

HELPING A FRIEND TO FAITH

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Of course, it all depends who that friend is! Many in Raleigh are religious without having a personal relationship with Christ. Some have even gone to BSF for years without coming alive spiritually. Others are very nominal, and some quite hostile. We need to be good friends, to be perceptive and to be flexible.

1. **It all begins with motivation.** Evangelism is not about technique but about passion to share the greatest relationship we have. It springs from gratitude to Jesus (John 21) and power from Jesus (Acts 1.8)
 - *So we must know Christ personally, or we can never introduce anyone to him.
 - *We must be thrilled with him. Enthusiasm communicates. See how in John 1.41 a sense of discovery proved a valuable evangelistic tool. It still does.
 - *We must harbor no unconfessed sin, or God will not be able to use us (Ps.66.18)
 - *We must be flexible, allowing our friend to make the running, and all the time drawing him/her back to the twin foci of Jesus and the resurrection. The attraction to Christ may not always be awareness of guilt. It may be a sense of emptiness or meaninglessness, an awareness of loneliness or failure. Your job is to sense where your friend is and introduce that aspect of the many sided Lord which is most appropriate to him at that time.

2. **You need to know the heart of the good news** (in broad outline)
 - about God* – who is personal, creator, holy, love
 - about us* –made in God’s image, but marred (the fact of sin, the result of sin, the power of sin)
 - about Jesus* – he came to reveal God, to rescue sinners, supremely by the cross and resurrection
 - about the way back home* - ‘bridge over troubled water’ : that bridge is already built, but it has to be crossed

3. **You must make non-church friends**, develop that friendship, discover where your friend is coming from intellectually, culturally and spiritually, reflect on the appropriate way in, pray regularly for him/her, and wait for the opportunity. All the time your life must be winsome or he will not hear what you have to say.

4. **You must develop that friendship**, and become very natural and relaxed with him/her. Pray daily for your friend, and make good use of stepping stones along the path. For example you might want to go to an appropriate film with him and discuss it, lend a video or a book, or introduce to other Christian friends. It is all part of the preparation..

5. **You might lay on an imaginative event**, or take him to one that others have planned. Be careful that it is not just a good speaker but someone who will address the situation your friend is in.

6. When talking about spiritual things you need to develop **a natural manner, a listening ear** for your friend’s concerns. And you will find it helpful to ask **questions**.

7. **4. You must be willing to share with him what Jesus has done for you.**
 Testimony from a friend is very powerful. It is not your faith so much as your Savior that you need to concentrate on. In an age that is shy of the rationalism of 'proofs for God' show him the attractiveness of Jesus – his matchless life, his love for all, his offer of forgiveness, his living presence, his pledge of heaven..
8. **You need to be able to give a clear and simple (but not simplistic) account of** how your friend can find the Lord. Here are four steps, easily memorable because of the initial letters, A B C D

If he is going to find a living faith, he must :-

Admit that he is not yet in touch with Christ. Sin is the problem, and you will find verses such as Romans 3.23, 6.23, Isaiah 59.1,2, John 8.34 valuable.

Believe that Christ has done all that is necessary to put this right, through his incarnation, death on the cross, and risen life (1 Peter 3.28, Isai.53.6, John 8.36, 1 Peter 1.3)

Consider the cost of discipleship (Matt.6.24, Rom.10,9,10, Heb.10.25)

Do John 3.16, 1.12, Revelation 3.20

You need to have a few verses like these up your sleeve and know where to find them in the Bible. God's word is much more powerful than ours. Expose him to it.

- 9 Once your friend is clear on that (or clear enough to see no reason why he should not commit himself to Christ) you should strike while the iron is hot and suggest praying. First, you pray for him (out loud) that he may have the courage to take this crucial step. Then ask him to pray, preferably but not necessarily aloud, asking the Spirit of Jesus to come and indwell his life, using the clear imagery of Revelation 3.20.
- 10 You will need to give him an initial toe-hold on assurance, because doubt will inevitably come. God means us to be confident that we belong. We have

The word of the Father assuring us we have life if we have Christ (1 John 5.11,12)

The work of the Son on the cross (1 John 4.10)

The witness of the Spirit in the believer (1 John 3.24). 1 John shows many signs of this new life the Spirit brings. The qualities do not all come at once, but include:-

A new sense of forgiveness 2.1,2

A new desire to please God 2.3

A new distaste for sin 3.9

A new love for other Christians 3.14

A new concern for the needy 3.17

A new power over temptation 4.4, 5.3-5

A new experience of answered prayer 5.14,15

A new joy 1.4

The N.T. wants us to be crystal clear that we belong and are accepted in Christ (1 John 5.13, cf. Rom.8.1).

N.B. Now book your friend up for the next Christian Foundations course!