

Small Group// Leader's Guide



//not beyond reach

How to Share Jesus with the Young, the
Deconstructed, and the Non-Religious

Aaron Pierce

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Welcome

Over the past few decades, we have experienced a profound post-Christian cultural shift in the United States. As a result, millions of people will not step foot into a church today. And these people are more than just statistics—they are our brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, friends, and co-workers.

The **Not Beyond Reach Small-Group Series** is practical and action-oriented and will equip you to reach any young people in your life who will not walk into a church.

This ten-week video series is designed to be stand-alone, but for the best experience, we recommend reading the book *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce (available on Amazon and at www.livingontheedge.org) as you go through the small-group series. Relevant page numbers for the book are provided at the end of each section.

Additional materials to guide you through the series can be found on the Not Beyond Reach resources page: **notbeyondreach.com**.



Small-Group Preparation

About the Leader's Guide

The Not Beyond Reach Small-Group Leader's Guide contains all the elements of the Participant's Guide, plus additional information to help you lead the small-group study.

This section on small-group preparation will help you understand the structure of the guide. Each week's portion of the Leader's Guide includes the answers to the fill-in-the-blank Viewing Guide sections and special notes to help you prepare for that specific week.


Suggested Schedule

We recommend setting aside at least ninety minutes each week to work through the study materials. This estimate does not include any additional time you may want to spend socializing as a group.

Small-Group Elements

Viewing Guide: Each week includes a Viewing Guide for the accompanying video, featuring key points with fill-in-the-blanks to help your group follow along. If helpful, you can review them together after watching the video. The Leader's Guide contains the filled-in Viewing Guide sections.

Group Discussion: Weekly Group Discussion questions are provided to help facilitate your conversation after the video. We recommend reading through the questions and other small-group elements before your group meets so you can plan how much time to allocate to this section.



Application for the Week: This course aims to be more than just an information transfer; it's a call to action! We encourage you to apply the principles you learn. Although it may be uncomfortable or risky, we learn the most when we step out in faith. As a leader, set aside time to review the Application for the Week together and discuss how and when you'll implement it. This application should be done outside your meeting time.

Stretch Application: Weeks 1, 4, and 5 include a Stretch Application. Some group members may not feel ready for participating in it, but as the leader, take time to review it and encourage everyone to step out of their comfort zones.

Last Week's Application: At the beginning of each week, time is allocated for discussing the previous week's application. Sharing experiences will encourage everyone to participate in the upcoming application.

Group Exercise—Prayer: Week 2 includes a Group Exercise focused on prayer. Allow extra time to pray together in a deep and meaningful way.

Group Exercise—Role-Play: Weeks 4 and 8 include role-playing exercises for spiritual conversations. Ensure you plan enough time for several role-play scenarios during your group meeting.

IsThereMore? Video and Discussion: Weeks 4, 8, and 9 feature an extra section of the video accompanied by some discussion questions. These videos, part of Steiger's IsThereMore? series, help facilitate gospel conversations. The Not Beyond Reach series includes these videos with on-screen instructions for when to pause for discussion.



Planning the Prayer Walk

During the first or second week of the study, take time with your group to schedule a prayer walk. The walk doesn't need to happen during a particular week, but plan it for a time outside your normal weekly meeting when as many group members as possible can attend. We recommend scheduling two hours for the prayer walk.

During the prayer walk, visit areas in your city where young adults live, work, and play, such as the art district, clubs and bars, near a major university, or places with cool coffee shops and breweries. As the group leader, you decide where the group will meet and the route to walk.

While walking and praying, ask God to open your eyes to see beyond the surface. Pay close attention to what He reveals. Observe the people, their dress, and their demeanor. Look at the advertising and graffiti art. Read the flyers and posters in the coffee shops. Engage in conversation with people you meet. If you find an interesting event or venue, go in and observe.

The goal is to better understand the culture, identify the seductive messages of secularism, allow God to break your heart for what breaks His, fuel your prayers for specific people and places, and set the foundation for effective spiritual conversations.

Post-Christian: The Rise of the Religiously Unaffiliated

//Viewing Guide

- The fastest-growing “religious group” in America is the religiously unaffiliated.

Attitude and Affiliation Towards Christianity

USA Population in 1990

Committed	Positive	Apathetic	Negative	Hostile
Convictional Christian (20%)	Nominal Christian (66%)	Religiously Unaffiliated (10%)	Other (4%)	

Source: In US, Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace (2020, June 09)


Attitude and Affiliation Towards Christianity

Gen Z in the USA (2022)

Committed	Positive	Apathetic	Negative	Hostile
Convictional Christian (20%)	Nominal Christian (24%)	Religiously Unaffiliated (49%)		Other (7%)
	Majority of evangelistic effort			

Source: 2022 Cooperative Election Study

- We need to become cross — cultural missionaries to our own people in our own cities.

