

6 TIPS FOR READING THE BIBLE WITH FRIENDS WHO DON'T BELIEVE IT

By Jim Petersen

One of the most effective ways to reach friends with the truth of the Gospel is to read and talk about the Bible with them. Doing so allows them to discover truth for themselves and also allows the Spirit to work in their hearts. As the book of Hebrews states, "...the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." (**Hebrews 4:12**)

This was a practice veteran Navigator missionary Jim Petersen used over the years to help people come to grips with who Jesus really is.

Here are six tips he offers to get things started:

- 1. Set the atmosphere.** Choose a comfortable, normal meeting place, like a home or an office. Songs, prayers, and religious language don't fit here. If you decide to meet in a home, rotate between homes.
- 2. Small is beautiful.** Participants can number from two to 12 at the most. If it gets bigger than that, true discussion becomes difficult.
- 3. Timing.** Don't be late and don't go over time. Stop talking before people stop listening. The schedule should be predictable so that people can plan accordingly.
- 4. Stick with the Bible even if people are unfamiliar with it.** Explain that there are two parts: The Old Testament and the New Testament. Explain that the big numbers are chapters in the Bible and the little numbers are verses. Don't assume that people have any prior knowledge of it.
- 5. Subject Matter.** There are several good options as starting points, such as the meaning of work, child rearing, or whatever constitutes an open nerve for your friends. But all roads eventually lead to the single question: Who was Jesus? Help people get a fresh look at Him. When they do, they will embrace Him.
- 6. Prepare for a session with questions that help probe the text.** Keep sessions interactive. Encourage people to read ahead, but don't expect much preparation on their part. Create an environment in which questions can flourish. Everyone will be wondering, "Is it safe to ask my real questions around here?" Make sure it is.

Adapted from "Reading the Bible with Friends Who Don't Believe It" by Jim Petersen. Used with permission. All Scripture quotations are taken directly from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®, Crossway.