

## IMPACTING OUR WORLD

### 5.1 In the World; but Not of the World

**Aim:** To understand how we are to live in our world for Christ's sake and God's glory.

**Discuss:** In our series "Walking with God", we have looked at Christ reconciling us to God the Father, the way we are to grow in our relationship with God, the blessing of the Holy Spirit, the way we are to live in Christ's church, and the way we are to follow Jesus and be like Him as we walk with God. In this final section, we shall consider how we are to impact our world as we walk with God.

*Discuss: How are we meant to impact the world?*

#### **Sent Ones**

*In our walk with God in this world, we are not meant to live in a monastery or a commune. How are we to live according to John 17:13-18?*

We are to be in the world, but not to be of the world; or more precisely, we have been sent into this world, yet we are not to be of the world; in the sense of living as a non-Christian does.

*What is meant by the statement that Jesus has sent us into the world? (John 17:18)*

Just as Jesus was sent by the Father to impact this world, we are also to impact this world for God. We see this clearly in the way Jesus disciplined His followers to have impact in this world.

*Jesus dramatically impacted the world with His revelation of God, His Rescue of us sinners on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead. How are we to impact the world?*

We are to impact the world with the Gospel for the glory of God and for helping other people be reconciled to God. We are to shine Jesus as well as share Him with others – we call this evangelism.

#### **Fisher Men**

*Jesus chose twelve men to be with Him. What was one of the primary things He taught them to do according to Matt 4:19?*

He taught them to be "fishers of men"; ie, just as He sought people and drew them to Himself, so that they might believe in Him, we are to draw people to Jesus by the way we live and by sharing the Gospel.

*Many times Jesus' disciples observed what Jesus did, but He also sent them out into the world by themselves (Luke 9:1-6). What were they to do? What can we learn from this?*

They went out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to preach the Gospel (this is what it means to be a "fisher of men"). They were even given power by Jesus to perform miracles in order to authenticate the message. In the same way, we are to go and proclaim the kingdom of God and preach the Gospel, and allow our transformed lives to authenticate the Gospel we proclaim (and through miracles, if God permits).

*Jesus didn't send the disciples out straight away. Why? What do we learn from this?*

He needed to train them and instruct them first. We also need to be trained. New believers need to understand their faith, and then we need to grow in sharing the Gospel with others, through the encouragement of the Word of God and each other.

*Sadly, many Christians never end up going out and sharing, or they rarely share. Why is this?*

Either we don't have the courage to share the Gospel, or we don't have confidence in the message, or we think we are not mature enough to share, or that it's only for those who are gifted. These are all excuses – we are all meant to be sharing the faith as soon as possible, and grow further as we put it into practice.

#### **Disciple Makers**

*In what we call the Great Commission, Jesus gave His parting words to His disciples (and to us who follow in their footsteps). What have we been commanded to do? (Matt 28:16-20)*

We are to make disciples of others; that is, we are not only to preach the Gospel so that others are saved, but we are to help others become followers of Jesus, so that they will go and make disciples of others.

*What's required in making another person a disciple, according to Matt 28:19-20?*

We are to GO and meet people from all people groups; we are to BAPTISE people as they believe in Jesus; we are to TEACH them the things Jesus taught us (and which have been recorded in God's Word).

*What encouragement should we have as we go into the world? (Matt 10:16-20; 26-31; 28:18-20)*

The Holy Spirit will give us the right words to speak; we are dearly loved by God and He will look after us; Jesus will always be with us as we go into this world and share Him with others.

**SUMMARY: As we live in this world, we are not to be of the world, but we have been sent to share the Gospel, to be fishers of men, and to fulfil Christ's Great Commission of making disciples.**

## 5.2 Me, Doing Evangelism!

**Aim:** To help us deal honestly with our attitudes and perceptions about evangelism.

**Discuss:** The danger for any Christian as the years go by is that of becoming a *thermometer* rather than a *thermostat*; ie. we reflect the temperature of the world around us; rather than setting it. *[Discuss]*  
We have been called to be distinct from the world; to be the "salt of the earth", to be the "light of the world" (Matt 5:13-16). We are to be "in the world, but not of the world"; to impact our world.

But besides being distinct in reflecting Christ to the world, what else are we to do? *[Discuss]*  
We are to proclaim Christ – to share the Gospel with others. In this way we are to also impact our world.

Many Christians are not too good at sharing the Gospel with others. For example, do we see it as a great privilege that flows naturally from our relationship with Christ, or is it a touchy, awkward situation that we avoid unless it's forced on us? In this study we will consider our impressions about evangelism, the things that hold us back when it comes to evangelising, and how we can be encouraged to evangelise.