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- To effectively communicate the gospel to a post-Christian culture, it's important to understand three key realities:
 1. Secular people have become suspicious of religious institutions and are far less likely to attend a church event.
 2. Secular people today do not hold the same assumptions about morality, truth, the authority of the Bible, and the existence and nature of God that earlier generations did.
 3. Secular people are often open to spirituality.
 - The post-Christian shift has exploded into mainstream culture over the past few decades because of the emergence of the Global Youth Culture.
 - There are four significant spheres of influence for the Global Youth Culture:
 1. The entertainment industry
 2. Internet stars
 3. Video games
 4. Pornography
 - There are three philosophical pillars supporting the worldview of the Global Youth Culture:
 1. Secularism
 2. Relativism
 3. Acceptance

//Group Discussion

- Share about the people in your life who are not following Jesus today. Describe their attitude toward the church (for example, positive, apathetic, negative, hostile).
- What are some reasons they do not believe or have deconstructed their faith?
- What are the reasons we in the Church sometimes fail to create an open environment where tough questions can be wrestled through within a Christian community?
- What unique obstacles and opportunities do the three key realities present for sharing Jesus with non-religious people in your life?
- How have you seen the influence of the Global Youth Culture shape the thinking of young people around you?



//Application for the Week

Note for Leaders:

Each week, we provide specific applications that enable participants to try out the principles they've learned. As you introduce the application, emphasize the importance of taking it seriously. We learn the most when we put what we hear and discuss into practice. As we take these steps, it may be uncomfortable or risky and you will likely stumble and make mistakes, but as you go, God will be with you. You will learn and grow, and God will demonstrate His power through you.

- Go to TikTok or Instagram Reels and search for videos using these hashtags: #exvangelical, #deconstruction, and #postchristian. (If you don't know how to do this, ask a younger person.)
- Please note that the content you will encounter might include profane language and other provocative material.
- What stood out to you about the videos you found? Share the most insightful ones with your group for discussion next time.

//Stretch Application

Note for Leaders:

This optional application provides an opportunity to step out of your comfort zone!

- Explain to someone you know who is not a believer (friend, family member, neighbor, co-worker, and so on) that you are taking a church course, and then ask them the following worldview questions:
 1. **Origin:** How did we get here? Where did life come from?
 2. **Morality:** Is there such a thing as right and wrong? Who decides?
 3. **Purpose:** What is the purpose of life?
 4. **Destiny:** What happens after we die?
- What stood out to you about the person's answers? Did their answers surprise you? How were their replies opposed to or in alignment with biblical truth?

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 17-34.

- Discuss Last Week's Application
- Week 2 Video (14:42)
- Group Discussion
- Group Exercise: Prayer
- Application

Broken Hearts Change the World

//Last Week's Application

Discuss the most interesting videos you found on TikTok and Instagram. What was your initial reaction to what you heard? What surprised you?

For those in your group who did the Stretch Application, how did your worldview interviews go? How did people respond to being asked those deep questions? Were you surprised by what you learned? How did their answers align or conflict with biblical truth?

//Viewing Guide

- If we're going to reach this increasingly **post** – **Christian** generation, we need to understand how they see the world today.
- We're not dealing primarily with a logic issue; we're dealing with a **spiritual** – **blindness** problem.
- The "god of this age" is **secular humanism**: God has been replaced, man is at the center, and there is no outside authority that can tell us how to live our lives.
- The heartbreaking consequences of the secular worldview are a generation that is
 1. **Confused**
 2. **Sexually broken**
 3. **Anxious**
 4. **Lonely**
- The extent to which our **hearts** are **broken** about something is the extent to which we will do something about it.
- Like Nehemiah, we need to **pray** like never before.
- Like Nehemiah, we need to recognize that the mission we are called to is not **hard**; it's **impossible**.



//Group Discussion

- What are the messages being preached in culture today? How do they relate to the secular humanistic worldview?
- Describe how secular people in your life are dealing with confusion, sexual brokenness, anxiety, and loneliness.
- What does it mean that “the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV), and how should we respond to that?
- Who are the non-believing people in your life God is putting on your heart to pray for?

//Group Exercise: Prayer

Note for Leaders:

Dedicate at least thirty minutes for an extended time of prayer.

As a group, respond to the call for a broken heart and desperate prayer. If needed, repent of any apathy and coldness toward the lost, and ask God to break your heart for what breaks His. Then, specifically pray by name for people in your life who are far from God and unlikely to walk into a church today.

