



The Ultimate Relationship: A Tool for Sharing the Gospel

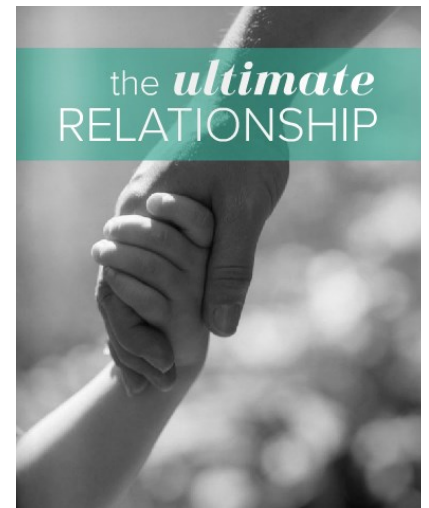
by Kevin Cotter

What is the Ultimate Relationship?

The Ultimate Relationship is a tool you can use to share the Gospel clearly and simply. The presenter walks a person, or “listener,” through a step-by-step presentation. The listener is able to understand what the Gospel message is and thus take the opportunity to commit or re-commit his or her life to Jesus Christ.

The booklet has four main messages:

1. God created us for a relationship with Him
2. Our relationship is broken through sin
3. Jesus restores our relationship with the Father
4. We have the choice to accept or reject this offer



Why use the Ultimate Relationship?

Too often we assume that certain people have already given their life to Christ or that they have actually heard the Gospel before. We must never make this assumption. Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, preacher to the papal household, says this,

“I can see from my own experience that even if I speak of many beautiful concepts, nothing seems to happen. We must proclaim Jesus as Lord and Savior, helping people to grasp what it means to have Jesus as their Savior — not in a theoretical way, but that every day they have a Savior, someone who will lift them from their fatigue of the day, of their sin, and their mistakes, and who renews them. He saves us. When you proclaim this living, crucified and risen Jesus, something always happens.”

Many of us desire to share the Gospel with others, but we return to a common excuse: I just don’t know how. The Ultimate Relationship takes this excuse out of the equation. The booklet gives you an opening to share the Gospel. It helps you to know what to say. It is easy to present. It helps you to stay on topic. It enables you to be brief, prepared, and confident. And finally, it can be given away to the listener at the end. If we fail to share the Gospel with others, we can’t use the excuse that we don’t know how to share it.

Who can I use the Ultimate Relationship with?

- Strangers
- Acquaintances
- Friends and family members
- Bible study members
- Disciples
- Yourself

When can I use the Ultimate Relationship?

- Outreach
- Invitation
- Follow-Up
- Leadership and proclamation situations
- Spiritual conversations
- Commissioning (alumni, missions, etc.)

How to use the Ultimate Relationship

One of the beauties of the Ultimate Relationship is that if all else fails, you can just read the booklet. All of the words, Scripture passages, and questions for the presentation are in the booklet. You don't have to be a world-class speaker or the best "people person." As you become more familiar with the text, you can become more natural in sharing (more on this later). Also, once you understand the techniques and methods of the booklet, you can be better equipped to share its message effectively with others.

Let's look at each page of the booklet to see how to use it. For each page, we will answer two questions:

1. *What is the purpose of this page?* We want you to understand what the page is all about and how to use it.
2. *What are the expected reactions?* You want to try to put yourself in the shoes of the listener and anticipate what that listener is thinking or feeling as the information is presented. There will be *reflection questions* throughout the guide to help you do this.

