

TRUST

CURIOSITY

OPEN

SEEKING

FOLLOWER

5 THRESHOLDS LEADER'S GUIDE

Val Gordon and Doug Schaupp¹

OVERVIEW

We hope and pray that God will use this series to transform your Small Group members individually and move your Small Group toward being a fruitful witnessing community.

6 DISCIPLESHIP CYCLES

You will find 6 1-page "executive summaries," one for each session. Each begins with Hearing the Word, then provides suggestions for Responding Actively, and finishes with Debrief and Interpret. We hope the 1-page format allows you to grasp the point at a glance. You may want to print out the Discipleship Cycle page and use it as you prep for each Small Group. That is the simple version. This Leader's Guide accompanies the "executive summaries" so that you can understand what is behind each respective Discipleship Cycle.

HOW TO ORGANIZE THIS MATERIAL

The following material is designed in modules, and pieces may be used in many settings and various ways. Here are three possible organizational outlines:

- 6 weekly 90-minute Small Group discussion sessions
- 1-and-a-1/2 day weekend conference
- Other ideas you can dream up

There are different components and tools for each of your sessions. You may eliminate different facets or add your own, or reverse the order. Experiment! If you have non-Christians in the room with you, we think they will enjoy this discussion, especially if you make some minor adjustments to your language that will help them feel more comfortable. In fact, we have found that when seekers go through the 5 Thresholds material, God uses it to clarify their journey and helps them commit to Jesus.

A TYPICAL SESSION

Here is the overview of how a session could work:

1. **Scripture:** 5-minute devotional or 45-minute inductive study
2. **Video:** Show and discuss the "Author" video (5 minutes long). Discussion could go 5-20 minutes.
3. **Application:** Think about your friends. To whom can you be a blessing this week?
4. **Video:** "Spiritual Conversations" (5 minutes long). Discussion could last 5-20 minutes.
5. **Application:** We will offer a practical suggestion for taking next steps.

YOUR PREPARATION

We assume you will study the Scripture and watch the videos yourself prior to leading the discussion. How you feel God is using the Scripture and videos to impact you is one of the most important things you bring as a leader. Please take risks each week to apply the material. Your integrity to not just lead them in this but also embrace it yourself is central to how the Bible describes leadership. (See Matthew 7:24-27 and James 1:22.)

IT IS ABOUT LOVE, NOT ONLY DISCERNMENT

The 5 Thresholds are not a science. It is much more important to help the Small Group members take steps to love their friends instead of quibble about which Threshold their friend might be in. And people sometimes move backward in the Thresholds. Discernment about where people are at only serves in so much as it moves us to love them in action and prayer.

¹Thank you to a whole host of people who contributed their ideas and efforts to making this project possible! You all deserve to have your names on this alongside ours.

BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH THE SERIES

If you lead this as a 6-week series, we hope that the momentum builds as you go. The series is designed to build week upon week. You may wish to begin each consecutive discussion by sharing stories of how the Small Group members tried to apply the material those previous days. A 5-10 minute opening debrief of people's experience can be a great momentum-builder for the next Threshold. Also, you may wish to close a session by saying something like, "Next week we are going to see how curiosity builds upon the trust we are developing." You can help them see how the pieces fit together. Application should also build momentum. The first week or two, your members might be ready for baby steps. Just praying for their friends might be a new step of faith. But as the weeks progress, feel free to take greater risks yourself, and to invite them to stretch.

VIDEOS

The videos are available for viewing and download at 2100.intervarsity.org/5T (you must be logged in). We would suggest transferring a copy of the videos for each session to your computer, eliminating the need for Internet access during your session and ruling out the possibility of technical glitches. The password for the videos on Vimeo is 5TH. Each session suggests a specific "Spiritual Conversations" video, but additional conversation videos are available online which may be more suitable for specific contexts.

TIPS ON LEADING A FRUITFUL DISCUSSION AFTER A VIDEO

It may be helpful to lead the video discussion along the lines of Observations, Interpretation, and Application. Your first questions to the group after watching the video might be along the lines of "What did you see?" "What did you notice?" "How did you feel?" etc. The next layer of questions can help them interpret, asking "why" questions. The third layer can be implication or application type questions. We have created a list of questions you may want to ask after the videos. However, your own questions will be better than ours!

Please explain to your group, before showing the video, why you are showing this video. We include "intro" comments as an example of how to prepare your folks for the upcoming video. The "Spiritual Conversations" segments are real college students telling their real stories, not actors.

Be prepared for the times when the discussion might get sidetracked or stuck:

- **The Random Question or Comment.** "Where does predestination fit into this?" "Once you cross the 5th Threshold and make a decision, is it possible to lose your salvation?" (For an interesting but off-topic question, please suggest that you discuss it afterwards or over coffee later in the week.)
- **The Critical/Skeptical Question or Comment.** "God is the one to change lives. This series is based on confidence in human wisdom." "I have tried this stuff. It won't work with my friends." "I don't think we should do evangelism training in our Small Group." ("Thank you for sharing that concern. Let's trust God and try this for three weeks.")

THE CONTENT

When you watch the "Author" videos ahead of time, you should get a good feeling for what is happening in each Threshold. We are not going to repeat that content in this guide. If you wish to go deeper with the Thresholds, please read *I Once Was Lost*.

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

At the end of each section, you will find suggestions under "For Leaders of Leaders." These ideas are for those of whom help train or coach Small Group leaders. We recommend the "Taking it Further" conversation pointers especially for you.

TAKING IT FURTHER

After the "Spiritual Conversations" videos, we have included various suggestions from Doug and Val about how we might engage this person in conversation if we were in the room with them. This section of each module is optional—only if you have time and motivation.

RESOURCES

This guide includes notes, comments, advice, and direct participant instructions you can use as you lead the session. It also includes a participant handout for each session, a manuscript passage handout for each session, and a few additional handouts. See the final pages in the PDF for these printable handouts.

Included online is a PowerPoint template you may use to create your own teaching aid, if you wish.



OVERVIEW: HAVING EYES FOR GROWTH

Growing our awareness of how others have invested in us and how we can invest in others.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: MARK 4:26-29—HOW WE CAN BE INVOLVED IN GROWTH

In this brilliant little parable, Jesus exudes confidence that growth will happen. However, it is also a mystery. This passage intentionally creates tensions for us. Who is responsible for the harvest, the earth or the farmer? Yes. Does the farmer know what comes next in the process, or is he clueless about where growth will happen? Yes. How does the farmer stay engaged in the mystery of growth even when he is powerless to create growth? These tensions are good; please don't feel the need to explain them away.