//Application for the Week

- Write down a list of as many people in your life as you can think of (friends, family members, neighbors, co-workers and so on) who are not following Jesus. Hang that list in a place where you will see it frequently (for example, in your Bible, on a bathroom mirror, or next to your bed).
- Commit to praying by name for these non-believing people this week. Pray that God will open their hearts to receiving the gospel message. Aim to pray for at least twenty minutes every day until your next small-group meeting.
- Additionally, your small-group leader is planning a prayer walk for your group during this course. For more information, visit the Not Beyond Reach resources page: **notbeyondreach.com**. Take time this week to collaborate as a group and discuss what time would work best for the prayer walk. Add the walk to your calendar and commit to being part of it!

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 35-39.


Friends of Sinners

//Last Week's Application

- How has God moved in your heart and mind as you've prayed for the lost this past week?
- Do you sense He is leading you to take any specific steps or action?
- What rhythms and disciplines can you put in place to continue praying regularly for the lost people in your life?

//Viewing Guide

- In order to bring the hope of Jesus to secular culture, we need to follow the example of Jesus and become a friend of sinner.
- Loneliness is at epidemic levels today.
- The Great Lie is that to be a good friend and love someone, we have to affirm their lifestyle and worldview.
- Love does not equal affirmation.
- In order to transform our culture, we have to be both present in it and distinct from it.
- The first step is to count the cost.
- Then, we start actively pursuing people around us in our spheres of influence—our oikos (a Greek word used in the New Testament that means “household”).
- We can expand our spheres of influence by being relationally present in secular places.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to a person of peace.

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- As you develop friendships in secular places, it's important to keep the following four principles in mind:

1. Be clear that you're a **follower** of **Jesus**.
2. Don't be surprised that non-Christians act and think in **unbiblical** ways.
3. Don't flaunt your **moral superiority** when you're around non-Christians. Instead, let them see your supernatural hope, love, joy, and peace.
4. **Affirm** the good you see in people.

//Group Discussion

- How can we build authentic relationships with non-religious people without affirming their lifestyles and worldviews?
- Discuss the tension between relevance and holiness. What does it look like to be present in the world yet distinct from it? How can we avoid the errors of assimilation on one end and isolation on the other?
- Read Luke 15:1-2. Why do you think the Pharisees and scribes were critical of Jesus for eating with sinners and tax collectors? How can we apply His example in these verses to our own lives today?

//Application for the Week

- Do an honest assessment of how you are spending your time. What do you need to cut out to make more room for relationships with non-religious people in your life?
- Then, spend time in prayer asking God to highlight
 - at least one person in your oikos who is not following Jesus whom you will actively pursue for a deeper relationship.
 - one place (a hobby, cause, or location) where you will be relationally present to intentionally build new relationships with non-religious people, which is even more effective (and fun) when you commit to doing this with others.
- When God reveals that person (or people) and place,
 - share them with the group for accountability.
 - write down the name and place in a journal or somewhere visible in your house, such as on your bathroom mirror.
 - pray for the person and place daily.
 - start adapting your lifestyle to pursue that person and be present in that place. This is what a missionary lifestyle looks like!

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 41-66.

Note for Leaders:

Week 4 //Small-Group Outline

- Discuss Last Week's Application
- Week 4 Video (17:40)
 - Were We Made for Time? (Is There More? Video and Discussion)
- Group Discussion
- Group Exercise: Spiritual Conversations Role-Play
- Application (and Stretch Application)

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week 4

How to Start Spiritual Conversations

//Last Week's Application

Discuss the specific non-religious people you are pursuing for deeper relationships and the places (hobbies, causes, and locations) where you want to be relationally present in order to intentionally build new relationships with non-religious people.

//Group Exercise: Were We Made for Time?

Note for Leaders:

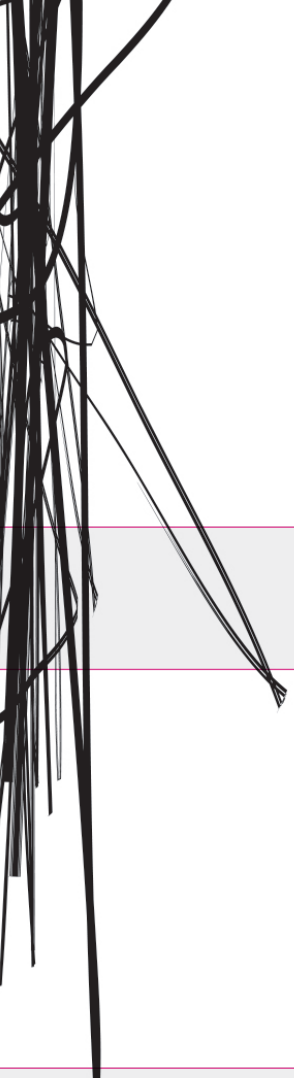
"Were We Made for Time?" is included in the first few minutes of the Week 4 video. Pause the Week 4 video when indicated on the screen for the discussion below.

