

TABLE TALK.

***Bringing Gospel conversations
to breweries.***

Learn how to host an *effective* Table Talk
to reach people where they're at.

Written and developed by Nathan Sims with Matthew Kay
Copyright © Cru 2022. All rights reserved.

Table Talk is a unique brewery outreach that intentionally brings all types of people to the table to have authentic conversations about life, spirituality, and God that always connect to the gospel.

The Heart of Table Talk

The Burdened Heart

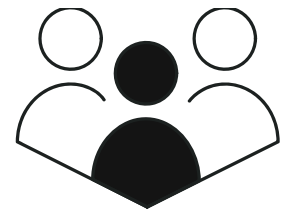
- In a 2018 article, Barna Group research revealed that a “growing number of Christians don’t see sharing the good news as their personal responsibility.” *
- 47% of millennials agree that it is wrong to share one’s personal beliefs with someone of a different faith in hopes that they will one day share the same faith. **
- Some eagerly want to share their faith, but not in the “mechanical” or inorganic ways that they’ve experienced in the past, while some fear they are ill-equipped to answer the kinds of questions that people raise. Others have simply replaced evangelism with an emphasis on some other important aspect of Christian living. ***

Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Matthew 9:37).

The Missional Heart

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus gives this command to his followers: Go therefore and make disciples. But how do we do this in American culture? What simple, Biblical principle did Jesus model that we can practice cross-culturally? Meet people where they live, work, learn, and play!

- The leper (Luke 5:12-13)
- Zacchaeus (Luke 19:5),
- The Pharisee (Luke 7:36)
- The woman at the well (John 4)
- The incarnation (John 1)



The missional heart asks, “Where can we go today to meet and engage people in spiritual discussions?”

“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32)

The Hopeful Heart

God speaks to everyone at Table Talk. The strategy helps you build a rhythm of expectant evangelism as you create a community with those thirsty for authentic conversations.

Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working"
(John 5:17)

*Sharing Faith Is Increasingly Optional to Christians - Barna Group

**Almost Half of Practicing Christian Millennials Say Evangelism Is Wrong - Barna Group

***Christians Say They're Seeking, but not Having Evangelistic Conversations

Notes:

Copyright © Cru 2022. All rights reserved.

Church Movements is a ministry of Cru. In partnership with the Church our mission is to increase the capacity and confidence of leaders to multiply faith communities, church-planters, and fruitful evangelists. For more information, visit www.churchmovements.com

Table Talk Check List

Before Table Talk

1. Extraordinary prayer for God's guidance, movement, and power (Col 4, Matt 9, Eph 6).
2. Find a brewery, pub, or tavern with good space that can accommodate 15-20 people.
3. Challenge one mature, missionally-minded Christian to co-host Table Talk with you.
4. Establish a rhythm that works for the both of you to host Table Talk once a month.
5. Cast vision to Christian friends who can invite 2-3 non-Christians in their OIKOS (people where they live, work, learn, and play) to Table Talk.
6. Text invitations at least 7-10 days prior to Table Talk and try to get RSVP's a few days prior so you can call in a general reservation for seats. You can text a reminder on the day of. Have a date for the next month set up so you can announce it at the end of the current table talk.

During Table Talk

7. Arrive early to invite people at the bar to the discussion.
8. Begin discussion 5-10 minutes after start time, welcoming everyone and creating a warm environment for authentic discussions to take place (introductions are good for new faces). After introductions is the best time to share that the first round of drinks is on you. Explain that you're buying drinks because you value deep discussions about life, spirituality, and God that are difficult to have in schools, on social media, at church or work..
9. Always go over the 6 Guidelines of table talk.
10. Host the discussion for as long as it has momentum, usually between 1.5 – 2 hours. When you sense the conversation has run its course, thank everyone for the great conversation and invite all to stay and hang out afterward. Share next month's Table Talk date (but don't give the topic!)

After the Table Talk Discussion

11. Stay after the main discussion because people usually linger and talk with each other, which is a great way to integrate more gospel truth to individuals in a personal way.
12. Begin discipling interested participants by following up with them and looking for ways to connect them to healthy churches or discipleship groups.



