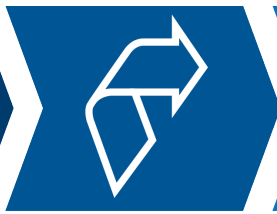




TRUST



CURIOSITY



OPEN



SEEKING



FOLLOWER

## 5 THRESHOLDS LEADER'S GUIDE

GFM 2018 EDITION

### OVERVIEW

Thank you for helping your Small Group learn more about how God is helping our friends grow toward Jesus today. The following material is designed in modules, and pieces may be used in many setting and various ways. Here are three possible organization outlines:

- 1-1/2 day weekend conference
- 6 weekly 90 minute sessions
- Other ideas you can dream up

There are different components and tools for each of your sessions. You may eliminate different facets or add your own, or reverse the order. Experiment! If you have non-Christians in the room with you, we think they will enjoy this discussion, especially if you make some minor adjustments to your language that will help them feel more comfortable. In fact, we have found that when seekers go through the 5 Thresholds material, God uses it to clarify their journey and helps them commit to Jesus.

### A TYPICAL SESSION

Here is the overview of how a session could work:

1. **Scripture:** 5 minute devotional or 45 minute inductive study
2. **Video:** Show and discuss the "Author" video (5 minutes long). Discussion could go 5-20 minutes.
3. **Our Friends:** Think about your friends. To whom can you be a blessing this week?
4. **Video:** "Spiritual Conversations" (5 minutes long). Discussion could last 5-20 minutes.
5. **Active Response:** We offer a series of practical suggestions for taking next steps.

### YOUR PREPARATION

We assume you will study the Scripture for yourself and watch the videos yourself prior to leading the discussion. It is important that you have your own stories to share with the Small Group. How you feel God is using the Scripture and videos to impact you is one of the most important things you bring as a leader. Please take risks each week to apply the material. Your integrity to not just lead them in this but also embrace it yourself is central to how the Bible describes leadership. For the health of your own relationship with Jesus, leadership is being the first one to hear the Word and apply it, not just passing on information (See Matthew 7:24-27 and James 1:22).

### IT IS ABOUT LOVE, NOT ONLY DISCERNMENT

The 5 Thresholds are not a science. It is much more important to help the Small Group members take steps to love their friends instead of quibble about which Threshold their friend might be in. And people sometimes move backward in the Thresholds. Discernment about where people are at only serves in so much as it moves us to love them in action and prayer. Each week we suggest ways to respond actively, but we do not expect your friends to move through each Threshold weekly.

### BUILDING MOMENTUM THROUGH THE SERIES

If you lead this as a 6-week series, we hope that the momentum builds as you go. The series is designed to build 1-week upon the previous. You may wish to begin each consecutive discussion by sharing stories of how the Small Group members tried to apply the material those previous days. A 5-10 minute opening debrief of people's experience can be a great momentum-builder for the next Threshold. Also, you may wish to close a session by saying something like, "Next week we are going to see how curiosity builds upon the trust we are developing." You can help them see how the pieces fit together. Application should also build momentum. The first week or two, your members might be ready for baby steps. Just praying for their friends might be a new step of faith. But as the weeks progress, feel free to take greater risks yourself, and to invite them to stretch.

## VIDEOS

The videos are available for viewing and download at [2100.intervarsity.org/5T](http://2100.intervarsity.org/5T) (you must be logged in). We would suggest transferring a copy of the videos for each session to your computer, eliminating the need for Internet access during your session and ruling out the possibility of technical glitches. The password for the videos on Vimeo is 5TH. Each session suggests a specific “Spiritual Conversations” video, but additional conversation videos are available online which may be more suitable for specific contexts.

## TIPS ON LEADING A FRUITFUL DISCUSSION AFTER A VIDEO

It may be helpful to lead the video discussion along the lines of Observations, Interpretation, and Application. Your first questions to the group can be along the lines of “What did you see?” “What did you notice?” “How did you feel?” etc. The next layer of questions can be to help them interpret, asking why questions. The third layer can be implication or application type questions. We have created a list of questions you may want to ask after the videos. Please do not feel obligated to use them all . . . your own questions will be better than ours!

Please explain to your group, before showing the video, why you are showing this video. We include “intro” comments as an example of how to prepare your folks for the upcoming video. The “Spiritual Conversations” segments are real people telling their real stories.

Some discussions after the “Author” video and after the “Spiritual Conversations” video will flow naturally. People will be engaged and they will eagerly jump in. However, be prepared for the times when the discussion will get sidetracked or stuck:

- **The Random Question or Comment.** “Where does predestination fit into this?” “Once you cross the 5th threshold and make a decision, is it possible to lose your salvation?” (For an interesting but off-topic question, please suggest that you discuss it afterwards or over coffee later in the week.)
- **The Critical/Skeptical Question or Comment.** “God is the one to change lives. This series is based on confidence in human wisdom.” “I have tried this stuff. It won’t work with my friends.” “I don’t think we should do evangelism training in our Small Group.” (“Thank you for sharing that concern. Let’s trust God and try this for 3 weeks.”)

## THE CONTENT

When you watch the “Author” videos ahead of time, you should get a good feeling for what is happening in each Threshold. We are not going to repeat that content in this guide. If you wish to go deeper with the Thresholds, please read *I Once Was Lost*.

## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS

At the end of each section, you will find suggestions under “For Leaders of Leaders.” These ideas are for those of whom help train or coach Small Group leaders. We recommend the “Taking it Further” conversation pointers especially for you. In addition, please remind your leaders that the goal of this series is to see God change the culture of our ministries.

## TAKING IT FURTHER

After the “Spiritual Conversations” videos, we have included various suggestions about how we might engage this person in conversation if we were in the room with them. This section of each module is optional—only if you have time and motivation.

## RESOURCES

This guide includes notes, comments, advice, and direct participant instructions you can use as you lead the session. It also includes a participant handout for each session, a manuscript passage handout for each session, and a few additional handouts. See the final pages in the PDF for these printable handouts.

Included online is a Power Point template you may use to create your own teaching aid, if you wish.



## OVERVIEW OF THE 5 THRESHOLDS

### PURPOSE OF WEEK ONE

1. To give people an understanding of the 5 Thresholds.
2. To help people tell their own faith journey story with more clarity and insight.
3. To grow in hopefulness that God is at work and will use us in the lives of our friends.

### SCRIPTURE

#### BIBLE STUDY: ACTS 17:16-34—IDENTIFYING WHERE GOD IS ALREADY AT WORK

In this passage we find Paul engaging philosophers in the Areopagus in Athens—affirming where they were close to God in their thinking and philosophies, and where the Gospel brings completeness to their worldview.

Finding himself in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy to join him (v. 15), Paul does not wait idly, but rather takes in his new context, is moved by it, and responds accordingly. As he engages the local philosophers, he gains their attention and piques their interest. His speaking catches their attention—so much so that they invite him to their most important venue for engaging ideas, the Areopagus.

It is here that Paul not only presents the message of the Gospel, but also identifies where these Epicurean and Stoic philosophers are already close in some of their thinking and beliefs. He connects his presentation of the Gospel to their religious zeal (v. 22) and his knowledge of their thinkers and poets (v. 28). What is implied in Paul's engagement here is that God is already at work in their midst. What he desires for them is to fully know God's plans and intentions for humankind—the Gospel. His presentation of the Gospel is brilliant both in its simplicity and in its appropriate focus to their context.

In this presentation Paul states a truth that should be encouraging to us as we think of intentionally engaging those God has put in our life: God is the God of all and the giver of life – “so that [people] would seek him and perhaps reach out for [“grope for” NRSV] him and find him” (v. 27). What a great reminder for us that God is already at work ahead of us in the lives of those we desire to come to follow Jesus, that they too might reach out (even grope for) and find him. The response to Paul's interactions with these philosophers should also be an encouragement to us. We are told that some scoffed, some wanted to hear more, and some became believers (vv. 32-34). It runs the whole gamut and we are reminded that even the apostle Paul did not have a 100 percent success rate! It is an important reminder that God calls us—like Paul—to be obedient in this process, and we can trust him for the results.

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- How does Paul respond to the situation he finds himself in at the beginning of the passage?
- As the philosophers he engages “want to know more,” how does Paul build bridges with their worldview and philosophies in his response?
- How does Paul present the Gospel in this situation? What does he emphasize? Why?
- What is the response of those listening (vv. 32-34)?

### “AUTHOR” VIDEO: THE OVERVIEW

Here is the first video in our series. This series is about hope. We Christians believe that God is at work all around us, in ways we will never know. We believe Jesus is the Great Seeker, the Good Shepherd who is willing to leave the 99 sheep and go after 1 lost sheep. This series is designed to help us open our eyes and see more clearly how God may be at work in our friends and how we can get involved in what God is already doing. Today's video is the overview of the growth process, and explains the contents of what we will be talking about for the next 5 weeks.

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

Describe one person who has had a positive impact on your faith life.

### SHOW THE VIDEO

## DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?
2. What questions does it raise for you?<sup>1</sup>
3. Doug talks about the story of the farmer from Mark 4:26-29. What do you like about the farmer story? What is one skill that the farmer has that you would like as well?
4. Can you see any of the Thresholds in your own personal journey of faith? If so, where do you connect with this?
5. In this series, we are going to consider how we might be used by God to be spiritual mentors to those around us. How do you feel about the idea of being a spiritual mentor?

## THE SUMMARY CHART

The summary below is for you to remember the point of each threshold. Please jot down a few key words to help you think about each Threshold. Please bring this back each week.<sup>2</sup> As you read it over, which Threshold are you initially most interested in learning about?