Pause after the "Were We Made for Time?" section of the video (indicated on the screen). Then, as a group, discuss the following:

- How would you expect a non-religious friend to answer these questions?
 - Why does death shock us?
 - What happens after we die?
 - Nearly every country, culture, and tribe throughout history has believed in an afterlife. Why do you think that is?
- How do you suppose non-religious people process their own mortality?
- How does this video set the foundation for sharing the gospel?

//Viewing Guide

- The key to communicating the gospel in a post-Christian culture is to learn how to engage in effective **spiritual conversations**.
- A spiritual conversation serves as a bridge from the **natural** to the **gospel**.
- Good communication is all about knowing your audience's **assumptions** and then challenging them or building off them.
- Everything we do and talk about has **spiritual** implications.
- A spiritual conversation requires the supernatural work of the **Holy Spirit** in order to be effective.



As you engage in a spiritual conversation, ask the Holy Spirit to help you listen for and discern one or more of the following:

1. Idols
2. Felt needs
3. Lies
4. Truth

//Group Discussion

Note for Leaders:

Download the “Spiritual Topics and Questions” guide from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) before your small group meets.

- What is the difference between a spiritual conversation and a gospel conversation?
- What are some of the underlying assumptions in a typical gospel presentation, and why might they be challenging for people with a secular worldview to accept?
- Download the “Spiritual Topics and Questions” guide from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) and read it together. Discuss the spiritual implications the topics and questions draw out. What idols, felt needs, truths, and lies would you expect to identify as you engage in a spiritual conversation on one of those topics with a non-religious person?

//Group Exercise: Spiritual Conversations Role-Play

Note for Leaders:

Encourage everyone to participate in at least one role-play conversation. To make that possible, you may need to limit each conversation to a few minutes. Lead by example and volunteer for the first round of role-play if no one else does. It may feel awkward at first, but these exercises are very helpful for equipping people to engage in meaningful spiritual conversations.

- Choose two people to engage in a role-play dialogue in front of the group, focusing on one of the topics from “Spiritual Topics and Questions”. One person will act as the questioner, and the other will respond from a non-religious perspective.
- As the conversation unfolds, the questioner’s goal is to draw out the spiritual implications of the topic by asking questions and making comments. Don’t feel you have to use the exact questions as a script, and don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Having these conversations may not feel natural at first, but push through. Over time, you’ll get better at it.
- After a few minutes of role-play, bring the group together to analyze the conversation. Discuss how the dialogue transitioned from the secular to the spiritual, and identify additional questions and comments that could have been made to draw out spiritual implications.
- Repeat this role-play exercise with different participants and various topics multiple times.

//Application for the Week

Look for opportunities to engage in at least two or three spiritual conversations with non-religious friends. You can pick a category from the list of spiritual topics and ask the related questions to draw out spiritual implications. What stood out to you about your conversations? Did you notice any idols, felt needs, lies, or truths in your friends’ responses?



//Stretch Application

Go to **istheremore.info** and watch a few of the short videos from the IsThereMore? Spiritual Conversations for the Non-Religious series. Then, pick one video that resonates with you and share it with a non-religious friend via text. Ask them what they think, and use the questions to guide the conversation. If the conversation goes well, send them another video to keep the dialogue going or ask them to meet in person to discuss the other video further.

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 67-88.

- Discuss Last Week's Application
- Week 5 Video (19:59)
- Group Discussion
- Application (and Stretch Application)

Connect Spiritual Conversations to One Truth of the Gospel

//Last Week's Application

Were you able to have any spiritual conversations last week? How did they go? Which topics did you discuss? Were you surprised by how people responded? Did you notice any idols, felt needs, lies, or truths in their responses?

For anyone in your group who did the Stretch Application, which "Spiritual Conversations" video did you send to a non-religious friend? How did they respond?

//Viewing Guide

Look for ways to connect your spiritual conversation to at least one core truth of the gospel.