The different phases of planting and harvesting require very different kinds of activity and skills from the farmer. Farming does not mean just one thing for him. This reality is a great bridge to our lives today. We are the field in the story—the people in whom the seed of the kingdom of God has been sown. We are invited to join the farmer in participating in the process of sowing and reaping. We should not simplify God's harvest to just one thing: just praying, just making friends, just sharing a summary of the Gospel. Kingdom harvest is all these things and more. We should enjoy the whole process.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TEXT

1. Who is responsible for growth in this story? How much is the farmer involved?
2. What is this farmer good at? What different skills does he use?
3. What is one area in the harvest you would like to grow in?

BRIDGING

- The farmer casts a lot of seed. That could be like us getting to know a bunch of people.
- The farmer watches and waits for growth, powerless. That could be like us praying and interceding.
- The farmer sees the phases of the growth of the stalk. This could be like our discernment of how people move through the Thresholds.
- The farmer puts in the sickle and harvests. That could be like us inviting people to consider following Jesus.

APPLICATION

Describe one person in your life whom God has used to help you grow.

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE OVERVIEW

Here is the first video in our series. This series is about hope. We Christians believe that God is at work all around us, in ways we will never know. This series is designed to help us open our eyes and see more clearly how God may be at work in our friends and how we can get involved in what God is already doing. Today's video introduces our series.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO






1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?²
2. Doug talks about the story of the farmer from Mark 4:26-29. What do you like about the farmer story? What is one skill that the farmer has that you would like as well?

²They may ask what exactly a "Threshold" is or why we use that term. We picked this term to show movement. Like a "threshold" of a door, it represents moving from one room to another. Point them to *I Once Was Lost* for a fuller description of how we arrived at the 5 Thresholds, or other such questions.

3. How might the Thresholds connect to your own personal journey of faith?
4. In this series, we are going to consider how we might be used by God to be spiritual friends to those around us. How do you feel about the idea of being a spiritual friend?

THE SUMMARY CHART

The summary below is for you to remember the point of each threshold. Please jot down a few key words to help you think about each Threshold. Please bring this back each week.³ As you read it over, which Threshold are you initially most interested in learning about?

 TRUST	 CURIOSITY	 OPEN	 SEEKING	 FOLLOWER
<p>OVERVIEW Our friends do not yet have a reason to trust a Christian.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet interested in our faith lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet interested in changing their current lifestyle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet bringing their questions to Jesus himself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends realize that a decision needs to be made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>OUR ROLE Gain trust by loving genuinely and asking questions.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE Encourage questions, and live curiously.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE Practice patience, enduring prayer, nudge and challenge.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE We help clarify their quest, we explain how to seek Jesus, and we invite them to join us.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE We invite them to consider following Jesus, and we help them think through the implications.</p>
<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>The journey through this Threshold is when our friends come to us for advice and are free to be themselves around us.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when our friends begin asking about faith, God, etc.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they become open to changing their mindset or behaviors.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they become intentional about their search.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they choose to become Jesus' disciple and journey with him for the rest of their lives.</p>

³If you hand out the chart before the video, people may spend all their time reading the chart and not engaging with the video. We recommend having them watch the video first and look at the chart second.

RESPOND ACTIVELY

TELLING YOUR STORY USING THE THRESHOLDS

Turn to your neighbor and tell your faith journey story. Then tell someone else your story this week. Our stories can be used by God to encourage others. Next week we would like to hear what you are learning about telling your story and being a spiritual friend.

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

1. Practice asking your Small Group leaders (and others) about their faith journeys. Give them feedback about where you see connection to 1 or more of the 5 Thresholds. Coach them on how to tell their story more clearly. Help them learn to interpret their experiences using insights from the Thresholds. Practice using the language and the paradigm to increase your discernment and fluency.
2. At your leaders meeting, use your story as a case study to help your leaders learn to apply the 5 Thresholds to a person's life and story. Tell two versions of your faith journey. First take a few minutes to tell the story as you always have. Then retell the story with insights and language applied from the 5 Thresholds. For example:
 - "The first time I remember trusting a Christian was . . . and they built trust with me by . . ."
 - "I started to become curious when . . ."
 - "My church school teacher helped me become open when they . . ."
 - "I remember the first time I directly asked Jesus to reveal himself to me . . ."
 - "My decision to follow Jesus came . . ."

After retelling the story, ask them, "How do the 5 Thresholds make my faith story more clear? How might this help you tell your story more clearly?" (If they are enthusiastic about this idea, you could ask for a volunteer to do the same exercise in front of their peers, and then the group can give feedback and insights to interpret their story.)

3. Each week at your leaders meeting, ask a different Small Group leader to do the above exercise. (They don't need to have the perfect story for each Threshold nor one that brilliantly flows through all 5 Thresholds. Pick 1 or 2 Thresholds that most resonate with their unique experience.)

SHARING YOUR TESTIMONY IN A WAY THAT ENGAGES

1. Find the most interesting part of your story, and the part that connects most easily to the experience of a non-Christian. (Often you learn what is most interesting by sharing your story with someone else and having them reflect back to you what they thought was most engaging and why.)
2. Focus your story with 3 clear parts: before, during, and after. "Before" describes how you lived before you trusted Jesus with this area of your life. "During"⁴ describes how you brought that area of your life to Jesus. "After" is how you are a little bit different today because of this experience of going deeper with Jesus.⁵ (It is important to be practical and not just talk about "salvation" here. Issues that make a great story include anger, family brokenness, anxiety or fear, self-hatred, depression, insecurity, people-pleasing, failure, pain, etc.)
3. Invite the listener into your story. "Have you ever felt this way? How did you handle it?" Or "Would you be up for exploring Jesus with me?"

⁴Sometimes you bring a struggle to Jesus. Other times, Jesus gets his hands on this part of your life totally apart from you trying. Both make for a great story. It is important to workshop together on our stories, and make them more clear, but this can be uncomfortable.

⁵The transformation described in your story may be dramatic or incremental. We don't have to be totally set free or redeemed to tell an honest and compelling story.



TRUST

THRESHOLD 1: GROWING AS TRUST-BUILDERS

Trust-building as the foundation of being a spiritual friend.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 4:1-26—BUILDING TRUST IN CONVERSATIONS

Jesus is the master trust-builder. He takes the initiative with a stranger and strikes up a conversation instead of politely waiting for her to leave the well. He surprises her by asking for help. He intrigues her with his reference to himself and what he is offering. He sees if she is interested in further conversation—and she is. Moreover, Jesus is not defensive when she is skeptical.

