

Faith Conversations

Talking about Faith on the Road of Life

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Overview

Sharing your faith story is an essential part of your role as a leader—yet this is usually a tough area for many people in the church. This session will introduce the basic ideas and skills necessary for having a natural, relational conversation about faith and life. We will admit our fears and find a way to speak about faith and life in real conversations with students.

Big Ideas We Hope to Get Across

- Sharing your story is the key to faith conversations
- We need to use words to express our faith
- Most of us are scared about sharing our faith, but it can become a natural part of life
- Vague ideas won't really help us talk about faith

Introduction

5 minutes

Say something like: Today's topic is on having faith conversations. For many of us, this subject gets us nervous because we feel inadequate in this area. We think we have to be theologians or bible experts to share our faith, but today is about learning to be comfortable with sharing our story.

As you may remember from the session on theology - all of us are theologians. You don't need to be an expert. You might also remember the “Landscape of Youth Ministry” session, where we referenced Kenda Creasy Dean. She mentioned how few teenagers are able to articulate their faith—and that they often get that from the adults around them. She said that churches need to be laboratories for these faith conversations. THIS is the place where we should be practicing sharing our faith. This session is designed to help us with this important topic, so let's get started.

Open in Prayer

Reflections: Life reflections

10 minutes

Small Groups:

Have the participants get into groups of 4-5 to discuss the following questions.

1. Describe a time when you felt comfortable sharing about your faith with another person.
What was that like? What made it comfortable? How did that go?
2. Now, describe a time when you tried to share something of your faith—but it just didn't work out at all.
What happened? Why do you think it didn't work?
3. As you think about sharing your faith with teenagers—what are some of your fears or concerns about that?

Video Segment #1: Tiger

5-7 minutes

Highlights of the video:

Sharing faith is not just for the professionals. We ALL have a story.

Kids struggle with articulating their faith—because they don't see adults do it.

Sharing our faith has to include our words...it can't just be a vague idea.

Luke 24 – “Jesus drew near to them” – our job is to come alongside kids, can't do

faith conversation from a distance, we need to talk about life and faith; Jesus

asks questions – asking questions creates environment that shows interest in

their world, listening to the answers, THEN teaching at the right moment

Reflections: Sharing Your Faith

10-15 minutes

In the same small groups, use the following questions to have the participants discuss some elements of their own faith story. You may want to ask the questions in two sets.

Set One Questions:

Name a time in your life when you felt close to God.

What story in the bible rings true for you?

Any character in the bible? A moment in a bible character's life?

What did Tiger say to get you thinking about sharing your faith more clearly?

Set Two Questions:

On a scale of 1-10 (10 being the most comfortable), how would you rate yourself when it comes to sharing your faith with others?

What makes it difficult for you?

What are your fears in this area?

Reflections: Large Group

10-15 minutes

Bring the group back together and get some responses from the small group time.

- What were the times you felt close to God?
- What were the fears about sharing your faith you named?
- How did you rank yourselves?

This will give you a good sense of what the group is feeling right now. You may want to put some of these on a whiteboard or flip chart for reference.

Practice Sessions:

10-20 minutes

Have the participants get into pairs to practice sharing their faith, using the questions below. Assume that the person asking these questions is a friend—not a stranger. They simply are asking these questions in a natural setting with you.

Set up each question from up front.

- Ask the question in the context just given—as a friend asking a friend.
- In pairs, have them answer the question to each other. Give them time to respond.
- After there has been enough time for each person to respond, set up the next question.

Remind them that this is a great time to practice. They don't have to feel pressure, and they may feel uncomfortable. Like anything, practice is valuable in becoming more comfortable.

1. Why do you go to church? What value do you find in going?
2. So, if you go to church, then you believe in God, right? Why do you believe in God and what does that faith in God do for you?
3. So, you go to First Lutheran. That is a Christian church, right? So, how does Jesus fit in the picture? What do you believe about Jesus—and why is he so important?

Leader Note: If there is time, you may wish to add the optional questions/exercises in the appendix, or give this as an assignment for them to do after the training.

Large Group Discussion

5-10 minutes

Bring the group back together and have a few people share their thoughts on the experience.

- How did that exercise go?
- What did it feel like to answer each of these questions?
- Which question was the hardest to answer in a conversational way?
- Where did you get stuck?

Leader Note: You will sense the willingness of the group to be honest about this. Hopefully, you can encourage them to share how it felt to try to put words to their faith—especially moving from Religious Behavior (Question #1) to Christian Distinctives (Question #3).

Conclusion:

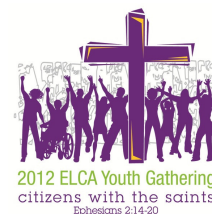
5 minutes

Say something like: I appreciate your willingness to talk about—and practice this idea of sharing your faith story. It can feel intimidating, but we believe that teens are helped when caring adults around them actually put words to their faith.

Like anything, it takes practice to become more comfortable. Young people need to hear us put words to our faith—let’s not keep it vague. Look for opportunities to connect life conversations to faith conversations. Keep working on this stuff—because this is really the core of our ministry.

Closing Prayer

**This curriculum was developed for the Practice Discipleship Project, an initiative of the 2012 ELCA Youth Gathering (www.elca.org/gathering) in partnership with the ELCA Youth Ministry Network (www.elcaymnet.org). While primary authorship belongs to the author noted above, this is a collective work of the Practice Discipleship writing team: Dr. Terri Elton (Luther Seminary: www.luthersem.edu), Dennis “Tiger” McLuen (Youth Leadership: www.youthleadership.org), and Dr. Jeremy Myers (Augsburg College: www.augsburg.edu). Permission is given to use these resources in your local context, so long as no organization or individual profits from the use of these materials.*



Optional/Appendix:

Practice sharing God's story.

What would you say are the key elements to you about this story of God's love for us?
Remember the Lutheran theology piece? Where can we find spaces to share it?
How can you transition general conversations with teens to talking about God?

Practice sharing your story.

Work on a short summary of your faith journey. How did you get to where you are today? How is your faith impacting your life at work, at home and life in general?
What are some key elements of your faith at this point? How would you put words to some of your core beliefs?