Table Talk Start Guide

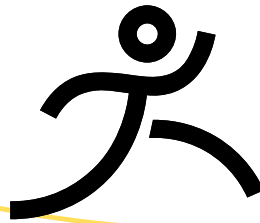
After everyone arrives, it's time to **JUMP** into discussion.

Joyful--Set the tone by welcoming all to the table & lead introductions with energy!

Understand-- Cast vision so participants know why Table Talk exists.

Maximize-- Get the most out of the conversation by reading the Guidelines to protect one another's vulnerabilities.

Prepare-- Each discussion should start with a broad introduction to steer the conversation that begins with an easy, "shallow end of the pool" first question that allows everyone to participate freely.



Start Guide Example

After Joyfully welcoming all to the table, say something like:

“Alright! I’m super excited and glad you’re here at Table Talk because this is a safe place where we can have authentic discussions about anything in life without being judged. Unfortunately, it’s hard to have real conversations in our society because everything seems polarizing, but my goal is to welcome all opinions here.

I personally believe in deeper conversations, and that’s why I’m buying you free drinks tonight! Now, before we begin the conversation, I want to go over some ground rules to make sure everyone feels comfortable and safe to share their opinions.

(READ GUIDELINES HERE).

Alright! So tonight, we’re talking about “conflict” because it’s a part of everyday life with family, friends, or random people we encounter in public. So, my first question tonight is “Why does every great story involve a significant amount of conflict?”

Crafting Questions

A Theology of Questions

What are some questions in Scripture that God asks people?

God asks questions to help people identify where they are in relation to Him. In Jesus' earthly ministry, we also find Him asking questions that help to uncover people's deepest human longings—longings that can only be met in Him alone.

The questions aren't for Him to find out something He doesn't know, God knows everything! The questions are *for them*, and for *their benefit*. As you craft questions for your Table Talk, prayerfully consider the kinds of questions that would be for the benefit of your guests.

What kinds of questions will invite people's hearts, stories, experiences, views, and longings into the discussion?

The Structure: One Topic | Three or Four Questions

Think about how you might lead a group through each of the questions like someone learning how to swim. You'll want to start in the shallow end and gradually make your way into the deep end of the pool.

Question 1: "shallow" end

A "surface level" and lighthearted question where, generally speaking, most people who attend would be comfortable answering in a group.

Example: Why does hypocrisy bother us so much?

Question 2 (or 3): "middle" of the pool

A more personal question, touching on people's views and lived experiences

Examples:

Is it possible to live without being a hypocrite?

What motivates our hypocrisy?

What are we protecting? (Notice the personal nature of the question: "our" "we")

The Final Question: the “gospel tension” question

This question is meant to unearth the real, existential tensions that only the gospel can resolve.

Example:

On the topic of hypocrisy, we prompted a discussion to help build a bridge to this “gospel tension” question. The previous question (“What motivates our hypocrisy?” or “What is our hypocrisy protecting?”), opened up dialogue about the ways that we can hide certain parts of ourselves or act like someone we’re not, depending on the situation.

Sometimes people “hide” or “act” to cover up false motives, but for others, it could also be the fear of being rejected if one was fully and truly known. The concern might sound like this: *“If you really knew me, you might not really love or accept me.”* or *“If you love and accept me, it might be because you really don’t know me.”*

This tension is a common part of the human experience, which begs the “gospel tension” question: “Where do you go where you are BOTH fully known AND fully loved?”

Breakout Room Exercise:

Have your group take the next 15 minutes to prayerfully craft one “shallow end,” one “middle” (personal), and one “deep end” (gospel-tension) question on the topic of _____.

Shallow End Question: a relatively lighthearted and “safe” question that introduces the night’s theme.

Middle (Personal) Question: a question that allows members of the group to open up more about their personal views and experiences related to the night’s theme. These questions seek to open up more vulnerable spaces of sharing and listening to one another.

