

THE ENGAGEMENT MODEL

Jesus commands us to go and make disciples with the promise that he will be with us. However, we live in a post-modern culture that is becoming increasingly skeptical of religion. This model outlines a pattern of 5 stages a person typically goes through on their way to faith in Jesus. God invites us to participate in this process with our friends and he promises to produce growth.

The 5 Stages

1. From skepticism to trusting a Christian

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

A person's spiritual journey often begins with a relationship with a Christian. Trust-building requires them to trust not only you, but you as a Christian. Building trust requires you to develop a genuine connection based on common ground and listening. If a person doesn't know you are a Christian by the end of a conversation then you haven't established their trust in you as a Christian.

How do you build Trust?

- Get to know people for who they really are
- Listen and ask good questions - be a learner
- Establish shared common ground
- Be honest about the challenges of life
- Share about the role faith plays in your life

You will recognize that a person is beginning to trust you as a Christian when:

- They ask you deeper questions
- There is laughter in the conversation

Trust can be broken when we become defensive, argumentative, make snap judgments of them or begin to lecture.

2. From indifference to curiosity about Jesus, God, or Christianity

Asking good questions that help nudge people toward curiosity

Once someone trusts you as a Christian they will develop a curiosity about your faith. We can encourage this through asking good questions and sharing about God's place in our lives.

How do you build Curiosity?

- Live out our faith in a real way through vulnerability and transparency
- Ask a lot of questions but don't necessarily answer all of their questions
- Openly share about what God has done in your life
- Invite them into Christian community

You will recognize that a person is beginning to become curious when:

- They ask you questions about faith, for example: What works for you? How you find purpose? What do you seek in life?

- They develop a genuine interest in your story

Curiosity can be stopped if we only give out all the answers, live out their expectations of Christian stereotypes, or fail to engage with the big questions of the day. If you only ask questions but fail to provide your perspective you can turn the conversation into an interview instead of a two-way conversation.

3. From curiosity to opening up to change

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

It can be difficult to be honest about our struggles in life but everyone has them. As we are open about our struggles we encourage our friends to be open about theirs. This requires us to be vulnerable and challenge our friends to be honest about their lives.

How do you build Openness to change?

- Through gentleness and love
- Discover what they currently are pursuing for happiness and satisfaction
- Helping them identify what their worldview lacks to provide satisfaction
- Identifying what their “false hopes” are - things that they look to for satisfaction but ultimately leave them empty

You will recognize that a person is beginning to become open to change when:

- They ask you for advice
- They expose their brokenness to you
- They desire to learn from your life experiences
- They desire help

Openness can be stopped when we have a sense of superiority on our part or when we give answers that only point to actions and not our hearts. Be careful to not expect people to change their lives for Jesus before this point. Prematurely expecting them to change their worldview will lead to frustration for both of you.

4. From openness to seeking God

Helping people begin to intentionally seek Jesus.

After a person realizes that their secular pursuits cannot fully satisfy them they are in a position to seek ultimate satisfaction in God. When a person begins to seek earnestly after God we want to encourage them and provide resources to help.

How do you help someone seek God?

- Pray for and with your friend
- Provide answers and resources (sermons, books, Bible studies) that specifically address their false hopes
- Invite them to join a discussion group
- Challenge them to ask God to reveal himself in their life

You will recognize that a person is beginning to seek God when:

- They want to know more about God
- They are willing to study the Bible or join a group
- They want to continue meeting to “figure this out”

Often we can be one of the determining factors that stop someone from seeking God when we fail to follow up with our friend. It takes time and effort to be available to help our friends. A friend that is seeking God may need you at strange hours or have difficult questions. Take the time to be a support to your friend at this stage.

5. From seeking to following Jesus

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

The biggest barrier for many people in becoming followers of Jesus is that they are never invited to do so and don't know how to start a relationship with God. We have the honor to help our friends make the decision to follow Jesus.

How do you help someone make a decision to follow Jesus?

- Explain the Gospel message in a clear, easy to understand format
- Invite them to make a decision
- Explain the role of faith in the decision - they don't need to have everything figured out in their life
- Share how you made a decision to follow Jesus
- Ask them what is holding them back from following Jesus

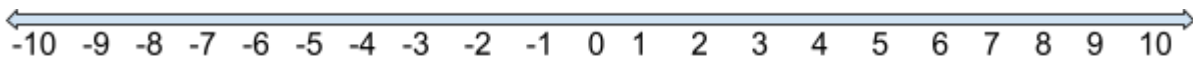
You will recognize that a person is ready to be invited to start following Jesus when:

- They read the Bible or pray on their own initiative
- They are "counting the cost" of what will change in their life
- They talk about God as a person and not a concept

A person may not make a decision to follow Jesus if they are never asked if they want to or if they are asked too often. We want to follow the Holy Spirit and look for openings to invite them to follow Jesus without being pushy. Avoid pressuring your friend to make a decision and look to see how God is working in their life.

The Spiritual Scale

Everyone around us is on a spiritual journey. A useful method to evaluate someone's spiritual journey is to determine where they are on a scale from -10 (hostile against God or spiritual things) to +10 (new Christian). A person that is indifferent would be at 0.



Often when we want to talk with others about our faith we can get overwhelmed thinking we need to perfectly share the entire message of Jesus every time. Instead, think of how you can help someone increase positively on the scale by one or two numbers. For example, perhaps your friend is an atheist and is sure God doesn't exist. They may be at -7 on the scale. After a conversation together they agree that God *could* exist. You have helped them move up the scale to a -6 and closer to Jesus.

A spiritual journey is made up of lots of small steps or sometimes big leaps. Every interaction is an opportunity for a person to take one step closer to Jesus.

Important to remember:

- This is not always a linear process. Sometimes we meet people who are already curious but have never known or trusted a Christian.
- The Gospel can be a vital component of any of these stages
- Prayer and reliance on the Holy Spirit are important factors in all of these steps
- You could cover multiple thresholds in one meeting
- We don't always get to walk through all 5 thresholds with a person, but we always have an important role to play in helping them engage with the message of Jesus at different points in their spiritual journey