There are great barriers between Samaritans and Jews, as well as between men and women. God's love in Jesus and through Jesus empowers him to glide through these walls as if they do not exist. (When the disciples return in v. 27, we are reminded that the walls are powerful.)

Like layers on an onion, Jesus moves the conversation deeper. Would she be willing to have an honest conversation about thirst? Indeed! Then Jesus can gently ask her about the man in her life, the "well" where she tries to get her thirst quenched. She cracks the door on her personal life. No husband. Jesus affirms her and reveals that he is from God. She asks questions and then she reveals that she is hoping for the Messiah.

Jesus builds trust at each layer of the conversation. If she is not interested, he will not keep pressing. But as she engages with him at each level, he keeps moving deeper, revealing more and more about himself.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BRIDGING

- How does Jesus build trust with the woman? How can we build trust with others?
- In vv. 11-12, she pushes back against Jesus. How does Jesus respond? How do you feel when people tell you what they dislike about Christians or the Bible? How can we avoid being defensive?

APPLICATION

1. Think about someone whom you have trust with. What did you do to build trust?
2. Many who don't know God's love need to trust a Jesus follower to move forward in the journey toward faith. What can you do to build trust with those around you who don't know God's love?

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 1ST THRESHOLD

Here is Doug's second video. In Scripture, we see Jesus naturally building trust with people wherever he went. Doug is going to take that concept and help us work on that together.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?
2. How do you feel when people don't trust you? How do you feel when they make snap judgments about you? (Think of a personal story to tell.)⁶
3. Tell a story about someone you have already built trust with. Why do they trust you?

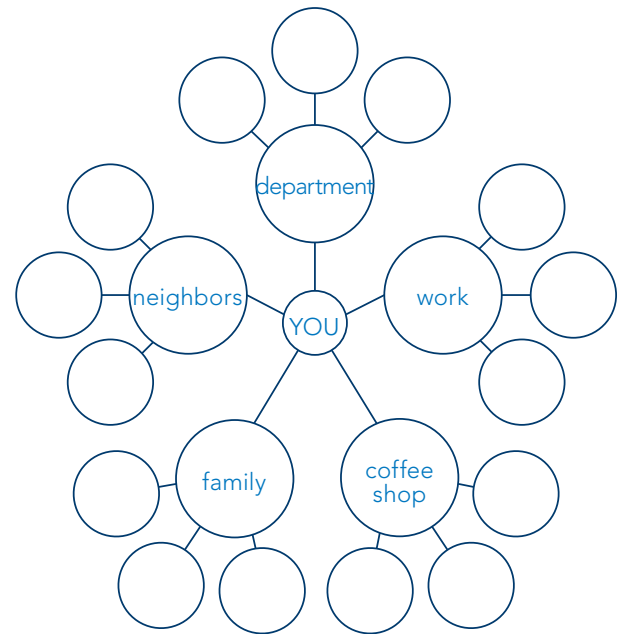
⁶For some, feeling judged for being a Christian is profoundly hurtful. They will need you to help them process their past painful experiences. Please help them forgive, in prayer, those who have judged them. Help them move beyond a defensive posture.

4. How do we as a Small Group do at building trust? How might we grow in welcoming new people?
5. What do you like to do? How are you naturally wired to build trusting relationships? (Think ahead of time about the people in your Small Group. How are they good at building trust? Affirm them.)⁷

RESPOND ACTIVELY

PRAYER MAPS⁸

Let's write down the names of some friends we can pray for. (If there are non-Christians in the room, you may want to say, "Who do you know who needs to experience deeper love? Let's pray for them.") Let's create a prayer map. (Hand out a blank sheet of paper.) Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to keep praying for our friends. Please bring your prayer map back each week. As God brings other friends to mind, please add them to your sheet of paper. (Show them an example of your own handwritten prayer map.⁹ Give them a few minutes to write down some names.) Now let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight 1 person in 1 of your networks that he particularly wants you to pray for this week. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. (The time of silence should be brief, 10-20 seconds max. The point is to get them to interact with God about their prayer map, not to perfectly discern the best person to pray for.)



"SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: SANTIAGO

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

As you listen to Santiago, how would you engage him in conversation? How would you build trust with him?

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. Santiago says that he likes to talk to people. What are a few questions you would ask him?
2. Where is he coming from? How does he describe his worldview?¹⁰
3. How might you help him become curious?

TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

In the four Gospels, Jesus shows us how to be captivated by people, how to give them our full attention. Jesus does this with the bleeding woman; he listens to her whole story (Mark 5:33). We too should be fascinated with people, interested in what they are interested in. Let's be curious about Santiago, and learn from him. If you don't know what he is talking about, just ask him.

- "You say that 'it is kind of a spiritual thing with humanity.' Tell me more about that. What does that mean to you?"
- "You say that you are moving toward secular humanism and existentialism. What does that mean for you? Who is your favorite author on those subjects?"
- "Kierkegaard is considered a Christian existentialist. Have you ever read him? What did he think of Jesus?"
- "If there were a god, what would you want to ask him/her?"

⁷Some of your Small Group members may not have any non-Christian friends. They may not want non-Christian friends. Please pray with them and ask God to open their hearts. They may need some basic skill training from you on how to be more friendly, how to ask questions. You may need to bring them with you into a time where you are building more trust.

⁸Some people call this the "network map." We find "prayer map" is a more comfortable term for non-Christians. Use whichever term you prefer.

⁹It is important for each person to write their own prayer map. If you give them a handout, it may feel too formulaic. We want it to be organic and something they can add to each week.

¹⁰For more insights on people's worldviews, in our resources section we suggest reading *The Universe Next Door*.

Building on some of the other things he said . . .

- “You said that you did a GIG for a little while. What is your favorite story about Jesus? What do you think of Jesus?”
- “What do you admire about your girlfriend’s faith?”

APPLICATION

- From your prayer map, who is one person you want to bless this week?
- What is one takeaway for you personally from our discussion today on trust-building? What is one thing you want to put into practice this week? How can we pray for you as you take that step?
- What is one skill that you want to work on to become better at trust-building?