The Six Core Truths of the Gospel:

1. God created us to be in relationship with Him. *(That is the basis for all human value, purpose, morality, identity, and relationships.)*
2. Our sins have separated us from a holy God. *(That is the cause of all pain, suffering, and evil in the world.)*
3. We cannot fix ourselves. *(No good deed, political system, book, philosopher, or self-help guru will solve our sin problem.)*
4. Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to pay the punishment for our sins. *(Jesus's work on the cross is the only solution to our sin problem.)*
5. Anyone who trusts in only Jesus will be reconciled and have eternal life. *(His work on the cross is our source of forgiveness, acceptance, and hope for the future.)*
6. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live life with Jesus today. *(When we make Jesus Lord of our lives, the Holy Spirit gives us supernatural love, joy, and peace and an identity and purpose that cannot be shaken.)*

Five Principles for Connecting Spiritual Conversations to the Core Truths of the Gospel:

1. The goal of spiritual conversation is not to convince the person you're talking to that you are **right**; it is to encourage them to pursue the **truth**.
2. Create an environment where it's okay to **doubt**, ask hard questions, say something stupid, and process a thought or idea in real time.
3. Be sensitive to the **direction** of the Holy Spirit.
4. Don't use the Bible as argumentative **proof** in your spiritual conversations. Leverage the truth of the Bible that is **experientially** verifiable instead of the authority of the Bible itself.
5. Don't make **secondary** things primary.

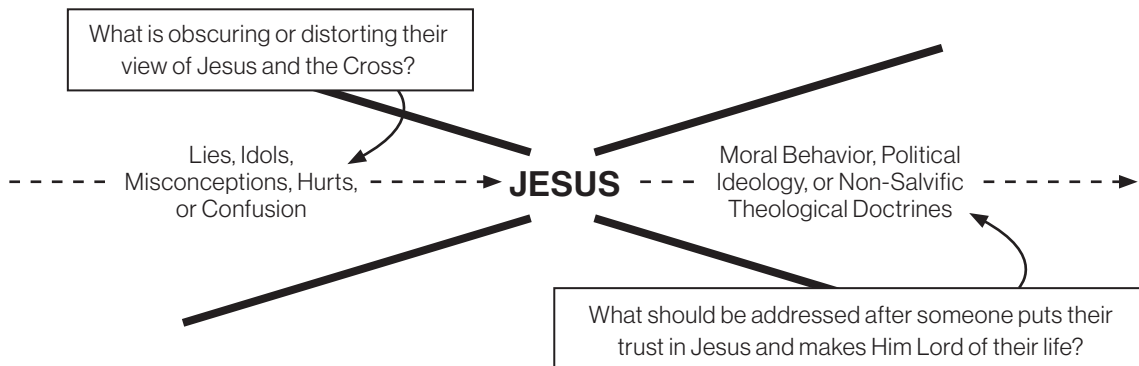
//Group Discussion


Note for Leaders:

Download the "Six Core Truths of the Gospel" guide from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) before your small group meets.

- Download "Six Core Truths of the Gospel" from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) and read it together. Brainstorm specific spiritual conversation topics and how you could connect them to *at least one* truth of the gospel.
- How does encouraging someone to pursue truth together with you (rather than convincing them that you're right) change the dynamics of a spiritual conversation?
- What are some strategies for creating an environment where it's safe to doubt, ask hard questions, and be open about one's beliefs without fear of judgment or cancellation?
- Discuss the statement "We need to leverage the truth of the Bible that is experientially verifiable, not the authority of the Bible itself." What are some experientially verifiable realities and deepest longings the Bible addresses?
- Consider this visual picture of the two-sided funnel with Jesus in the middle.

The Two-Sided Funnel



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- What are some lies, idols, misconceptions, hurts, and confusions on the left side of the funnel that you need to address to open people's hearts and minds to Jesus and the Cross?
 - What are some secondary issues on the right side of the funnel that should be addressed after someone puts their trust in Jesus and makes Him Lord of their life?
 - Why is it important to address those things in their proper order? What can go wrong by focusing on secondary issues before someone has met Jesus?

//Application for the Week

Continue engaging in spiritual conversations with non-religious friends. This time, look to go further by connecting your conversation to at least one core truth of the gospel.

//Stretch Application

Gather some friends and go to a "global youth culture" area in your city where young adults naturally gather. Use one of the creative evangelism tools in the Steiger Streets guide, found on the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com). The tools are fun, creative, and surprisingly easy ways to spark spiritual conversations with young people on the streets.

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 88-92.

- Discuss Last Week's Application
- Week 6 Video (20:29)
- Group Discussion
- Application

Jesus and the Message of the Cross

//Last Week's Application

Were you able to have any more spiritual conversations over the past week? Were you able to continue any conversations that you'd already started previously? Did you continue with the same topics, or did you choose new ones? Which core truths of the gospel did you connect with? How did your friends respond?


