



BASIC TRAINING:

EVANGELISM

CORNERSTONE
CHURCH

EQUIPPING
COURSES

**BASIC TRAINING:
EVANGELISM**

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to a three-part training on evangelism. **These notes are just to refresh the mind for those who come to our Equipping Course on the subject.** There is a lot of material – more comprehensive than this – that is good reading and encouragement regarding personal evangelism. This course's intention was to handle a few relevant issues rather than provide a comprehensive training.

There are three major areas that need attention when it comes to evangelism. Actually there are four but one of them needs little to no attention. Knowing we should evangelise is the fourth area. There can't really be any Christian who doesn't know that it is God's plan that we reach the world with the message of Jesus. If you didn't know that you can be told in one quick sentence: God's plan is that His people should reach those who aren't His people. He wants us to tell everyone who doesn't believe in Jesus why they should and how they can be reconciled to God. God has reconciled Himself to them already; He is just waiting for them to come to Him. We tell the world the time is short and the time is now to put our trust in Jesus as God's only chosen King and Saviour. That's His plan in short. Now you know.

The greater issues are (1) the will (2) being prepared (3) actually doing it. The three-week focus of this course is therefore on becoming **willing**, getting ourselves **prepared** and actually getting to **do** it. May this course help you as a person who really wants to please the Father and live more like our Lord Jesus.

Part One

WILLING

Luke 22:42

*“Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, **not my will, but yours, be done.**”*

This verse contains a wealth of teaching for us with regards to evangelism. Before we get to anything practical, it's good to know that certain issues can too soon cloud our minds. Our failed attempts, our poor attempts, our embarrassment, and all the other issues we may have are not uncommon. People regularly cite the following as reasons why they don't evangelise. (Are any of them yours?) “I don't know their language”; “Evangelism is illegal”; “Evangelism can cause problems at work”; “I am just so busy”; “I don't know any non-Christians.” If you've thought or said any of these, you are not alone.

We simply need to win over these. Too much is at stake to let our failures stop us. We need courage to overcome these all too common issues! Jesus needs us to win; He needs us to get moving. The whole plan of God is at stake.

Let us look soberly at the text mentioned above. Jesus is in the garden of Gethsemane praying. He knows full well in a few hours He will go through the hardest ordeal of His life. He will suffer. He will be humiliated. He will go through great pain. He will be tempted. He will be tortured and killed. He will have to bear the disapproval of His Father; that thought arguably concerns Him the most. He will bear sin

and the indignation of the Father.

The first thing to know is that **God will want us at times to do things that for us are tough**. So tough was this for Jesus that He asked the Father openly to let it not happen to Him. “Is this what you want me to do Lord? It’s so tough”, we may say with Jesus. And then we’ll hear no answer, just like Jesus. He heard absolutely nothing that we are aware of. Silence. It was obviously up to Jesus to respond. Likewise the response is ours to give. The Father had no more to say. Jesus already knew what He needed to know. The thought of evangelism being tough, not working, being awkward or seemingly ineffective to you doesn’t mean that God doesn’t want you to do it. Our cry may be that he remove this from us! It may sound unfair, but He won’t. He is not oppressive, but He is the Lord our Father. His will has been revealed.

We are **also to notice that it is ok for us to have a will that is different from God’s**. Jesus literally had a will different to the Father’s here. Many Christians don’t evangelise because they are praying until they have a change of heart. More accurately, they actually want a change of will. They are waiting until they **really feel like they want to do it**. Commonly a genuine prayer is given: “Lord, give me a heart for the lost”. But it’s possible that what people are really saying is, “God, please override my will and feelings so that I will really want to do it.” We should know that this might never happen. We may well wait until our time is up if we are waiting to really want to do this. Jesus never felt like he wanted to suffer and die on the cross. **Want and feeling was not His motivation at all**. He had another motivation: His determination to lay down His will for His Father’s. Jesus lovingly laid down His will to take up His Father’s.

Feelings are good helpers but not good leaders. Some argue that living under grace means that we never have to feel as though we have to do anything but we should *want* to do what we do. They are right to one degree, but this isn't the whole story. Grace means that God will help us to be whom we *should*. Grace doesn't mean that God will be okay with us being who we want to be. We will always be wrong with who we are if we focus on what we want to be; but if we listen to who God wants us to be, we will be who we really are. It is true that following Him is not like following a strict rulebook. Agreed. Jesus didn't hear the Father saying, "Do this or die", He heard: "This is my will". And then it was up to Jesus as to what He would do from there. The point is simply this: waiting to *feel* like you want to evangelise is a flawed way to approach this.

Next we should see that **we are welcome to ask the Father to change His will for us**. Jesus did this. "If you are willing, please let this change for me...", Jesus essentially says. We may ask. You may ask the Father to change His will for you. Ask Him that you may be a person who never has to speak about Jesus being the saviour to those who don't know. I think you know what He will say.

