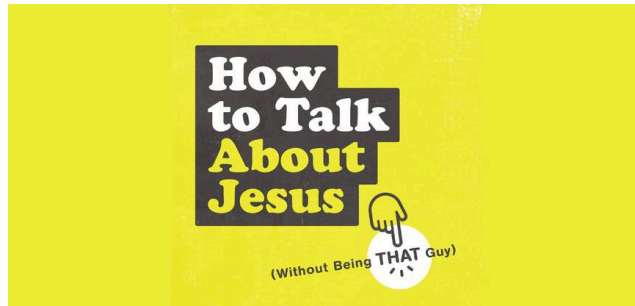




Community Group Guide

Tip #1: Merge Your universes

In this chapter, Sam talks about plausibility structures. This is the idea that what we believe is influenced by three main sources: (1) community, (2) experiences, and (3) facts, evidence, and data. What do you think about this idea? As you think about your own life, have you seen this play out?

Sam writes:

One of the major reasons our friends aren't Christians is that they don't belong to a community of friends who also believe in Jesus. It's not primarily because they haven't heard the gospel (they probably haven't, but they already think they know what you believe). It's not because there's not enough evidence for the Christian faith (because no matter how much evidence you produce, they'll explain it away). In many cases, the number one reason our friends aren't Christians is that they don't have any other Christian friends.

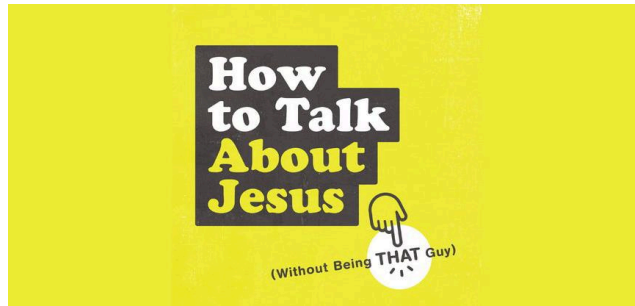
As you think about the non-Christians in your life, what does their connection to Christians look like? And how do you think their connection, or lack of connection, to other Christians influences the way they think about Christianity?

Sam suggests that the longer someone is a Christian, the more likely they are to have two separate universes of friends, Christian and non-Christian. Is this true in your life? If so, why do you think that is?

Can you think of any examples from Jesus' life of times he merged his universes?

What challenges might arise when you try to integrate Christian and non-Christian friends?

What small step could you take this week to begin merging your universes?



Community Group Guide

Tip #2: Go to Their Things

Sam describes the awkwardness that can exist when inviting a non-Christian friend to something faith related. Can you relate to that? Can you think of any examples of a time you either did not invite someone because of the awkwardness, or when an invite was awkward?

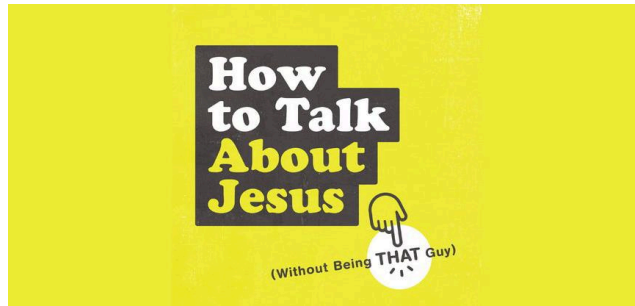
Sam describes Jesus as someone who “went to their things.” How do we see that in his life?

As you think about your social circles, what are the “things” that most people are doing? For example, is your friends time filled with: youth sports, book clubs, golf, concerts, food, museums, hobbies?

Sam also notes the value in inviting others to participate in your normal things, not just the church ones. What are some invitational opportunities your life naturally provides? In other words, what fills your time?

What are some challenges or difficulties that come with “going to their things”?

What is one step you could take this week to put this into practice?



Community Group Guide

Tip #3: *Coffee, Dinner, Gospel*

Sam lays out three layers of conversation: interests, values, and worldview. What does he mean by each of those?

Sam also relates each layer of conversation to a progression of interaction: coffee, dinner, gospel. Why do you think he chooses these, and what kind of conversation does he think goes best in each setting?

What layer of conversation do you find most comfortable?