For anyone in your group who did the Stretch Application, share with your group about how the outreach went. Which tool did you use? What conversations did it spark?

//Viewing Guide

- Jesus and the message of the Cross is the *only* **hope** for our world.
- When you commit to sharing Jesus, you should expect spiritual **opposition**.
- The message of the Cross is both **foolishness** and the **power** of God.
- The proclamation of the gospel needs to be accompanied by God's **power** and **presence**.
- We need God's power, but our **words** still matter.

//Group Discussion

- Reflect on the context and the words Luke Greenwood used to preach the gospel. What stands out about his approach? What words did he use that were relevant to his audience? What assumptions did he challenge? How did he introduce Jesus and the message of the Cross?
- Discuss the statement "Jesus and the message of the Cross are the *only* hope for our world." Is that true? Why?
- Why is it that core truths of the gospel can grow dull in our hearts? What can we do to keep a deep sense of awe and gratitude alive for what Jesus did for us on the cross?

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- Share about a “cliff-jumping moment” you experienced. Did you jump? Why or why not?
 - Read 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 2:1-5 and discuss the tension between the apparent foolishness and power of the Cross. What implications does this tension have on our efforts to share the gospel?

//Application for the Week

Write out your personal story and the gospel story (separately and combined) using your own words and following these guidelines:

- Make it short and succinct (three to five minutes when spoken).
- Don't use religious language.
- Include a clear invitation to respond.

Practice sharing the gospel and your story with a friend in a natural, conversational way.

Then, ask God for opportunities to share your story (which should include Jesus and the Cross) with non-religious friends in your life. Ask them if anything is holding them back from putting their trust in Jesus. If nothing is, ask them if they want to surrender their lives to Jesus and commit to following Him right now. Give them the opportunity to say yes!

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 93-117.

- Discuss Last Week's Application
- Week 7 Video (21:32)
- Group Discussion
- Application

Navigating Sexuality

//Last Week's Application

Have one or two group members share their personal stories they wrote about the gospel. If you were able to share your story with any of the non-religious people in your life, how did it go?

//Viewing Guide

- Our goal is always to win the heart, not just the argument.
- Remember not to make secondary things primary.
- Beneath the mask of intense moral conviction, there is deep confusion and brokenness.
- Jesus's response to the confusion of His day was compassion.
- There are three essential reasons people experience same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria:
 1. External sin
 2. Personal sin
 3. Fallen nature
- Experiencing same-sex attraction is not a sin, but to act on those temptations (in thought or deed) is.
- God designed our bodies, minds, and souls with a clear purpose and a way to live it out that is revealed in the Bible.
- His design for sex, marriage, and our bodies is about protecting us from harm and allowing us to thrive.
- Submitting our sexuality to God's design is a discipleship issue based on trust that God is good and that His ways are better than ours.



//Group Discussion

- In what aspects have you noticed our society's attitudes changing toward LGBTQ issues in recent years? If you are comfortable, share about people in your life who identify as LGBTQ and how that has affected your relationship with them.
- What are some ways we can challenge the belief that love equals affirmation? How can we show love to people without affirming their lifestyles?
- In your experience, what do most secular people believe about the purpose for sex, marriage, and our bodies? How does their view compare with the Christian view? How can we challenge misconceptions and reframe the Christian sexual ethic as a positive vision for true fulfillment?

//Application for the Week

In your quiet time with Jesus, ask Him to reveal if there are areas of your life that you have not fully submitted to His lordship. Reflect on whether you truly believe that God is good and that His ways are better than yours. Are you willing to lay down your financial security, your comfort, a secret sin, an unhealthy relationship, or anything else out of love and obedience to Him? This matters because you will not be able to lead someone experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria down a path of complete surrender that you have not walked first.

Then, ask God for the opportunity to befriend one person in the LGBTQ community and, by the power of the Holy Spirit, open their heart and mind to the person of Jesus through your words and deeds.

Related Resource: Recommended Reading on Apologetics (Not Beyond Reach resources page: notbeyondreach.com)

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 132-143.

Note for Leaders:

Week 8 //Small-Group Outline

- Week 8 Video (24:56)
 - Can We Fix Ourselves? (Is There More? Video and Discussion)
- Group Discussion
- Group Exercise: Spiritual Conversations Role-Play with Cultural Hot Topics
- Application

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week 8

Navigating Politics

//Group Exercise: Can We Fix Ourselves?

Note for Leaders:

"Can We Fix Ourselves?" is included in the first few minutes of the Week 8 video. Pause the Week 8 video when indicated on the screen for the discussion below.