Notice further that **the Father is not a tyrannical, controlling leader**. As said earlier the Father says nothing in this account. If there were ever a time to bring in words of control and power it was now. "You better do this" should have been said now. But the Father is quiet. He has already spoken. He knows that Jesus knows Him and His ways. Jesus knows His will. He wants to see Jesus respond rightly. He wants Jesus to want to be His Son in the flesh. He wants Jesus to want to obey. He is not an enforcer. He is patient, He will wait.

Some people seem to wait until they get 'punished' or pushed before they do anything for God. Some people only become generous when the money gets tight; some only love their partners when they almost lose one. This seems to be human nature. Evangelism too often receives this same attitude.

We next see **Jesus reasoning with Himself**. "Nevertheless", He says. The decision is Jesus' alone to make. Jesus is the Son of God, who is also just as completely a man. He has grown up now. He is spiritually mature. Jesus wants done what the Father wants done. He has ceased to live for Himself and His mission is now to do the will of another.

This too will need to be our process. We too can get to do what God has revealed He wants. Reason with yourself. Is there anything in life you want more than spiritual reward and fulfillment? Why? Are you still primarily serving your will and desires? How come? What about God's will? How does it matter to you? When will you get to say, "Nevertheless", not me but you.

There is still more to learn. Notice that **Jesus lovingly lays down His will**. Some other religions demand taking on the *unbending will* of their god. The god strong-arms the follower. The follower submits through fear. Jesus is not like that. He lovingly lays down His will to take up the Father's. We are to follow this example. We can lovingly lay down our will to take up the Father's. The 'can' just has to become what we do. "Not mine... I'll do yours rather", says Jesus. What are you saying with regards to evangelism?

The final thing to note is that **Jesus follows through with His conclusion**. It says, "your will be done". There was one step still to

follow. The Father's will had to actually be done. Jesus had to reason with Himself and the Father's will. Once he came to the conclusion that he was going to do what God wanted He had to get the will done. Jesus would have to die. He would submit to the excruciating hours of trial, beating and crucifixion. Just hours later He would actually suffer physically, He would go through the Fathers will. He would suffer the Father's will. He did it; he followed through.

In the same way tomorrow, you will need to follow through with your conclusion as to the Father's will. And tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow.

Other encouragements to the will

Reward

Hebrew 12:1

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

The Father set joy before Jesus. He set fulfilment before Jesus. Some time ago a friend sent me (Shaun) a text message. It said, "Shaun, are you fulfilled in your life?" I was gutted. Fulfilled was not a word I could honestly use. Fulfilled. Whole. I so badly want that. I want the deepest

sense of rightness and achievement. That is what the Father promised Jesus. The Father set joy before Him. That is one of the reasons Jesus went through the cross. This same promise comes to all of us. Jesus went to the cross as that's what the Father had for Him to do. Your race is different but similar. The same process and promise of reward waits. No-one sets out to run the Comrades Marathon for any reason other than the joy and glory of finishing. Parading the medal, sensing the deep feeling of accomplishment is the reward. Ours will be spiritual and far greater than a Comrades medal, as well deserved as that is.

Compassion

Matthew 9:36

*When he saw the crowds, he had **compassion** for them, because they were **harassed** and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

When Jesus saw people who didn't walk with God it mattered to Him. Compassion is what we can call a "support motivation". Feelings of compassion can go up and down. Too many people are waiting for a dream from God where they are forever changed by the sight of people dying and going to hell. This dream many never come.

Most see compassion as the feelings we have when we see people less fortunate than us. But the Biblical grounds for compassion are different. *Self-sufficiency* is the worst kind of sickness and is to conjure the greatest feelings of sadness. It is the furthest you can get from God. Anyone who thinks they are okay in life without God is in a worse state than someone with cancer. It is a terminal illness that medical treatment cannot cure. Trusting yourself is sickness of the worst kind.

The will can be encouraged by a right compassion.

To see the world the right way requires supernatural help. Consider carefully Psalm 73 in this regard:

Psalm 73

*1 Truly God is good to us,
to those who are pure in heart.
And Christians will honestly agree!
2 But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled,
my steps had nearly slipped.*

We would mostly consider stumbling or slipping to mean falling into some gross sin. We wouldn't consider backsliding and slipping what Asaph does here.

*3 For I was envious of the arrogant
when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.
4 For they have no pangs until death;
their bodies are fat and sleek.
5 They are not in trouble as others are;
they are not stricken like the rest of mankind.*

Isn't this just so terribly true. It doesn't seem to matter whether they care about God or not in their life.

*6 Therefore pride is their necklace;
violence covers them as a garment.
7 Their eyes swell out through fatness;
their hearts overflow with follies.*

8 *They scoff and speak with malice;
loftily they threaten oppression.*
9 *They set their mouths against the heavens,
and their tongue struts through the earth.*
10 *Therefore his people turn back to them,
and find no fault in them.*
11 *And they say, "How can God know?
Is there knowledge in the Most High?"*
12 *Behold, these are the wicked;
always at ease, they increase in riches.*

Oh Asaph, it's like you live in the 21st century. Not only do we notice it, but they do too! The non-Christian thinks it's foolish to follow God because it makes no difference. They are just fine like they are.