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

Think about how to help your Small Groups become more welcoming and better at trust-building:

1. Help your Small Group leaders create their own prayer map before the session. Train them in quick listening prayer. Explain to them how to help their members work through possible feelings of being judged for being Christian.
2. Brainstorm with your Small Group leaders an event they could host in order to build more trust with people in one leader’s network. Help them think about how to involve their Small Group members in deepening trust with people in one of their networks. This will help them also discern where God is at work in the network maps of their Small Group members, and hopefully they can help create an event so their members invest more deeply in that part of the network. (For example, invite the people in their academic department to watch a sporting event in your home, and invite the Small Group members to join in.)
3. What would make our Small Groups more welcoming? How can we deepen trust with each other, so that we can invite friends into our authentic community? The 1st Threshold is a good time for you to help your leaders think about how to improve the connection in their Small Group. You can help them reflect on the question, “What would make us feel more comfortable inviting our friends to visit our Small Group?”

RESOURCES

- Threshold 1 session handout
- John 4:1-26 manuscript handout
- 5 Thresholds of Faith handout
- PowerPoint template
- 5 Thresholds of Conversion Network Map: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/strategy/5-thresholds-network-map>
- Planters Network Map PDF: <http://collegiateministries.intervarsity.org/chapter-planting/network-mapping-skill-develop-relational-networks>
- Prayer map: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/pray-and-fast/praying-through-5-thresholds>
- IVP’s : <https://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=3850>



THRESHOLD 2: BEING CURIOUS. STOKING CURIOSITY.

CURIOSITY

Asking good questions that help nudge people toward curiosity.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 3:1-15—DRAWING OUT PEOPLE'S CURIOSITY

In this passage we encounter Nicodemus, who has his curiosity piqued by engaging with Jesus. Our passage begins with a description of Nicodemus and what time of day he comes to Jesus. He was a member of the most influential leadership group within Judaism at the time, the same group who had almost complete distrust of Jesus and would later ensure Jesus' death. Given their opposition to Jesus, it is no surprise that Nicodemus would only approach Jesus under the cloak of night. And yet, the first words of Nicodemus seem unexpectedly positive about Jesus: "You are a teacher who has come from God."

Jesus surprises Nicodemus. It is important to remember that Nicodemus would have held the belief that to be born a Jew was what it took to be an inheritor of God's kingdom. By using the term "being born again," Jesus waits to see if Nicodemus wants to take the conversation deeper. Like we saw in John 4, conversations are like layers of an onion. And like the woman at the well, Nicodemus stays engaged with Jesus, but he shows in v. 4 that he is a bit exasperated by Jesus' confusing word choice. The conversation again goes deeper in v. 9, as Nicodemus shows that he still wants to engage further on the unexpected topic that Jesus is bringing up.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

TEXT

1. How and when does Nicodemus approach Jesus?
2. How does Jesus engage him?
3. What do Nicodemus's questions tell us about his posture or attitude toward Jesus?
4. What do Jesus' answers tell us about how he views Nicodemus's attitude?
5. Why do you think Nicodemus stays engaged with Jesus in this dialogue, even though he has so many questions/concerns?

BRIDGING

- Jesus moves this conversation deeper like the layers of an onion. What can we learn from Jesus in this, and how can we grow in moving conversations deeper?
- Jesus cultivates curiosity in people. How do you feel about growing in your ability to spark curiosity in others?

APPLICATION

Let's discuss in pairs one step we can take to be more like Jesus in John 3.

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 2ND THRESHOLD

In the Gospels, Jesus helps people become curious in various ways. Doug is going to take this concept from Jesus and bring it into our world. God can actually use us to help people grow in curiosity.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?
2. Who is someone in your life who trusts you as a Christian but is not yet curious about your faith? Why do you think they trust you but are not curious about your relationship with God?
3. What would be 1 or 2 intriguing questions you could ask this week?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Doug said that we all need a starter question and a follow-up question that keep the conversation going. Ask two people (on your prayer map) two questions. For example, a starter question would be: "What's your spiritual background?" and a follow-up question would be: "How does that play out for you today?"

After asking them questions, invite them to Small Group.

INTERACTION IN PAIRS

Discuss with your neighbor if you are going to use the above two questions this week, or if you have others you prefer. Pray by name for the two people whom you want to ask these questions.

"SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: ALEX

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

As we listen to Alex, think about how you would nudge him toward curiosity.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. How would you engage Alex in conversation? How would you nudge him toward curiosity?
2. What is Alex curious about? What might you affirm in his beliefs or actions?
3. What might be intimidating for you about engaging someone like Alex?

TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

"I am mostly non-theistic . . ."

- You said you were mostly non-theistic. Does that mean you are a tiny bit theistic?
- Do you think you might have a spiritual side? Do you think you might have a soul? Would you be open to exploring what your soul might be saying to you?

It takes courage to hang out with a bunch of Christians. Way to stick with it!

- What is your current favorite Bible story? Besides being open and respectful, what other principles have you tried to live out from your Bible study? What do you like most about what you have seen of Jesus?

You made an interesting comment about Christians and fellowship. We Christians believe in Emmanuel, God-with-us. We believe that when you are enjoying fellowship, you are also enjoying Emmanuel.

- What if you were actually experiencing something of God amidst the bacon? What if the joy of fellowship was actually the grace of God to you? What if God has been reaching out to you through these guys? What if God is using this community of Christians to warm you up to him?

"Sometimes I'm a jerk and sometimes I like being a jerk."

- Would you be open to me praying with you about that? I'd like to invite Jesus into that and see what he might do. Can I pray with you?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 2nd Threshold from the John story?
2. How are John and Nicodemus similar? Different?
3. What might it take to spark curiosity among your friends who may be stuck in Threshold 2?

APPLICATION

- Let's take out our prayer maps. Let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight 1-2 people who might be served by your question. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. Who came to mind for you?
- Who is someone who may be stuck like Alex? Someone who trusts you and maybe at one time was curious, but their journey has stalled out? How could you partner with God in potentially re-igniting their journey with a new question?
- What is one skill that you want to work on to become better at cultivating curiosity?

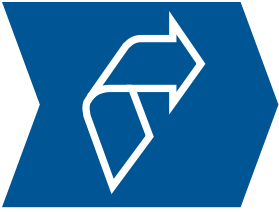
FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

Think about how to help your Small Groups become better at cultivating curiosity.