 <b>TRUST</b>	 <b>CURIOSITY</b>	 <b>OPEN</b>	 <b>SEEKING</b>	 <b>FOLLOWER</b>
<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends do not yet have a reason to trust a Christian. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet interested in our faith lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet interested in changing their current lifestyle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet bringing their questions to Jesus himself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends realize that a decision needs to be made. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> <li>• _____</li> </ul>
<b>OUR ROLE</b> Gain trust by loving genuinely and asking questions.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> Encourage questions, and live curiously.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> Practice patience, enduring prayer, nudge and challenge.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> We help clarify their quest, we explain how to seek Jesus, and we invite them to join us.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> We invite them to consider following Jesus, and we help them think through the implications.
<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____
The journey through this Threshold is when our friends come to us for advice and are free to be themselves around us.	The journey through this Threshold is when our friends begin asking about faith, God, etc.	The journey through this Threshold is when they become open to changing their mindset or behaviors.	The journey through this Threshold is when they become intentional about their search.	The journey through this Threshold is when they choose to become Jesus' disciple and journey with him for the rest of their lives.

<sup>1</sup>They may ask what exactly a "Threshold" is or why we use that term. We picked this term to show movement. Like a "threshold" of a door, it represents moving from one room to another. Point them to *I Once Was Lost* for a fuller description of how we arrived at the 5 Thresholds, or other such questions.

<sup>2</sup>If you hand out the chart before the video, people may spend all their time reading the chart and not engaging with the video. We recommend having them watch the video first and look at the chart second.

## ACTIVE RESPONSE

### GROWING AS A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

"We would like this Small Group to be a safe place for you to invite your friends. What is one concrete thing we can do next week to be more welcoming?"

### TELLING YOUR STORY USING THE THRESHOLDS

Help your Small Group see how the 5 Thresholds can shed light on our faith journey. Invite your members to use the 5 Threshold language to share their faith story with one Christian or non-Christian friend this week.

## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

1. Practice asking your Small Group leaders (and others) about their faith journeys. Give them feedback about where you see connection to 1 or more of the 5 Thresholds. Coach them on how to tell their story more clearly. Help them learn to interpret their experiences using insights from the Thresholds. Practice using the language and the paradigm to increase your discernment and fluency.
2. At your leaders meeting, use your story as a case study to help your leaders learn to apply the 5 Thresholds to a person's life and story. Tell 2 versions of your faith journey. First take a few minutes to tell the story as you always have. Then retell the story with insights and language applied from the 5 Thresholds. For example:
  - "The first time I remember trusting a Christian was . . . and they built trust with me by . . ."
  - "I started to become curious when . . ."
  - "My church school teacher helped me become open when they . . ."
  - "I remember the first time I directly asked Jesus to reveal himself to me . . ."
  - "My decision to follow Jesus came . . ."

After retelling the story, ask them, "How do the 5 Thresholds make my faith story more clear? How might this help you tell your story more clearly?" (If they are enthusiastic about this idea, you could ask for a volunteer to do the same exercise in front of their peers, and then the group can give feedback and insights to interpret their story.)

3. Each week at your leaders meeting, ask a different Small Group leader to do the above exercise. (They don't need to have the perfect story for each threshold nor one that brilliantly flows through all 5 Thresholds. Pick 1 or 2 Thresholds that most resonate with their unique experience.)



## TRUST

# THRESHOLD 1: TRUST

### PURPOSE OF WEEK TWO

1. To help people understand the importance of trust-building in relationships, with some practical steps they can take.
2. To help people overcome their negative feelings when others do not trust them.
3. To practice listening prayer for their friends.

### WELCOME THE GUESTS

Welcome to week two of our series on exploring faith. Today we are talking about the biblical principle of trust building. We will also watch two brief videos about trust.

### SCRIPTURE

#### BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 1:43-50—HOW DO YOU ENGAGE A SKEPTIC?

In this passage we encounter Nathanael, who is being invited by Philip to encounter Jesus.

After responding himself to Jesus' call to follow, Philip seeks out Nathanael to share with him the good news of whom he has found. Philip sets Jesus in the Jewish story, connecting him to Moses and the prophets, as well as to his lineage. At this Nathanael scoffs, basically saying, "Can anything good come from there?" We need to appreciate the context: not only was Nazareth an insignificant town of little repute, but also none of the prophecies concerning the Messiah mention it. Nathanael reminds me (Craig) of many of the graduate students I have worked with over the years. They are not quick to jump onto bandwagons, and if facts or information don't line up, they take a critical or skeptical posture—until information is proven to be true.

What Philip does next is important to note and easy to miss. Think of the ways he could have responded to Nathanael's skepticism. He could have become defensive, he could have tried to prove his point, or he could have just walked away and disengaged. Instead, Philip answers Nathanael's question with an invitation, "Come and see." It is noteworthy in its simplicity, but also brilliant given the stage Nathanael is in with his journey of faith. Instead of defending Jesus, Philip just points to him. "Check him out for yourself." "Come and see" defuses the debate, and they become companions on the same journey of exploration. In the chapter on the 1st Threshold in *I Once Was Lost*, Doug and Don suggest, "'Come and see' is one of the most authentic, transparent gifts we can give. It is better than any pat answer we might offer."

This proves to be the case for Nathanael. Though we are given no details, we find that he has enough trust in Philip to take the next step and encounter Jesus together. After this step, the actual interaction with Jesus is transformational and shocking . . . he finds that Jesus has "supernatural" knowledge of him. Jesus' statements about Nathanael do not confront or judge his skepticism, but rather speak of his heart and what Jesus sees as a lack of deceit. Scholars agree that though he is initially suspicious, Nathanael still comes to Jesus, and his "lack of deceit" stands in stark contrast to others who will resist and reject Jesus. Nathanael then makes even stronger proclamations about Jesus than Philip had made to him earlier. Even with this, Jesus promises him there will be even more than he can imagine. No doubt Nathanael will have far more to learn as he becomes Jesus' disciple. Here in the opening chapter of John's Gospel, Nathanael trusted his friend Philip, steps through his initial skepticism, and embraces the invitation to "come and see" for himself.

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- How does Nathanael enter the scene in this passage?
- What are his questions?
- What does this say about his posture or attitude toward Jesus?
- How does Philip engage him?
- How does Jesus engage him?
- What does Jesus invite him to? What does he promise Nathanael?

## "AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 1ST THRESHOLD

Here is Doug's second video. In Scripture, we see Jesus naturally building trust with people wherever he went. Doug is going to take that concept and help us work on that together.

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

For 30 seconds each, tell a story about how you bonded with someone recently or built trust.

### SHOW THE VIDEO

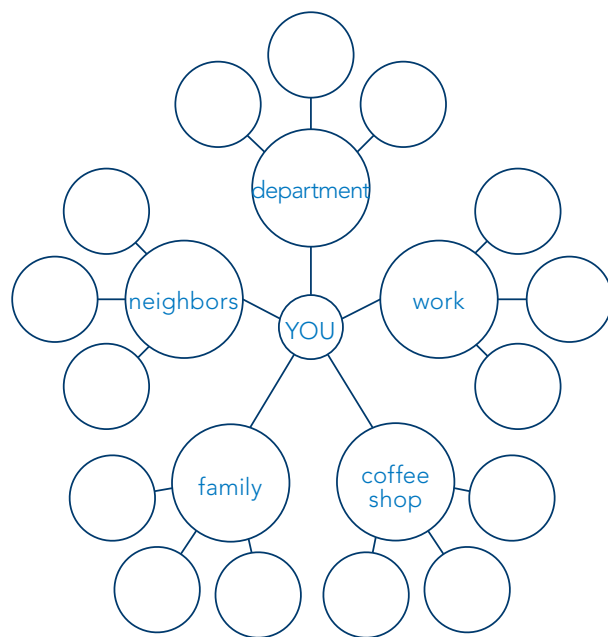
### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?
2. What questions does it raise for you?
3. How do you feel when people don't trust you? How can you tell when people do not trust you? How do you feel when they make snap judgments about you? (Think of a personal story to tell.)<sup>3</sup>
4. Did you have to grow in trust with the Christians around you? How did that happen?
5. Tell a story about someone you have already built trust with. Why do they trust you?
6. How might community help with building trust? How might it hurt?
7. What do you like to do? How are you naturally wired to build trusting relationships? (Think ahead of time about the people in your Small Group. How are they good at building trust? Affirm them.)<sup>4</sup>

## OUR FRIENDS

### PRAYER MAPS<sup>5</sup>

Let's write down the names of some friends we can pray for. (If there are non-Christians in the room, you may want to say, "A prayer is a natural conversation with God. We want to talk to God about our friends. Who do you know who needs to experience deeper love? Let's pray for them.") Let's create a prayer map. (Hand out a blank sheet of paper.) Over the next 5 weeks, we are going to keep praying for our friends. The point is to be more intentional with the people we already know. Please bring your prayer map back each week. As God brings other friends to mind, please add them to your sheet of paper. (Show them an example of your own handwritten prayer map.<sup>6</sup> Give them a few minutes to write down some names.) Now let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight 1 person in 1 of your networks that he particularly wants you to pray for this week. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. (The time of silence should be brief, 10-20 seconds max. The point is to get them to interact with God about their prayer map, not to perfectly discern the best person to pray for.)



## "SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: JOHN N. INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

We have been talking about what it is like for us to build trust with others. Now let's look at the other side of the coin. Let's hear from those on the receiving side. What does it feel like to have someone go out of their way to build trust with you?