13 *All in vain have I kept my heart clean
and washed my hands in innocence.*
14 *For all the day long I have been stricken
and rebuked every morning.*
*It is incredibly easy to think this way. This was Asaph's lowest
moment. He was about to backslide and believe a lie.*
15 *If I had said, "I will speak thus,"
I would have betrayed the generation of your children.*

Asaph is recused by a tiny thought. If he were to mention this as a leader he would destroy a whole generation of followers. The followers were thinking of it as he was, but he was wrong. He can't destroy them by living according to his backslidden perspective.

*16 But when I thought how to understand this,
it seemed to me a wearisome task,*

It is virtually impossible to change some of our deepest attitudes on our own.

*17 until I went into the sanctuary of God;
then I discerned their end.*

Spiritual power is when God changes our outlook to our life. God rescues Asaph and shows him the truth. The sanctuary was where God and His people are. The people of God rescued him too. They weren't all thinking like he was. Their life of love and wisdom helped him.

*18 Truly you set them in slippery places;
you make them fall to ruin.*

*19 How they are destroyed in a moment,
swept away utterly by terrors!*

20 Like a dream when one awakes,

O Lord, when you rouse yourself, you despise them as phantoms.

21 When my soul was embittered,

when I was pricked in heart,

22 I was brutish and ignorant;

I was like a beast toward you.

*23 Nevertheless, I am continually with you;
you hold my right hand.*

*24 You guide me with your counsel,
and afterward you will receive me to glory.*

25 Whom have I in heaven but you?

And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you.

26 *My flesh and my heart may fail,
but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.*
27 *For behold, those who are far from you shall perish;
you put an end to everyone who is unfaithful to you.*
28 ***But for me it is good to be near God;***
*I have made the Lord GOD my refuge,
that I may tell of all your works.*

Please God, may we come to Asaph's conclusion! Please!

Maybe his second last sentence deserves some more comment. Asaph says, "I want to be near to God, I have made Him the one I trust". **Asaph discovers the great motivation of love for God.** Asaph says He focuses on being near to God. This pleasing of God and living with Him is very closely linked to making his desirability known. The best evangelists are always those who are the most impressed with God. The Christian life can be explained in one easy sentence - *do whatever it takes to stay near to God.* Make God Himself your refuge. Doing the will of the Father will never dissatisfy anyone. Making the glory (the shining brilliance and greatness) of God known is always done best by those who are familiar with it. This was the deepest desire of Jesus (John 17): to make the glory of God known. It was because He was so familiar with it.

Part Two

PREPARED

Assuming that you have given serious, slow and careful thought to your will, we now address 'how'.

Many people fail to reach out simply because they feel they don't know how. And sadly, many don't know how. Let us think of evangelism as being a religious gossiper. We gossip in the day, in the open and for one or many to hear. We spread a scandal about God. We openly gossip, "Have you heard this ridiculous story?" Or "Can you believe what I heard?" But this gossiping sometimes needs a little structure and a little help.

There are many complex and simple systems out there. Some work for some and not for others. Scripture itself has many different 'methods'. Paul displays multiple strategies, such as: going from house-to-house, attending synagogues, being in philosophical meetings, being at work, and speaking to individuals. Paul seemed to have a plan but remained open to other opportunities.

If the will is settled there will be many different ways God will use us to reach others. Being prepared involves at least the following:

1. Daily honest prayer

Evangelism begins in your closet . Try to pray more **specific prayers** than large general ones. You will see God answer. Basically more

prayers such as, “Father give me a time with Bev where she asks questions and, please, would you have been working with her already”, rather than “Save people Lord”. God does answer prayer. Ask him; write down what you ask. Ask more passionately if you see He is not answering especially in this area. Be specific; use names. Ask God to give you details of a person’s life if He wishes. Any gifts God will give you to use gladly ask for it and take it. Be open to the Spirit.

Linked with this is **getting familiar with your Bible**. So familiar that scriptures flow easily in your language and they are easy for you to draw on. You don’t need to have to quote chapter and verse but general wording and flow of thought of key Scriptures will always be important and fruitful. We have to give the Holy Spirit something that He can remind us of!

2. Make a pre-decision not to be too busy for an opportunity

Many people simply miss an opportunity when it comes. Consider the seriousness of the story of Zechariah in Luke 1. Zechariah asks for a child. The Lord answers yes and an angel comes to tell Zechariah the news. Zechariah says to the angel, “How can this happen? We are both old.” Zechariah is made mute for months. When the answer came Zechariah wasn’t ready! This happens too often and too easily.

Maybe add this as your last line of prayer: “...and Father help me not to be too busy today to miss an opportunity. I want to be ready when you answer. Help me to watch carefully while I am busy”.