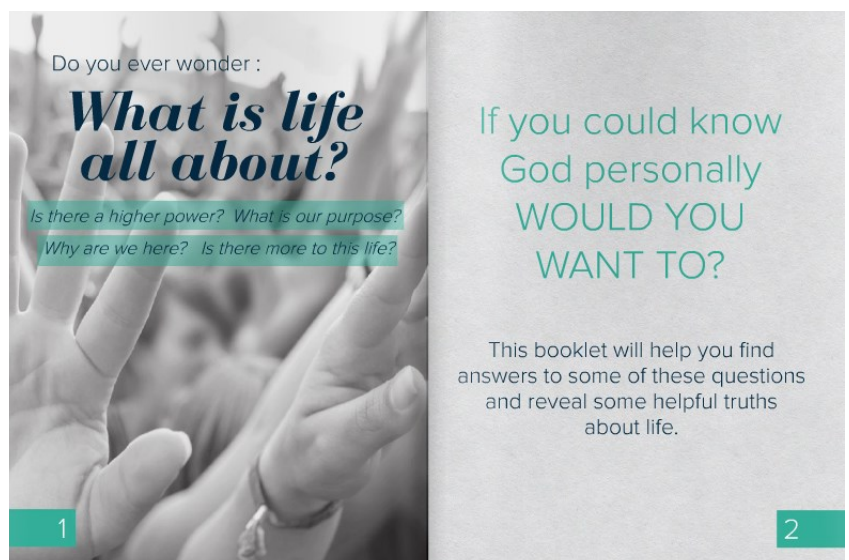
Page 1

What is the purpose of this page?

This page is meant to give you a starting point and transition you into the presentation. It helps the listener know that the book is all about looking at the big questions in life.

What are the expected reactions?

This page provides a basic understanding of what the booklet is about.



Pages 3-4**What is the purpose of this page?**

It presents the first point of the Gospel message: Our purpose is to be in a relationship with God.

What are the expected reactions?

You will see how the listener experiences a relationship with God. It will give you some insight to see what the listener's view of God is.

Reflection question: How does our knowing we are created for relationship affect the way we see ourselves?

Created for Relationship

God created us to have a personal relationship with him, now and forever.

"See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are."
-1 John 3:1

God wants us to know his love and experience his fulfilling plan for each of us.

"For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope."
-Jeremiah 29:11

Do you think we perceive and encounter God in this personal way?

3

Pages 5-6**What is the purpose of this page?**

It helps the listener see what it is like to feel separated from God.

What are the expected reactions?

The hope is that the listener can see the reality of the brokenness in our world. The listener may feel burdened by the reality of sin.

Reflection Question: Why is it so important for the listener to realize that a relationship with God is can be broken through sin?

Our Relationship is Broken

The problem in all our lives is sin — our turning away from God in what we have done and what we have failed to do. Sin severs our relationship and separates us from him.

The image to the left symbolizes the separation our sins create and the consequences that sin has brought about.

Some of the consequences of this separation are guilt, emptiness, or feeling far from God. But sin has even a greater consequence: eternal separation from God.

"For the wages of sin is death."
-Romans 6:23

Our broken relationship can be restored.

5

6

Pages 7-8

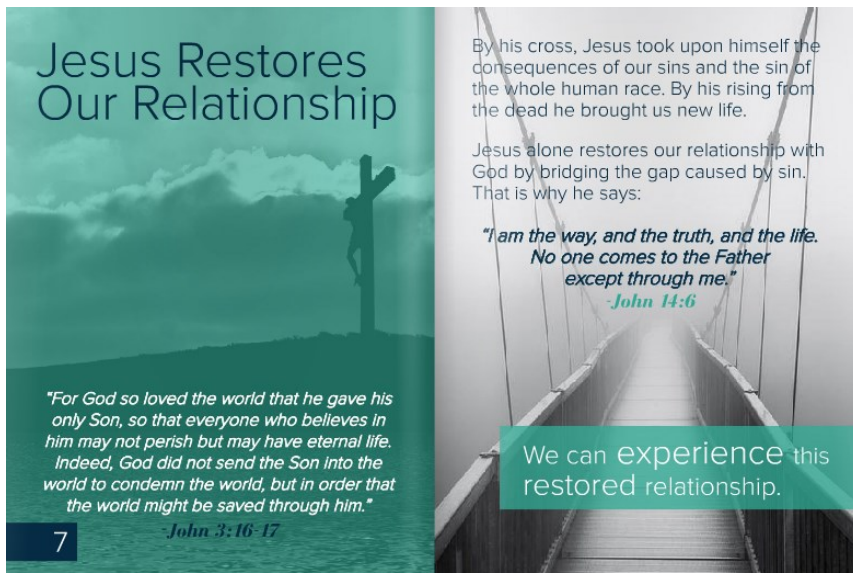
What is the purpose of this page?

The text here seeks to give the listener the solution to the problem of sin.