Pause after the "Can We Fix Ourselves?" section of the video (indicated on the screen). Then, answer the following questions the way you'd expect a non-religious friend to answer them:

- Given enough time, can a person, a culture, or even a country solve all their problems? Why or why not?
- Why are we drawn to the self-sacrificing, superhero narrative that Hollywood repeatedly depicts?
- Whether purposely or not, Hollywood has been retelling the Christian story for decades. Jesus came to our world and sacrificed Himself to fix a problem we couldn't fix ourselves. What do you make of this?

//Viewing Guide

- We need to consider both our **attitude** and our **approach** toward politics.
- Followers of Jesus should be known for **hope**, not **fear**.
- We need to remember who the real **enemy** is.
- Our primary goal as believers is always to **reach** secular people and bring them into a relationship with **Jesus**.
- This post-Christian generation is passionate about fighting **injustice**.
- We can identify biblical truths that our non-religious friends already believe and then **affirm** them.
- We can begin to identify **lies** and **idols** that they believe.
- From there, we can raise **spiritual** questions.
- Finally, we can transition to a conversation that introduces **Jesus**.



//Group Discussion

Note for Leaders:

Download the “Spiritual Questions to Help Reframe Political Hot Topics” resource from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) before your small group meets.

Download “Spiritual Questions to Help Reframe Political Hot Topics” from the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) and read it together. Discuss the spiritual implications the topics and questions draw out. What idols, felt needs, truths, and lies would you expect to identify as you engage in a spiritual conversation with a non-religious person on one of those topics?

If you are comfortable, share about a political conversation you’ve had with someone you don’t see eye to eye with. How did it go?

How does a hope-driven rather than fear-driven approach to politics change how we engage in political conversations?

In our hyper-polarized world, it’s easy to fall into the tribal “us versus them” mentality. Discuss how our perception of “them” can influence our desire and ability to share the love of Jesus with people who are politically opposed to us.

Consider the politically active non-religious people in your life.

- Name some causes they are passionate about.
- What motivations and beliefs can you affirm in them?
- What idols and lies are they buying into? Think of a few spiritual questions that would gently call attention to the idols and lies.
- How can you point to Jesus as the only solution to our political problems in a way that will resonate with those people?

//Group Exercise: Spiritual Conversations Role-Play

Note for Leaders:

Encourage every group member to participate in one role-play conversation. To make this possible, you may need to limit each conversation to a few minutes. Lead the way and volunteer for the first round of role-play if no one else does. Remember, the goal of this exercise is to reframe a political conversation into a spiritual one, not to argue a political point.

With your group, role-play some conversations in which you reframe politics into a spiritual conversation by empathizing with the felt needs, affirming the truth, and gently challenging the idols and lies of a particular political topic. Choose a couple of “Spiritual Questions to Help Reframe Political Hot Topics” (Not Beyond Reach resources page: notbeyondreach.com) to discuss, and take turns with who is responding from a non-religious perspective. Don’t feel you have to use the exact questions as a script, and don’t be afraid to make mistakes. Having these conversations may not feel natural at first, but push through. Over time, you’ll get better at it.

//Application for the Week

Reflect on the way you think and speak about people who are politically opposed to you. Do you envision real people with hopes and fears? Do you see them as people Jesus loved so much that He died on the cross for them? During your quiet time with the Lord, ask Him to break your heart for the lost and see them with compassion, regardless of their politics. Pray by name for the non-religious people in your life, and ask God for the opportunity to redirect political conversations to spiritual ones.

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 119-132.

- Week 9 Video (19:29)
 - Can Something Come from Nothing? (IsThereMore? Video and Discussion)
 - Are We More Than Animals? (IsThereMore? Video and Discussion)
- Group Discussion
- Group Exercise: Are We More Than Animals?

Navigating Science

//Group Exercise: Can Something Come from Nothing?

Note for Leaders:

"Can Something Come from Nothing?" is included in the first few minutes of the Week 9 video. Pause the Week 9 video when indicated on the screen for the discussion below.

Pause after the "Can Something Come from Nothing?" section of the video (indicated on the screen). Then, answer the following questions the way you'd expect a non-religious friend to answer them:

- Do you agree with the statement "All things have a beginning"?
- Where did the universe come from? What about our planet?
- What would change if God was indeed who created the universe?
- Are science and Christianity compatible, or are they contradictory and competing ideologies?