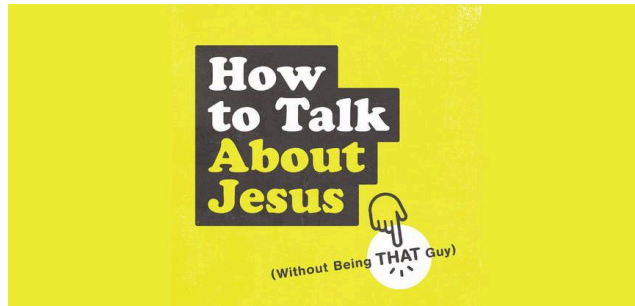
Sam suggests that jumping layers too quickly can close the door on a conversation. Have you ever experienced this?

Sam also suggests that we can easily miss opportunities to move the conversation to a deeper layer. Can you think of a time you moved a conversation from interests to values? Or a time you did not, but felt like you should have?

Sam suggests nudge questions as a way to move the conversation from layer to layer. Do you have any favorite nudge questions?

Sam also highlights the need to listen rather than argue, especially as the conversation goes to deeper layers of meaning. Why is this important?

What role does hospitality play in creating space for conversation?



Community Group Guide

Tip #4: Listen

Many methods of evangelism center on talking, but Sam puts the emphasis on listening. Why do you think that is?

Sam quotes the “golden rule of Evangelism”: *Evangelize the same way that you want to be evangelized.* If someone from another faith were to evangelize to you, how would you want them to do it?

Sam writes:

That brings me to lesson number one on how not to evangelize: Unless our friends feel heard, they cannot listen to us, no matter how hard they try.

What is the difference between being listened to, and being heard?

Sam outlines three ways of listening.

The first form is where you listen, but you’re really just waiting for your own turn to say what you want to say. The second form is where you listen but you’re working out how to argue against them, how to show them why they’re wrong, or what advice you’re going to give them. The third form is real listening. Here you really are just letting them talk while you listen. Can you think of a time when you’ve been on the receiving end of these types of listening?

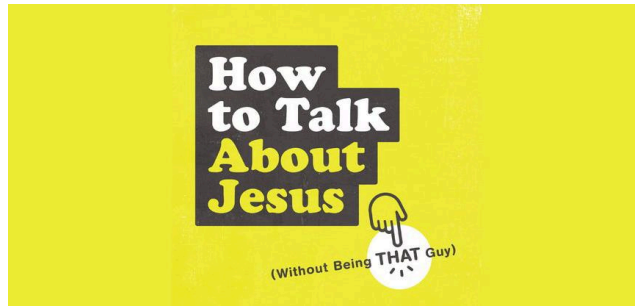
Sam suggests that we can take different approaches to conversation, depending on the nature of our relationships. So it is different with strangers than with family.

What are some challenges you experience having deeper conversations with family or close friends?

Sam writes:

What we say is important. But the more closely someone knows us, the more they will be persuaded by our way of life rather than merely by what we say.

What do you think about that statement?



Community Group Guide

Tip #5: Tell a Better Story

Sam invites us to think about different ways to tell the story of Jesus. When you think about the story of Jesus, what is the first thing that comes to mind?

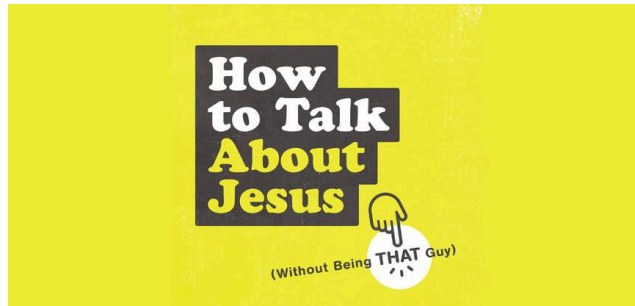
It can be a challenge to know what to share when talking about Jesus. Do you ever wrestle with knowing what to say, or how to say it?

Sam suggests that the way we might naturally tell the story of Jesus might not be the way that most naturally fits our audience. Have you ever experienced this mismatch?

Sam suggests matching a person's felt needs to some real aspect of Jesus' care and provision for us. What do you think of that idea? And what do you think about the examples he gave?

One challenge of talking about Jesus, is the churchy language, or jargon, that is unfamiliar to those outside of faith. Can you think of some church words or phrases that might be strange or confusing to your non-Christian friends or family? What are some other ways we might explain those ideas, without using those words?

