

Part Two: Community and Evangelism

Evangelism is a team sport. Though at one level each believer in the Christian community is to see her or himself as an 'informal missionary' (see Acts 8:1-4), the shared life of Jesus-followers and the element of a friend-community, is key to the process of making the news of Jesus known in our world. In this study we'll discuss two key approaches. These are adapted from Sam Chan's important book: *How to Talk About Jesus Without Being 'That Guy.'*

The first, Chan calls "Merge Your Universes". The second is simply "Go to Their Things." We'll look at each of these approaches in our study and discuss what it would look like not just to 'try and do them once in a while,' but to adopt these approaches as a whole way of life.

Open Up

1. What are some of the most common ways you get to know our neighbours or co-workers and develop friendships?
2. What makes those ways so 'natural'?
3. What challenges do you face with making friends with people who are not followers of Jesus? Share ideas with each other about what might be a help in this area (and we'll look at some below too).

In this study we'll look at how important to evangelism, that we are present as a community of believers in the lives of our non-believing friends.

Dig In

In our second sermon, we looked at the fact that Jesus was always 'going to their things' – he was present in the lives, and at the tables, of those he was seeking to reach. **Read Matthew 9:9-13.**

1. What were the Pharisees concerned about in v.11?
2. What is the reply Jesus offers in v.12-13?
3. What does this show us about Jesus' approach to his mission?

4. Do you see friendship as an important element of the process of sharing the hope of Jesus with our world? Why or why not? How does Jesus offer an example for us to follow in this text?

Practice It

In the message, we saw that one of the most significant factors that influences what people believe is their community of trusted friends. It is very hard for someone to change their beliefs, identity, and purposes in life – as the Gospel transforms all those areas – if they do not have any trusted friends who believe the Christian message. Because of this we need to look for ways for our non-Christian friends and our Christian friends to become friends with each other. Sam Chan calls this process ‘merging our universes.’

I. Merging Our Universes

When we are in grade-school, we probably found making friends very easy. For adults, with jobs, families, multiple responsibilities, it can be more difficult. On top of that, in the Western world there is an assumption that every person, if they are an adult, should be ‘self-sufficient’ – that the idea of wanting friendships can come off as ‘needy’.

And yet I don’t know anyone who is not, when they are honest, wishing to have trusted friends to enjoy life with. Many of the movies and shows that are most attractive to us are shows about friendships (literally “Friends” in the previous decade and “Cheers” the decade before that), even if those friendships just happen to be in the office (or “The Office”).

Further, sometimes Christians tell me: “I don’t have any non-Christian friends.”

1. So, how do we initiate connection and build toward authentic friendships that can also bear fruit for the Gospel?

Here are a few ideas that relate to our physical ‘neighbours’. Read them through and discuss how you begin to adopt a similar practice or add your own ideas.

- A. One idea is to get to know our physical ‘neighbours.’ Drop off some extra baking and introduce yourself. Maybe write their names down so you don’t forget, and, in time, invite them over for a BBQ where you can get to know them more.
- B. One of the most helpful ways to build relational trust with our neighbours is by *asking for a favour*. By doing this we show vulnerability, and we are put in their dept. It might be something small – some ingredient you need for baking – but it begins to build a sense of community. There are walls of isolation that begin to fall when we reciprocate. This can begin to create a sense of ‘village’ where Christian and non-Christian neighbors begin to know each other and form friendships. This is a ‘merging of universes.’

- C. If you are a parent, you are already present in the world because of school or sports. When you are at a soccer or hockey game in the stands, or when you are picking up kids from school, this is an opportunity to connect. You have something in common already, kids and parenting, and perhaps this sport. Consider how being present can be an opportunity for connection.

Take some time to discuss each of those three suggestions (A, B and C above).

2. Sam Chan describes some other ways that we could 'merge our universes'. "When our non-Christian friends go to the movies, we invite our Christian friends along. Or when our Christian friends have a BBQ, we invite some of our non-Christian friends along." What other types of events can you think of that could be a way to merge your universes?

II. Go to Their Things (and they'll be more likely to come to yours)

One way to introduce our friends to the good news of Jesus is to invite them to a talk or event hosted by our Church where they will have the opportunity to hear this news in a way that is understandable and inviting. This might be something like the Alpha Course, a Christmas event, or even a church service (depending on where they are at in their journey of faith).

But one thing to keep in mind is that a friend will be much more likely to happily come to one 'our things' if we've already gone to 'their things'. As we saw in the example of Jesus, he went to where people worked and lived and was involved in their lives. When we show interest in others, there is a reciprocating that naturally happens.

1. Why do you think this might be helpful in building relational trust?
2. What potential issues can you see with this?

Jesus was certainly criticized for the places he went. Sam Chan recommends that if you sense the invite is to something that might be a compromise for your faith – a concert at a club for example – that to take along another Christian friend (this is a *team sport* after all) and letting your pastor or Life Group leader know why you are going helps with accountability. How might those steps help?

Prayer Focus

As we discuss ways to best connect with our broader culture, pray for each other – that you would have creativity and courage to 'merge your universes', which might even include connecting your Life Group, or some members of it, with some of your non-Christian friends for

a get together. Pray for those 3 or 4 friends that God has laid on your heart out loud together. Ask for God's Spirit to be at work in them.