

# **GAMEPLAN**

**CREATING EVANGELISTIC COMMUNITIES**



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# WHAT IS YOUR GAMEPLAN?

Standing now in the aftermath of a global pandemic, the church is understandably scrambling to readjust to the complexities of our changing cultural landscape. The recent McCrindle and Barna reports have highlighted a number of revealing trends; mixed insights that bring into view just how fraught the God conversation can be right now.

For those who inhabit our prodigal culture, though, there is a deep need for a faithful and faith-filled response. Why? Because the moment we are in must never pause the mission we are on. The church exists for something beautiful. Jesus launched the Church to be the epicentre of God's work in the world. The hands and feet of Jesus. A foretaste of the Kingdom of God. The carriers of the Christian story. And despite our collective failures, the local church remains God's vehicle for reconciling a lost world to Himself. We are to be gathered together to rehearse the rhythms of the gospel, before then scattering to reach out with compassion and Christlike persuasion. Ours is the task of showing how the Christian story connects with life's deepest questions, and how the gospel of Jesus Christ is good news for every sphere of life.

So, what is your gameplan?

The purpose of this resource is to offer some prompts for church leaders to consider together how to map out a healthy strategy for evangelism across their church. To avoid the danger of simply being reactionary and sporadic in our attempts at evangelism, here are some indispensable elements of any serious gameplan for taking Jesus public together:



- Young people are becoming more religiously engaged, with Generation Z more open to religious ideas and spiritual practices than their parents.
- Social media is the first port-of-call for young people to connect with religion, especially YouTube and TikTok.
- There is a lot of confusion about Jesus (existence and significance) amongst the nominally or non-religious.
- Doubt is common to religious belief, with over 50% of Aussies surveyed experiencing periods of doubt.
- Aussies have complex hang-ups with Christianity, ranging from sexual ethics, bad Christians, and suffering to an unidentifiable mood of doubt.

STORY

CULTURE

STRATEGY

PREACHING

TRAINING

RESOURCES

# STORY

The journey of leading others toward faith in Jesus begins with *knowing our story*. One of the biggest helps for your church, and for newcomers who are exploring faith in Jesus, will be if you can connect the Christian story to life's deepest questions. The adoption of a framework for sharing the Bible's big story, and a repetition of key phrases as the basis of a common theological language, can help weave together the otherwise loose threads of Christian preaching and teaching into a better story we can all embrace and share. Whilst you are free to choose whatever framework you like, my upcoming book [Questioning Christianity](#) retells the Christian story this way:



## THE GARDEN: CREATED FOR GOOD

Everything starts with the Trinitarian God. Humanity was *created for good* in God's image, being designed for deep and meaningful relationships and for a role (to love God, love each other, and cultivate the planet). To create a world where such things were possible God imbued humanity with significant moral freedom. As earthly kids to a heavenly Father, God granted humanity the choice to either trust that His moral boundaries are the best way to rule creation, or to break faith with God and redefine good and evil on our own terms.



## THE TOWER: DAMAGED BY EVIL

Without any reason to doubt God's love, humanity chose the path of rebellion, which meant that everything good became *damaged by evil*. Selfishness dethroned love in the human heart, and our exile from God's presence meant that humanity became subject to disorder, disease, decay, and death. Brother turned against brother. Men enslaved women. The tools of war became a trade. The deep darkness of this scene culminates in the evil shadow of Babel's tower where a corrupt humanity sought to reach heaven on their own terms.



## THE NATION: CHOSEN TO BLESS

God's love endured despite all this darkness. His plan to rescue the world begins with a barren couple who end up giving birth to a nation: Israel. Delivered from slavery in Egypt and given the Torah as a way to be marked out as God's people, Israel were *chosen to bless* the world, lighting the way back to God. Tragically Israel repeatedly failed in their purpose, and for their own corruption are eventually carried off into exile by Babylon, comforted only by the prophets' promises that God would send a messiah to deliver them from evil.



Jesus is the invisible God made visible, and is sent to earth as heaven's answer to humanity's every heart cry. The singular calibre of Jesus' life, along with his sublime moral teaching and ministry of miracles, pierce through any darkness to show us what it would be like to live in the light of a world where God is King. Jesus' death on the cross was God's way of dealing with our sin, upholding justice while opening a door for forgiveness so we could be *redeemed by love*. The bodily resurrection of Jesus was God's way of defeating death, leaving behind a historical footprint bearing witness to the truth of Jesus' claim to be God, and opening a door for all who believe in Jesus to have eternal life. This is the good news of a the christian story.



