

Aiming for the Heart in Everyday Conversations

- 1) Do you **move conversations one step deeper**?*
- 2) Do you **move towards others** and **know them well enough to pray with them**?
- 3) Do you listen? What do you listen *for*?
 - 1) Are you always scanning for the work of the Spirit? (**The person reflects God.**)
 - 2) Do you pick up on troubles? (**The person suffers.**)
 - 3) What if the person is confessing sin? (**The person sins.**)
- 4) Are you **personal**?
- 5) Do you **follow up**? Think of what you do as following up—keeping track of the person’s story.
- 6) Another way to summarize in a few words what we are doing? **Listen until you are moved.**
- 7) Who are we? Brother, sister, friend, becoming a friend, sinner, strong in weakness, shepherd, guide. **Think “we”** and walk alongside as a friend.
- 8) When in doubt, **edit yourself.**
- 9) In your desire to know the person, are you mingling your conversation with words of **encouragement** and **comfort**?
- 10) **Be slow to give advice.** Advice is “speed-counseling”. Something may emerge out of Scripture, but what makes it advice is that it is a narrow application of that Scripture. Advice tends to not be strong on listening, and certainly isn’t strong on compassion. Advice is simply waiting to identify the problem, and once it identifies the problem it is off and running on a possible solution. For the advice-giver, compassion is just extra time that impedes efficiency. It doesn’t tend to be personal; it isn’t moved by what the other person has to say. There tends to be a lack of entering into the other person’s world and seeing it through their eyes. Rather, advice says “This is what I would do in your situation.” It tends to put the relationship at risk a bit, because when you start receiving from another person, especially a close friend, it suddenly feels as if the relationship has taken a hierarchical turn. The person giving the advice is the expert, who’s speaking down to the student who’s intended to receive the advice. Advice does not say “That’s a great question. Tell me what you’re thinking. I know you’ve thought about this. You wouldn’t ask the question if you weren’t thinking about these things.” This is a theological concept. You have been thinking about this, and you have the Spirit of Christ in you! Simply put, first ask “What have you done?” and “What are you thinking about doing?” When in doubt, move in a collegial direction and speak ‘we’.

* = *Bolded words indicate the most important concepts in this material.*



Aiming for the Heart—Four Deeper Considerations

- 1) **Consider your own heart and life story.** Can you make the connection between the details of your daily life and your relationship with the Lord? Your daily life—your work and relationships—gives you an accurate read on your relationship with Jesus.
 - 1) How are your best relationships? Your worst relationships?
 - 2) How are your spiritual disciplines?
 - 3) How are you growing in your battle with sin? **Can you identify sin in your own life?**
 - 4) Do you **ask for help**? Are you needy? I would like to give you a homework assignment for this coming week. Ask someone to pray for you on the spot!
 - 5) Do you encourage other people to do things you don't do?
 - 6) How are you growing in the way you turn to Jesus in the midst of suffering and hardship? In Hosea 7:14 the Lord accuses the Israelites in this way: *They do not cry to me from the heart, but they wail upon their beds...*
 - 7) What are your weaknesses or common mistakes in everyday conversation?
- 2) What are you hearing? What should you follow?
 - 1) Follow the events and, even more, the interpretation and impact of the events. “What was that like for you?” Rather than trying to be a fly on the wall, try and to look at life through their window.
 - 2) Follow the strongest emotions.
 - 3) Follow the relationships, especially the hard ones.
 - 4) Follow repeated words or key images and metaphors.
 - 5) Follow references to Jesus. Are there references? Does the person sound like a Christian?
 - 6) Follow what is perplexing, confusing, or inconsistent.
 - 7) Remember, ethical assessments are not the same as pastoral ministry. When you've got someone firmly planted in a moral category, it's best to **ask one more question!**
- 3) Do you **notice small steps**?
- 4) Do you **recommend and agree on small steps**?