Deep-End (Gospel-Tension) Question: a question that unearths the real, human, and existential tensions that only the Good News of Jesus can fully resolve.

Navigating the Conversation

The main goal in navigating the conversation is to facilitate conversation that creates a comfortable environment for everyone. We do this in two ways.

- 1.) **Demeanor**- Always express a grateful, fun, and passionate attitude with confidence.
- 2.) **Posture** – Create space where Christians prioritize listening and learning the stories of others

When leading the conversation, remember to **SWIM**:

Safe-- Enforce the guidelines & mirror participants' emotions.

Example: Guideline #4: don't dominate the conversation

"Hey Roger, I really appreciate your thoughts on this question, does anyone else have any thoughts?"

Wise-- Avoid the temptation to correct and teach participants as you watch the time limit.

Example: Not enough time to answer a complex question

"Bill, you have a great question about gay and lesbian relationships and God's view of it. To give my thoughts thoroughly we should discuss this after tonight's discussion or another time, is that alright with you? To be clear, I'm not avoiding the question, I simply want to give a comprehensive answer that requires more time."

Invite-- Pull everyone into the conversation.

Example: Bring quieter voices into the conversation

"Hey Tom, I want to make sure you have an opportunity to share, so what are your thoughts on this question?"

Move--Keep the conversation moving toward the gospel

Thoroughly address each scripted question and natural question while allowing each person to contribute to the conversation. When you get the sense that people have thoroughly discussed a question, look for natural ways to transition to the next scripted question.

Example: Transition to next question

"Alright, well it seems we've talked a lot about reconciliation as the goal when conflict arises, which leads me to my next question, "What is the cost of forgiving someone?"



APPENDIX

A Table Talk discussion should not be overtly Biblical, like, "Can we trust the Bible?" Rather, each topic should be a shared human experience. Consider crafting questions for topics like:

suffering

truth

hypocrisy

human nature

conflict

justice

Table Talk helps believers *join others* in *their* spiritual journey by listening and asking questions. The art in any conversation is about how people find connection. The exchange demands that each listen, respect and understand the other.

Additional examples from actual conversations:

When someone is talking, don't cut them off

"Hey, Tim, we're going to let Roger finish his thoughts and then we'll get to your thought right after."

Allowing others to disagree so you can facilitate multiple opinions

"Does anyone have a different or similar perspective on this question?"

Deepen the conversation

"Carrie, I'm grateful for your courage to share your story even though it's difficult... if you don't mind me asking, how do you think your relationship with your dad has impacted you over the years?"

Creating a safe environment for conversation means you **always** go over these guidelines prior to the discussion:

Table Talk guidelines are to be read out loud for everyone

1. Be genuine and authentic (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Table Talk Host Role

- Takes ownership of the outreach and inspires other Christians to invite non-Christians to Table talk
- Makes/revises invitations each month and distributes invitations for all to share
- Creates a safe atmosphere where Christians mostly listen, and allows non-Christians to speak their heart and mind
- Manages the discussion with artistic wisdom that seeks to: include all people, keep the conversation flowing and on target, challenge people's views politely through asking clarifying questions, listen actively by asking additional questions that flow with the current conversation, address hot topics that arise with tact and realistic timeframe (i.e. give a brief answer or response then state "we don't have time to address that topic in detail, but some other time we will discuss it"), redirect Christians who default to "Bible answers" consistently or aggressively, and humbly admit not knowing an answer to every question
- Envisions and executes discipleship plan that flows from Table Talk opportunities (consider all who attend each month)
- Buys the first round