<sup>3</sup>For some, feeling judged for being a Christian is profoundly hurtful. They will need you to help them process their past painful experiences. Please help them forgive, in prayer, those who have judged them. Help them move beyond a defensive posture.

<sup>4</sup>Some of your Small Group members may not have any non-Christian friends. They may not want non-Christian friends. Please pray with them and ask God to open their hearts. They may need some basic skill training from you on how to be more friendly, how to ask questions. You may need to bring them with you into a time where you are building more trust.

<sup>5</sup>Some people call this the "network map." We find "prayer map" is a more comfortable term for non-Christians. Use whichever term you prefer.

<sup>6</sup>It is important for each person to write their own prayer map. If you give them a handout, it may feel too formulaic. We want it to be organic and something they can add to each week.



## SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. Initially, why doesn't John trust Christians? What barriers can you hear in his story?
2. Where is he coming from? Describe his worldview.<sup>7</sup>
3. What does Julian do to build trust?
4. How might you engage John in conversation? How might you help him become curious?
5. Last week (in the overview session), we discussed Acts 17 and how Paul quotes the secular "poets." From Paul's model, we are invited to look for ways that God is already at work in a non-Christian's life and affirm the truth that they already believe. How does Julian affirm the truth in John's life?

### TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

*"I have had deep experiences in nature . . . I have never had an experience that deep in church."*

- John talks a little like a Transcendentalist, like Emerson, Thoreau, or Muir. How might Jesus engage someone like Thoreau or Muir?
- What was that "deep experience in nature" like for you? Do you think God was in that experience?
- I have a Native American friend who calls himself a follower of the Jesus Way. He loves Native spirituality, but the Jesus Way offers resurrection. If he were with us today, he would tell of amazing experiences with his Creator in nature, and he would talk about resurrection. What are your thoughts on the Jesus Way?

*"My experience of Christians has been . . ."*

- John's negative experience of Christians means he has expectations of how Christians will act. Julian did not fit in the "box" of John's expectations. Jesus is amazing at "stepping out of the box" of people's expectations of him. They expect him to say one thing, and he says the opposite. Like Julian, Jesus gives an "unexpected word" that amazes his listeners. When I talk to someone like John, I ask myself, "What does he expect a Christian to say or do? How can I be like Jesus and surprise him with an 'unexpected word'?"

*"I think about Jesus fairly often . . ."*

- What is your favorite Jesus story? Why?
- What do you like about Jesus?

*"I enjoyed church at first . . . I got increasingly dissatisfied with it . . . some of them were hypocritical in ways I found offensive."*

- Thank you for bringing up the topic of Christian hypocrisy. That is so endemic. Recently I have been trying to face the hypocrisy in my own life . . .<sup>8</sup>

### CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 1st Threshold from the John story?
2. What barriers might keep us from being like Julian and building trust with people like John?<sup>9</sup>

### ACTIVE RESPONSE

Take a look at the active response suggestions. Which one is a good next step for you?

- What is one way we can each make time for one friendship this week?
- Who has God put on your heart to pray for this week? How can you get to know them better?

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<sup>7</sup>For more insights on people's worldviews, in our resources section we suggest reading *The Universe Next Door*.

<sup>8</sup>For a 5 minute case study of this type of conversation, see Doug's video on hypocrisy: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uo1p5ZM8nyw>.

<sup>9</sup>Julian, what was it like for you to enter into John's world of environmentalism? "I knew very little about environmental issues when I stepped into this world. We had a grad student in our ministry who was passionate about this, so we decided to address faith and the environment as an outreach issue. John was in the audience that night. After the event I sought out John and asked him to meet for a cup of coffee. From that coffee conversation, a genuine friendship was born." What was difficult and what was easy for you about crossing over into his world? Why? "It was uncomfortable at first because I felt way out of my depth. I had not thought about environmental issues from either a theological nor a scientific point of view. At the same time, such ignorance was my greatest strength, because I quickly admitted my ignorance to these experts, and I become their eager student. I was curious and asked a lot of questions."



## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

Think about how to help your Small Groups become more welcoming and better at trust-building:

1. Help your Small Group leaders create their own prayer map before the session. Train them in quick listening prayer. Explain to them how to help their members work through possible feelings of being judged for being Christian.
2. Identify a few key relational skills that your Small Group leaders can impart to their Small Group members to help them grow in trust-building. Role play with your Small Group leaders how to help people work on a relational skill. If they like this idea and they have the kind of Small Group that would be open to this type of practical coaching, that is a potential activity to use during the application section of the Small Group.<sup>10</sup>
3. Help your Small Group leaders develop a discipleship cycle that builds off of John 1. (You could have them agree to take a risk and bond with one non-Christian this week, and then debrief what they learned in doing what others like to do.)
4. Brainstorm with your Small Group Leaders an event they could host in order to build more trust with people in one leader's network. Help them think about how to involve their Small Group members in deepening trust with people in one of their networks. This will help them also discern where God is at work in the network maps of their Small Group members, and hopefully they can help create an event so their members invest more deeply in that part of the network. (For example, invite the people in their academic department to watch a sporting event in your home, and invite the Small Group members to join in.)
5. What would make our Small Groups more welcoming? How can we deepen trust with each other, so that we can invite friends into our authentic community? The 1st Threshold is a good time for you to help your leaders think about how to improve the connection in their Small Group. You can help them reflect on the question, "What would make us feel more comfortable inviting our friends to visit our Small Group?"

## RESOURCES

- Threshold 1 session handout
- John 1:43-50 manuscript handout
- 5 Thresholds of Faith handout
- Power Point template
- 5 Thresholds of Conversion Network Map: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/strategy/5-thresholds-network-map>
- Planters Network Map PDF: <http://collegiateministries.intervarsity.org/chapter-planting/network-mapping-skill-develop-relational-networks>
- Prayer map: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/pray-and-fast/praying-through-5-thresholds>
- IVP's *The Universe Next Door*: <https://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/book.pl/code=3850>

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<sup>10</sup>We like the "Asking Questions" game. Everyone has 5 seconds to ask a question of the person on their right. You don't answer the question. You just ask the next person any question. If it takes someone more than 5 seconds to come up with a question, they are eliminated. In a few minutes, you can generate dozens of questions that help you take interest in people.



## CURIOSITY

# THRESHOLD 2: CURIOSITY

### PURPOSE OF WEEK THREE

1. To help people understand the importance of cultivating curiosity in relationships.
2. To help people learn to ask better questions.
3. To become more proactive in conversations with non-Christian friends.

### WELCOME THE GUESTS

Welcome to week three of our series on exploring faith. Today we are talking about the biblical principle of curiosity. Also we will watch two brief videos about curiosity.

### SCRIPTURE

#### BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 3:1-15—DRAWING OUT PEOPLE'S CURIOSITY

In this passage we encounter Nicodemus, who has his curiosity piqued by engaging with Jesus.

Our passage begins with a description of Nicodemus and what time of day he comes to Jesus. He was a member of the most important and influential leadership group within Judaism at the time. This is a group who had almost complete distrust of Jesus and would later ensure Jesus' death. Given their opposition to Jesus, it is no surprise that Nicodemus would only approach Jesus under cloak of night. Given that, the first words of Nicodemus seem unexpectedly positive about Jesus: "You are a teacher who has come from God."

In coming to Jesus, he may have a certain level of curiosity about Jesus, but what we find in their interaction is Jesus drawing out much more curiosity from Nicodemus. One way Jesus does this is by not merely agreeing with Nicodemus's assessment of him. Instead, he moves the conversation forward to what it means and takes to "see/enter the kingdom of God." It is important to remember that Nicodemus would have held the belief that to be born a Jew was what it took to be an inheritor of God's kingdom. By engaging him about "being born again," Jesus prevents the conversation from staying on Nicodemus's initial comments of Jesus merely being a teacher from God, and moves it toward the purpose of Jesus' mission and eliciting a response from Nicodemus. Time and time again in conversations with critically thinking grad students or faculty, I (Craig) have experienced a shift toward curiosity as I help people move from their conclusions about Christianity toward Jesus himself.

Nicodemus not only stays engaged with Jesus, but in his responses we also see his growing curiosity and desire to understand what Jesus is telling him about entering the kingdom of God. Jesus ties this "new teaching" that piques Nicodemus's curiosity to an illustration that he would have known well—Moses lifting the snake in the desert. He is desiring that Nicodemus see that he is not only a teacher who has come from God, but is also the One who has come from God and will be lifted up so that all who believe would have new life. Jesus stirs Nicodemus's curiosity ultimately because he does not want him to stay in a complacency that causes him to miss this amazingly good news.

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- How and when does Nicodemus approach Jesus?
- How does Jesus engage him?
- What do his questions tell us about his posture or attitude toward Jesus?
- What do Jesus' answers tell us about how he views Nicodemus's attitude?
- Why do you think Nicodemus stays engaged with Jesus in this dialogue, even though he has so many questions/concerns?

### "AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 2ND THRESHOLD

In the Gospels, Jesus helps people become curious in various ways. Doug is going to take this concept from Jesus and bring it into our world. God can actually use us to help people grow in curiosity.

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

Why is curiosity an important part of being human?

## SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?
2. What questions does it raise for you?
3. What are you personally naturally curious about?
4. Were you naturally curious about God, Jesus, or religion? If not, how did you grow in curiosity?
5. Think of someone you know who asks good questions. What are they like? How does it feel when someone takes an interest in you and asks a few good questions?
6. What questions do you tend to ask people you are meeting for the first time?
7. How can community encourage or stifle curiosity?
8. Who is someone in your life who trusts you as a Christian but is not yet curious about your faith? Why do you think they trust you but are not curious about your relationship with God?
9. What would be 1 or 2 intriguing questions you could ask this week? Are you willing to try?