3. Be clear on what the gospel is

You may think that you have to share everything from Adam to Revelation in order for someone to respond. Why? Think of the Philippian jailer: he saw a miracle, feared, asked a question, Paul answered him, "Believe in Jesus." That was all.

The gospel is such a rich and multifaceted message that it can be shared from many angles in many scenarios. To be trapped into one formula may well help a beginner actually get the message out but in the long run creativity and ease will win the day for you and your hearers.

So can you articulate the main premises of the gospel? What are the most important things you and others need to know to respond? Here is a question that will reveal what you consider the main purpose of the gospel to be: *What is your number one reason for wanting someone to believe in Jesus?*

We have lost the real message of the gospel, although we may well know it. Here is the gospel in very strict summary. It contains three elements; the facts, a promise, and an invitation. These three elements can be presented in different order but all three need to be there as that is the gospel and that is our message.

a. The basic facts of salvation

- All people have sinned (Romans 3:23).
- The penalty for our sin is death - spiritual, emotional and eventually physical separation and inability to relate to God (Romans 6:23).
- Jesus Christ died to pay the penalty for our sins and to reconcile us to the Father (Romans 5:8)

b. An Invitation to respond to Christ personally in repentance and faith

Whoever we speak to is to understand that the words of the gospel are not old news but for us now. When Jesus says, "Come unto me" in Matthew 11:28 it is as though He is personally saying it to you or others, right now, to come.

There is an invitation by Jesus to believe and follow. It is a personal response. The response of the heart in words could be put like this: 'A decision to trust no one and nothing other than Jesus for all matters relating to God. A decision to trust Jesus alone for all matters relating to my life.' (Acts 2:38, Romans 10:10.)

Note: we need not get caught up about faith and repentance arguments. Scripture requires faith for salvation. Genuine faith for salvation always has repentance. Why? Because you are repenting as you put your faith in Jesus.

c. Promise of forgiveness and eternal life

The promise of salvation is that faith in Jesus Christ saves a person from the certain judgment to come. It is also a promise for a life lived

with God here on earth and forever in heaven.

Our gospel message needs to have in it the assurance that Jesus promises forgiveness of sins and eternal life with God. John 3:16 is the well known example: “[whoever believes] shall not perish... but have eternal life.” Jesus will actually forgive anyone who comes to Him. John 6:37 says, “Him who comes to me I will not cast out”.

That is the bare bones of the gospel message. There are as many ways to share it as there are people. But the gospel, to be the true gospel, has to contain the above.

4. Be clear on what the gospel is not

Do you think, in general, we are doing a good job at explaining the gospel to the world? On the whole it doesn't seem that we are.

Our survey (done with this course - see the back of this booklet) points to this and to the reason why. Most people in this survey have been saved for twenty years and have led one or two people to the Lord. And they say the easiest part of evangelism is sharing their experiences. People mostly fear rejection and offending people. The most common reason people don't believe is they think they know what it's all about already. The most common problem people have with God is they think they know about Him already. People mostly know that you are a Christian because you told them you go to church.

This makes for an interesting perspective in answer to the question as to how we are doing. Here is the message the world gets: I am happy to speak about Jesus. I am happier to tell people I go to church. I don't

think that many people will believe my message however because not many I speak to have in the past. I am okay with sharing my experience of the good things God has done for me. It saves me from rejection and offending people. People already know the gospel anyway but don't want to change their life.

What can we deduce the world is hearing? How can we summarise what they hear? "I am happy I am following Jesus. Jesus can help your life a lot. I have learnt this through my experience. I know you think you know Him but are you sure?" All these points aren't wrong, but they are also not right.

Here is Paul's gospel from **Romans 1:14-22**. We will put it backwards.

22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. 21 For although they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 20 For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, "The righteous shall live by faith." 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and

also to the Greek. 15 So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 1:14 I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish.

The world has heard the message of what we *think* about God instead of us telling them about what God thinks about them!

The gospel has become more *our* message than God's. We are to share *His* message. In today's world then it needs to be clear that the gospel is not:

1. **Moralism** - getting people to clean up their lives a little to get close to God.
2. **Special spiritual experience** - It is not primarily a message about how knowing God is a life of having spiritual power experiences.
3. **Unconditional acceptance** - God just loves everyone so much that He will make sure everything will be okay.
4. **Simply a message that God is love** - while this is true it is not the whole truth. God's love is only properly understood when His holiness, anger, and righteousness are also understood.
5. **Simply a message that God makes your life nicer and wants to be your friend** - there is real sin. Real guilt. Real cleansing needed. Real change has to be made to the person. They don't just pick up from where they left off. This message is particularly tempting in our 'me focussed' post-modern world.