1. Play the Question game with the Small Group leaders for a couple minutes. Do a few rounds and change the topic from any questions to family or spiritual background. Teach your Small Group leaders to play that game with their Small Group to help them get better at asking questions. Small Group leaders could use this activity during the application section of the Small Group.
2. Help your Small Group leaders identify their “pair” of questions. Coach them to use those questions with someone from their prayer map before they show this session to their Small Group.
3. Help your Small Group leaders identify who might be “stuck” in Threshold 2 on their prayer map. How does their question need to change or be reframed to be relevant to this person?
4. What would make our Small Groups a place that cultivated curiosity? What are the questions our friends are asking? How could the Small Group become a place where people’s questions are . . . ?

RESOURCES

- Threshold 2 session handout
- John 3:1-15 manuscript handout
- PowerPoint template



OPEN

THRESHOLD 3: BEING OPEN. INVITING OPENNESS.

Helping friends identify areas in their life where they want change.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 5:1-15—OPENING UP TO CHANGE

In this intriguing story, we encounter a man who has been an invalid for 38 years. What would it be like to be sick for an entire year? Now imagine if you were sick all your life. 38 years is a very long time. By staying near this healing pool, the man appears to be looking for healing. He seems to be open and seeking and eager.

How does Jesus engage him in conversation? With sympathy? No, with a very strange question. If you were sick, would you want to be asked if you wanted to get better? The answer is obvious . . . of course! And yet, the man's answer reveals a degree of hopelessness. He has very good excuses for why he has never been healed. Jesus sees through his complacency, and rouses him through exhortation. Get up!

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BRIDGING

- Like the man by the pool, we all have areas of our lives where we may feel stuck. How can we become more open to change in our personal lives?
- How does Jesus engage this man who is complacent? How can we be like Jesus and help our friends become more open to change?

APPLICATION

1. On this 3" by 5" card, write down these 5 things: fear, anxiety, bitterness, anger, self-doubt. Pick 1 of these 5 areas in your life where you most want to invite God to change you.
2. Invite God to go deeper. When do you feel this way? Why? Similar to what Jesus asks the man by the pool, what do you want God to do for you in this area?
3. Describe what your life would be like if you no longer struggled with this.
4. What would it take for you to live differently? How can we help you?
5. We want to become the type of people who can go deeper with our friends and talk about personal growth areas. Take this same list to 2 people on your prayer map. You could say, "Our small group is doing an informal survey about areas in our personal lives where we would like to see real change. Would you be willing to answer a few questions?" Show them the 5 areas on your 3" by 5" card and ask them which area they most want God to change them in. You could also ask them how they think their life would be different if the area they picked changed. Be prepared to share your own answers as well. If they are open, go deeper with them by asking, "Would you be open to inviting God to change this? May I pray for you?"

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 3RD THRESHOLD

In Scripture, we see Jesus nudging others to become open to changing how they think and how they live. Now we are going to hear about how we can join in on what God is doing in our friends' lives.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?
2. Why do you think Jesus uses 3 different styles of speaking the truth in love (John 3: sarcasm with Nicodemus; John 4: gentle confrontation with the woman at the well; and John 5: direct exhortation with the man by the pool)? How is each style suited to the person he is talking to?

3. Which of the 3 approaches to speaking the truth in love are you personally drawn to? Why?
4. Think of a time when you were reluctant to change, or specifically closed to changing a belief or lifestyle. What helped you become more open? Was there a style that God or someone in your life used to help you become open?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

Tell us which approach you are drawn to. Then we will work on going deeper with that style of speaking the truth in love.

(Break into pairs or trios according to the 3 styles.)

- Please discuss: Why are you drawn to this style?
- What type of people are best served by our approach to speaking the truth in love?

Share a few insights about each style from your conversation. What are you learning about your own style? What are you learning about the other styles?

Take out your prayer maps. Let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight one person in one of your networks that he particularly wants you to pray for this week and consider nudging them to become open to change. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. Which style might be best for them and why?

"SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: SIMIAO

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

As you watch the video, please think about how you might engage Simiao in conversation. How might you help her become a seeker?

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. Where is Simiao coming from? Describe her worldview.
2. How might you engage her in conversation? How might you help her become a seeker?

TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

We think Simiao is "stuck" in the 3rd Threshold. Always exploring, never finding. Content to be an open person, but never more. This is one of the things that makes the 3rd Threshold so confusing. Here are a few ways we would nudge her along:

- I like how you have been exploring! It reminds me of how, when you are exploring a cave, you have to leave markers along the way so you can find the path again. What if, as you have been exploring, God has been giving you markers along the path of your life? Would you be open to seeing that? What are some hints the past few years that God is trying to woo you to himself and have a personal relationship with you?
- In Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus tells 2 stories about 2 seekers. One accidentally stumbles over amazing treasure, sells all he has, and buys that treasure with great joy. The second one is a pearl merchant who explores carefully for the finest pearls. You remind me of this second explorer. And when he finds Jesus, he sells his entire collection and joyfully gets Jesus. Once you realize how great Jesus is, would you be willing to give your whole life to him?
- Some people prefer to always be in "explore" mode, but never discover. Just explore. Sometimes actually finding Jesus is more scary than just looking. How would you feel about finding Jesus?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 3rd Threshold from Simiao's story?
2. What are you learning about yourself and speaking the truth in love? What might be some of your fears or other internal barriers that keep you from engaging more deeply with our friends like Simiao who need us to speak the truth in love to them?

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

Reflect about each of your Small Group leaders. Try to name their “speaking the truth in love” style. Think about how to help them grow in nudging others to become open to changing their mindsets and behaviors.

1. Help your Small Group leaders discover their go-to style before they lead this discussion. Ask them for one or two ways they could grow in speaking the truth in love. Help them think through recent experiences that have gone well or gone poorly when they have tried this. Help the leader process any fears or barriers he or she may have regarding growing in this.
2. Do a role play with your leaders. You play the role of a Simiao. (As you play her role, please avoid making a caricature out of her.) Have the leaders take turns engaging you in conversation, and then help them interpret which style they used. Be ready to reverse roles and show them how you would engage Simiao. Debrief the exercise: What are they learning about themselves and about speaking the truth in love with friends in the 3rd Threshold? Have the Small Group leaders describe their friends and do a second role play with one of their friends.
3. Help the Small Group leaders discern the possible barriers or fears that may block their members from applying this teaching on getting better at speaking the truth in love.