### YOUR FRIENDS

Doug said that we all need a starter question and a follow-up question that keep the conversation going. In the video Dave asks "Why?" Gabe asks, "What's your story?" We have already discussed the questions that come naturally to us. Now we need to find a way to take that question and find a second question that helps the conversation go deeper with your friends.

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS

Discuss with your neighbor a few options for pairing questions. Then tell us what you brainstorm.

## "SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: JOHN H. INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

We have been talking about what it is like for us to cultivate curiosity with others. Now let's look at the other side of the coin. Let's get into the shoes of this professor and think about how you might engage him in conversation.

## SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about John?
2. How is John already a curious person? How did he become curious?
3. Describe his experience of Christians. What might be some of his barriers to faith?
4. What if you were in the room with John, having this same conversation. What would you ask him? Why? (We think John may be "stuck" in the Curious Threshold. He obviously has a deep appreciation for spirituality and even Jesus. But we wonder if he needs something to instigate it again, a question like . . .).
5. What might be intimidating for you about engaging someone like John?

### TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

*"What I have loved about it over the years is that philosophy has a way of really blowing your mind."*

- I really like what you said about philosophy. I also love having my mind blown by new insights. Actually, that is why I first started following Jesus. He blows my mind regularly. In fact, when my mind is not being blown, that is a warning sign to me of my own complacency and stagnation. I'm missing out. Have you ever had Jesus blow your mind? I'd love to discuss the mind-blowing passage that gets me every time I look at it. Would you be open to taking a look together at Mark 4:1-12, the Jesus story that blew my mind?<sup>11</sup>

*"If Christians obviously lived with more hope and joy and love than the rest of us, we would be all lined up to get this. . . . Or it would depend on me really taking to heart that Christianity is not a creedal religion, it is not about what you believe. . . . All these formulas that are getting recited are pointing to something else."*

- I agree with you. Religious formulas don't help anyone. Can I share with you how I have taken one religious tradition and made it spiritually transformational for me personally [baptism, Communion, the Lord's Prayer, etc.]?
- Your comment about joy is really profound. I have been trying to live a joyful life. When I run out of love/hope/joy I . . .

<sup>11</sup>Pick your own passage that has done the same for you.

- Have you ever met a Christian or studied the life of a Christian who lived that kind of joyful and loving life?
- What do you take to heart? What would you say are the key values of your heart and soul? How did they come to be that?

*"A hospice doc in Missoula, Montana . . . says people die well if they can say five things: I love you, I forgive you, please forgive me, thank you, and goodbye. Those are so powerful for me that I can hardly say them without choking up. Those are all spiritual, I think. Now how they relate to having Jesus in your life? I think some of them, maybe all of them, relate pretty well. . . . As a senior citizen, those are my spiritual tasks, to get those 5 things said."*

- Wow, those are 5 incredible insights into life. Thank you for sharing that part of your heart with me. The one I relate most to today is . . . [share about forgiving someone or someone asking you for forgiveness and why it was meaningful]. Which of the 5 tasks is the one you are thinking most about today? I also get emotional when I think about . . . of the 5 tasks. Which task generates the most emotion for you and why?
- Do you think we are created with souls? I wonder if we humans have embedded within us a need for these 5 tasks.
- This may sound ironic, but I think that as you reach out for those 5 spiritual tasks, I wonder if in actuality you are reaching out to Jesus. Could it be that, as you are exploring these 5 tasks, Jesus is actually reaching out to you? What might that mean if this were the case?

In our view, John comes across as a "good guy." He has many great qualities and traits. How does Jesus interact with a "good guy" like John? The passage that comes to mind for us is Jesus interacting with the rich young ruler in Mark 10:17-31. If Jesus were going to interact with John like he did the rich young ruler, what might he say or ask?

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 2nd Threshold from the John story?
2. How are John and Nicodemus similar? Different?
3. What might it take to nudge curiosity among your friends who may be stuck in Threshold 2?

## ACTIVE RESPONSE

- Part of loving others is to pray for them. Let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight 1-2 people who might be served by your question. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. Who came to mind for you?
- Who is someone who may be stuck like John? Someone who trusts you and maybe at one time was curious, but their journey has stalled out? How could you partner with God in potentially re-igniting their journey with a new question?
- What is one skill that you want to work on to become better at cultivating curiosity? Look at the active response suggestions for ideas.

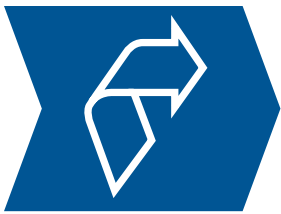
## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

Think about how to help your Small Groups become better at cultivating curiosity. It can be helpful to acknowledge that in our GFM context, it may be inappropriate to cultivate curiosity during work hours. Brainstorm where we could go to have these important conversations.

1. Play the Question game with the Small Group leaders for a couple minutes. Do a few rounds and change the topic from any questions to family or spiritual background. Teach your Small Group leaders to play that game with their Small Group to help them get better at asking questions. Small Group leaders could use this activity during the application section of the Small Group.
2. Help your Small Group leaders identify their "pair" of questions. Coach them to use those questions with someone from their prayer map before they show this session to their Small Group.
3. Help your Small Group leaders identify who might be "stuck" in Threshold 2 on their prayer map. How does their question need to change or be reframed to be relevant to this person?
4. What would make our Small Groups a place that cultivated curiosity? What are the questions our friends are asking? How could the Small Group become a place where people's questions are . . . ?

## RESOURCES

- Threshold 2 session handout
- John 3:1-15 manuscript handout
- Power Point template



## OPEN

# THRESHOLD 3: OPEN TO CHANGE

### PURPOSE OF WEEK FOUR

1. To help people understand that they can be used by God to help their friends become open.
2. To help people identify and use a style of conversation to nudge others toward openness.
3. To face their fears about speaking the truth in love.

### WELCOME THE GUESTS

Welcome to week four of our series on exploring faith. Today we will talk about the biblical principle of opening up to change. We will also watch two brief videos.

### SCRIPTURE

#### BIBLE STUDY: JOHN 4:4-26—OPENING UP TO CHANGE

In this passage we encounter a Samaritan woman at a well who opens up to change followed by belief during this life-changing encounter with Jesus.

Jesus intentionally plans his visit to Samaria. It is widely believed that no one ever had to go through Samaria—especially a Jew in those days. To come in the middle of the day for a drink would also lead to encountering someone who was likely ostracized from their community. The Samaritan woman herself drives this point home in verse 9: “How can you ask me for a drink?” However, Jesus desires that this interaction go much deeper than his need for a drink from the well in the middle of the day.

This woman’s engagement and interest are immediately heightened as Jesus takes the conversation away from his thirst and water to his identity (“If you knew . . . who it is that asks you”) and the “gift of God,” which Jesus refers to as living water. In his encounter we observe Jesus being both patient and yet challenging with this woman. At verse 26 we find Jesus affirming that he is indeed the Messiah, but this comes after patiently and inductively leading her to this revelation through his creative discussion around living water. His interaction is not without challenge as he calls out her relationship situation. Jesus demonstrates a wonderful mix of gentleness and forthrightness with this woman, which both draws her in and leads her to be open to change.

In *I Once Was Lost*, the authors speak of Jesus knowing what to do for people in this 3rd Threshold (p. 81): “The thing about Jesus is he gave people what they needed.” That seems to be exactly what happens in his interaction with the woman at the well. As I (Craig) have watched grads and faculty wrestle with how to engage their friends and colleagues with their faith, I have found that most have a tendency to err toward either patience or challenge. Those who overly lean toward patience are often afraid of “rocking the boat” in the relationship. Those who overly err toward challenge can be drawn toward simply convincing people of their arguments—often at the expense of relationships. Neither extreme helps people open up to change regarding encountering Jesus.

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- What are the particulars of Jesus’ initial encounter with this Samaritan woman at the well? What are the potential barriers?
- How does Jesus engage her?
- What are the barriers? How does Jesus overcome them?
- How does Jesus move from asking for water to helping the woman be open to greater spiritual change in her life?
- How does Jesus handle the delicate relationship situation in her life?
- Read verses 4:28-30 and 39. What change has happened in this woman’s life due to her encounter with Jesus? What further impact did it have?
- What are the critical components in this encounter that make her open to change?

## "AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 3RD THRESHOLD

In Scripture, we see Jesus nudging others to become open to changing how they think and how they live. Now we are going to hear about how we can join in on what God is doing in our friends' lives.

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

When was a time someone spoke the truth in love to you? Maybe they challenged you to change a behavior or a mindset. Think about how they helped you become open to change.

### SHOW THE VIDEO

#### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?
2. What questions does it raise for you?
3. Why do you think Jesus uses 3 different styles of speaking the truth in love (John 3: sarcasm with Nicodemus; John 4: gentle confrontation with the woman at the well; and John 5: direct exhortation with the man by the pool)? How is each style suited to the person he is talking to?
4. Think of a time when you were reluctant to change, or specifically closed to changing a belief or lifestyle. What helped you become more open? Was there a style that God or someone in your life used to help you become open?
5. How can community help foster or shut down openness?
6. Which of the 3 approaches to speaking the truth in love are you personally drawn to? Why?

### YOUR FRIENDS

Tell us which approach you are drawn to. Then we will work on going deeper with that style of speaking the truth in love.

(Break into pairs or trios according to the 3 styles.)

- Please discuss: Why are you drawn to this style?
- What type of people are best served by our approach to speaking the truth in love?