We can be confident of these points because of the reports of gospel preaching and the responses to it in the New Testament. Do you think if the apostles were proclaiming the above messages they would ever had received such responses? Consider the following:

- Luke 3:7 John the Baptist says, “You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee the wrath to come?”
- John 3 – Jesus says to Nicodemus that you can’t know the first thing about God unless you are made alive. (“Born again”.)
- Matthew 4:17 shows Jesus’ message: “Repent, the kingdom is at hand”. In other words, change your mind about God. He is coming to earth. It is now. His entire rule and plan is to unfold before your eyes. He is coming; will you?
- Acts 2:40: “And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, ‘Save yourselves from this crooked generation.’” This was clearly his message.
- Acts 17:31: “Because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”
- One of the main themes of Revelation is the judgment to come.
- You see twice in Acts 16:30 and 2:37 people ask, “What must we do to be saved?”. You don’t ask this question if someone told you “God can make your life nicer”. **Our goal is to get the right message across.**

The gospel is truly good news. What would you say the gospel message of good news is?

Summarised we can say that the good news is that there is one God. He made everything including us. He made us to be with Him and know Him. But we cut ourselves off from Him and sinned, following our own ways. Instead of rejecting us God in return made a way to save us

from our rejection of Him. He came to earth in the form of a man, Jesus. Jesus lived perfectly before God in this world. He took upon Himself all the punishment for the sins that anyone ever committed. He died on a cross as punishment but rose again to show that God was pleased with Jesus' sacrifice for sins. Now anyone who turns to Jesus and calls on Him to save them from their sins can be made totally right with God! They can come into a new life with God being able to live as they were made to. This life will also last forever!

5. Be clear on what evangelism is

There are probably two main goals of evangelism. The first is to witness to the truth. The second is to live according to your confession.

Firstly, successful evangelism is when you witness, not only when someone responds. The word 'testimony' in Scripture is not used in the way we use it. It is not referring to 'our' story of salvation or how good God has been to us. 1 John 5: 11 – *“And this is the testimony, that God gave us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”* Our task is to present the report or record or statement. Successful evangelism is to make clear to whomever, wherever, the **testimony** – life is found only in the Son.

Evangelism is NOT winning converts but is simply announcing the good news, whatever the results. We are not persuading people to make decisions but proclaiming the good news, calling them to hear, believe, turn and be saved.

Practically this means a few things:

- We are not trying to 'sell' a nicer life or, in fact, anything.
- We are not having to rack our brains for clever stories about what God has done that would make Him seem likeable.
- We are simply stating and explaining what God has revealed to be true.
 - - He exists and the world that He made is His.
 - - Every human life will have to account to Him.
 - - He has set a standard for heaven.
 - - He has made only one way to get to heaven - saving faith in God the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The Holy Spirit then opens the mind and clears the eyes to convince (our Bibles say convict) people our message is true.
- The Holy Spirit convinces people of the above points. You will find He won't convince people that God is nice to live with and helps you a lot!

The other goal is to live according to your confession. This is not saying that evangelism is done without speaking and only projecting our lifestyle or that our lifestyle is even evangelism at all. That is not true! We live according to our testimony. We claim Jesus saves, Jesus heals, lives and changes people. Then best we show it! The world is truly watching and just waiting to catch us out. Don't let it be you.

6. Be clear on what evangelism is not

(This part has been adapted from Mark Dever's *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* (Crossway))

According to our survey (done with this course) this may be the most important part of this whole booklet. Evangelism is suffering from a mistaken identity!

Firstly, evangelism **is not winning converts**. As explained above, evangelism is telling God's message to the world. The Spirit causes them to believe. We don't win anyone. Our task is to make the message correct and clear! We must not promise the wrong things and skew the message. Therefore the trade of the evangelist is not the altar call but the message! We are to be experts in the message. I fear we have become experts in many things - buildings, coffee, marketing, communication, but not our trade - the message of the good news!

Secondly evangelism **is not telling our personal story**. Our personal testimony is not necessarily evangelism. There is power in the testimony of our lives and what God has done for us (Psalm 66:16). But we might leave out all the details of the gospel message in our story. It may not and regularly is not explicit in a testimony of the reasons for Jesus. People have widely exchanged personal testimony for gospel evangelism. Unfortunately we have given the world the wrong message. They hear, "God will do great things for you; come to Him." This is not the whole truth and certainly not *saving* truth. For a personal testimony to proclaim the good news it needs to make the gospel explicit not implicit. Test your testimony for this. Test your evangelism efforts for this mistake.

Thirdly evangelism **is not imposing our views**. This is because it is neither imposing nor our views! We are not pressurising and making people respond correctly, nor are we telling them our perspective on faith. We are stating the good news with a wish that they would respond. And the good news we are stating is not something we came up with; it is what God has told us to say.

Fourthly, evangelism **is not showing good deeds**. Good works commend the gospel but are not the message. This does not mean we are condemning good works - God forbid! All that goes on in the name of good works are at best complimentary helps to the message, however. Good works don't technically proclaim the message, they simply back it up, prove it and show it off.

Fifthly, evangelism **is not apologetics**. Peter in 1 Peter 3:15 says we should be ready to give a reason for our hope - and he is of course right. We should understand popular arguments and be able to engage in arguing for our faith's truth. Apologetics is a good thing. Apologetics also has two inherent dangers. We may end up inadvertently confirming unbelief because there are questions we can't answer anyway. Also it has a propensity to get caught up with issues that are not the main thing.

