this week's video segment, we witnessed the telling of really bad stories.
 - The long winded story that went on and on and on.
 - The fuzzy story that never seemed to get to the point
 - The religion-ese story that was filled with Christian insider's jargon
 - The superiority story that was filled with pious, haughty language
 Which one bothered you the most and why?
2. On the other end of the spectrum, what are a few common denominators you noted in the good stories that were told at the end of the video segment? (See page 43-44 of the book **Just Walk Across the Room**.)
3. What type of person were you before you met Christ? On the lines below, write down five to ten adjectives that come to mind. (If you came to faith at a young age, consider how you would describe what you were like prior to developing a thriving, more mature relationship with Christ.)

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. From the adjectives you noted in question 3, what is the one word in particular that best summarizes your "before" state?

Your Encounter with Christ

5. Now describe the circumstances that caused you to submit your life to Jesus Christ. What life-stage were you in? What input did you receive that finally triggered your desire to ask Christ into your life? What was the most significant thing about your making this decision?

Your "After"

6. Now, completing the sentence below, note the primary difference that Christ has made in your life.

Since inviting Christ into my life, I've become... _____

7. Tell your tale. Have a member of your group keep time as you tell your before-and-after story now. (One thing to keep in mind: in addition to conveying the basic before-and-after framework, be sure to mention one or two areas of your life that Christ is still refining. Nobody has "arrived"—it's important to acknowledge this reality.)

Video Segment on God's Redemptive Story

Take time in your group to either practice the bridge, do vs. done or the morality ladder.

Prayer Points

Share prayer requests of people you want to connect with and pray.

Read Colossians 4:2-6

What does this text say to you about being a faithful witness?

Video Teaching

Group Sessions: Grander Vision Living, second segment

1. What in this video teaching made an impression upon you?
2. Have you ever thought that being a Christian necessarily meant that you would have to become a "lifestyle referee" to the world around you? How did it strike you when it mentioned that Christ followers are under no obligation to play such a role?
3. What do you think of the "Matthew Party" concept—an event where you invite a few Christ-followers, several seekers, and several people who want nothing to do with God—as presented in this session's video?
4. Whether or not you've ever been involved in a Matthew Party, what fears or concerns would you have about hosting one now?
5. Based on the following verses, what do you learn about the Holy Spirit's involvement in the life of the Christ-follower?

John 14:16-21

Acts 1:8

Romans 8:16-17

Prayer Points

Share prayer requests and close in prayer.



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