

**START  
TO STIR  
TRAINING  
SERIES**

**StartToStir**

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# Participant Guide

**TOPIC 2  
START WHERE  
PEOPLE ARE STARTING**

# WHAT'S INSIDE

## TOPIC 1: SHARING FAITH IS A PROCESS

Session 1: What If Sharing Faith Didn't Have to Feel So Difficult?  
Session 2: What If Our Picture of Sharing Faith is Holding us Back?  
Session 3: What If People Saw Christians Living a Full Life?  
Session 4: What If People Knew That God is Good?  
Session 5: What If People Experienced the Gospel as Good News?  
Session 6: How Can I Help Someone Start a Relationship with God?  
Topic 1 Key Takeaways

## TOPIC 2: START WHERE PEOPLE ARE STARTING

Session 1: Where Are People Starting?	P.03
Session 2: Why Are Most People Not Interested in God?	P.04
Session 3: What Questions Are People Asking?	P.05
Session 4: Why Do People Seem so Spiritually Dead?	P.06
Session 5: How Do People Decide What is True?	P.07
Topic 2 Key Takeaways	P.08

## TOPIC 3: STIR SPIRITUAL CURIOSITY

Session 1: What Does Scripture Say About Where to Start?  
Session 2: How Did the First Missionary Stir Curiosity?  
Session 3: Start by Stirring Souls  
Session 4: How Can I Stir Spiritual Longings?  
Session 5: How Can I Show that Spiritual Longings Reveal Our Soul?  
Session 6: Everyday Examples of Soul Stirring  
Topic 3 Key Takeaways

## TOPIC 4: INVITE PEOPLE TO RESPOND

Session 1: How Do I Start to Introduce People to God?  
Session 2: How Do I Introduce People to Jesus?  
Session 3: Is it Possible to Help People Encounter Jesus?  
Session 4: What Does it Mean to Start a Relationship with God?  
Session 5: Can You Show Me an Example of Inviting Someone to Respond?  
Session 6: How Else Can You Help me Share My Faith?  
Topic 4 Key Takeaways

## SESSION 1:

# WHERE ARE PEOPLE STARTING?

In the last Topic, we presented a process approach for sharing faith. We also talked about the reality that, compared to previous generations, many people today are starting much further back in their knowledge and experience of God.

In this Topic, we want to help you grapple with *why* so many of the people around us seem so indifferent about faith, the types of questions people *are* asking and how they find satisfactory answers to those questions.

What if we discovered that sharing faith doesn't have to feel so difficult when we actually know where people are starting?

### START

How does your motivation and expectation for sharing faith now compare to when you first started this series? (you may want to reference your 'Evangelism Temperature Check' and 'Key Takeaways' pages)

Share about any recent opportunities you've had to talk about your faith with others.

Are you feeling stuck in any area?

- [The presenters shared their own story and said, "The gospel didn't sound like good news to people who were not looking for God." What do you think about that statement?](#)
- What is your typical response when you find people are not interested in God?  
Push forward and present the truth.  
Don't push. Be kind and live a faithful life.  
Something in-between
- What initial thoughts do you have about how to overcome the relevancy barrier?

### PLAY VIDEO

### REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- What is the 'Relevancy Barrier' (and why is it so important to understand if we want to effectively share our faith?)
- Think about your own experience of coming to faith. How much did the facts or the truths of Christianity motivate you to follow Jesus and how much of it was because of other experiences or encounters with God?
- Can you relate to the experience of trying to share faith with people who are not against it, but are simply indifferent to it?

### PREPARE

How would you answer Darin's friend Colin when he said, "I don't see why I need God?"

(hint: Although it's true Colin needs forgiveness from his sin, hearing that he can receive forgiveness from God probably isn't going to motivate a faith journey at this point)

### PRACTICE

This week, consider asking one or two non-Christians you know: "Do you have any questions about God or the Christian faith?"

SESSION 2:

WHY ARE MOST PEOPLE NOT INTERESTED IN GOD?