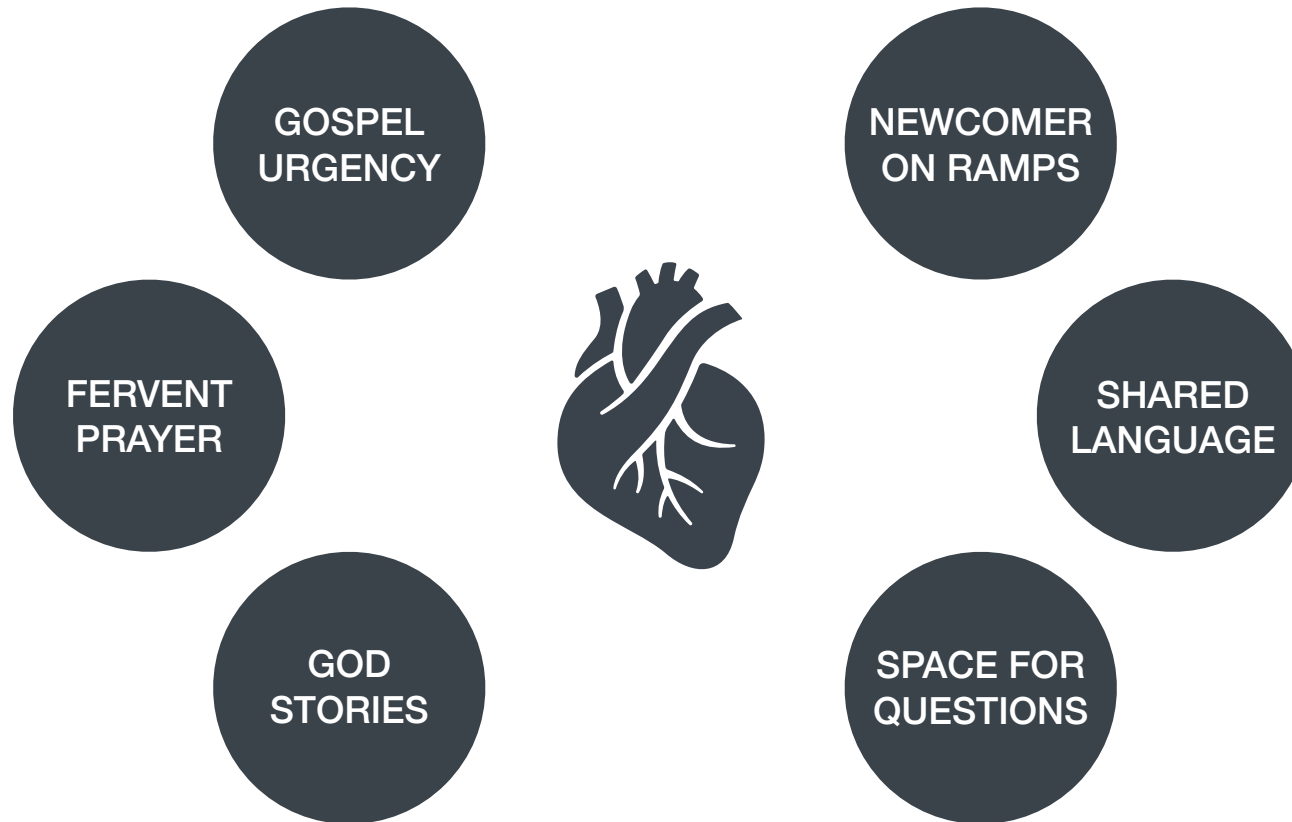
After Jesus' resurrection he gave last standing orders to the church before ascending into heaven. The church was *sent together to heal*. Christians were commanded to follow the way of Jesus, confronting evil and injustice, being agents of peace and reconciliation, and caring for the vulnerable, all the while spreading the news of what Jesus has done through this death and resurrection to open the way back to God. By gathering around the gospel, and rehearsing the christian story through remembering simple doctrines and practicing simple disciplines, the church spread around the world as the invitation to believe in and follow Jesus went out. Through Jesus the promise to Israel was being fulfilled that God would bless all the nations.