Share a few insights about each style from your conversation. What are you learning about your own style? What are you learning about the other styles?

Take out your prayer maps. Let's take a few seconds for listening prayer. We will ask God to highlight one person in one of your networks that he particularly wants you to pray for this week and consider nudging them to become open to change. I will pray, we will listen silently for a few seconds, and then you can share who has come to mind. Which style might be best for them and why?

## "SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: RAJAN

### INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

We have been talking about what it is like to help someone become open to change. In this video we meet Rajan, and he describes where he is coming from. As you listen, please see where he is open to change and where he might be closed to change. If you were in the room, what you would say to him?

### SHOW THE VIDEO

#### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about Rajan and his story?
2. Where is Rajan coming from? Describe his worldview.
3. In what ways might he be considered "open to change" in his beliefs or lifestyle?
4. What kind of a friend does he need?
5. Think about your style of how you prefer to speak the truth in love. How might that be a blessing to someone like Rajan?
6. How would you nudge him along toward openness?

## TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

*"Why this guru?" or "Did lord Krishna really exist?"*

- I appreciate your struggle between mind and heart. I think everybody wants facts and wants spiritual connection. I had a time of great doubt about Jesus' resurrection and miracles. Did they really happen, or are they made up? I had to do serious study on this pivotal question. Where did you end up on Krishna? [After you ask him a question, he may ask you a question back if he is interested. You are leaving the door open for him to ask about the resurrection.]

*"I went to Christian school which was good for English education but not for religion."*

- One of the problems with religion is that religion is often more preoccupied with answers than encouraging good questions. In my personal experience, church growing up was like this. And it was not very life-giving. When I came to college, I bumped into some people who said to me, "Every thinking person deserves the chance to bring their questions and form an adult opinion of Jesus." That blew my mind. I wanted a safe place to ask my questions. So I joined their discussion group, and I discovered a Jesus who loves questions and provokes people to ask questions. I wonder if you too would be helped by a safe place to explore your questions?

*"Places where people are worshiping feel peaceful to me. I like being here and watching it."*

- I think we are all created with a soul and our souls yearn for connection to the divine. I can ignore the yearnings of my soul for a long period of time, but part of feeling alive is letting the yearnings of my soul move me toward the divine. I think we are created to experience peace in God's presence. Moments of peace are a gift from God, reminding us what we are created for. What if God were using your desire for peace to draw you to himself? [This is an example of the gentle approach.]
- I think peace is a gift from God. We will only find lasting peace in God. You will keep searching and being disappointed as long as you search away from God for peace. What if the next time you were in touch with feeling this sense of peace, you talked to God and reached out to him? [More direct approach.]
- Peace? Our whole department could use some peace in it. But I think we couldn't handle it if God showed up with his peace. Laugh. [Sarcasm.]

*"I would go to church if it were accessible, if someone would go with me."*

- I would be so honored if sometime you would like to go to church with me. It may feel like a cross-cultural experience for you, so let's have lunch afterward. I would like to hear your honest feedback about the experience.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 3rd Threshold from Rajan's story?
2. What are you learning about yourself and speaking the truth in love? What might be some of your fears or other internal barriers that keep you from engaging more deeply with our friends like Rajan who need us to speak the truth in love to them?
3. What are you learning about Jesus and how he works in our lives?

## ACTIVE RESPONSE

- It takes courage to speak the truth in love. What is one step you can take this week to become more courageous?
- Look at the suggestions for conversation starters (in the active response worksheet). Which feels most natural to you? When could you use it this week?
- What is one skill that you want to work on to become better at nudging others to become open?

## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

Reflect about each of your Small Group leaders. Try to name their "speaking the truth in love" style. Think about how to help them grow in nudging others to become open to changing their mindsets and behaviors.

1. Help your Small Group leaders discover their go-to style before they lead this discussion. Ask them for one or two ways they could grow in speaking the truth in love. Help them think through recent experiences that have gone well or gone poorly when they have tried this. Help the leader process any fears or barriers he or she may have regarding growing in this.
2. Do a role play with your leaders. You play the role of a Rajan. (As you play his role, please avoid making a caricature out of him.) Have the leaders take turns engaging you in conversation, and then help them interpret which style they used. Be ready to reverse roles and show them how you would engage Rajan. Debrief the exercise: What are they learning about themselves and about speaking the truth in love with friends in the 3rd Threshold? Have the Small Group leaders describe their friends and do a second role play with one of their friends.



3. Help the Small Group leaders discern the possible barriers or fears that may block their members from applying this teaching on getting better at speaking the truth in love.
4. We want our Small Groups to be communities in which we ourselves are transparent and open to change. How can you help your Small Groups embrace this message for themselves? (We think there are 3 levels of honesty in a Small Group: honest, more honest, and the most honest version of your story. Many Small Groups never get beneath the first layer of honesty with one another.) What is one step of honesty that you can take with your Small Group leaders? Ask them to in turn be more honest with their Small Groups, and with a non-Christian friend as well.

## RESOURCES

- Threshold 3 session handout
- John 4:4-26 manuscript handout
- Power Point template
- Doug has a series of video interactions about ways to speak the truth in love in the 3rd Threshold using your own story. Please see the following topics:
  - Don't all religions point to the same god? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2Q1S-U1s4Jo>
  - If God is good, why does he let bad things happen? <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp4AJtfMTsl>
  - Am I going to hell if I don't believe like you do? [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlgP8\\_bIMng](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XlgP8_bIMng)
  - Truth is relative. I'm glad that's true for you. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cr00jtAx80o>



## SEEKING

# THRESHOLD 4: SEEKING

### PURPOSE OF WEEK FIVE

1. To help people understand what it means (and does not mean) to be a seeker.
2. To help them see that they can help shape someone's quest.
3. To help them select one option (the Bible, prayer, or apologetics) as their preferred pathway to help a friend.

### WELCOME THE GUESTS

Welcome to week five of our series on exploring faith. Today we are discussing the biblical principle of seeking. We will also watch two brief videos on seeking.

### SCRIPTURE

#### BIBLE STUDY: ACTS 8:26-40—SEEKING HARD AFTER GOD

In this passage we encounter an Ethiopian eunuch who is helped by Philip in his seeking for understanding about Jesus.

"True seekers are on a quest," state the authors of *I Once Was Lost* about this 4th Threshold. Not only do we find the Ethiopian eunuch in this passage on a return journey from Jerusalem, but we also find him on a "quest" to truly understand God and the Gospel. The passage opens with Philip—led by the Spirit—coming upon this man reading Isaiah while traveling home from Jerusalem in his chariot. The man's response to Philip's direct question, "Do you understand what you are reading?" shows how earnestly he is seeking as he invites Philip to sit with him to explain what he is reading.

"Scripture is used by the Holy Spirit to speak to people" (*I Once Was Lost*), and this is never more true than what we find here in this passage. This man is desiring real answers to his real questions about Scripture, and he is hoping that Philip can provide just that. Philip does, beginning with "that very passage of Scripture and [telling] him the good news about Jesus" (v. 35). We are not told what Philip said, but it is certainly implied that he had a strong knowledge of Scripture in order to do this, as well as a dependency on the Holy Spirit working through him and his words. Being immersed in the academic world, I (Craig) have found that grads and faculty who are in this Threshold of seeking can be a delight to interact with, for they will read the books you give them (C. S. Lewis's *Mere Christianity* is still extremely useful) and engage with earnest, serious Scripture study.

The response of the Ethiopian eunuch after his interaction with Philip is immensely encouraging: "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" God draws this seeker to himself through Philip and his obedience to the leading of the Spirit, the power of Scripture explained and understood, and an articulation of the "good news about Jesus." No wonder the Holy Spirit wanted these two to connect!

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- How does Philip first engage this Ethiopian eunuch?
- How does he respond to Philip? What are his questions?
- What does this tell you about his posture and attitude toward the Gospel?
- What does Philip do next? What does this tell you about his preparation for this encounter?

### "AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 4TH THRESHOLD

In Scripture, seekers take many shapes and sizes. There is not just one way to seek Jesus. What does it look like today for people to seek Jesus? How can we help our friends think about seeking Jesus for themselves?

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

When you hear the word seeker, what comes to mind? How would you describe what a seeker is?

### SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?

2. What questions does it raise for you?
3. What happened in your life that encouraged you to seek after Jesus?
4. What do you think of the Monica story, the friend who needed Jesus to answer her 30 questions?
5. How might you use a larger community to help a seeker? What cautions are there to using community at this point in the journey?
6. What do you think of the 7 day prayer challenge? What would it take for you to be willing to try that with one of your friends?
7. Which of the 3 ways to shape the quest would you personally prefer to use? Prayer with a seeker? Reading an apologetics book together? Looking at Jesus in the Gospels together?

## YOUR FRIENDS

- Part of being a good friend is joining them on their spiritual quest. Break into pairs to talk with someone else about your ideas of how you would approach helping someone be a seeker. After a few minutes in pairs, briefly share the one idea you each like most with the rest of the group.
- In listening prayer, ask God, "Who do you want me to pay attention to this week? Is there someone I might try this with?"

## "SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: KATHLEEN INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

What does it feel like to be the person who is seeking? We will hear from Kathleen different experiences she has had of seeking.

As you listen, think about where she is coming from and how you might engage her in conversation if you were there.

## SHOW THE VIDEO

## DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about Kathleen?
2. Where is she coming from? Describe her worldview.
3. Describe the different parts of Kathleen's search. What words does she use to describe her journey?
4. What can you affirm in her story and in her worldview? How might you bridge to what she already believes?
5. How might you engage Kathleen in conversation? How might you help her focus her quest?
6. How do you think God is at work in her life?

## TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

*"This sensation and this relationship . . ."*

- I like how you use the word "relationship" and how you describe talking to God as "using words and not using words." How do you know God wants to talk to you and have a relationship with you?

*"I was raised atheist."*

- You used to be an atheist. How do you talk with your atheist family and friends now about your spiritual side? How do they respond?
- Since you are no longer an atheist, would you consider yourself a theist today?

*"The other side became very real. . . . The other side was kind of present and all around me."*

- I wonder if you met Jesus that day when you had asthma. Have you ever wondered if that was Jesus there in the room with you?
- What is your impression of Jesus? Do you have any personal experience with him?
- I'd love to talk together to Jesus. Would that be okay?
- How would you define what it means to be a Christian? Do you like the idea of being a Jesus follower?

As we listen to Kathleen, we hear ways that she is seeking. We also hear ways that she is not. She seems a little stuck. Kathleen may be seeking now, but without some sort of invitation to the next step she could move backwards to the previous Thresholds. Thanks be to God that she has remained a seeker for so long. We think she needs a friend to help shape her quest now and move forward.

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What do you learn about the 4th Threshold from Kathleen's story?
2. Do you think she would be more open to praying with you, looking at Jesus with you, or discussing an apologetics book with you? Why?

## ACTIVE RESPONSE

If there are guests in the room: Sometimes Christians use lingo that can be confusing to others. What is some of our language that would translate for others?

If there are no guests, do one of these two:

- (Commission one another to use prayer, apologetics, or the Bible, which they have hopefully already previously identified.) Let's lay hands and pray over those who are passionate about a prayer challenge. (Then take a minute to pray over those with Bible and then apologetics passions. Pray for God's anointing and authority to take risks.)
- Consider taking 5 minutes near the end of the Small Group to give a practical training from 1 of the 2 options below. See if you can help your members feel equipped to go and try it this week with one friend.

## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

1. Write down the names of all the people in your Small Groups and the names of those who are in relationship with your members and might be like Kathleen. Create an intercession list for this group of people who are quite close to the kingdom of God. Ask God to create a sense of godly urgency about them, and call it out as you see it. Often when someone else points out that one of our friends is close to seeking, it increases our urgency and focus.
2. We recommend that you grow in giving your leaders "simple and focused trainings." Simple training means that you can narrow down an important topic to the 3 most important or basic things someone needs to know or do or say. In 5 minutes you can then impart one key skill or tool. Here are 2 examples of simple trainings that you can give to your Small Group leaders, 5 minutes each, so that they, in turn, may use this with their members who want more input on using the Bible or prayer with non-Christians.

### BRINGING YOUR QUESTIONS TO JESUS

Once they agree to look at Jesus with you, select the Gospel passage you want to discuss with your non-Christian friend. We suggest you keep it simple and try to answer just 3 questions together.

1. What is 1 question you have after reading this passage?
2. What is 1 thing you like about Jesus?
3. What is 1 way we could live this out?

### THE PRAYER QUEST

Once they agree to pray with you, here 3 ways to pray with a non-Christian.

1. Ask them if they have an honest question they want to bring to God. If not, ask them for a need they can bring to God. (It is ideal when they are willing to say to God, "Help me know you. Help me build trust with you." But sometimes it can take several prayer experiences before they are that honest. See Brittany's story in the "Resource" section of the 3rd Threshold session.)
2. As you open the prayer time, begin with yourself. Pray about your own brokenness and emptiness first. Invite God to meet you right now and bring his love. Then pray for your friend—for the same filling of God, that they might experience the love of God right now. Ask God to speak a word of love to their heart or mind. Then ask them what they felt and explain that God is taking the initiative with them.
3. Encourage them to look at ways God might be reaching out to them over the next 24 hours. Ask about it tomorrow.

## RESOURCES

- Threshold 4 session handout
- Acts 8:26-40 manuscript handout
- Power Point template



## THRESHOLD 5: FOLLOWER

### FOLLOWER

#### PURPOSE OF WEEK SIX

1. To understand that crossing this Threshold includes making a decision.
2. To equip people to help their friends make this decision.
3. To know how to celebrate and disciple new believers.
4. To invite a commitment to Jesus

#### WELCOME THE GUESTS

Welcome to the final week in our series on exploring faith. Today we will discuss what it takes to follow Jesus, and we will close with an invitation for us to consider that.

#### SCRIPTURE

##### BIBLE STUDY: LUKE 19:1-10—ALL IN: ENTERING THE KINGDOM

In this passage we find Zacchaeus eagerly awaiting Jesus and Jesus directly engaging him as Zacchaeus enters the kingdom.

In this brief encounter, it is hard to miss Zacchaeus's enthusiasm and expectancy about encountering Jesus. Phrases such as "so he ran ahead," "so he came down at once," and "welcomed him [Jesus] gladly" show how ready Zacchaeus is to engage Jesus. Jesus seems to know this too as he uses similarly direct and expectant language with Zacchaeus: "Come down *immediately*. I *must* stay at your house *today*" (emphasis mine). What is missing from this encounter is the questioning that we are familiar with when Jesus engages those who are "seeking." We are not given the details of their interaction, but what is implied is that Zacchaeus was ready to make a decision. The level of commitment of that decision is seen in this chief tax collector's willingness to give of his wealth and make any amends for previous wrongdoing. It echoes the parables of Jesus likening the kingdom (and entering the kingdom) to finding a treasure in a field, a person joyfully selling all to buy the field.

How does Luke show us Zacchaeus's openness? The short man who climbs a tree sticks out from the crowd. He has gone out of his way to look for Jesus. Jesus sees that effort and honors it publicly. In our experience, non-Christians who attend our Small Groups or other events are often "climbing a tree" to take a better look at Jesus. Let's have eyes to see those who "climb trees" to see more of Jesus. Today might be the day that they are ready for great transformation.

Jesus affirms that Zacchaeus has indeed "crossed the threshold" into faith as he states, "Today salvation has come to this house" (v. 9). The entire encounter is brief and direct, and reminds us again that as people come to this Threshold, what is needed is not a laissez-faire or hands-off approach but rather our encouraging or nudging with appropriate urgency. Grad students and faculty can find themselves being counter-cultural with colleagues who are at this Threshold due to an academic culture that often does not encourage directness in regards to one's personal beliefs. However, when people are at this Threshold, they are truly wanting and needing an encouragement to respond, not continue pondering. Like Zacchaeus and the man in the parable who sells all to buy the field with the treasure, our friends at this Threshold are on the cusp of the great joy and peace that comes with entering the kingdom. No doubt, great joy will be ours as well.

Questions for an inductive study of the passage:

- What is the situation in which we first find Zacchaeus?
- What language in the text helps us get a sense of his desire to encounter Jesus?
- How does Jesus engage him? What does this tell us about how Jesus perceives Zacchaeus's status in relationship to the Gospel?
- What does Zacchaeus do next? What do his words and actions say about the transformation that has taken place in his life through this encounter?
- How does Jesus perceive his response?

## "AUTHOR" VIDEO: THE 5TH THRESHOLD

This video is going to help us think about the question, "How can we be a blessing to our friends who are thinking about following Jesus?"

### INTERACTION IN PAIRS (OPTIONAL)

How would you respond if a seeker asked you, "How do I become a follower of Jesus? What do I have to do?"

### SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about the video? What are a few ways that you connect with what Doug said?
2. What questions does it raise for you?
3. What do you think about the way Doug summarizes the Christian life as "no longer living with us at the center of the story?" How might your non-Christian friends respond to that definition of following Jesus?
4. Have you ever celebrated with a new follower of Jesus? What do you think of this idea of throwing a "new faith party" for a new believer and inviting their friends to hear about this new faith? How is this a reflection and strengthening of community?
5. When do you feel like you "came to faith" in Jesus or experienced an adult faith decision to follow Jesus? Please describe.

### YOUR FRIENDS

- What if one of our friends decided to follow Jesus and we wanted to celebrate? Let's brainstorm what would make that a great event.
- Doug says it is important to intentionally mentor people in the first 4-6 weeks of following Jesus. If you were going to mentor a friend, what would you include in the training and input?
- Let's get comfortable using words to invite a friend to consider following Jesus. How would you word it? Doug gave us his example, and you could use that if you like. (Let them try.) Here is how I might do it. (Give them your example.)

## "SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS" VIDEO: JEROME

### INTRODUCE THE VIDEO BEFORE YOU SHOW IT

Here is Jerome. He tells what it was like being a grad student and the tensions he felt as he deliberated about following Jesus.

### SHOW THE VIDEO

### DISCUSS THE VIDEO

1. What do you like about Jerome's story?
2. What stands out to you about his journey?
3. What was his experience of first going to church? Describe the tensions he felt. (He felt welcomed. But he also felt a self-imposed outsider status.)
4. Why might a seeker feel awkward in our community, even if we are very welcoming?
5. Describe the impact of Christian community on Jerome.
6. God used his sister to have a big impact on his life. How does that inspire you?
7. He perceived that Christians have it all together. How did he get his misperception?

### TAKING IT FURTHER (OPTIONAL)

*"I really struggled my first 2-3 years of grad school. I felt underprepared and all my peers were much better than me. . . . I felt pretty down."*

- How many students on our campus may have these same feelings of insecurity and unpreparedness?
- How might God be using these struggles to draw people to himself, like he did Jerome?
- Jerome seems like the "everyman" of grad school. Instead of seeing all the ways people look confident and busy and successful, how about we see them like Jerome, like people whom God is drawing to himself?

