

Connecting Women to Christ

By Janice Kerper Brauer

Women come in all shapes and sizes. They have different backgrounds—from stable, loving upbringings to dysfunctional families. Women hold differing aspirations—to marry and have children, to find success and satisfaction through a career. Women experience different life situations; they are married, single, divorced, cohabitating. Women know different joys and different hurts. Yet there is a common thread. Women long for meaningful relationships, including a meaningful relationship with the One who created them in His image (Genesis 1:26-27).

C.S. Lewis described the innate longing to know God as “a secret thread, an ineffable suggestion, an attraction or longing, something you were born desiring and which, beneath the flux of other desires and in all the momentary silences between the louder passions, you are looking for, watching for, listening for” (C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*). Not all women are aware of this inner longing to know God, of course, but that doesn’t negate the need. Scripture tells us that knowing God through His Son is the key to life—both now and in eternity (John 10:10, John 17:3).

So how can we help women recognize their deep need for God? And how can we connect their inner yearnings to the One who alone can save and satisfy?

Women are relationally wired; they want to connect to people in meaningful ways. That’s why one-to-one female relationships provide a natural setting for connecting women to Christ. Your friendships with women are conduits through which God can extend His love and grace. What an exciting opportunity! Here are some tips for developing relationships that meet women’s needs to connect with others and with God.

Tips:

Listen and care. You may have heard that people will not care how much we know until they know how much we care. This is more than a clever phrase; it is true. Jesus modeled listening and caring for women. Consider His conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4. He initiated the interchange. He took the time to listen, to interact. He helped her become aware of her spiritual thirst. So be intentional about initiating relationships with the women in your life. Keep your eyes open. Does your friend look tired or frenzied? Keep your ears open. Listen carefully to what your friend says and doesn’t say that reveals the need of her heart.

Show that you are tuned in to her needs. Is she overwhelmed by the daily challenge of caring for an infant and two toddlers? Is she running ragged from a demanding job? Is she just waiting for “Mr. Right”? Is she lonely in her marriage? Is she ill? Is she stressed out caring for aging parents? Let her know you hear and understand. You need not have had the same experiences as she to relate to her emotions. We’ve all felt exhausted, overwhelmed, sad, or anxious at times.

Serve. Once you have heard her heart-cry, do something about it. Take care of that two-year-old for an afternoon. Bring a meal so she can take a break from the after-work rush of getting supper ready. Accompany her to a doctor’s appointment. Share a helpful book on marriage. Be a friend.

Follow the 3 Rs: Be respectful, be well-reasoned, be real. When you spend time with your friend and show you care by serving her in practical ways, your relationship will grow. Then it's natural that you will speak about more personal matters. Remember, women want to connect in meaningful ways; they want to talk about things that matter most in life. As your conversations deepen and spiritual topics come up, be respectful of your friend's perspective. She may believe things that are quite outlandish, but when you show respect you also open the door for sharing the truth about Jesus. 1 Peter 3:15 tells us, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." Be well-reasoned when you talk about your faith. Know from Scripture what you believe and why. This doesn't mean you need to have all the answers, but you should be able to answer basic questions about God, the Bible, the nature of man, and the Savior. And be real. Share the struggles in your life and in your faith journey.

Tell your story. Just as you listen and care as your friend shares her heart with you, share your heart with her. Tell her about what is most important to you: your relationship with Jesus. Elisabeth Elliott, wife of Christian martyr Jim Elliott, has been telling the story of her husband's life and death and how she has dealt with it for nearly 50 years. Once she questioned Corrie Ten Boom if she should keep telling the same story over and over. Corrie wisely responded that God's reply to Elisabeth would likely be: "This is the story I gave you. You tell that one" (Elisabeth Elliott, *Through Gates of Splendor*, 25th anniversary edition). You, too, have a story all your own of what God has done in your life. Tell your story.