Sixthly, evangelism **is not displaying God's power alone**. God's power is supposed to bring about opportunities to proclaim the truth. In Acts 2 when the Spirit causes people to listen Peter proclaims the message. Many people today are tempted about talking about the miracle that just happened instead of then evangelising - telling people the good news. The message is not supposed to be "Look how great this power is, you see I told you God is powerful", but rather "Just as God has

done this He too can do the impossible with you, He can forgive your sin and save you eternally. Let me tell you about the Lord Jesus...”.

7. Be ready to answer why you believe what you do

Considering all that has been said (especially about apologetics) here are some answers to the questions that you may encounter. These are not comprehensive answers but short ones, simply to show you have been thinking about such things.

Q: How do you know the Bible is as it's supposed to be?

A: All ancient documents are judged by certain criteria. There are four criteria authenticity is judged by: how old are the earliest copies; the time between the original and copies, how many copies exist; and were there eye witnesses around to verify the copies? Based on this we have more historical proof that Jesus existed and the story about him is true, than if Julius Caesar ever existed. *Our secret - everyone in the depths of their hearts knows God is there and they will answer to Him (Romans 1)*. Whether you can convince them of the Bible or not.

Q: How do you know the disciples didn't make this all up for popularity and money?

A: It's a really foolish thing to do considering they all lost their lives for it and made no money - actually they became poor. No one would have followed when there is in fact not much to gain in popularity and financial terms. It would have fizzled out a long time ago.

Q: How do you know there even is a God?

A: Good question. All the philosophical arguments have flaws and

we can't ultimately prove God this way. There is only one sure way to know. You have to decide who Jesus is. If Jesus was who He claims, then God exists, because he claimed to be the Son of God.

Q: Christianity is so dull and rule driven.

A: Unfortunately you have heard the wrong end of the story. The Bible tells followers of God to live for Him. It tells the person who doesn't follow to believe in Jesus. Don't do a thing for God until you *actually* are doing it for Him. You don't do things for God's acceptance, you do it in response to his acceptance.

Q: There are so many bad examples out there.

A: I am sorry for this, truly. The truth is that Christians need just as much help as anyone else to live the way God wants. Our claim is not that we are good but God is willing to save the terrible.

Q: It seems all about money and glamour.

A: For some. Most Christians are poor in the world. It's those who are on TV that you are taking your view from. It's not the majority at all. Until satellite TV no one thought this.

Q: I have been so hurt by people telling me "I will go to hell".

A: I'm sorry about this. People have just been insensitive. Let me explain what hell is and how people may go there. Hell is a place of separation from God. If people don't want Him their whole life, eventually He will give them what they always wanted. They won't want it when it happens though. Also, no one goes there by mistake. It is stubborn refusal upon stubborn refusal to believe God's message of how to be saved from separation.

Q: I don't think heaven and hell exist.

A: I hope you're right about hell. Actually the Bible says everyone does believe in these if they were really honest. Most people just don't like the thought of these; they prefer to tell themselves hell doesn't exist. Very few people actually 100 percent believe that there is nothing when we die. It's not innate in humans. Of all the world's population there are only less than .05 percent atheists who believe there is nothing after life.

Q: What about suffering and evil in the world. I thought God is loving and good?

A: He is loving and good. But the Bible's definition of loving and good is different to ours. He is loving and good in that He lovingly rescues and saves people from an eternal problem. His goodness is expressed primarily in what He does after this life has ended. God never promises to make anyone's life perfect, in fact He promises that 'in this life you will have trouble'. (John 16:33.) What he does promise is that He will be there with you in trouble. (If they are asking an absolute question of where evil comes from - we simply will never know this side of life. Again, you may add that that itself is proof that we didn't make this all up.)

Q: God allows bad things in the world

A: This question is tricky. They are normally thinking of a scenario in their mind. Ask about this scenario.

Possible answers:

- God has given people the ability to make their own decisions. That's the way He made the world.
- Love. People often need the love of God defined correctly.

- The New Testament never promises that God will make everything nice for you in life. That is a false teaching. He promises to be with us in the suffering and one day to end it all.

Q: Surely God will forgive me. He tells people to forgive. Surely He will.

A: This is a right and wrong deduction. God does forgive, but not without Jesus. Jesus is God's way of forgiveness. Because God is also a God of justice, no one will be forgiven just on principle. Evil will be punished. Jesus is God's way of forgiveness. No faith in Jesus, no means of forgiveness from God.

And a thousand others!

This part is called 'be prepared'. **Our greatest challenge is making sure we have the message right.** We are not telling the world God will make life nicer and a few stories of how He has done that for you (even though it's mostly true). We tell the world that God has set a day to judge the life of everyone and His measure is perfection. Everyone will fail. But He has made a way to be saved. His name is Jesus. He is God's way of salvation. Wholehearted trust in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in Jesus Himself is God's way for you to be found not guilty on that day and be welcomed to heaven.