### **Our Impressions about Evangelising**

*What thoughts and feelings do you have whenever you are challenged to share Jesus with others?*

*Up to this point in time, how have people responded to you as you tried to share Jesus with them?*

*What are your most memorable experiences (if any) in sharing the Gospel with others?*

*Why do most Christians struggle with evangelism?*

We feel it's "not our ministry", we feel inadequate and not gifted, we are fearful of a bad response, etc

### **Misconceptions in Evangelising**

*We associate evangelism with evangelists. What effect do bad role models have on us? (eg, those who are hellfire and brimstone preachers, or pushy salesmen types, or money-grabbing televangelists)*  
These bad role models can make us stay far away from wanting to be an evangelist. We fear that people may associate us with these images, if we should try and evangelise; and so, we don't share our faith.

*We also have good role models of evangelists (eg, Charles Spurgeon, Billy Graham, or a Christian friend we know who is a born evangelist). What effect can they have on us?*

We may honour them as great servants of Christ, but unfortunately, they can discourage us in evangelising as we feel so weak and inadequate compared to them. They seem so gifted, and we are not!

### **Encouragements in Evangelising**

*In Paul's last words before he was martyred for the faith, he encouraged a young believer who was timid in his faith – young Timothy. What can we learn from Paul's words in 2 Tim 1:7 and 4:1-5?*  
We all have been given God's Spirit to help us be bold and not timid, and whether we are gifted or not, we are all to do the work of an evangelist, because we are commanded by God, and God will help us.

*When it comes to evangelism, it's not our responsibility to bring a person to faith in Christ. What are we responsible for? How is this truth a great help to encourage us? (1 Cor 3:5-9)*

We are responsible for sowing the Gospel seed and watering it by follow-up, but it's God who must make it grow so that a person becomes a Christian. If a person, after we have shared with them, doesn't become a Christian, it's not our fault. We can only plant and water.

*Often, we feel that we are untrained and don't have enough ability or experience to share our faith with others. What do we learn from the remarkable story recorded for us in Mark 5:1-20?*

We can actually start evangelising immediately we are saved – by sharing our testimony with others. We may not fully understand the doctrine of salvation, but we can testify of God's goodness and mercy.

*What helpful thoughts (if any) have helped you embrace evangelism and share your faith?*

- We don't have to be a Billy Graham and be able to talk to millions; just one soul at a time.
- We don't have to be brilliant at evangelism; just available.
- When we might think we've messed up, God can still made it work out for good.

*In what ways can an "average" Christian have an effective evangelistic ministry?*

- Be positive and prayerful about evangelism.
- Learn from the way Jesus and His apostles did evangelism, as well as from believers around you.
- Pick one or a few people to actively reach out to, and look for opportunities to share with them.
- Have another fellow believer pray for you as you seek to share with others.

**Summary: We are called to lead others to Christ; it's not beyond any of us and God will help us**

## 5.3 The Costs and Blessings of Evangelism

**Aim:** To demonstrate clearly that the blessings of evangelism far outweigh the costs.

**Discuss:** There is a reluctance for many Christians to actively to share their faith with non-believers. That's because there is a cost. *What's the cost?*

There is the cost of making time and effort in praying for people and befriending them. There is also the cost of our reputation in regard to what other people may think of us, or the cost of family members shunning us, or the cost of an employer overlooking us for job opportunities, etc.

In this study will consider how there are blessings that far outweigh the costs we may face.

### **The Costs of Evangelism**

*What did it cost Paul to do evangelism? (2 Cor 4:7-12; 6:1-10)*

It cost him dearly. He experienced many trials; especially attacks and rejection from non-believers.

*If we faithfully witness for Christ, will we experience trials? (cf. Matt 10:16-17; John 15:18-19).*

Yes! It is very likely. It may not be as intense as Paul, but we will endure opposition.

*What other costs might we have to bear for making evangelism a priority?*

We may experience increased spiritual warfare, potential public shaming, greater scrutiny by people around us, emotional turmoil as we are hated and despised by those about us

*But despite the "costs", what do we glean from 2 Cor 4:7-12, Acts 18:9-10 and Matt 5:11-12?*

God will uphold us, He will be with us and protect us, and we will receive a great reward one day.

### **The Blessings to God**

*How does God respond when a lost sinner finds salvation? (Luke 15:7, 10)*

God and His holy angels rejoice, even when just one person comes to Christ. As a result, we need to see that our witnessing brings joy to the heart of God.

*When we bear fruit for God, including fruit from evangelism, what do we bring God? (John 15:8)*

We bring God glory. It pleases Him greatly.

*Why does evangelism particularly glorify God? (cf. John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:9)*

As we evangelise by sharing the Gospel, we proclaim God's glorious character and what He has done through His Son to save us - we make God's name "big" before those we share; ie, we glorify Him.

*We've been commanded to share our faith. How does God view it when we do this? (John 14:15)*

He sees it as obedience, and to God, obedience is an expression of our love for Him.

*What do you think of the cost in doing evangelism in the light of the blessings that come to God?*

### **The Blessings to Others**

*What blessings come to a person who receives Christ through our witnessing? (1 John 5:11-12)*

They come to receive salvation; they are forgiven of their sins, they are spared eternal damnation, they receive the gift of eternal life, and they have peace with God and are made right with Him.

