

# Making meaningful connections

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”  
**1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)**

*This session guide outlines suggested elements you might use to help answer the key question below and achieve the aim of the training session. The time allocations can be adjusted according to the amount of time you have.*

**Key question:** How can we make more meaningful connections with non-Christians?

**Aim:** To see that journeying with people towards life in Jesus begins with noticing them, intentionally getting to know them, being kind and sharing our lives with them.

## Pre-video ice breaker/discussion starter (3 min)

**When was the last time you got chatting with someone new? How did it come about?**

*We would recommend people split into pairs or triplets to discuss this and further questions. If you are doing more than one session over a period of time, it may be helpful for people to stick to the same pairs/groups so that they can build trust and support one another consistently.*

*We'd also recommend you either print the list of questions or display them on a screen if meeting in person. Put them into the chat feature before you head into breakout rooms if you're meeting online.*

## Play video by Lizzy Smallwood (approx. 15 min)

Download here: [apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-vid-download](https://apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-vid-download)

## Practical exercises and discussion questions (15 min)

*Below is a list of questions to consider using. You will not have time for all of them, so select those that you think will be most helpful for people to internalise and apply what they've just heard. Maybe you can think of others.*

1. Who is my “everyone” Peter speaks of in 1 Peter 3:15? Write down their names with whatever you use to make notes (phone/notepad). List people you already have a natural connection with: family, close friends, neighbours, colleagues/classmates, casual friends, acquaintances. Also think about your weekly routine. Are there people you see regularly that you could be more intentional about getting to know e.g., parents at the school gate, the postman, your hairdresser, dog walkers in the park or people at the local café/shops?

# Making meaningful connections

2. Have you found any helpful comments or questions that ease you into conversations with people and get you beyond the “Hi! Bye!” phase of your relationship?
3. Share any ways you have found to show hospitality / acts of kindness with your friends and acquaintances. Have these led to any opportunities to share the reason for the hope you have? If not, how could you do things differently?
4. Make a list of people who you think would be encouraged if you offered them some hospitality. Make a plan to invite them soon. Which of your Christian friends might it be good to introduce them to?
5. What are the ways in which you as a local church can use your natural connections in the community to build friendships and show love & hospitality with the aim of introducing people to Christ? Are there things you do as a church that were initially set up for this but have lost their purpose; becoming a “good work” that soaks up a lot of time and energy but doesn’t share the gospel anymore? How can you divert these back to honouring Christ and sharing the good news with the lost?

## Prayer time (12 min)

*We would recommend leaving some time for people to pray in their pairs or groups. You may like to ask them to reflect and pray about what has encouraged or challenged them from this session. They may like to include these points:*

- Thank God for the people in your lives who loved and shared the gospel with you.
- Ask God to help you to open your eyes to see those He has put around you and to have the desire and opportunity to get to know them better and share your life with them.
- Ask God to help you to speak more naturally about your faith with everyone and be prepared to share the reason for the hope you have in Jesus.

## Further Bible Reflection (10 min)

*This is an additional Bible reflection to go deeper into the main theme. You may choose to use it as part of the training session. Alternatively, you could hand it out on a printout / email it around for reflection during the week, along with the “take home” questions.*

The idea of hospitality is everywhere in the Bible, we see it in the regular societal practices of the Old Testament and almost every New Testament writer makes mention of it.

# Making meaningful connections

It's important to remember that it is never about the quality of the cuisine, it's even more than opening your home. For believers it's about creating the space and opportunity to connect with people, to build relationships with them, share life and to talk together in ways that we couldn't in our otherwise fleeting encounters.

Amazingly, many of the examples listed in the Bible are of unbelievers inviting Jesus or his followers into their home. Take some time to each choose one of the following passages and having read it, share a little reflection with one another from it.

**Luke 5:27-32** - Levi and Jesus

**Luke 19:1-10** - Jesus and Zacchaeus

**Acts 16:15, 34** - Lydia and the Philippian jailer

**Hebrews 13:2** - Entertaining angels

**1 Timothy 3:1, 2** - Leaders modelling hospitality

Try to think about what it looks like to open our hearts, be generous with our time and welcome others intentionally to build bridges of friendship and create opportunities to share the hope Jesus offers.

## Take Home

*You may like to print out / email around this section so that people can re-watch the video and reflect further.*

Why not re-watch the video with a notebook open, praying that God will root these principles into your heart. Watch here: [apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-view](https://apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-view)

If you have not already written a list of the people you are connected with (question 2 above), do so and then:

- Place a mark besides the names of the people with whom you have already shared the gospel over the years – most likely family and close friends.
- Put a different mark by those with whom you have never shared the gospel - think and pray about your points of contact with them. Note any information you need to remember or find out.
- What natural opportunities are there for you to share your life with them? - Chatting and (carefully) asking questions? Acts of kindness? Hospitality?
- If you haven't already – download an excellent prayer app like PrayerMate. (It makes praying for people far less daunting. You can use it when you have a few spare minutes or even when you're on the go like walking or doing jobs around the house!) Add in some or all of the people you're connected with so you can regularly be praying for opportunities to **live it out and speak it out**.

The training video is available for anyone to watch at [apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-view](https://apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1-view)

More stories from everyday believers can be viewed and downloaded at [apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1](https://apassionforlife.org.uk/lc1)