

Hope Church

Sunday Sermon 5/17/2026

To watch sermon, click here: [▶ Sunday Morning Worship 2026-05-17](#)

Life Group Discussion Guide

Session: Relational Evangelism — The Gospel Through Relationship

Main Idea

God often opens doors for the gospel through relationships. As believers, we are called to intentionally love, invest in, and point people to Jesus within the context of everyday life and authentic connection.

Head Change

To be able to understand the biblical foundation for relational evangelism and learn the “4 I’s” framework:

1. Identify
2. Invest
3. Invite
4. Intercede

Heart Change

To be able to develop a deeper compassion for spiritually lost people and a greater confidence that God can use ordinary relationships to lead others to Christ.

Life Change

To be able to begin intentionally praying for and engaging specific people in their lives with the hope of sharing Jesus through genuine relationship and gospel-centered conversation.

Opening Discussion

- Think about someone who had a significant spiritual influence on your life. What made their influence meaningful?
- Why do you think sharing our faith with friends or family can sometimes feel harder than talking to strangers?
- Have you ever experienced a moment where God seemed to “open a door” for a spiritual conversation?

Introduction

In this session, we’ll explore how God uses relationships as one of the most effective pathways for evangelism. Jesus consistently ministered through relationship, conversation, compassion, and invitation. We are called to do the same — not treating people like projects, but loving them enough to share the hope we have in Christ.

Scripture Reading

Read together:

- Colossians 4:2–6

- 1 Peter 3:15
 - Luke 19:1–10
 - John 4:1–26
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Discussion Questions

Colossians 4:2–6 — Open Doors and Prepared Hearts

Paul tells believers to devote themselves to prayer and “make the most of every opportunity.”

- What stands out to you most in this passage?
 - Why do you think prayer is the starting point for evangelism?
 - What does it mean for conversation to be “full of grace, seasoned with salt”?
 - What are some opportunities God may already be placing in front of you?
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1 Peter 3:15 — Prepared with Gentleness

Peter says believers should always be prepared to give an answer for their hope.

- What fears keep Christians from sharing their faith?
 - Why are gentleness and respect essential in gospel conversations?
 - How does confidence in Jesus differ from confidence in arguments or apologetics?
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Jesus and Zacchaeus — Relationship Before Transformation

Jesus intentionally pursued relationship with Zacchaeus before confronting his sin.

- Why do you think Jesus chose to eat with Zacchaeus?
 - How would the crowd have viewed Jesus’ actions?
 - What changed in Zacchaeus after encountering Jesus?
 - What does this teach us about the heart of God toward lost people?
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The Four “I’s” of Relational Evangelism

I. Identify

Prayerfully identify people God may be calling you to reach.

Discussion

- Who has God placed in your life right now?
- Which relationships may already contain open doors for spiritual conversations?
- How can prayer change the way we see people around us?

Key Truth

Evangelism begins with spiritual awareness and intentional prayer.

II. Invest

Relational evangelism requires genuine investment in people.

Paul said:

“We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”

Discussion

- What's the difference between loving someone and treating them like a project?
- Why is consistency important in building trust?
- How can ordinary activities become opportunities for gospel influence?

Reflection

Who are you currently investing time, energy, and care into spiritually?

III. Invite

A. Invite Into Conversation

Healthy gospel conversations often begin with curiosity and listening.

Principles for Gospel Conversations

1. Start with Curiosity

Jesus often asked questions.

- Why are questions powerful in spiritual conversations?
- How does curiosity lower defenses?

2. Really Listen

People want to feel heard before they are willing to hear.

Read:

- James 1:19
- Why is listening such an important spiritual discipline?
- What deeper heart issues often exist beneath surface disagreements?

3. Look for Opportunities to Point to Jesus

The goal is not winning arguments but introducing people to Christ.

- What are some common “open door” statements people make?
- Why is it helpful to ask permission before sharing personally?

4. Share Stories

Personal testimony makes truth tangible.

- Why are stories often more impactful than abstract doctrine alone?
- What part of your testimony most clearly points to God's grace?

5. Keep Jesus Central

Jesus stayed focused on the gospel even when distractions arose.

Read:

- John 4:25–26
 - What distractions commonly pull conversations away from Jesus?
 - Why must Jesus remain the center of evangelism?
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B. Invite Into Community

The church family plays a powerful role in helping people encounter Christ.

Discussion

- Why can community be so impactful for spiritually curious people?
- What invitations could you extend this month?

- Church service
- Small group
- Youth event
- Meal
- Service project

Key Truth

You are not carrying the mission alone. God uses the whole body of Christ.

IV. Intercede

Prayer is not optional in evangelism — it is essential.

Discussion

- Why is persistent prayer so important?
- How does prayer prepare both our hearts and the hearts of others?
- Have you ever seen God answer prayer through a spiritual conversation?

Challenge

Begin praying daily for specific people by name.

Additional Reading and Reflection

Read:

- Matthew 9:35–38
- Romans 10:13–15
- 2 Corinthians 5:17–21

Reflection Questions

- Which of the four “I’s” is strongest in your life right now?
 - Which one needs the most growth?
 - Are you more comfortable talking about faith with strangers or with people you know well? Why?
 - What would change if you truly believed God had already been preparing hearts around you?
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Application and Personal Commitment

Personal Action Steps

1. Identify three people you will intentionally pray for this week.
2. Look for one opportunity to invest more deeply in a relationship.
3. Initiate one meaningful spiritual conversation.
4. Invite someone into Christian community.
5. Commit to daily intercession for open doors.

Prayer Prompt

“Lord, open doors for the gospel in my relationships. Give me wisdom, compassion, courage, and grace to point people to Jesus.”

Last Word

Relational evangelism is not about manipulation, pressure, or perfect arguments. It is about loving people enough to share both the gospel and our lives.

Jesus came near. He walked with people. He listened, loved, served, and spoke truth with grace. We are called to do the same.

Some conversations plant seeds. Some water them. Occasionally we get to harvest. But every faithful act of love and witness matters in the Kingdom of God.

Being a witness is not the gospel instead of relationship — it is the gospel through relationship.

Go Deeper

Devotional Focus: Jesus and the Woman at the Well

Read:

- John 4:1–42

Observe Jesus' Approach

- He crossed cultural barriers.
- He initiated conversation.
- He listened and engaged personally.
- He addressed deeper spiritual thirst.
- He revealed Himself as Messiah.

Reflection

- What barriers keep you from engaging people spiritually?
 - Where might God be calling you to step outside your comfort zone?
 - What would it look like to trust the Holy Spirit more fully in conversations?
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Memory Verse

“We were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”

— 1 Thessalonians 2:8