Jesus promised that one day he would return to *set everything right* by restoring justice through judgment. Everyone will be resurrected to face a just reckoning with the grand ledgers of life being opened for the world to see, and only two things stop us from entering God's future world: our records and our hearts. Since a just God has to deal with evil, and since sinful hearts cannot stand in God's holy presence without being consumed, only those who have trusted in Jesus will stand acquitted and transformed at the judgment and so be granted eternal life. For those who refuse forgiveness and eternal life, they will face the eternal punishment of the second death. God's future world—the new heavens and new earth—is described as a place where evil and all of its symptoms (disorder, disease, decay, and death) have been wiped away, along with our tears.

# CULTURE

Too often do we forget that the organisation of the church exists to support the organism of the church, much like a skeleton to a body or a trellis to a vine. This is why simply planning a calendar without building a culture is a colossal waste of time. Stirred by the very heart of God, an evangelistic culture is what will animate your church. Here are six critical keys to building an evangelistic culture:



## GOSPEL URGENCY

A pulpit without passion translates to a pew without zeal. God's heart to see lost people come home has to bleed through our preaching, holding together the imminence of Jesus' return to bring about God's endgame with the universal invitation of the cross of Christ to be saved.

Always speak as though non-Christians are in the room. Whether it is avoiding insider language, giving clear next steps, or actively assuming people aren't familiar with Christian doctrines or disciplines, building on-ramps into liturgy opens the door to newcomers.

## NEWCOMER ON-RAMPS

## FERVENT PRAYER

Prayer is the engine that drives evangelism. Fervent prayer sparked the great awakenings of the past, where as people cried out for God's heart they became consumed with an evangelistic hunger to see others come to Christ. God works powerfully through prayer.

To share our story Christians need to know our story. Hearing the Christian story on repeat, anchored by key phrases, equip Christians to give voice to what they believe and how it connects to life's deepest questions, paving the way for more fruitful God conversations.

## SHARED LANGUAGE

## GOD STORIES

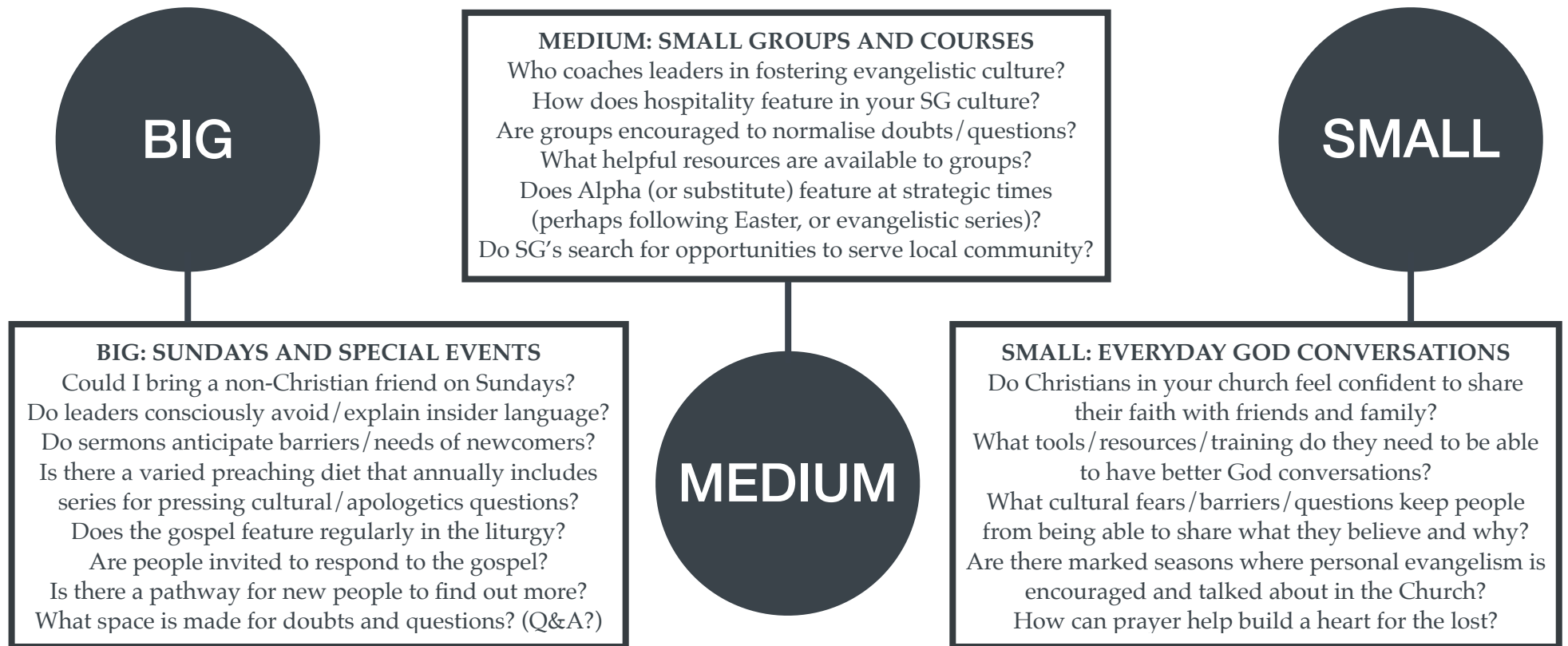
Evangelism begets evangelism. Telling honest stories about God conversations, the fruitful ones and the failures, wakes people up to be looking for opportunities. When Christians hear that the gospel really does have power, and God can use us, they feel emboldened for Christ.