Sam also suggests using our story to tell Jesus' story. Have you ever thought about how to tell your story in this way? What do you think about that idea?



Community Group Guide

Tip #6: Tell them stories about Jesus

Sam suggests that many of us are in the “friend zone” when it comes to talking about Jesus. He means that we have friendships where the risk of talking about Jesus keeps us from doing it. Do you have any friendships you would describe this way?

Many of us fear that we might lose relationships with people if we talk about our faith. Do you relate to this fear?

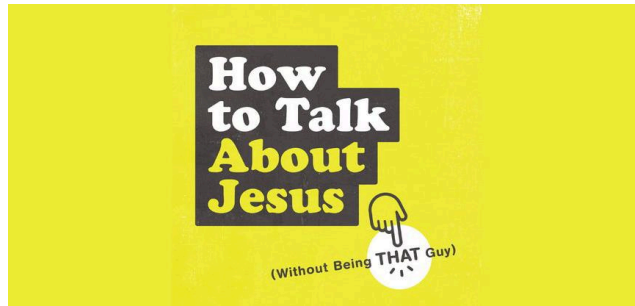
Sam suggests two tips for moving into a conversation about faith: (1) Ask a nudge question, (2) Just do it! Does anyone have a story they would be willing to share about a time you tried one of these techniques?

Sam writes:

If we tell our post-Christian friends only that we're a Christian, chances are they will not understand. Worse, they will associate us with whatever wrong ideas they have about Christianity. They may even see us as drawing an “us versus them” line in the sand. We can alleviate this confusion by asking a follow-up question like, “What do you think of when I say I’m a Christian?” or “What do you think I mean when I say I’m a Christian?”

What do you think of that question?

If you had to choose one story from the Bible to tell a non-Christian friend about Jesus, what story would you tell? And why that one?



Community Group Guide

Tip #7: Become their unofficial, De Facto Chaplain

Sam suggests that we can position ourselves into our non-Christian friends' lives as their unofficial, de facto chaplain. What do you think this means?

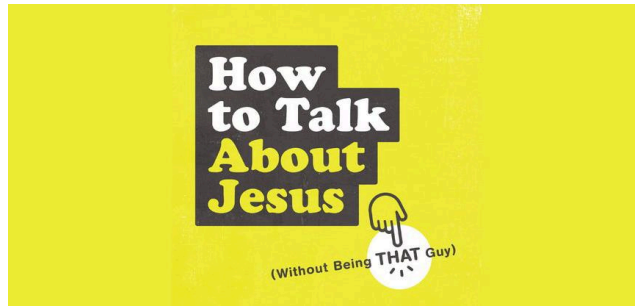
Sam says that a chaplain is wise, takes an interest in people's lives, is a calm, nonanxious presence, and offers to pray. Have you had people serve this kind of role in your life (try to think about people other than pastors.)?

What has been the impact of those people on you?

Of those four components of being a chaplain to others, which come most naturally to you? And which are most difficult?

As you think about your friends and family, what are the life moments when a chaplain-like presence has been most needed?

What is one step you could take to offer more of a chaplain-like presence to your friends?



Community Group Guide

Tip #8: Lean into Disagreement

Sam writes:

In order to tell our friends about Jesus, we have to make ourselves vulnerable. Not so much vulnerable to attack, but vulnerable to disagreement. When we do this, we're following in Jesus' footsteps.

People have different levels of comfort with disagreement. How would you describe your own level of comfort with disagreement?

Sam writes:

Jesus shows us that allowing for disagreement in relationships and being willing to engage with people we disagree with is a way of demonstrating inclusiveness and showing unconditional love.

Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

Sam suggests two ways to support your own position: (1) agree with Jesus and (2) share stories as examples. What do you think of these techniques?

Sam invites us to gently challenge the worldview of others with questions like: *Where do you get your views? Or why do you believe that?*

What are the dangers of doing this? What are the benefits of doing this? And how can we do this well?

Sam suggests that in a time when more and more people have little background with Christianity, we don't just need to defend Christian ideas, but we actually have to make a case FOR Christian ideas. What do you think about that?

Sam says that in disagreement, our goal should be to win the friendship, not the argument. What are some ways those two goals might be in conflict? And what are some ways to "win the friendship?"