

How to Expand Your Relationships with People Far from God

1. Be in proximity with people who do not know the Lord.

Perhaps this is an obvious point, but we need to be with people in order to create opportunities for sharing the gospel. We need to be in proximity with people—doing life with them, sharing ourselves with them, rubbing shoulders with them. Jesus created time to be with people on a natural basis. He walked with them, ate with them, and visited them in their homes. We need to create time, too. This may mean accomplishing less on our “to do” list, being involved in fewer church activities, or reducing the number of relationships with Christians, to create space in our lives for people who need Jesus!

Be with your neighbors.

- Talk over yard work
- Walk your neighborhood to create opportunities for conversation
- Spend adult time together while your children play
- Invite a neighbor over for refreshments
- Hang outside of your house instead of inside
- Organize and/or attend block parties

Be with people on a local sports team

- Join a sports league team
- Volunteer to coach children’s leagues
- Take a fitness class or join an activity group in your area. Examples:
 - [Running Room Clinics](#)
 - [See Mommy Run.com](#) (run/walk groups for moms and moms-to-be)
 - [Twin Cities Biking Club](#)
 - [Thursday Night Hikes](#) (weekly group that meets throughout Twin Cities area for hikes in urban parks and wilderness reserves)
 - [Meet-up Group](#) (Check out this site for a listing of Mee-up Groups in your area. Find interest groups on everything from book clubs to craft groups to motorcycle enthusiasts.)

Be with people in a community groups

- Take a community education class
- Volunteer with community or park boards
- Join an arts and crafts group
- Join a civics group: Rotary, Toastmasters

Be with coworkers

- Initiate lunch appointments
- Get a group together to walk over your lunch break
- Post a flyer about starting a shared interest group: i.e. craft, sports or child-based
- Invite coworkers to join a Potluck Lunch Club
- Join coworkers in social gatherings outside of work—even if it means going to a bar!

More tips

- Invite people into your extra-curricular activities. Invite them to go hunting, fishing, biking, trap shooting, swimming, exercising, boating, etc.
- Become a student of their interests. Most people enjoy answering questions about their interests.

2. Initiate small talk.

“We should make small talk our majority ministry in our neighborhoods (and other social circles). We need to be willing to give ourselves to people where they are, in the ordinary, everyday task of living. Small talk is the natural language of the reality of everyday lives. We should become proficient in it. We can learn how to enjoy those brief encounters that we are privileged to share with our neighbors....We are not trying to make something happen but trying to be part of what is happening, without controlling or manipulating relationships. Your neighbors ought to be able to relax with you, to learn that they can trust you, that you really are interested in them as people first, and that you don’t just see them as another potential notch on your Bible binding....I’ve observed an interesting phenomenon. Often when I see one of my neighbors, perhaps getting the mail or doing some yard work, I’ll go over and strike up a conversation. In a minute or two someone else will come over and join in. Pretty soon we will have several people there chatting and getting to know one another. I believe that most people want relationship and community with their neighbors but are not sure how to go about it. When they see it happening, they eagerly join in. As Christians in our neighborhoods, we can reach out to others and model friendship behavior by being good listeners, by making it easy for people to talk with us, and by making time for neighbors.....Most of your neighbors’ lives will not be lived in crisis but in the ordinary. Learning the art of small talk will help us to become a significant part of the ordinary lives of those around us. I find that if we can become a significant part of their ordinary lives, when crisis comes, we will be invited there too....It is easy to make small talk. Careers and kids are good topics. Hobbies, sports, family activities, current events, positive aspects of the neighborhood, possessions, home improvement projects, books, movies, eating places, where they lived before coming here and even religious topics are great discussion starters. The most important element is that you are willing to take time to be with your neighbors. Communicate to them that there is nothing more important for you to do with your time than to talk with them and find out more about them.”

--Tom L. Eisenman, *Everyday Evangelism*

3. Let people around you know you are a Christian (in a natural, unforced way)

- Mention what you did this past weekend: “I went to church and heard a great message!” Then describe a point of the message that spoke to you. On Mondays, people naturally talk about their weekends!
- Look for ways to mention God
- Live a life of integrity

4. While in conversation, look for “bridges” to spiritual topics.

- Ask questions that may lead to spiritual topics. See the very helpful article, “How to Transition from Small Talk to Spiritual Talk”
 - Ask questions to slowly discover their story. Every person has a story of pain, disappointment, joy and accomplishment. Once you discover their story, you can begin to tell your spiritual story. Be ready to tell your spiritual story in 2-3 minutes (see “How to Write and Print Your Faith Story”). You may want to write out your story so you can say it at a moment’s notice.
 - Listen to your friends problems – offer to pray for them.
 - Share your problems with others. Be open and transparent. Then testify to how your faith helps you. *“Our best witness is a truly transparent marriage. Those around us need to see that we face the same struggles they face. They need to see that we make mistakes and our kids make mistakes, that we are, on the whole, living in the same world they are. The difference though will come as they observe the reality of Jesus’ love operating in our marriages. It is in the miracle of seeing real life lived and genuine experiences of pain resolved that our neighbors will be drawn to the life-changing love of Jesus Christ.....Sometimes Christians feel that they must keep up the perfect appearance in order to witness significantly for Christ. Often the opposite is true. Letting people see that Jesus makes a difference in the real life situations of our pain and need is the most powerful witness of all.”*
- Tom L. Eisenman, *Everyday Evangelism*

5. Discern next steps.

Not every conversation you have will result in sharing the Good News. But conversations may lead to a next step. There are potential roles you may have to influence people down the road to salvation.

Therefore, as you are talking with someone, discern what next step you might take.

- The most important first step you can take is to make sure your friends know that you personally care for their well-being. Become a student of their life and interests!
- Be a resource provider!
 - Offer a book that might meet their need.
 - Suggest a message that might meet their need.
- What can you do to serve? During small talk people often send signals, often unintentionally, that inform you about their needs.
 - Does a neighbor need help shoveling snow?
 - Does a neighbor need help with cleaning out their gutters?
 - Does a neighbor need help caring for a pet while they are on vacation?
 - Is a coworker alone for the holidays?
 - Does a coworker need help moving?
 - Does a friend need a dog walked?
 - Does a friend need a meal because of a new baby or an unexpected burden?

“You develop credibility with people when you connect with them and show that you genuinely want to help them.....People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care”

*-- John Maxwell, **The 21 Irrefutable Laws Of Leadership***

Do you want even more inspiration and resources? Pick up the book ***Just Walk Across the Room*** by Bill Hybels.