Table Talk Co-Host Role

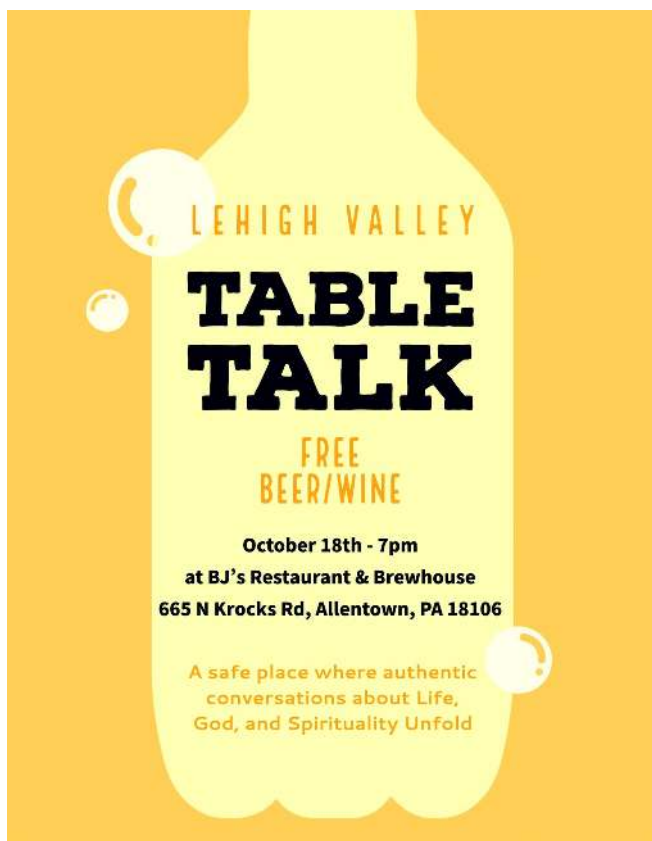
- Helps develop or revise discussion questions
- Helps draw those who haven't spoken much into the conversation by saying "if you're up for it, I'm curious what you think about this question...."
- Sometimes, the question being asked isn't resonating with the audience and the host may need help reframing that question to the group
- Initiates spiritual conversations after the discussion to further understand participants' spiritual journey

Practical Help

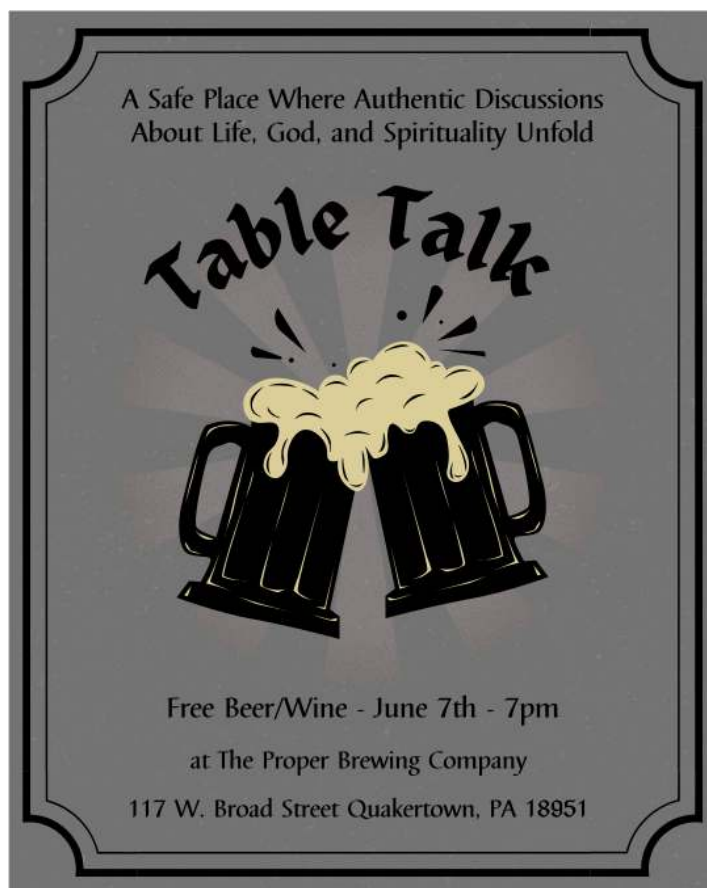
If you're inviting someone in person, verbally describe Table Talk and then send the invite image. Everyone should know that they're being invited to a conversation with free drinks.