Part Three

ACTION

Now that we are hopefully willing and a little more prepared the only thing left to do is to **get talking**. Some people just need to get talking. Just talking, no agenda, no pressure, just talking. We can't stay quiet. Jesus says "Seek and save" in Luke 19:10. Seeking means just not hiding! This message is even to the shy. We will need to get talking.

You may say, "Well I don't know how or what to talk about." You are not alone. For many people their only hope is "an awkward change of direction, like crunching the gears in your car. So you are watching football and you resort to saying things like, "At last a substitution. Did you know that Jesus could be your substitute?", "Great goal. What about you? What's the goal of your life?", "Come on referee! That was never a penalty! Did you know Jesus paid the penalty for our sin?".

The easiest way to get talking with people is to **ask questions**. Get them to talk about themselves. Let them share their views and thoughts. It's almost letting them 'teach' you what they think. At some point you will want to try and move the conversation to spiritual things. Feeling comfortable doing this just requires some practice.

The next thing to do is to really listen to them; you will find everyone has spiritual ideas and questions. **Just listen**, you'll find a spot to move the conversation.

Then begin to **ask spiritual questions**. There are so many questions

you can ask. Ask and again just listen. The idea is to get to the place where you ask questions that **provoke self-reflection**. In your own words you want to try and bring people to the point where you are asking questions such as:

- What do you think is the main message of Christianity?
- What do you think about heaven, hell, Christians, Jesus?
- How do you think people get to heaven? If you were to die today, do you know for sure you will go to heaven?

Please remember that *attitude* is so very important. We seek to balance honesty with urgency and joy. If it is possible we can try and get to a place where we are able to **answer some of the questions**. Make your answers clear and easy to understand.

Of course, here again, you will need to know the gospel so you become free to share it correctly in an appropriate way to where the conversation is going. You may say: is this all there is to it? Frankly, yes. It says in the book of Acts that the people were scattered and all they did was talk to people wherever they went about Jesus and what they had learnt. None of them were preachers. There were no experts. What do you think they were doing? Probably much of the above.

To summarise: Begin to talk. Listen. As naturally as possible try and get discussing spiritual matters. Listen. Ask spiritual questions. Listen. Present the gospel in response to their questions or as an answer. Well done! What you have just done is called evangelism.

Some things to avoid

1. *Christian language* that no one will understand who is not a Christian.
2. Christian '*Pentecostalism*' - for example "Amen!" or "Praise God!" at the end of every sentence. This just makes you look weird.
3. You don't want to come across like you are forcing anything. This is because *you aren't*. There is nothing you need to force to happen; God does and doesn't need you. Relax.
4. Don't come across like you are correcting all they say. The Holy Spirit has to convince, not you!
5. Think of some of the major problems that people have with the church. They call Christians judgemental, weird, hypocritical and more. We are obviously trying to avoid perpetuating some of these. Some stigmas will never go away and we are not apologising for those!

Know this! If your heart and approach is with genuine patience, care, love and concern as opposed to project, duty and irritation you will do well.

Here are a few things to help put you at ease

1. There are as many contexts as there are people. Everyone has at least some contact in their life with non-Christians. That is the place to start. Just where you are, doing what you can with what you have.
2. The goal of evangelism is to *witness to the truth about Jesus*. This means that success is providing the witness. The convincing is what the Holy Spirit does. This means that some

people may not respond immediately. We may well be those who give them some solid food for thought. The key is – *give the Holy Spirit something to work with*. He says He will convince people that they need a savior and Jesus is the only one. We need pressurise no one.

3. People don't *need the entire A-Z of the story to be saved*. However, they can't do without the facts of the gospel and they should not put their faith in the 'God who makes everything work for you'.
4. Tact, respect and genuine interest go a long way.
5. There is bad news in the gospel message.

Some helps for particular groups

These are more about the philosophy of what you are sharing with them than the practical details.

Reaching the poor

- The gospel we present to a poor person is the same as we present to anyone. This is because the message is a message of salvation. So what can we promise someone who has pressing needs right now?
 - The promise of a different life with God.
 - He will be with you. He will give you riches in heaven and promises to clothe, give shelter and food to His children. He will not fail to fulfil His promise.
 - Promise that a Christian family is waiting to include them.

Reaching the rich

- The rich are prone to ‘adding Jesus’ to their life to make it better. The rich need to come to Jesus on His terms or they shouldn’t come at all. We need to be careful of promising a God who will ‘make your life nicer’.
- Rich people need to learn to think about the future and spiritual things including death. Thinking about today only will cost them.

Luke 12:16

16 And he told them a parable, saying, “The land of a rich man produced plentifully, 17 and he thought to himself, ‘What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?’ 18 And he said, ‘I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. 19 And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”” 20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”

- Helping the rich to see the futility of the god they worship is a good approach.
- The rich will benefit from knowing that you have done your homework. They aren’t interested in ‘throwing your brains out’ and observing some weird ‘faith’ thing. The gospel needs to be communicated clearly and logically.

