

How to start reading the Bible with your non-Christian friends

Here are a few tips to help you introduce your friends to Jesus Christ:

1. Get interested!

What makes your friend tick? Would they rather only ever be able to stay lying down or only ever be able to jog around? Would they rather have the super-power to be invisible or to fly? What did they want to be when they grew up? What's important to them in a life-long partner and why? Which of their parents are they more like? What would they do if they only had a week left to live?

Asking questions is like a key: it unlocks your friend's hopes and fears, finds out what drives them and where their securities lie and is a sign that you genuinely care about them – even if the questions seem a bit ludicrous! Asking good questions is the first step in creating openings for gospel-centred conversations. And be prepared to answer the questions yourself!

2. Create intrigue:

If they had God-like powers for a day, what would they do/change/improve? If they could ask God one question, what would it be? What is their biggest issue with religion in general and Christianity in particular? How would they solve this? What do they think Jesus would have to say/do about it? If they could know God personally, would they be interested?

Let them know that you'd love to introduce them to your friend Jesus, if they'd let you.

Here's something you could say:

"I'd really love you to have the opportunity I had to get to know God personally (as a friend) through Jesus, but only if you're interested.... Would you be up for having a look at an account of the life of Jesus? I think it'll surprise you, as it has surprised me!"

It is intriguing for your friends to see that your faith isn't just in a set of beliefs but in a *person who is alive*.

One of my friends who later became a Christian said that she thought I had gone mad "as if I could go and have a cup of tea with Jesus" – but then realised after some time that I was completely serious and she was intrigued to find out more about this person....

3. Share an invitation:

Jesus has many different encounters with people in the gospels and our friends often identify with them.

People are often fascinated that something in the bible is relevant to them. For the “I’m alright, I’m a good person, surely I’ll go to heaven” person, you can take them to Luke 18:19-30. For the pleasure-seeking person who thinks this life is all there is, take them to Luke 12:13-21. For the “I’m ashamed of myself and so far from God; he would never accept me” person, you could take them to John 8:1-11. Take people who think being a Christian is all about rules to Mark 7:1-23. Why don’t you make a list of your friends, scour the gospels and see which characters they would most identify with?

Why not have them over for dinner (or a game of squash) beforehand, so the invitation to look at the life of Jesus comes in the context of a holistic friendship?

4. Make a long-term investment in them.

Your first study doesn’t have to take them to the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The gospel writers don’t do that either - they build up to it. Spend quality time finding out what stops them from putting their faith and trust in Jesus Christ, both as you grow the friendship and as you look at the gospels together. That’ll help you lead more effective bible studies and will help them articulate where they’re at on their faith-journey. Prayerfully make it your aim that the first time you read the bible with them won’t be the last. Be like Jesus when he arouses curiosity in the heart of the Samaritan woman in John 4: “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked and he would have given you living water” and ask the Holy Spirit to create an intense thirst inside them for the living water of Jesus!

UNCOVER

There are some very helpful resources available to help you read the Bible with your friends. Written and produced by UCCF: The Christian Unions, UNCOVER offers ready-made questions for reading a gospel account of Jesus’ life with your friends. They provide an invaluable resource as you introduce your friends to King Jesus. Order some copies for yourself and your CU today!

www.uccf.org.uk/uncover