If you're inviting people through a text message, send an invite image first, then immediately send a text message describing Table Talk that elicits a response.

You're encouraged to create your own invite image. Canva is a great tool for creating these invitations.



Sample Images/Text



Hey, John! I'm hosting a casual discussion on life, spirituality, and God, where all views are welcome at the table, and I'd love to have you join us! You can bring friends & the first round is free. Would you be interested in joining us?

Table Talk Outline 1: Hypocrisy

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

1. *Why does hypocrisy bother us so much?*
2. *Is it possible to live without being a hypocrite?*
3. *What motivates our hypocrisy? I.e. What are we protecting*
4. *How have you experienced the Church to be fully known and yet fully loved and accepted?*

Table Talk Outline 2: Human Nature

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

1. *Why are we drawn to new year resolutions?*
2. *What do you believe about human nature? Are we naturally good? Bad? Indifferent? Broken?*
3. *How do we determine if someone is good or bad? How do we know where the scale tips?*
4. *Good, bad or indifferent, or broken we all make bad decisions so how do we cope with guilt? What does Jesus offer?*

Table Talk Outline 3: Your Experience of Christianity

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

For this conversation, acknowledge that many of us have been exposed to some form of Christianity in our lives. Sometimes it's good, or sometimes, it's bad. I would love to know about your experiences...

1. *How have you experienced Christians and how has that shaped your view of Christianity?*
2. *What is your view of God and how he interacts with the world?*
3. *A lot of us have experienced Christianity in this culture to some degree, in your words what is the essence or core of Christianity?*

Table Talk Outline 4: Conflict

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

As we enter the holiday season, there are a lot of great memories and traditions, but sometimes there's a lot of conflict intertwined.

1. *Why does every great story involve a significant amount of conflict?*
2. *What is one of your favorite stories and what conflicts in that story resonate with you? (How did the main character handle that conflict; how do you handle it in your own life?)*
3. *Why are humans drawn to mending conflicts and why is that so difficult? (The cost is always sacrificial)*

Table Talk Outline 5: Meaning & Purpose

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

1. *Do you believe that your story has meaning & purpose? Why or why not?*

2. *I wonder what sort of a tale we've fallen into?" - Sam Gamgee, Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers.*

In your own words, how would you describe the story we're living in, the story we've "fallen into?"

3. *Will Ferrell—Stranger Than Fiction -realizing the author is participating in the story (I recommend watching this movie)*

What if God writes our story and also participates in it—How would that resonate with you?

Table Talk Outline 6: Influence

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

1. *What people and experiences have shaped you to make the big and small decisions in your life?*
2. *Consider times in your life when unexpected pain and suffering came your way. How did those experiences impact the way that you view others, yourself, and God?*
3. *How do you decide which influence/voice to follow (people, feelings, beliefs, etc). Do you think it's okay to try to influence what someone else thinks/feels/believes (in what circumstances?) [b/c eternal decisions carry great weight]*

Table Talk Outline 7: Peace

Introduction to the evening

Why are we here? I am buying you beer because I believe in having deeper conversations about life, spirituality, and God. Your voice is valued, and I look forward to discussing our topic tonight, but before I do I want to make sure we all know each other's names and where work... (make sure new faces always get introduced).

Welcome & Discussion Rules

We all come from different backgrounds with potentially different beliefs. Nobody is required to join the conversation, but if you do we ask that...

1. Be genuine (express your views don't pretend to be someone you're not)
2. Challenging ideas or questioning them is encouraged, but with politeness
3. Disagreements aren't personal (it's ok to have different views!)
4. Don't dominate the conversation (give space for others to speak)
5. When someone's talking, don't cut them off
6. Everyone has a voice at this table (The desire is for everyone to share their thoughts)

Introduction to the topic

After the rules give a personal story or broad introduction to the topic.

1. *How do we treat things that make us uncomfortable or unsettled?*
2. *What are some things about your worldview that make you feel uncomfortable?*
3. *How does your worldview bring you peace despite these discomforts?*