*"They invited me to their small group, community group. . . . Experiencing Christian community is really what got me hooked."*

- We have Christian community to offer people like Jerome. How do we open our doors and lives to a wider circle of people?

*"What are my friends going to say? I'm really self-conscious."*

- Describe his barriers to committing to Jesus.
- How many of our friends have this same fear?
- What might we say to Jerome or one of our friends to help them bring this fear to Jesus?

## CONNECTING THE DOTS

1. What are we learning about the 5th Threshold from Jerome?
2. What are learning about ourselves?
3. What are we learning about God?

## ACTIVE RESPONSE

### DEMONSTRATE

It is crucial that we give people the opportunity to consider following Jesus. We need to take the risk first. We have created a script that you can use for this invitation.

### HAVE THEM PRACTICE

After your invitation to faith, ask them to break into pairs. "Using your own words, how would you invite a friend to consider becoming a follower of Jesus?"

## FOR LEADERS OF LEADERS: RESHAPING CULTURE

We want to wisely create space in our ministries for students and faculty to make new faith decisions.

1. Prepare your Small Group leaders to make the invitation. As we have taught the 5 Thresholds to groups of Christian grad students and faculty, we often have one or two people tell us that they did not realize they were seekers until we put words to it. Expect this to be true in your Small Groups. It is important for your leaders to practice using the script (either with you or with another student leader) so that they are comfortable with it. This may feel awkward for you or them. We suggest you say, "If you are uncomfortable practicing with me, you will feel even more uncomfortable in front of your Small Group. It is important that we do this a few times out loud right now."
2. Prepare them for the 3 possible outcomes.
  - A. Someone will say yes, and you should be ready to celebrate with them.
  - B. No one will say yes, and you need to interpret the moment for your group. "That's okay that no one made a new faith decision today. Our role is to be faithful to ask, and I'm learning to be faithful. God will take care of the rest. Thank you for letting me take this risk today."
  - C. Someone will be respond to the moment with tears, but will not know how to talk about it. "Let's wrap up our Small Group now. Sometimes new faith invitations are deeply personal. If you would like to talk about what you are feeling, I am here for you."
3. Your small group leaders may wish to edit our script and contextualize it for their group. On the one hand, that is a wonderful idea. On the other hand, please look over their edits and make sure they are not watering down the Gospel.
4. Think through your context and create an outline for the kind of new believer celebration event that your students would want to invite friends to. Think about how to prep new believers to invite their friends and also share a brief story.
5. Many of us are not very good at investing in new believers right after they make faith decisions. Please ask your leaders set up a 1-to-1 conversation within a week with any new believers. In this ensuing face-to-face, they can ask them what this new faith decision means for them. Please check out our 4-week new believer series, GROW. You can either purchase the GROW guide on the staff store, or you can use the electronic version.



## INVITATION TO NEW FAITH: SCRIPT

We are a community that is striving to create space for us all to respond to God. So, whether you're a follower of Jesus or not, we want to ask, what's your next step?

If you're here and you're an active Christian, how will you respond to God? What's your next step in light of what we talked about? It can be easy to slip into a pattern of just listening and learning without applying. Especially in our academic context, it would be natural to make our time together an abstract intellectual exercise, but Jesus isn't just an idea, he is a person and he wants us to follow him ever more closely till we become just like him, an agent of grace and reconciliation in the world. How can you take a practical next step to follow him more closely?

Some of us here may have walked away from a loving relationship with Jesus to pursue other loves (e.g. career, romantic relationships, etc.), making them our ultimate love instead of Jesus. Maybe there was a clear and intentional break-up that occurred or maybe, without being conscious of it, you found yourself growing more distant from him. How might God be asking you to respond? God, who is reckless and extravagant with his love, always invites us back. Whether we have walked away from him intentionally, or we have slowly turned a loving relationship into a list of rules to follow, God invites us to embrace him once again. Will you?

For others of us, we may be skeptical because we've had bad experiences with Christians or have some important questions that haven't been addressed. Whatever the case may be, what might a next step for you look like? Perhaps it's to discuss your unanswered questions here in this community? Or maybe you can experiment with prayer and ask God to show himself to you in some way if he's real? Or maybe you just want to keep hanging out with us and explore faith. Whatever your next step might be, we'd encourage you to choose one and share it. We'd love your feedback and we're so glad you're here.

Lastly, some of us may have grown up in the church, maybe even identify as Christian, but never realized that Jesus is more than a moral teacher. Or maybe you don't identify as Christian, and this is the first time you're hearing what Jesus is really about, and you find him compelling. Either way, we want you to know that Jesus invites us into a relationship with him and into a story that is bigger than ourselves, all of which is made possible by what he did on the cross. At the cross, all the power of sin and death, which came from us putting ourselves at the center of our lives, died with Jesus; all the debts owed from having broken God's creation have been paid. And because Jesus rose again, we can start over. God's grace makes a new life possible. We don't need to be ruled by anxiety or enslaved any longer to other loves like achievement, prestige, sex, money or power because, by God's grace, we have been guaranteed a love that is greater than them all. Jesus died in our place and God honored him by raising him from the dead 3 days later. That is why Jesus came and what makes him unique. He didn't come to just show us the way to God—he is the way. If you are ready to start a relationship with Jesus for the first time or if you want to come back to him and join his community in pursuing his purposes in the world, I would like to invite you to pray this prayer with me.

## PRAYER

"Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I ask that you forgive me for the wrongs that I have done. I receive your forgiveness and the gift of your love into my life. By faith I receive Jesus as King over every part of my life. Change me; make me the person you want me to be. I commit to be a member of your family on earth, pursuing your purposes and mission for the world. I give you my heart; I give you my life; I want to know you more! Amen."

## DEBRIEF

- How was this for you?
- What next step do you feel led to take?

## RESOURCES

- Threshold 5 session handout
- Luke 19:1-10 manuscript handout
- Power Point template
- Launch website: <http://launch.intervarsity.org/>
- Big Story App: <http://evangelism.intervarsity.org/how/gospel-outline/get-big-story-app>

# 5T


## 5 THRESHOLDS ACTIVE RESPONSE

### START WITH VISION

Who do you see? Who are the people in your life? Where do you hope to see God at work? Read Acts 17. Ask God to help you see where he is already at work. Make a network map\* of people in your life (in your lab, dorm/apartment, internship). Pray over your list. Are there one or two people who God seems to be highlighting to you? Begin to pray with someone for those people. Invite God to help you see how he is already at work in their lives. Ask God to increase your desire to see them come to faith in Jesus. What about the Gospel might be really good news to them?

### THRESHOLDS

Based upon evidence observed about how a postmodern person moves towards faith in Jesus, there seem to be common thresholds. These are like chasms that need to be crossed and which build upon each other as postmoderns have journeyed toward faith. Understanding these thresholds helps us navigate the best next steps as we prayerfully try to help our friends move one step closer to finding Jesus. This chart has a series of questions, all related to the 5 Thresholds. We believe God is at work on our campuses, but we need his help to see that! We need God to be working in us, preparing us to reach out to folks in our labs, cohorts, living spaces, etc. Below are questions for you to consider; potential conversation starters and practical responses/applications for each threshold. Conversation starters are designed to build on each other as you go deeper in relationship and as your friends become more curious about Jesus.

THRESHOLD	WHAT MY FRIEND NEEDS...	WHAT CAN I DO (POSTURE)?	WHAT CAN I DO (ACTIONS)?	CONVERSATION STARTERS	APPLICATION RESPONSE
 TRUST	They need to know that I genuinely care about them. They are not my "project". Am I trustworthy? What does it look like when someone begins to trust? What are markers of trust?	What does it mean for me to be trustworthy? Do I show interest in their story? Do I listen well? <b>Do I make time for them?</b> How do I create space for them? How can you tell when people don't trust you? How do you feel when people make snap judgments about you?	What does it mean to love your neighbor in this context? What might it cost you in terms of time and freedom in order to become a learner about this friend? What will you sacrifice in order to build trust (time, resources, information)? Do your work out in a more public space. <b>Attend social events with your department.</b>	<b>Learn about them:</b> What do you like to do outside of lab? What holidays do you celebrate in your country? Share with someone in your small group a name and date by which you want to have this conversation. Tell me about your research? Why are you passionate about it? Why did you choose this field/project?	Pray and identify one person with whom God wants you to build trust with this week. How can you build this relationship? Is there something in your field that you could learn from this person? As you're listening and learning, share your appreciation with this person. What is one event in your department that you could attend, just to be with your colleagues and get to know them better?
 CURIOSITY	My friend needs to see real Christianity in my life—a Christianity that challenges their stereotypes. Who is the real Jesus, and how does he make a difference in my life/their lives?	How can I make sure that I am experiencing life with God on a daily basis? Do I invite Jesus into my day? <b>Jesus, help me to see you in my life, in my friends, and in my work.</b> How can I grow in curiosity about the world and people around me?	What stories can you share about how you are experiencing God? How might you live provocatively so that your friend becomes curious about your faith? What is a good question to ask your friend? <b>How can you serve or show generosity in a practical way?</b>	<b>Is there a prayer need of yours that you could share so that they can see how God answers?</b> Ask this friend: What are your presumptions about Christians? What do you think of Christians? Have you ever experienced God in a personal way?	Pray and ask God for a practical step this week that would bless and surprise them. <b>Name one person you could ask, "How can I pray for you?"</b> Plan a crossover event as a fellowship and invite friends from your department: e.g., "Passion Talks" or Believers in Business.

THRESHOLD	WHAT MY FRIEND NEEDS...	WHAT CAN I DO (POSTURE)?	WHAT CAN I DO (ACTIONS)?	CONVERSATION STARTERS	APPLICATION RESPONSE
 OPEN	<p>They may need courage to face the places in their lives where they need change. They may need to realize that their worldview needs to change. Maybe the Holy Spirit is showing them that the worldview they have is shifting as they think about Jesus.</p> <p>They need to become open to the idea that perhaps the "real" Jesus is different than they thought.</p>	<p>Patience, prayers, and faithfulness: Stay faithful in loving and serving your friend and helping to cultivate "good soil" in your friendship.</p> <p>Be open to change in your personal life. Tell stories to your friends of ways God is changing you. Invite your friend to join you in serving the poor and underprivileged.</p>	<p>Watch for complacency. <b>Pray</b> and lovingly challenge them. Think about the rich young ruler story (Mark 10:17-27). You might need to help them reframe their story and help them see God's activity in their life. Acknowledge where you see God's work in their life.</p> <p>Tell a personal story of when you became open to God changing something in your life. What were internal barriers you had to overcome?</p>	<p>Consider asking: What do you think about Jesus? Have you ever had a God experience? Would you tell me about it?</p> <p>If you could change one thing about your life, what would it be? What keeps you from change in your life?</p> <p><b>Share a story of something practical you changed in your life as a result of knowing Jesus.</b></p>	<p>Offer to read scripture together (GIG). Help them to imagine themselves in the text. What would you say to Jesus if you were there?</p> <p>Invite: Hey you seem curious about Jesus, would you like to read a book together to explore this? (Tim Keller's Reason for God).</p> <p>Invite them to serve with you in some way.</p>
 SEEKING	<p>Seekers want to spend time with Christians. They are curious and want to have their questions answered. They need help clarifying their quest, and prioritizing what are their most pressing questions. What is their most honest question for Jesus?</p>	<p>Invite, invite, invite!</p> <p>Welcome, welcome, welcome!</p> <p>Be in prayer that you will be continually filled with the Spirit and available to share from that place.</p> <p><b>Be aware of our "Christianese" and lingo that may be confusing. Translate for them.</b></p>	<p>Live out the kingdom of God in front of them.</p> <p><b>Invite them to join your small group to see Christianity lived out in community.</b></p> <p>Model seeking—help them to see how you seek to follow Jesus.</p> <p>Encourage them to commit to seeking after God and getting their questions answered.</p>	<p>Ask: <i>If you could ask Jesus one important question, what would it be?</i></p> <p>How is your view of Jesus changing?</p> <p>Are you interested in taking an adult look at Jesus?</p>	<p><b>Invite them to study scripture with you.</b> Notice how people respond to Jesus. (Peter, when Jesus gets in his boat; Nicodemus, Zacchaeus)</p> <p>Ask: How would you respond to Jesus if you were in the story?</p> <p>Share a story about how you respond to Jesus.</p>
 FOLLOWER	<p>They need to understand 1) that they need to make a choice about following Jesus, and 2) how to make that choice.</p> <p>They need to see that the Lord Jesus is worthy of their allegiance, and Jesus is inviting them to respond.</p>	<p>Pray for them. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you the right words to speak.</p> <p><b>Be willing to be the one who offers them a call to faith.</b></p>	<p><b>Practice, with a Christian, inviting someone to put their faith in Jesus.</b> Get comfortable with this part of the process. Share The Big Story or a similar Gospel presentation and invite them to choose Jesus. (Think about making a call to faith in your small group/ large group.)</p> <p>Study passages that talk about lostness and salvation: the pearl, the treasure, the two sons, etc.</p>	<p>Ask: Hey, you seem pretty interested in Jesus, can we meet for coffee some time?</p> <p><i>I would love to tell you about how I started my journey as a Christian and see if I can answer any questions you might have.</i></p> <p>Is there anything standing in the way of you becoming a Christian today?</p> <p><b>Would you like to make a decision to follow Jesus now?</b></p>	<p><b>Be appropriately urgent about the decision in front of them.</b></p> <p>Ask: <i>What's keeping you from making a decision?</i></p> <p>Help them sort through their road blocks.</p> <p>Explain that you found it helpful to make a decision about following Jesus.</p> <p>Invite them: <i>Would you like to make a decision about following Jesus?</i></p>

\*This can also be done as a small group activity. In twos and threes list everyone in the small group, and then list everyone they know on campus (a prayer map). Do a moment of listening prayer, led by the small group leader. Ask God for the eyes of the Spirit to see the way Paul saw in Athens. Consider a prayer walk in your building or on campus. Is there anyone who comes to mind who seems spiritually open and/or hungry? Who are the neighbors God might be calling you to love on campus? Is there anyone in your department or dorm? How can you lean into this relationship this week?

## OVERVIEW SESSION

ACTS 17:16-34

AUTHOR VIDEO

MY STORY

THIS WEEK I WILL...

## THRESHOLD 1: TRUST

JOHN 1:43-50

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

## THRESHOLD 2: CURIOSITY

JOHN 3:1-15

AUTHOR VIDEO

PAIRED QUESTIONS

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

## THRESHOLD 3: OPEN TO CHANGE

JOHN 4:4-26

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...



## THRESHOLD 4: SEEKING

ACTS 8:26-40

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

## THRESHOLD 5: FOLLOWER

LUKE 19:1-10

AUTHOR VIDEO

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATIONS VIDEO

THIS WEEK I WILL...

# 5 THRESHOLDS OF FAITH

 TRUST	 CURIOSITY	 OPEN	 SEEKING	 FOLLOWER
<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends do not yet have a reason to trust a Christian. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet interested in our faith lives. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet interested in changing their current lifestyle. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends are not yet bringing their questions to Jesus himself. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>	<b>OVERVIEW</b> Our friends realize that a decision needs to be made. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> <li>_____</li> </ul>
<b>OUR ROLE</b> Gain trust by loving genuinely and asking questions.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> Encourage questions, and live curiously.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> Practice patience, enduring prayer, nudge and challenge.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> We help clarify their quest, we explain how to seek Jesus, and we invite them to join us.	<b>OUR ROLE</b> We invite them to consider following Jesus, and we help them think through the implications.
<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____	<b>IN YOUR WORDS</b> _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
The journey through this Threshold is when our friends come to us for advice and are free to be themselves around us.	The journey through this Threshold is when our friends begin asking about faith, God, etc.	The journey through this Threshold is when they become open to changing their mindset or behaviors.	The journey through this Threshold is when they become intentional about their search.	The journey through this Threshold is when they choose to become Jesus' disciple and journey with him for the rest of their lives.

## OVERVIEW SESSION—ACTS 17:16-34

While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols.

So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace

day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to

debate with him. Some of them asked, "What is this babbler trying to say?" Others remarked, "He seems

5 to be advocating foreign gods." They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and

the resurrection. Then they took him and brought him to a meeting of the Areopagus, where they said

to him, "May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? You are bringing some strange

ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean." (All the Athenians and the foreigners

who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

10 Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: "People of Athens! I see that in every

way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even

found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you

worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in

15 temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather,

he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations,

that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the

boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. 'For in him we live and move and have our being. 'As

20 some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring.'

"Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead."

25 When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them sneered, but others said, "We want to hear you again on this subject." At that, Paul left the Council. Some of the people became followers of Paul and believed. Among them was Dionysius, a member of the Areopagus, also a woman named Damaris, and a number of others.

## THRESHOLD 1: TRUST—JOHN 1:43-50

The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, "Follow me." Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. Philip found Nathanael and told him, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" Nathanael asked.

- 5 "Come and see," said Philip. When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, "Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit." "How do you know me?" Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Then Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel." Jesus said, "You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that." He then added, "Very truly I tell you, you will
- 10 see 'heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on' the Son of Man."

## THRESHOLD 2: CURIOSITY—JOHN 3:1-15

Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council.

He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God.

For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." Jesus replied, "Very truly

I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." "How can someone be born

5 when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's

womb to be born!" Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless

they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You

should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases.

You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone

10 born of the Spirit." "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do

you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what

we have seen, but still you people do not

accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you

believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from

15 heaven—the Son of Man. Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must

be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him."



### THRESHOLD 3: OPEN TO CHANGE—JOHN 4:4-26

Now he [Jesus] had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about noon. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.) The Samaritan

5 woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?

Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but who-  
10 ever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water." He told her, "Go, call your husband and come

back." "I have no husband," she replied. Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no  
15 husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband. What you have just said is quite true." "Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

"Woman," Jesus replied, "believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us." Then Jesus declared, "I, the one speaking to you—I am he."

## THRESHOLD 4: SEEKING—ACTS 8:26-40

Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, “Go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from

Jerusalem to Gaza.” So he started out, and on his way he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important

official in charge of all the treasury of the Kandake (which means “queen of the Ethiopians”). This man

had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home was sitting in his chariot reading the Book of

5 Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, “Go to that chariot and stay near it.” Then Philip ran up to the

chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. “Do you understand what you are reading?”

Philip asked. “How can I,” he said, “unless someone explains it to me?” So he invited Philip to come up

and sit with him. This is the passage of Scripture the eunuch was reading:

“He was led like a sheep to the slaughter,

10 and as a lamb before its shearer is silent,

so he did not open his mouth.

In his humiliation he was deprived of justice.

Who can speak of his descendants?

For his life was taken from the earth.”

15 The eunuch asked Philip, “Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?”

Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they

traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What can

stand in the way of my being baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. When they came up out of the water, the

20 Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing. Philip, however, appeared at Azotus and traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea.

## THRESHOLD 5: FOLLOWER—LUKE 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."