//Viewing Guide

- We need to challenge the assumption that the Christian worldview is based solely on (blind) **faith** and that the secular worldview is based solely on **reason**.
- Many people have rejected Christianity as a viable option because they believe it to be **implausible** (rationally) and **undesirable** (emotionally or morally).
- Plausibility comes by offering various forms of **evidence** that shows that the Christian worldview is rational and an (extremely) reasonable **explanation** for the world as we know it.
- Desirability is the second barrier to overcome, and it comes from contrasting the **implications** of the two worldviews.
- If our non-religious friends seek the living God openly, earnestly, and sincerely, they will encounter Him in a way that **science** cannot explain.
- Ask God for understanding in **prayer**, search Scripture for answers, read recommended books by respected Christian authors, and seek the **counsel** of wise Christians.
- We should not confuse or distract non-religious people by focusing on our particular view of the Creation or other **secondary** theological issues.



//Group Exercise: Are We More Than Animals?

Note for Leaders:

"Are We More Than Animals?" is included near to the end of the Week 9 video. After the Week 9 video ends, take a few minutes for the discussion below.

Consider the "Are We More Than Animals?" section at the end of the video. Then, answer the following questions the way you'd expect a non-religious friend to answer them:

- Are human beings just highly evolved animals, or are they something more? Why do you think that?
- People will choose not to eat so they can afford to go to a concert. What does that say about us? Why do we care so much about art?
- When animals kill one another, we don't call that murder, but when we kill one another, we do. Why?
- What are some of the questions and experiences of life that science cannot answer?

//Group Discussion

- Do you know any non-religious people who reject Christianity because they believe it is incompatible with science? How do they explain their reasoning?
- Many secular people assume that the Christian worldview is based solely on (blind) faith and that the secular worldview is based on reason. Why is that a false assumption?
- Discuss the statement "The Christian worldview is the best possible explanation for our world." What is some of the scientific, moral, historical, and philosophical evidence for the Christian worldview?
- Discuss the contrasting implications of the Christian and secular worldviews. Why is it important to demonstrate the desirability of the Christian one? What are some spiritual questions that you can ask that highlight its desirability?
- Many sincere Bible-believing Christians have different interpretations of secondary (non-salvific) theological questions. Why is it important to avoid confusing or distracting our non-religious friends by emphasizing our particular views on these issues before they trust in Jesus?

//Application for the Week

Share one of the science-related videos from the IsThereMore? Spiritual Conversations for the Non-Religious series (istheremore.info) with a non-religious friend via text. Ask them what they think, and use the questions to guide the conversation. If it goes well, send them another video to keep the conversation going or ask them to meet in person to discuss the other video further.

Related Resource: Recommended Reading on Apologetics (Not Beyond Reach resources page: notbeyondreach.com)

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 143-151.

Discipleship Relationships

//Viewing Guide

- “Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but **our lives** as well.” (1 Thessalonians 2:8, NIV)
- A discipleship relationship is **sharing life** with someone and intentionally showing them, in their context, what it means to follow Jesus.
- A discipleship relationship doesn’t necessarily start the day someone becomes a Christian or commits to joining a local church, but rather it starts the moment they **meet** a follower of Jesus.
- We are called to enter into the world and transform it with bold faith characterized by outrageous **love** and contagious **courage**.
- “Without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he **rewards** those who earnestly **seek** him.” (Hebrews 11:6, NIV)

//Group Discussion

- Who are your “discipleship relationships”? (In other words, who are the people you are walking with and intentionally showing what it means to follow Jesus, even before they have decided to follow Him?)
- How has God spoken to you through the Not Beyond Reach course?
- What are the key insights you will take away from it?
- How do you plan to put the things you have learned into practice?



//Application for the Week

Note for Leaders:

During the final week with your group, spend extra time discussing the application beyond the Not Beyond Reach series. What regular actions can you continue, both individually and collectively, to develop discipleship relationships with non-religious people beyond the ten weeks of the study?

As you develop new discipleship relationships with non-religious people, look to foster a space for an intentional but informal community—a place where your non-religious friends can feel a sense of belonging. It could be anything from a regular meal at your house, to hangouts at a coffee shop, to a picnic at a park.

Then, download *IsThereMore? Spiritual Conversations for the Non-Religious* and *IsThereMore? Bible Study Guide for the Non-Religious* on the Not Beyond Reach resources page (notbeyondreach.com) and use the tools to nurture meaningful spiritual conversations and exposure to the Word of God.

Over time, invite other non-religious friends to join your community. This is truly day-to-day discipleship: living life together, eating meals, hosting parties, and helping one another in the good times as well as the hard times. It means making prayer and the Bible accessible and understandable and helping people get connected with a local church community.

Read more in *Not Beyond Reach* by Aaron Pierce, pages 151-158.