What are the expected reactions?

The hope is to encourage the listener to take in the offer that Jesus Christ gives us. Some listeners will embrace it. Some will reject it. Some will say that this kind of relationship with God has not been their experience.

Reflection Question: How do you think it changes our disposition towards Jesus when we realize that we need Him?



Pages 9-10

What is the purpose of this page?

This page is perhaps the most critical part of the booklet. It helps the listeners to gauge where they are in their relationship with God and to see that their relationship with God is first based on God's free grace.

What are the expected reactions?

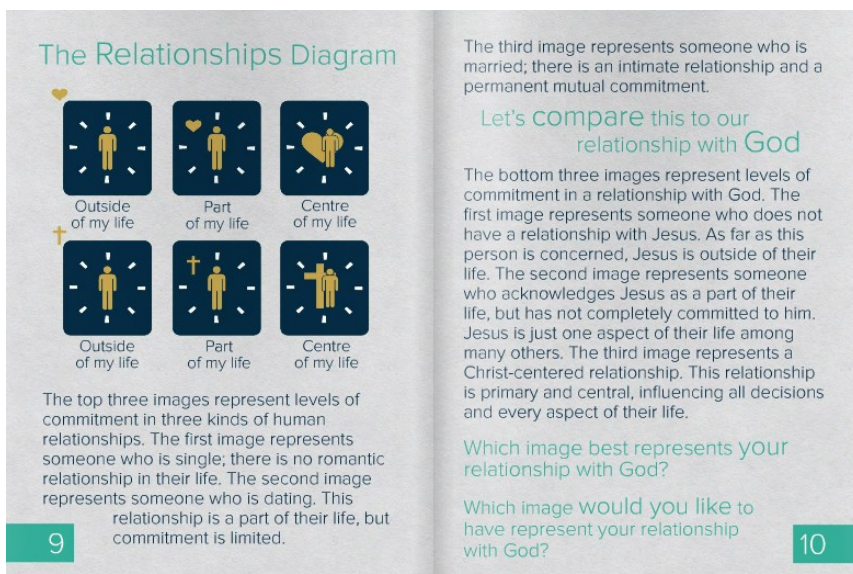
For some this will be the first time that they have had the opportunity to gauge their commitment to Christ. They will likely choose the first or second rectangle. As a follow up you can ask would you like to be in the third

rectangle? They may not have any concept of what a third rectangle relationship is like so if you have time you could share personally about your experience of living a relationship with God.

Many listeners chose the second rectangle. They have some type of relationship with God but they are not fully committed.

Some don't think they could be in the third rectangle. We have the opportunity to show them that a relationship with God isn't about being perfect at first. It is about intimacy and this intimacy leads to perfection.

Some might not be sure about their commitment. As a follow-up, you can also ask them when they made a commitment to Jesus Christ. This can give them clarity about their decision.



Pages 11-12***What is the purpose of this page?***

This page helps transition the listeners from gauging their relationship with Jesus Christ to making a decision.

What are the expected reactions?

The goal is to provide a better understanding of the invitation that Jesus Christ offers us and a time for reflection.

Invitation

Jesus desires to be at the centre of your life.

"If we let Christ into our lives, we lose nothing, nothing, absolutely nothing of what makes life free, beautiful and great. No! Only in this friendship are the doors of life opened wide. Only in this friendship is the great potential of human existence truly revealed.... do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away and he gives you everything. When we give ourselves to him, we receive a hundredfold in return. Yes, open, open wide the doors to Christ – and you will find true life."
-Pope Benedict XVI

"Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me."
-Revelation 3:20

12

Pages 13-14***What is the purpose of this page?***

This page gives a direct way for a listener to begin or renew a commitment to Jesus Christ. At the end of this page, your job is to ask: Does this reflect the desire of your heart?

What are the expected reactions?

At this point, there might be questions or the need to reflect. You are there to answer any questions or help the listener think through the decision. If the listener wants more time to think, set-up a time for a follow-up.

If the listener does want to pray the prayer, there are a few different options: Both you and the listener can pray the prayer together; the listener can pray the prayer alone; or, if there are people around and the listener feels uncomfortable praying out loud, you can pray it out loud and have the listener say "Amen" at the end of the prayer.