Last session, we heard the presenters talk about their experiences of being met with simple indifference when they talked about Jesus and the gospel. Can you identify with them?

Have you ever plucked up the courage to tell someone about Jesus and you expected to receive either a strongly positive or negative reaction, but instead just got a blank look?

Why? Why are so many people so indifferent? What if part of the reason for a “so what?” response when we try to share the gospel is because we cannot always start with Jesus?

START

What opportunities are you getting to share your faith?

PLAY VIDEO

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- Would you agree or disagree that most people around you have very little history with God and the Church?
- Do you have any examples of sharing faith with people who were completely clueless about God, the Bible or Christians?
- How do you feel when you hear the statistics that were shared in this session?
- Can you give any examples of how the Church once had prominence in society but no longer has the same influence? How does the Church’s place at the fringe of society make you feel?
- Do you know anyone who has grown up in the church or who once had faith, but has walked away from it? What do you think of the presenters’ idea that we need to learn to stir a fresh curiosity about God and faith with these kinds of people?

PREPARE

Think of 2 or 3 non-Christian people you know. Where would you place them on the following scale?



PRACTICE

Think about asking someone you are trying to share faith with the following question:

“You know that I go to church and that I get a lot out of it, but I’m wondering, what do you think is good and bad about the Church?”

NOTES

**Post-Christian:** The church is no longer on the centre stage of society

## SESSION 3:

# WHAT QUESTIONS ARE PEOPLE ASKING?

If people are largely not actively asking questions about Christianity, what kinds of questions are they asking? This session will help you to identify several of these key questions.

Wouldn't it be nice to answer the questions people are asking about God and faith instead of answering the questions they are not asking?

### START

Have you had any recent experiences where you noticed the people around you were simply indifferent toward God and faith?

Have you had any recent interactions where it became obvious the person was not *against* God or faith, they just didn't have any history with it all?

### PLAY VIDEO

### REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- What kinds of questions do you *wish* people would ask you about God or the Christian faith? (What questions do you hope they *don't* ask you?)
- Are the non-Christian people in your life asking questions about these things? What kinds of questions do you hear them asking?
- How does it make you feel to hear that people are not as moved about the facts or truths of the Christian faith as they once were?
- What questions did the presenters say people today are asking?
- Can you think of times when you've heard these kinds of questions?
- How would you go about trying to answer those questions?

### PREPARE

If someone asked you, "Why would God or faith matter to my life?" how would you answer?

If someone said to you, "We would be better off without religion. Look at all the wars and violence it has caused throughout history," what would you say?

### PRACTICE

Listen this week for the kinds of questions people are asking about God, about Christians and about the Church. This could be in a personal conversation or something you see on social media or hear in a film or programme.

Consider asking one or two non-Christians you know, "What do you think would motivate you to consider or maybe even pursue faith in general or the Christian faith specifically?"

### NOTES

*"Demonstrating the reasonableness or truth of Christianity does not always lead people to embrace it. Something may be true yet possess little, if any, relevance for human existence."*

Alister McGrath, Narrative Apologetics

The book *Evangelism Outside the Box* by Rick Richardson was also mentioned in this session.

SESSION 4:

## WHY DO PEOPLE SEEM SO SPIRITUALLY DEAD?

Many scientists and leaders in our culture tell us that our existence is due to purely random and natural causes. What effect has this had on the beliefs of the people around us and the desire to search for God or even to search for any kind of meaning in life?

Is there any way to help people discover their true spiritual identity?

START

What practical questions about God and the Christian faith are you starting to hear people ask in your conversations?

PLAY VIDEO

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- Can you think of any personal examples supporting the observation that the people around us seem to be satisfied by the explanations of naturalism and materialism?
- What effect do you think these 'beliefs' have had on the belief in God or the supernatural or even simply questioning the purpose of life?
- Can you think of any effective ways to encourage people to question these beliefs?
- Do the non-Christians you know think that humans are just physical creatures or do they believe we are more than a body and brain?
- Do your non-Christian family or friends believe there is a meaning or purpose to life and do they seem to be actively searching for it?

PREPARE

How would you answer this statement: "Our emotions are just the result of the chemicals in our body and brain."

PRACTICE

This week, ask a non-Christian friend or someone who serves you regularly (like a person at the cafe or shop):

"Do you think we as humans are just physical creatures or are we more than a body and brain?"

NOTES

Definitions:

**Naturalism:** Everything in existence can be explained as a result of natural forces at work in our universe.

**Materialism:** Nothing exists in our universe other than physical matter.

SESSION 5:

# HOW DO PEOPLE DECIDE WHAT IS TRUE?

We've spent time in this Topic identifying the questions people today are asking about God and faith. But how do people today decide what answers are true? In the past, people relied heavily on logic and reasoning, but this has shifted dramatically, just in the past few decades.

So how do most people today decide what is true?

START

Did you ask anyone their thoughts about us as humans? Specifically, if we are more than a body and brain?

What responses did you get? Did you get the sense that people are eager to talk about this or would they prefer not to?

PLAY VIDEO

REFLECT AND DISCUSS

- Why do you think people today are more reluctant to trust other people's truth statements? Why do you think they are more reluctant to engage in logic and reasoning to decide what is true?
- Do you agree or disagree that people today decide what is true through experience?
- How much would you say *you* make decisions about the important things in your life based on logic or reasoning versus your experiences? Can you think of an example?
- How would you answer the question posed in the video, "How can we help a generation who is far from God and who knows almost nothing about Him, experience their way into a relationship with Him?"

PREPARE

Take time to complete the Topic 2 Key Takeaways page to help track your experiences and motivation for sharing faith.

PRACTICE

This week, ask someone you know who is not a Christian:

"What would it take to convince you that God is real?"

NOTES

*"Back in the eighteenth century, it was important to show that Christianity was true; in the twenty-first century, it has become important to show that it works."*

Alister McGrath, Narrative Apologetics

# TOPIC 2

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

### DON'T FORGET!

1. Indifference, rather than hostility or intellectual objections, is one of the biggest barriers to the gospel.
2. People living in Western cultures are increasingly disconnected from God, the Church and the Bible. These trends feed the sense of indifference.
3. The acceptance of naturalistic and materialistic explanations for our universe has numbed the sense of the supernatural and stifled the search for meaning and purpose in life.
4. People's questions about faith are extremely practical.
5. Most people feel they need to experience something for themselves in order to conclude that it's true.

### THESE ARE THE THOUGHTS AND ACTIONS I FOUND MOST HELPFUL FROM THIS TOPIC:

### I'M PRAYING FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE FAITH WITH:

1

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2

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3

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### THESE ARE THE QUESTIONS I STILL HAVE WHEN IT COMES TO SHARING FAITH AND THIS IS WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO GET BETTER AT:

## MY EVANGELISM DASHBOARD (Draw a needle on the gauges)



I'm praying for God to move in hearts and lives



I'm looking for opportunities to share my faith



I'm expecting people to respond positively

## TRIP INDICATOR (Put a tick in any relevant circle)

- I've spent intentional time with someone who doesn't yet know God
- I've prayed with another person
- I've shared my testimony
- I've shared how God helps my life
- I've invited someone to read the Bible
- I've invited a person to an outreach event or service
- I've helped someone start a relationship with God

### LEADERS

How is God moving and how is your group taking opportunities to share their faith? We would love to hear your stories and share them with others. So take two minutes to let us know at [info@starttostir.com](mailto:info@starttostir.com)!

### Want to learn more about where people are starting when it comes to faith?

Follow us [@starttostir](#) on Instagram and Facebook for more ideas and practical examples.

### Have a question that you would love to talk about or have us answer?

Join our next Live Training here:  
[starttostir.com/learning-centre/stirworkshop](http://starttostir.com/learning-centre/stirworkshop)