God is not afraid of our questions. Given that the Bible entertains serious doubts about God, without filtering the raw emotional register of the doubters, we should too. Christianity should make space for questions and offer reasons to believe. Truth invites questioning.

## SPACE FOR QUESTIONS

# STRATEGY

A church-wide strategy for evangelism is indispensable to reaching your community with the gospel. Too often now church efforts towards evangelism are haphazard, reactionary, and narrow, simply throwing in the odd outreach event, sermon series, or evangelism course. Churches tend to be doing okay on only one or two of the three scales of evangelism: big, medium, or small. The following questions are designed to help you build an effective strategy so that all three scales of evangelism can work synergistically.





Answers to the above questions need to be worked down with your team to the practical level, with healthy evangelistic rhythms made visible throughout the church calendar.

January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
1 Fr <small>New Year's Day</small>		1 Mo	1 Su	1 Sa	1 Tu	1 Th		1 We	1 Fr	1 Mo	1 We
2 Sa		2 Tu		2 Su	2 We	2 Fr		2 Th	2 Sa	2 Tu	2 Th
3 Su <small>City Prayer Gathering</small>		3 We		3 Mo	3 Th	3 Sa		3 Fr	3 Su	3 We	3 Fr
4 Mo		4 Th		4 Tu	4 Fr	4 Su		4 Mo	4 Mo	4 Th	4 Sa
5 Tu		5 Fr		5 We	5 Sa	5 Tu		5 Th	5 Tu	5 Fr	5 Su
6 We		6 Sa		6 Th	6 Su	6 Fr		6 Fr	6 We	6 Sa	6 Mo
7 Th		7 Su		7 Fr	7 Mo	7 Sa		7 Sa	7 Th	7 Su	7 Tu
8 Fr		8 Mo		8 Sa	8 Tu	8 Su		8 We	8 Fr	8 Mo	8 We
9 Sa		9 Tu		9 Su	9 We	9 Mo		9 Th	9 Sa	9 Tu	9 Th
10 Su		10 We		10 Mo	10 Th	10 Tu		10 Fr	10 Su	10 We	10 Fr
11 Mo		11 Th		11 Tu	11 Fr	11 We		11 We	11 Sa	11 Th	11 Sa
12 Tu		12 Fr		12 We	12 Sa	12 Th		12 Th	12 Su	12 Fr	12 Su
13 We		13 Sa		13 Th	13 Su	13 Fr		13 Mo	13 We	13 Sa	13 Mo
14 Th		14 Su		14 Fr	14 Mo <small>Queen's Birthday</small>	14 We		14 Tu	14 Th	14 Su	14 Tu
15 Fr		15 Mo		15 Th	15 Tu	15 Th		15 We	15 Fr	15 Mo	15 We
16 Sa		16 Tu		16 Fr	16 We	16 Fr		16 Th	16 Sa	16 Tu	16 Th
17 Su		17 We		17 Sa	17 Th	17 Tu		17 Fr	17 Su	17 We	17 Fr
18 Mo		18 Th		18 Su	18 Tu	18 Fr		18 We	18 Sa	18 Th	18 Sa
19 Tu		19 Fr		19 Mo	19 We	19 Mo		19 Th	19 Su	19 Fr	19 Su
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21 Th		21 Su		21 We	21 Fr	21 Mo		21 Sa	21 Tu	21 Th	21 Su
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27 We		27 Sa		27 Th	27 Su	27 Tu		27 Fr	27 Mo	27 We	27 Fr
28 Th		28 Su		28 We	28 Fr	28 Mo		28 We	28 Tu	28 Th	28 Su
29 Fr		29 Mo		29 Th	29 Sa	29 Th		29 Fr	29 We	29 Fr	29 Mo
30 Sa		30 Tu		30 Fr	30 Su	30 We		30 Th	30 Sa	30 Tu	30 Th
31 Su		31 We		31 Mo	31 Tu	31 Sa		31 Tu	31 Fr	31 We	31 Fr

GOD CONVERSATION TRAINING

EASTER EVENTS

LAUNCH BIG QUESTIONS SERMON SERIES

ALPHA STARTS HERE

EXPERIMENT OUTREACH PUB/CAFE

ALPHA STARTS HERE

COMMUNITY SG MISSION WEEK

GUEST SPEAKER/SPECIAL EVENT

GUEST SPEAKER/SPECIAL EVENT

CHRISTMAS EVENTS

SG CULTURE TRAINING

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

SUNDAY Q&A

# PREACHING

The goal of all preaching is that God would be glorified through more people becoming more like Jesus. There is a sense, then, that all truly Christian preaching is *gospelizing* people, inviting them to believe in and follow Jesus as the centrepiece of Scripture's storyline. Sadly, evangelistic preaching is often relegated in a preacher's mind to an entire sermon devoted to a simple presentation of the gospel, followed by an invitation to come to Jesus. In truth, evangelistic preaching can easily bleed into the various types of sermons you could give. Whilst some influential preachers are die-hard when it comes to a particular method of preaching, realistically a healthy diet of various types of homilies are required to help clear away misconceptions and frame God and the gospel right to your hearers. One easy way to test if your preaching has a reliable evangelistic edge to it is whether Christians feel confident to invite their friends to church.



## SIMPLE GOSPEL

Simple gospel sermons offer a clear overview of the gospel message, honing in on the deity, substitutionary death, and bodily resurrection of Jesus. The goal is to invite newcomers to respond to the Holy Spirit's leading to put their faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life. Such messages should be sparse, not because Christians aren't served by hearing the gospel on repeat, but because discipleship requires meat not milk. Christians need to be encouraged to consciously invite friends who are ready for such a message.

## EXPOSITORY

Expository preaching is the mainstay of a healthy preaching diet, building up a church with the whole counsel of God. However, expository sermons need not exclude newcomers or doubters. Theological language can be explained, not assumed. The narrow focus on a particular passage can be complimented by zooming out to see where it fits into the Christian story. So try and invite people into the text by entertaining doubts, clearing away misconceptions, offering arguments, and highlighting why this is *good news* given our cultural moment.

## TOPICAL

As a compliment to expository preaching, topical preaching recognises the need to bring biblical and systematic theology to bear on pressing cultural questions or objections. The goal is to show how, despite public opinion to the contrary, the Christian story really is eternally relevant as God's word to us, and eminently reasonable to believe. These sorts of BIG QUESTIONS series are great for piquing the interest of newcomers, and should be used strategically in the year when you offer some next steps.

## SEASONAL

Seasonal sermons take into account the swelled presence of newcomers at Christmas and Easter, and makes a special effort to connect these scenes of the Christian story to life's deepest questions. Whereas often Church leaders sadly prioritise *visibility* in the pulpit for senior leaders, these are precisely the times you want the most gifted evangelist to speak. Special care should be given to jolt newcomers out of cultural familiarity to experience the challenge that Jesus' incarnation and passion carries. Next steps need to be clear.

# TRAINING

A number of cultural factors spell out the need to move away from a sole reliance on the gathered church as the locus for evangelism. Whether it be the reputation of Christians behaving badly that has poisoned the waters for some Aussies when it comes to the Church, or the shift in how people work out their spirituality as evidenced by younger generations asking their questions online, the cultural moment we are in means Christians need to be better prepared to be the Church scattered, and make the most of every opportunity to have meaningful God conversations with their friends and neighbours. The challenge is, when it comes to survey data, very few Christians feel prepared to share their faith, and end up being paralysed by fear or uncertainty as they fumble around for what to say. With so many complex dynamics in our culture the traditional evangelistic tools have declined rapidly in popularity, leaving Christians often without any training whatsoever in how to talk about what they believe and why. Knowing that actually having God conversations is the best way to grow, what kind of content and skills training should church leaders be offering to Christians?\*

## KNOW GOD'S STORY

Christians need to practice being able to share the Christian story in summary form. Edit what is unhelpful, add what is missing, and focus on how God's story answers our questions, and why Jesus is good news.

## QUESTIONS

Asking good questions and listening intently is the shortest route to better God conversations. Jesus asked hundreds of questions designed to help people think about what they believe and why.

## KNOW OUR REASONS

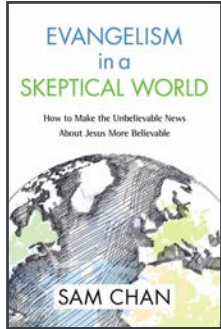
Why do we believe in and follow Jesus? Our answers might be personal and experiential, or they might be intellectual, but in a world of spiritual options we need to be able to give a reason for the hope that is within us.

## STRATEGY

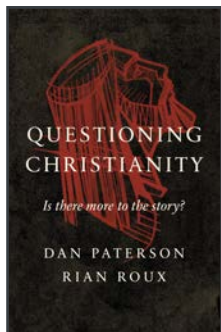
Not every conversation is a come to Jesus moment. Christians need to be intentional to make space for hospitality and true friendship, opening the door for better God conversations in different contexts.

\* See RESOURCES for ideas and how QC can help.

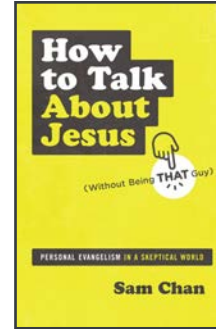
# RESOURCES



Evangelism in a Skeptical World should be the new global textbook for evangelism classes in seminary. Each chapter is designed to help Christians, and especially church leaders, think through the challenges and opportunities that our cultural moment affords the gospel. A must read for church leaders.



Questioning Christianity is designed to help doubters, newcomers, and Christians connect the Christian story to life's deepest questions. Without assuming anything, this book will help you get a handle on what Christians believe and why, and how you can respond to hard questions in your God conversations.



How to Talk About Jesus is a tremendously practical guide for Christians who want to get better at sharing their faith. Designed to help Christians develop a plan for better God conversations, Sam's steps are so simple and relatable that everyone feels more confident to talk about Jesus with their friends.



Christianity Explored is another short course designed to help newcomers engage with the Christian story. Over 7 weeks it walks through various elements of the gospel, creates space for questions, and fosters an experience of Christian community.



The Alpha Course is a helpful launching pad for inviting newcomers to experience hospitality, learn about the Christian story, and ask their questions in community. With a global track record of seeing millions of people come to Christ, either Alpha (or another substitute) is a brilliant way of doing *medium size* evangelism. These courses are designed to start with the broad content of the gospel message, and move people towards understanding what it means to step into that story and begin a personal relationship with God. Any particulars can be fed in around the table conversations if you feel something is lacking.

# QUESTIONING CHRISTIANITY



Questioning Christianity is a ministry founded by Dan Paterson to help connect the Christian story to life's deepest questions, and to humbly demonstrate how truth invites questioning. As a ministry that seeks to come alongside churches, schools, campus missionaries, and para-Church organisations to serve together in gospel ministry, here are some ways QC might be able to help.



**SPEAKING.** Book our speakers for Sundays or special events to speak evangelistically and engage in Q&A. From outreach Sundays to local pub events, Christmas carols to Big Questions series, send us an invite through our speakers or QC's website so we can help serve together.

**TRAINING.** Our *Taking Jesus Public* session is designed to equip Christians to have better God conversations where God has placed them, leaving them with a ton of helpful resources. QC also offers specialised training for leaders, especially in how to answer complex cultural objections.



**DIGITAL.** Our Youtube channel and social media accounts are loaded with helpful content, especially to engage younger generations. Why not share our content across your accounts, feature our short videos in your LifeGroup studies (5-10mins), or encourage your church to subscribe.

**ACADEMY.** Each year we accept 10-12 emerging evangelists from around Australia/NZ into our speaker academy program. Designed to run alongside full-time commitments, We train people in theology and apologetics, developing engaging evangelistic talks, and Q&A skills.



**MATTHEW 9:36-38**

WHEN HE SAW THE CROWDS, HE HAD COMPASSION ON THEM, BECAUSE THEY WERE HARASSED AND HELPLESS, LIKE SHEEP WITHOUT A SHEPHERD. THEN HE SAID TO HIS DISCIPLES, "THE HARVEST IS PLENTIFUL BUT THE WORKERS ARE FEW. ASK THE LORD OF THE HARVEST, THEREFORE, TO SEND OUT WORKERS INTO HIS HARVEST FIELD."

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