Resources:

Tap into what your church or neighboring congregations offer. Stay-at-home moms with young children often feel isolated, so groups such as Mothers of Preschoolers (www.mops.org) or other gatherings for moms are welcome havens where women can form friendships and hear about Christ. Busy working women might come to a short, topic-focused class such as a six-week Bible study on balancing women's many roles. Even women who may not want to attend a function at your church might be willing to let their children come to Sunday school, vacation Bible school, or youth group activities. Invite the neighborhood kids and give them a ride!

Connect felt needs with resources. Does your church library have a video series on parenting? Lend it to your friend or host a showing in your home, followed by refreshments and discussion. Expand your personal library of books or articles offering a biblical perspective on marriage, careers, time management, mental health issues, etc. and lend these freely to female friends. Be sure to follow up by asking questions about the material and offering to pray for any specific concerns. Know which Christian radio stations operate in your area and when they have programs of special interest to women; pass that information along to the women in your life. (www.mbn.org, www.klove.com)

Be ready. Keep Gospel tracts in your purse. Memorize key Scripture verses that will help you explain God's plan of salvation to a friend. Practice doing this so you can find your own words and a natural way to share the Gospel. Remember, you can share biblical truth without quoting Scripture at people. Anticipate faith questions others might have and learn how to answer them. The Web site of Josh McDowell Ministry is very helpful for this (www.josh.org -- click on "apologetics").

Practice:

Be tuned in when opportunities arise.

One sunny Saturday afternoon when I would rather have been outdoors, I found myself sitting in my son's middle school. Two other moms and I were manning the registration table at an all-day musical event. The other women started talking about their favorite radio stations and disc jockeys. What a perfect opportunity to say, "I have my car radio set to KLOVE. It's a Christian station with encouraging music. I don't have to worry about my kids hearing questionable lyrics. It's always uplifting."

Make opportunities happen.

One fall weekend our family hosted a neighborhood party. Several new families had moved onto the block, and this was a fun way to get acquainted. As a follow-up, I sent out notes that said, "As Thanksgiving approaches, we are thankful for our family, our friends, and our neighbors. Please join us for a special Thanksgiving service at our church, followed by a pie reception. Hope you can be there!"

How might you seize the following opportunities:

A neighbor says: "Thank you so much for driving me to this doctor's appointment. I'm really scared about the tests I'm having today."

As you watch your children play together at the park, fellow mom confides: "Don't the kids just drive you crazy sometimes? Some days I'd like to walk away from it all."

A co-worker complains: "I just feel like my work is unappreciated. I knock myself out around here, and no one even notices."

A friend observes: "I know you have some problems at home, too, but you always seem so calm. How do you do it?"

Please remember, there are no magical phrases or "right" answers to how you might respond in each of these situations. The point is to use your friendships, your connections with women, as a springboard to speak naturally about your relationship with Jesus and the truth found in Him.

Missed opportunities.

We've all had opportunities pass us by and later thought, "Why didn't I say something?" Satan would love to have such missed opportunities leave us defeated and keep us silent in the future. Instead, simply confess and receive Christ's forgiveness. Learn from these experiences, and move on.

Conclusion:

I'm assuming you are interested in reaching out to women with the Good News of God's love and grace in Jesus Christ. Otherwise you wouldn't be reading this article. Yet I know that the task can seem daunting. You know so many women and they all need the Lord! The overwhelming scope of it all can immobilize us.

So the last tip I have to share is really the most important. Pray. Ask God to show you two or three women He wants to love and reach through you at this particular time. Write their names down and commit to pray for them daily. Try praying Scripture, personalized with each woman's name; for example:

God, You desire Susan to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). Please reveal to Nancy that You are the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6).

Please open Sarah's mind and heart to the Bible so that faith may come from hearing and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17).

As you pray for the women God has placed on your heart, ask Him to give you opportunities to deepen your friendship with them. Pray for creative ways to show your love for them and ask the Holy Spirit to grant boldness as you share about the Savior.

God is in the business of drawing people to Himself (John 6:44, John 12:32). What a privilege to have your relationships with women be an avenue for them to come into a faith relationship with the One who lived, died, and rose for all!

Bio:

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