RESOURCES

- Threshold 3 session handout
- John 5:1-15 manuscript handout
- PowerPoint template
- Brittany’s article, “Why I Stopped Being a ‘Nice’ Christian”:
<http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/strategy/why-i-stopped-being-nice-christian>
- Doug has a series of video interactions about ways to speak the truth in love in the 3rd Threshold using your own story. Please see the following topics:
 - Don’t all religions point to the same god? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Q1S-U1s4Jo>
 - If God is good, why does he let bad things happen? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp4AJtfMTsl>
 - Am I going to hell if I don’t believe like you do? https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlgP8_bIMng
 - Truth is relative. I’m glad that’s true for you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr00jtAx80o>



SEEKING

THRESHOLD 4: BEING SEEKERS. HELPING SEEKERS.

Helping people begin to intentionally seek Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: MARK 10:46-52—SEEKING HARD AFTER GOD

In Mark 10:47, Bartimaeus shouts at Jesus for healing. He is clearly seeking and hoping for Jesus to do something for him. However, the journey for this seeker has a large barrier in the way: the crowd. They tried to silence him. Jesus was too busy and important for people like him. But Jesus stops. He makes the crowd swallow their words and bring Bartimaeus to him. We might expect an immediate healing to follow. Instead, Bartimaeus is greeted by one of Jesus' famous questions: "What do you want me to do for you?" Isn't the answer obvious?! It is important to Jesus that Bartimaeus ask him directly. That he name his desire. In the hype of the moment and the crowd, Jesus wants to hear that this is something Bartimaeus wants for himself. Naming the desire of his heart opens the door to this miracle. Jesus says that naming his desire is part of the "faith" that heals Bartimaeus.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BRIDGING

- Jesus asks Bartimaeus and others in the Gospels this same question: "What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus wants to help every seeker, and everyone, put to words what we desire from Jesus. What do you want Jesus to do for you?
- The path of seeking Jesus may be full of barriers. Jesus helps Bartimaeus refocus amidst the chaos of the crowd. Our friends may encounter an array of barriers on their way to seeking Jesus. Let's similarly help them to focus on what they would like Jesus to do for them.

APPLICATION

Let's take a quiet moment. Allow Jesus to ask you the same question, "What do you want me to do for you?" In the quiet moment, share something from your heart.

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 4TH THRESHOLD

In Scripture, seekers take many shapes and sizes. This video will help us think about how to be a good spiritual friend, and how to help our friends seek Jesus for themselves.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?
2. Which of the 3 ways to shape the quest would you personally prefer to use? Prayer with a seeker? Reading an apologetics book together? Looking at Jesus in the Gospels together?

RESPOND ACTIVELY

- Let's go deeper regarding the way we prefer to join the quest of a friend. Break into pairs to talk with someone else about your ideas of how you would approach using prayer, the Bible, or apologetics to help someone seek Jesus. After a few minutes in pairs, briefly share the one idea you each like most with the rest of the group.
- Take out your prayer map. In listening prayer, ask God, "Who do you want me to pay attention to this week? Is there someone I might try this with?"

“SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS” VIDEO: NABILA

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

We are about to hear from Nabila. As you listen to her story, think about what it feels like to be a seeker. And think about how you might help her take a next step toward Jesus.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about Nabila?
2. Where is she coming from? Describe her worldview.
3. Describe Nabila’s journey up to this point. What does it mean to her that she is a seeker?
4. She needs help taking a next step. How might you help her if you were her friend?

TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

Nabila talks like she is stuck in the 4th Threshold. She has been doing an amazing job of exploring Jesus and taking risks to get to know God.

- I love how you said that you know that religion is about rules—do’s and don’ts. And you know that following Jesus is not religion, but about trust. You talk like it is up to you to explore Jesus. But I think Jesus is seeking you; Jesus is reaching out to you. He has already answered one prayer. Have you ever considered that God may have given you Myra as a roommate as a gift to you, as a way for you to know Jesus?
- Instead of feeling like you have to stir up this emotion of “trust” in Jesus, how about we pray together and ask Jesus, “Would you please build trust with me?” Put the responsibility of building trust on him. If you invite him into your fears and your feelings of apprehension, he will meet you in that.
- You said religion should have its limits. I agree. But remember that Jesus is not religion. You know how a husband and wife give each other vows at their wedding? What if you went to a wedding and the groom said to the bride, “I give you two days a week. I will give up most of my other girlfriends. I will stick with you as long as it isn’t too difficult.” We would walk out in protest. The bride deserves full vows. Partial vows make her sound cheap. Same with Jesus. He doesn’t want partial vows. He is not cheap. He is worth full vows. He is that good. If he did not call for full vows, he wouldn’t be worth following. Let’s pray together and ask Jesus to show you that he is better than the life you can create for yourself.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

What do you learn about the 4th Threshold from Nabila’s story?

APPLICATION

- How many of our friends are like this? What would it take to be proactive in helping them form a quest now? Get out your prayer map. Ask God, in listening prayer, if there is anyone in your world who might be ready to join you in seeking Jesus together.
- (Commission one another to use prayer, apologetics, or the Bible, which they have hopefully already previously identified.) Let’s lay hands and pray over those who are passionate about a prayer challenge. (Then take a minute to pray over those with Bible and then apologetics passions. Pray for God’s anointing and authority to take risks.)
- How might we grow in appropriate urgency about these ideas? Let’s pray for appropriate urgency.

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

1. Write down the names of all the people in your Small Groups and the names of those who are in relationship with your members and might be like Nabila. Create an intercession list for this group of people who are quite close to the kingdom of God. Ask God to create a sense of godly urgency about them, and call it out as you see it. Often when someone else points out that one of our friends is close to seeking, it increases our urgency and focus.
2. We recommend that you grow in giving your leaders “simple and focused trainings.” Simple training means that you can narrow down an important topic to the 3 most important or basic things someone needs to know or do or say. In 5 minutes you can then impart 1 key skill or tool. Here are 2 examples of simple trainings that you can give to your Small Group leaders, 5 minutes each, so that they, in turn, may use this with their members who want more input on using the Bible or prayer with non-Christians.

BRINGING YOUR QUESTIONS TO JESUS

Once they agree to look at Jesus with you, select the Gospel passage you want to discuss with your non-Christian friend. We suggest you keep it simple and try to answer just three questions together.

1. What is 1 question you have after reading this passage?
2. What is 1 thing you like about Jesus?
3. What is 1 way we could live this out?

GOING DEEPER WITH THE PRAYER CHALLENGE

Once they agree to pray with you, here are 3 ways to pray with a non-Christian.