Reaching your friends

- This can be particularly difficult, as they know you so well.
- The way you live counts a huge amount here. Jesus seemed to get the balance right - He could please the Father and have sinners enjoy being around Him. We need help to find the balance too.
- Try to leave them with a constant question: Are you sure the horse you are backing is the right one?

Reaching people you don't know at all

- This doesn't come naturally to everyone.
- The above process of spiritual conversation does work. You want to leave them with the question nagging their mind 'what happens when you face God?'
- Ask God for a gift of prophecy that operates so hopefully you could break in with something startling at the right time.

Reaching your family

- Often family need to understand the logic in Christianity. Try and familiarise yourself with why Jesus is a sure choice. They want to know it's not some crazy fad and cult you just joined - they care about you!
- They will want to know you have examined the facts and done your homework

- Arrogance can hurt our witness with family.

Consider two examples from Scripture

Jesus and Nicodemus

John 3:1

1 Now there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. 2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." 3 Jesus answered him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God." 4 Nicodemus said to him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" 5 Jesus answered, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. 6 That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. 7 Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit."

9 Nicodemus said to him, "How can these things be?" 10 Jesus answered him, "Are you the teacher of Israel and yet you do not understand these things? 11 Truly, truly, I say to you, we speak of what we know, and bear witness to what we have seen, but you do not receive our testimony. 12 If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how can you believe if I tell you heavenly

things? 13 No one has ascended into heaven except he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man. 14 And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

This is a wonderful example of Jesus talking with a non-Christian.

What can we learn here?

1. Nicodemus came with questions.

- This is what we hope every person will begin to do. We begin by asking and probing. Then we hope they begin to ask.

2. Nicodemus did believe in Jesus.

- He believed He came from God.
- He believed He was powerful and His power was from God.
- He believed He was a teacher and could give great insight and help in life.
- He believed He was a potential revolutionary.
- He believed He was powerful and could change peoples lives.

3. All that Nicodemus believed was not the faith God is after. It wasn't saving faith.

4. Jesus explains how Nicodemus can be saved.

- He needs to be born again - His very being is unfit to know God closely.
- Nicodemus doesn't understand.

- Jesus then tells Him he needs to look at the snake in the desert like Israel did. Saving faith comes when you know a snake has bitten you. Sin has entered your body and you will die from it. You know you may well die any minute now and there is only one way to be saved from death. Nicodemus has to believe in Jesus as the dead and resurrected Son of God. He has to see Jesus as He is to be saved. He is the one who died for sin and was raised for eternal life. That is saving faith.

Paul and the Philosophers

Acts 17:22

22 So Paul, standing in the midst of the Areopagus, said: "Men of Athens, I perceive that in every way you are very religious. 23 For as I passed along and observed the objects of your worship, I found also an altar with this inscription, 'To the unknown god.' What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. 24 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, 25 nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. 26 And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us, 28 for

*"In him we live and move and have our being";
as even some of your own poets have said,*

“For we are indeed his offspring.”

29 Being then God's offspring, we ought not to think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone, an image formed by the art and imagination of man. 30 The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, 31 because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.”

32 Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” 33 So Paul went out from their midst. 34 But some men joined him and believed, among whom also were Dionysius the Areopagite and a woman named Damaris and others with them.

What can we learn here?

1. Paul engages them and affirms them.

- He is not condescending. He says, “I can see you are religious”. He found common ground. This is our process, asking questions hearing what they think Christianity is.

2. Paul tailor-made the message to fit the situation.

- We need to be so familiar that we can do the same. Remember that the A-Z from Adam to Revelation is not always appropriate. You may start at ‘love’ or ‘God knows pain’ or ‘injustice is something God cares about too’.

3. Then he begins to explain the message (v. 29).

4. He still has the elements of the gospel message even though he is sharing it in another way.

- Notice 'God has fixed a day', 'God will judge the world', 'repent', 'Jesus is the dead and alive Saviour'.

5. Notice how Paul gently presses the message onto them.

- After explaining truth about God he says 'We should not be so ignorant' and 'there is not much time'. We need to find our way to say this, but it needs to be said.

There is a lot more that can be said about evangelism. Let's go back to the first part again. Remember all that we have covered. Be willing. Be prepared. Make it your goal to be an expert in the communication of the true gospel message. Get talking. Get listening. Bless you as Jesus helps you do what he has asked of us!

How many people have come to Christ through you telling them?

What is the **easiest** part of evangelism to you?

What is the **hardest** part of evangelism for you? Please rank with 1-6; 1 being strongest feelings.

What is the most common **problem people have** about the God you talk about?

Evil	Natural disasters	Science	Bible contradicts itself	They think they care know	Don't really
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Do you find spiritual conversation easy?

Yes

No

Do people know you're a Christian at work?

Yes

No

How?

You told
them

You told them
a story about
you and God

You refused
sinful
indulgence

They noticed
something

You
mentioned
you go to
church

Other:
