

Breaking the Sound Barrier

Risen Life Church

April 2026

Friends of Sinners (Matthew 11, Luke 7)

- Jesus is called a friend of sinners.
- He was great at befriending the lost.
- Meeting needs.
- Sharing meals.
- Loving those who were far from God.
- Matthew the tax collector, the woman at the well, Nicodemus, Zacchaeus.
- He had no problem hanging out with the lost.
- Dinner party with the disciples and all Matthews sketchy friends.
- We are called to be friends of sinners.
- To build close relationships with those who don't know Christ.
- Co-workers, neighbors, classmates, family members, old friends.

“Instead of retreating, isolating ourselves, and condemning unbelievers and our culture, Jesus calls us to something very different. He desires that we give ourselves to the understanding of the culture around us; he urges us to stop condemning the world and unbelievers; His desire is that we be like him, and that we commit ourselves to developing intimate relationships with non-Christians. He wants us to teach our church members and our children to do the same - no matter what the belief system and the lifestyle of the people around us.” (Jerram Barrs)

- How are you doing when it comes to building friends with non-Christians?
- Do you have close relationships with the lost?
- When was the last time you had a non-Christians over (excluding family)?
- When was the last time you were in the home of a non-Christian (excluding family)?
- Let's be intentional in building these kinds of relationships.
- Session 3 in Proclaim will help us with this.
- “Becoming a friend of sinners.”

Ok so now that you have established or are establishing these friendships.

- Or will be establishing these friendships.
- The question arises.
- How do we transition from normal conversation.
- To spiritual conversation?
- And then how do we get the spiritual conversation to the gospel?
- Fighter pilots are familiar with the sound barrier.
- 767 mph.
- Creates increasing drag and shock waves.
- Making it difficult to get through it.

- Fighter pilots have been trained and have experienced.
- Breaking through this invisible wall.
- But how do we break through our own sound barriers?
- Invisible walls we feel we can't break through in conversations with non-Christians.
- Let's look at 3 different sound barriers we need to break through.

1. THE NATURAL SOUND BARRIER

- Starting a conversation and establishing rapport.
- Discussing a person's job, school, family, interests, etc.

2. THE SPIRITUAL SOUND BARRIER

- Shifting to general spirituality.
- Discussing a person's spiritual beliefs and background, etc.

3. THE GOSPEL SOUND BARRIER

- Shifting to gospel-centered truth.
- Discussing Jesus, sin, the cross, forgiveness, etc.

“There came a woman of Samaria to draw water. Jesus said to her, ‘Give me a drink.’ (For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask for a drink from me, a woman of Samaria?’ (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink’, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water”. The woman said to him, ‘Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob? He gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did his sons and his livestock’. Jesus said to her, ‘Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.’” (John 4:7-14)

How did Jesus start and transition this conversation through each sound barrier?

- Natural
- Spiritual
- Gospel

1. Breaking the Natural Sound Barrier

- The key to breaking the natural sound barrier.
- Is to simply being friendly and kind when we're out and about.
- This can feel awkward at first.
- Because we live in an increasingly isolated “keep-to-yourself” culture.
- However, people are usually very happy to reciprocate our friendliness.
- We just need to take the first step, open our mouths, and say something!
- Christians should be the most curious people around.

- We should take an interest in others.
- We should be the best at asking questions.
- We should not be looking at our phones in public.
- But should be looking around to see who we can engage.
- And who we can serve.
- Here are some ideas to get us started:
 - ✓ Be others-focused in public places (at work, parties, stores, restaurants, games, family events).
 - ✓ Be curious (ask people questions to get to know them).
 - ✓ Talk to people next to you on planes, buses, subways.
 - ✓ Don't be afraid to introduce yourself.
 - ✓ Ask questions. People usually love to talk about themselves. (Where do you live? What do you do? Do you have any family? Tell me about your tattoos").
 - ✓ Serve the needs of others and converse while interacting (open doors, carry bags, shelter others with your umbrella).
 - ✓ Break the formal protocol and really talk to your cashier, waiter/waitress, salesperson, mechanic, etc.

2. Breaking the Spiritual Sound Barrier

- Once we've blasted through the natural sound barrier.
- And started a conversation.
- The spiritual one can still look pretty intimidating.
- But it really isn't as difficult as it can seem.
- Let's consider four different ways.
- We can transition conversations from the natural to the spiritual.
- Spiritual Comments, Spiritual Questions, Spiritual Service and Spiritual Invites

Spiritual Comments:

- Drop a spiritual comment into the discussion and see where it goes.

Talk about your trust in God.

- "This is a difficult time in my life right now."
- "I'm sorry to hear that. When I'm struggling, I find a lot of hope and strength in God..."

Connect their idea or story back to the Bible.

- "It's beautiful out today."
- "I agree. It's amazing how God created things with such beauty."

Exercise:

- Your co-worker is talking about what she normally does on the weekend.
- Write down a response:

Spiritual Questions:

- Spiritual questions are another great way to transition conversations.
- They're non-threatening.
- And position us to listen and learn prior to sharing the gospel.
- Here are some that work well:
 - ✓ Do you go to church at all? Or did you grow up going to church?
 - ✓ What was your experience like?
 - ✓ What's your spiritual background?
 - ✓ What do you think the purpose of life is?
 - ✓ Where do you find the most joy in life? What do you think would bring you ultimate joy.
 - ✓ What do you think God is like?
 - ✓ If you could ask God any question, what would you ask?
 - ✓ When you die, what do you think is on the other side?
 - ✓ Is there any way I can pray for you?
- If the spiritual question seems a little abrupt, try prefacing it with:
- "I'm curious" or "Can I ask you an interesting question?"

Rely on reciprocal reflexes.

- Ask questions you would like to be asked back.
- "What do you like to do in your free time?"
- If they return the question, respond with a spiritual comment.

Exercise:

- You're eating lunch with a co-worker or talking to a neighbor, what spiritual question would you ask them?

Spiritual Service:

- While our actions can never replace our words.
- They can definitely precede them.
- And if we're intentional.
- Spiritual conversations will follow as we serve the world in Jesus' name.
- Here are some ideas to consider:
 - ✓ Ask your waitress if you can pray for her.
 - ✓ Do the job at work that no one wants to do.
 - ✓ Help a neighbor with a home project.
 - ✓ Make a cake for a coworkers birthday.
 - ✓ Offer to babysit for a non-Christian relative.
 - ✓ Bring coffee for the classmate you are reaching out to.
 - ✓ Go Christmas caroling with your small group and distribute cookies.
 - ✓ Make a meal for someone that just had a baby.
 - ✓ Help your neighbor with yard work (rake leaves, mow grass or shovel snow).
 - ✓ Buy flowers for a someone who lost a loved one.
 - ✓ Come up with your own idea.. find a need and meet it!

Exercise:

- Has anyone done something like this? What idea do you think you could try?

Why are you doing this?

- As we serve, let's not hide our true motives.
- We should point people not to ourselves, or our own inherent goodness.
- But rather to the love of Christ that compels us.
- Let people know...
 - ✓ "I freely give, because I've freely received from God." (1 Corinthians 2:12)
 - ✓ "I want to share the love of Christ in a practical way." (2 Corinthians 5:14)
 - ✓ "It's free, because God's grace is free." (Romans 6:23)
 - ✓ "Jesus first served me, giving his life for me." (Matthew 20:28)
- If our service doesn't allow time for conversation, consider giving someone a "How good are You?" tract or an invitation to church or Bridge or one of the other ministries that we offer, as a way to connect your good works to God's grace. (Ephesians 2:10)

Spiritual Invites:

- When reaching out, inviting people to Christian events is always a good idea.
- But let's not stop there.
- Whether or not they accept it, the invitation itself can transition the conversation to the spiritual.

Christmas Outreach:

- "Julie, my church is having a Christmas concert this Saturday. Would you and Todd want to come to it with me and my family?"
- "Hmm... sounds tempting. Unfortunately, we've already made plans to do dinner with Bib and Cindy that night."
- "Okay. Well we usually do it every year, so maybe another time. I'm curious, do you and Todd celebrate Christmas during the holiday season? Did you grow up going to church?"

Invite people to:

- Bridge (use the new NFC cards, send them a video).
- Church.
- Grief share, Divorce Care, FPU, Cancer Care, Reboot, Celebrate Recovery.
- Outreach Events (Easter Egg Hunt, Guest Sundays, Christmas Concert, Trunk or Treat).
- Holidays services (Good Friday, Easter and Christmas Eve).
- Small group socials.
- Campus meetings.
- Bible Studies.
- Men's and women's breakfasts.
- Retreats.

Invitation Tip:

- Often people will be more likely to come with us if we offer to get together with them before or after the event.
- Consider carpooling or even grabbing a meal together.
- Take the extra effort and see where it goes!

3. Breaking the Gospel Sound Barrier

- Hopefully, after we've pushed through the spiritual sound barrier.
- The conversation will move towards the gospel.
- But if that doesn't seem to be happening.
- These last two suggestions can help.

Gospel Questions:

- Similar to spiritual questions, gospel questions can drive the conversation forward in a gentle way. A good principle here is: "Ask the questions you'd like to be answering." When we do this, it piques curiosity and paves the way for biblical answers.
 - ✓ If you could ask God one question, what would it be?
 - ✓ If God asked you, "Why should I let you into heaven?" what would you say?
 - ✓ On a scale of 1 - 10 how would you rate your goodness?
 - ✓ How good do you think you have to be to make it to heaven?
 - ✓ What do you think the Bible is all about?
 - ✓ Why do you think Jesus died on the cross?
 - ✓ What do you think Jesus' primary mission on earth was?
 - ✓ When you die, do you think you'll go to heaven? Why?
 - ✓ How do you think a person can be forgiven by God?
 - ✓ What does your church (religion) teach about how to get to heaven?
- Start by using broader questions.
- Listen intently.
- Agree where you can.
- Then use follow up questions to narrow in on the gospel.

"How Good Are You?" Walk-Through:

- Still lost in a meandering conversation?
- Or having trouble articulating the gospel clearly and succinctly?
- That's where the "How Good Are You?" booklet can help.

Exercise: What Gospel Question Would you ask?

- A friend is explaining how he thinks religion is good for people because it helps them find purpose in life. What could you ask them?