1. Ask them if they have an honest question they want to bring to God. If not, ask them for a need they can bring to God. (It is ideal when they are willing to say to God, "Help me know you. Help me build trust with you." But sometimes it can take several prayer experiences before they are that honest. See Brittany's story in the "Resource" section of the 3rd Threshold session.)
2. As you open the prayer time, begin with yourself. Pray about your own brokenness and emptiness first. Invite God to meet you right now and bring his love. Then pray for your friend—for the same filling of God, that they might experience the love of God right now. Ask God to speak a word of love to their heart or mind. Then ask them what they felt and explain that God is taking the initiative with them.
3. Encourage them to look at ways God might be reaching out to them over the next 24 hours. Ask about it tomorrow.

RESOURCES

- Threshold 4 session handout
- Mark 10:46-52 manuscript handout
- PowerPoint template



FOLLOWER

THRESHOLD 5: HELPING FRIENDS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Inviting friends and opening the door for them to follow Jesus.

SCRIPTURE

BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 4:27-42—ENTERING THE KINGDOM OF GOD¹¹

We resume our discussion of John 4 that we began in the 1st Threshold. The woman had this amazing interaction with Jesus. She revealed that she has been looking for the Messiah. Jesus reveals that he is the one. In that moment, the disciples return from buying lunch. They feel the barriers and the awkwardness of talking to a Samaritan woman, so silence and avoidance are their default. The same woman who had been ashamed of her 5 husbands now suddenly returns to her village joyfully declaring, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Messiah?” This invitation to check out Jesus becomes the bridge to salvation for them. Little did she know, and little did they know, that her invitation would be the “game changer” for their village.

Meanwhile, Jesus tries to get the disciples to see what he sees: that a movement of God is about to break forth in this village community. They are all walking down the path toward Jesus, but the disciples are thinking about lunch.

When Jesus sees the responsiveness of these Samaritans, he decides to remain with them 2 more days. They began to believe because of the woman’s words. But then their faith goes deeper because they get to know Jesus for themselves.

POSSIBLE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BRIDGING

- Jesus invites the disciples to open their eyes to the harvest he is bringing. We too are invited by Jesus to open our eyes and see the ripe harvest right around us. Yet often, like the disciples, we are thinking about the logistics of “getting lunch ready.”
- The woman goes through a process of getting to know Jesus. So do the village members. Describe their journeys. What are we learning from John 4 about the process of conversion?
- Jesus reveals that he is the Messiah. Ask each Small Group participant to describe what they think it means that he is the Messiah.

APPLICATION & INVITATION

Please let your Small Group members respond to Jesus for themselves. If you have never done this before in your Small Group, it might feel awkward. We have provided a script (on the back of the Discipleship Cycle and below) so that you can demonstrate how this is done. Practice this invitation out loud a few times before the Small Group meeting. It is important for you to extend this invitation, even if there are no non-Christians in your Small Group. You will courageously model something that makes some people uncomfortable. This is why we recommend you use the script. It has actually been tested with students in many parts of the country, and God has used it powerfully.

Please tell them:

- “The biggest barrier for many people in becoming followers of Jesus is that they are never invited and don’t know how to get started. We have the honor of helping remove this barrier by asking them if they would like an opportunity to know Jesus for themselves.”
- “We are going to take a few moments now for people to make a faith decision for themselves. Please bow your head with me in prayer.”
- “We are a community that is striving to create space for us all to respond to God. Jesus invites us into a relationship with him, and into a story that is bigger than ourselves, all of which made possible by what he did on the cross. At the cross, all the power of sin and death died with Jesus; all the debts owed have been paid. And because

¹¹Matthew 13:44-46 may be a more fruitful passage for inviting nominal Christians to become followers of Jesus.

Jesus rose again, we can start over. A new life is possible. If you are ready to start a relationship with Jesus for the first time or if you want to come back to him and join his community in pursuing his purposes in the world, I would like to invite you to pray this prayer with me: 'God, I believe Jesus is your son, the Savior of the world. I believe he died on the cross for me and took away all my sins, paying the cost for all of us. I believe in my heart that you raised Jesus from the dead and that he is alive today. I ask that you forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I receive your forgiveness into my life. By faith I receive Jesus as King over every part of my life. Change me; make me the person you want me to be. I commit to be a member of your family on earth pursuing your purposes and mission for the world. I give you my heart; I give you my life; I want to know you more! In Jesus' name, Amen.'"

"AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 5TH THRESHOLD

This video is going to help us think about the question, "How can we be a blessing to our friends who are thinking about following Jesus?"

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What questions does it raise for you?
2. What do you think about the way Doug summarizes the Christian life as "no longer living with us at the center of the story?" How might your non-Christian friends respond to that definition of following Jesus?
3. Have you ever celebrated with a new follower of Jesus? What do you think of this idea of throwing a "new faith party" for a new believer and inviting their friends to hear about this new faith? How is this a reflection and strengthening of community?
4. When do you feel like you "came to faith" in Jesus or experienced an adult faith decision to follow Jesus? Please describe.

RESPOND ACTIVELY

- Brainstorm a hypothetical "new faith party." What if one of our friends decided to follow Jesus and we wanted to throw a "new faith party"? Let's brainstorm what would make that a great event.
- Doug says it is important to intentionally mentor people in the first 4-6 weeks of following Jesus. If you were going to mentor a new believer, what would you include in the training and input?
- Let's get comfortable using words to invite a friend to consider following Jesus. How would you word it? Doug gave us his example, and you could use that if you like. (Let them try.) Here is how I might do it. (Give them your example.)
- We not only want to be people who respond ourselves to Jesus, but we also want to be friends who help others consider Jesus. I am going to help you try this yourself. I know it might be a stretch.
- Now let me help you write out some talking points for a conversation with a friend.

"SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: DEJUAN

INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

As you listen to Dejuan tell his story, think about how you would describe his journey through the Thresholds.

SHOW THE VIDEO

DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about Dejuan's story?
2. What was it like to interact with the prayer walk guy? What did he see in that guy?
3. What was the first Large Group like for him?
4. What happened in the GIG? How did that help him grow?
5. What happened at the Compelling conference?

CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What are we learning about the 5th Threshold from Dejuan?
2. How can we be good friends to people like Dejuan?