If the listener does pray the prayer, be sure to rejoice the commitment and show how important the decision was.

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Reflection Question: Why is it important for us to give the listener a concrete way to make a commitment to Jesus Christ?

Prayer of the Heart

Whether you have been close or far from him in the past, he is waiting for you to open the door. Take a look at the following prayer.

13

"Father, I believe that you know me and love me. I have not always chosen to love you, and have broken my relationship with you through my sins. Thank you for sending your Son Jesus who proved your love for me on the cross. Lord Jesus, I open the door of my heart and I invite you to be at the centre of my life – to be my Saviour and my Lord. Direct me by your Holy Spirit and help me to live the Gospel with my whole life. Amen"

Would you like to invite Jesus to be at the centre of your life?

If so, step out in faith and pray to him right now.

14

Pages 15-16

What is the purpose of this page?

This page connects the listener's decision to the sacrament of Reconciliation. For more on this page, see the Follow-up section below.



Sealing our Relationship

An important part in our relationship with Jesus is the new start we receive through the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
-1 John 1:9

Jesus brings us freedom and new life through the graces of the sacrament of Reconciliation. If you are a Catholic, take the time to find a priest to hear your confession.

16

Pages 17-18

What is the purpose of this page?

This page gives the listener some concrete steps to live out a relationship with Jesus Christ. As you did with pages 14-15, see the section on Follow-up below.

Relationship Essentials

Here are some practical steps to begin growing your relationship with God:

- Talk to God every day through prayer
- Be baptized, if you are not already
- Read your Bible every day beginning with the New Testament
- Become involved in your local parish
- Share your faith with others
- Celebrate the Eucharist every Sunday
- Go to Confession on a regular basis
- Get to know the teachings of the Catholic Church, which can offer guidance on your journey with Jesus

Know that regardless of any stumbling on your way he will always be there **loving you** — ready to **forgive you** and **help you.**

17

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Additional Instructions and Tips

Follow-up

It is important to follow-up with the listener after you have walked through the booklet together.

If the listener did not make a commitment but had questions, you will want to research some of the questions and start up the conversation again within 48 hours.

If the listener has made a commitment, your follow-up will depend on the situation. If the listener is someone you will see again (in Bible study, for example), after you walk through the booklet together let that person know that you will be in touch within 48 hours. Ask the listener to continue to review the prayer in the back of the booklet. It is possible to lose sight of the importance of the commitment over time. Your connection with the listener can be a reminder of the decision and also point to the next step. If the listener is Catholic but doesn't attend Mass regularly, invite that person to come to Mass with you. There you can introduce the listener to a priest to connect with and who can hear his or her confession.

See how you can continue to connect listeners to the habits listed in the back of the Ultimate Relationship booklet. Show them how they can pray for 10 to 20 minutes a day. Connect them with a Bible study where they can continue to grow in their faith with other Catholics.

How to be more natural in sharing the Ultimate Relationship?

1. There are transitions at the end of each page to help you move from one page to the next. As you get better at using the booklet, you can develop your own transitions.
2. When reading from Scripture you might consider saying, "The Bible says..." rather than quoting the exact book, chapter, and verse.
3. Share your own testimony as it relates to the booklet. Think about your life before your conversion. What did you think about Christianity before you made a commitment?

Other tips

1. Lots of questions about Christianity or Catholic doctrine can arise when you walk someone through the Ultimate Relationship. These questions are important but try to stick to the book and find answers to the questions later. You want the listener to experience who Jesus Christ is before anything else.
2. Listen closely to the response of the listener. Try to design your presentation to those reactions, thoughts, and perspective.
3. Finally, take courage as you prepare to present the booklet and when you are presenting it. Remember the words of Fr. Raniero Cantalamessa, "When you proclaim this living, crucified and risen Jesus, something always happens." Have confidence that the Holy Spirit is with you as you present the booklet. Have confidence that the Holy Spirit is working on the person's heart as you are presenting the booklet. May God bless your efforts!

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End

FOCUSequip is based on Ephesians 4:12 "for the equipment of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ." These materials seek to equip you for lifelong Catholic mission.

We would love to hear your feedback at: focusequip@focus.org

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