APPLICATION

- Each small group can become a more welcoming community. We need to be more self-aware that we have a culture in our Small Group. We have a way of talking, of praying, of interacting. A new visitor will experience some of our culture as wonderfully refreshing, and some of our culture will be foreign and awkward. We need to translate ourselves to our friends, and we need to intentionally ask them about their experience, and help them process what was confusing. What if we were to go out of our way to ask every visitor these questions afterwards?
- Some of us have been Christians for a long time, but we see that we have put ourselves back at the center of our lives and Jesus is on the periphery. We need to reverse this order, and let Jesus back into the center of our own stories and give him access to speak into all our decisions, not just some. Others of us are realizing through this series that we have been seeking Jesus for a while, but have never made the decision to follow Jesus for ourselves. Tonight would be a great time to move from being a seeker to being a follower of Jesus with our whole life.
- We can tell our stories and describe the 5th Threshold. We can share about when and how Jesus moved to the center of our story. Can we try that together now in pairs? After you tell your story to a non-Christian can be the perfect time to follow up with a question or an invitation, such as, "What or who is at the center of your story and why?"

FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

1. Think through your context and create an outline for the kind of new believer celebration event that your students would want to invite friends to. Think about how to prep new believers to invite their friends and also share a brief story.
2. Many of us are not very good at investing in new believers right after they make faith decisions. We assume that just being a member in our Small Group will help them deal with all the complexities of this new journey with Jesus. Expect that some 1-to-1 investment will need to happen in the weeks immediately following their decision, and create a plan for it. Also, please use the Launch webpage (launch.intervarsity.org) with the new followers of Jesus.

SHARING A GOSPEL SUMMARY IN A WAY THAT ENGAGES

Ask a non-Christian, "What do you think it means to be a Christian?" (This is also a great conversation for your Small Group. After each person shares their best answer, the leader can draw a diagram or pull out their phone and use the Big Story App. See "Resources" below.)

1. Provide a simple definition or diagram. "I have come across a really helpful diagram to summarize my take on life and faith. Do you have a few minutes for me to share it with you?"
2. "How about you? Do you want to make that step? What would it take?" (Have each person identify their preferred question or invitation that best engages their friend after the Gospel summary.)

RESOURCES

- Threshold 5 session handout
- John 4:27-42 manuscript handout
- PowerPoint template
- Launch website: <http://launch.intervarsity.org/>
- Big Story App: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/gospel-outline/get-big-story-app>

OVERVIEW: HAVING EYES FOR GROWTH

MARK 4:26-29

AUTHOR VIDEO

MY STORY

THIS WEEK I WILL...

THRESHOLD 1: GROWING AS TRUST-BUILDERS

JOHN 4:1-26

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

THRESHOLD 2: BEING CURIOUS. STOKING CURIOSITY.

JOHN 3:1-15

AUTHOR VIDEO

PAIRED QUESTIONS

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

THRESHOLD 3: BEING OPEN. INVITING OPENNESS.

JOHN 5:1-15

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

THRESHOLD 4: BEING SEEKERS. HELPING SEEKERS.

MARK 10:46-52

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

THRESHOLD 5: HELPING FRIENDS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD


JOHN 4:27-42

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

5 THRESHOLDS OF FAITH

 <p>TRUST</p>	 <p>CURIOSITY</p>	 <p>OPEN</p>	 <p>SEEKING</p>	 <p>FOLLOWER</p>
<p>OVERVIEW Our friends do not yet have a reason to trust a Christian.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet interested in our faith lives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet interested in changing their current lifestyle.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends are not yet bringing their questions to Jesus himself.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____ 	<p>OVERVIEW Our friends realize that a decision needs to be made.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • _____ • _____ • _____
<p>OUR ROLE Gain trust by loving genuinely and asking questions.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE Encourage questions, and live curiously.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE Practice patience, enduring prayer, nudge and challenge.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE We help clarify their quest, we explain how to seek Jesus, and we invite them to join us.</p>	<p>OUR ROLE We invite them to consider following Jesus, and we help them think through the implications.</p>
<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	<p>IN YOUR WORDS</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<p>The journey through this Threshold is when our friends come to us for advice and are free to be themselves around us.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when our friends begin asking about faith, God, etc.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they become open to changing their mindset or behaviors.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they become intentional about their search.</p>	<p>The journey through this Threshold is when they choose to become Jesus' disciple and journey with him for the rest of their lives.</p>

OVERVIEW: HAVING EYES FOR GROWTH—MARK 4:26-29

He also said, "This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man scatters seed on the ground. Night and day, whether he sleeps or gets up, the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how. All by itself the soil produces grain—first the stalk, then the head, then the full kernel in the head. As soon as the grain is ripe, he puts the sickle to it, because the harvest has come."

THRESHOLD 1: GROWING AS TRUST-BUILDERS—JOHN 4:1-26

Now Jesus learned that the Pharisees had heard that he was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John—although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. So he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee. Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, 5 tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, “Will you give me a drink?” (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?” (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have 10 given you living water.” “Sir,” the woman said, “you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?” Jesus answered, “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, 15 give me this water so that I won’t get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water.” He told her, “Go, call your husband and come back.” “I have no husband,” she replied. Jesus said to her, “You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now

have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem." "Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth."

20

25 The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

THRESHOLD 2: BEING CURIOUS. STOKING CURIOSITY.—JOHN 3:1-15

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

He came to Jesus at night and said, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.

For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” Jesus replied, “Very truly

I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.” “How can someone be born

5 when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s

womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless

they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You

should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases.

You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone

10 born of the Spirit.” “How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do

you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what

we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things

and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone

into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake

15 in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life

in him.”

THRESHOLD 3: BEING OPEN. INVITING OPENNESS.—JOHN 5:1-15

Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda[a] and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?” “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

THRESHOLD 4: BEING SEEKERS. HELPING SEEKERS.—MARK 10:46-52

Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means “son of Timaeus”), was sitting by the roadside begging.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, “Son of David, have

5 mercy on me!” Jesus stopped and said, “Call him.” So they called to the blind man, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. “What do you want me to do for you?” Jesus asked him. The blind man said, “Rabbi, I want to see.” “Go,” said Jesus, “your faith has healed you.” Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

THRESHOLD 5: HELPING FRIENDS ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD—JOHN 4:27-42

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked,

“What do you want?” or “Why are you talking with her?” Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went

back to the town and said to the people, “Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could

this be the Messiah?” They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his

5 disciples urged him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you know nothing

about.” Then his disciples said to each other, “Could someone have brought him food?” “My food,”

said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Don’t you have a saying, ‘It’s still

four months until harvest’? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.

Even now the one who reaps draws a wage and harvests a crop for eternal life, so that the sower and

10 the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying ‘One sows and another reaps’ is true. I sent you to

reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits

of their labor.” Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testi-

mony, “He told me everything I ever did.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay

with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said

15 to the woman, “We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves,

and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world.”