*What else happens to those who hear and believe in Christ? (Acts 2:38; Eph 2:13; 1 Pet 2:9-10)*

They are blessed in receiving the Holy Spirit; they are brought near to God and made right with Him; and they become part of His chosen and special people.

*What do you think of the cost in doing evangelism in the light of the blessings that come to others?*

### **The Blessings to You**

*After his conversion, Paul began witnessing for Christ. What blessings came? (Acts 9:19-22)*

It caused him to grow stronger in the Lord, and to become more courageous in sharing Christ.

*Have you experienced spiritual growth as a result of doing evangelism?*

Evangelism helps us grow stronger in the Lord and to become more sure about what we believe.

*What can you infer about Paul as he ministered the Gospel? (cf. 1 Thess 2:13, 19-20)*

Paul was filled with thanks to God and filled with joy when people accepted Christ.

*Have you ever had a time in your experience when sharing your faith left you joyful?*

We experience great joy when we share our faith, even if the person we are reaching out to doesn't respond. That's because we know that we are pleasing God and serving Him. And when a person does respond to the Gospel, we obviously have great joy – it's one of the most joyful things to experience.

*When we witness, we will come to have Paul's view of the Gospel. What was it? (Romans 1:16)*

He was unashamed of it and boldly declared it, knowing that it is God's power to change lives.

**Summary: Evangelism produces blessings that far outweigh the costs. Are you convinced of this?**

## 5.4 Learning how to do Evangelism

**Aim:** To learn from others in regard to sharing our faith with others.

**Discuss:** *When it comes to evangelism, it's not like we have to "reinvent the wheel". Why?*

Evangelism has been happening for nearly 2000 years. We can learn from how the New Testament church did it, as well as read good Christian books on sharing our faith, and learn from each other.

*Sharing our faith is not new, but what may we need to adjust, and what must we keep the same?*

Every culture is different. Often we have to consider and adjust the way we conduct ourselves and share our faith for the sake of others (cf. Paul's words in 1 Cor 9:19-23), but the Gospel itself never changes.

In this study will consider how Jesus and the early church shared the faith.

### Evangelism by the Master

*In John 4, when Jesus shared the Gospel with a Samaritan woman, He gave us an example of how to evangelise. There are four clear steps in Jesus' method. In John 4:7, what's the first step?*

RELATE – Jesus related to her by opening up conversation and asking for a drink of water.

*What do we need to do to relate to people? What do we need to be careful to avoid?*

We need to be willing to talk to people and relate to them, but we are never to do that by being worldly.

*In the second step, what did Jesus do? (read John 4:8-14)*

CREATE – Jesus created an opportunity to share by directly speaking of spiritual matters (our need for "living water", and about Himself - the One who alone that can give us "living water"/spiritual life).

*Why is it important to look for ways of creating an opportunity to share our faith?*

We may do well in relating to people, but there is a high chance that the person we are talking to will never bring up spiritual matters unless we "swing" the conversation to the things of God.

*Read John 4:15-18. What is the third step in the way Jesus evangelised?*

CONVICT – Jesus convicted her of her sins. We must see our sins if we are ever going to be saved.

and our need for Jesus if we want to by highlighting to her by pointing out how she had broken God's

*In terms of this third step, what two things are needed to bring conviction? (Rom 7:7; John 16:8)*

Like Jesus, we need to use God's law to help a person see that they are not good, but in trouble with God (cf. Mark 10:17-19). But we also need the help of God's Spirit to bring conviction of sin.

*Read John 4:19-26. Although the woman tried to deflect attention from herself after being convicted of her sin, what did Jesus do in the final step?*

REVEAL – Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah (the Christ); God's promised one to save us from our sins and rule us in righteousness. We also must reveal to people who Jesus is, and how they need Him.

*What three key truths should we reveal to others about Jesus when we are sharing our faith?*

1. Jesus is the Son of God – He is God, one with God the Father, and was sent by the Father from heaven.
2. Jesus is the Saviour by dying on the cross in our place and bearing the punishment of our sins
3. Jesus is the risen king, by His resurrection from the dead, and by God appointing Him to be our Lord.

### Evangelism by the Early Church

*Peter and John met a lame man. What did they do and what eventuated? (Acts 3:1-16)*

Peter and John healed a lame man. Their compassion for him, and the power of Christ, resulted in them having a great opportunity to share Jesus with the crowd that gathered.

*What can we learn from this story and what can we do to give opportunity to speak of Jesus?*

We can stop and care for people. By showing compassion and by serving others in Jesus' name, it often leads to an opportunity to share Jesus.

*What important points can we learn from the way Peter shared with the crowd? (Acts 3:17-26)*

He sought to get the crowd's attention onto Jesus, he declared who Jesus was and their sin, he urged the crowd to respond by repenting and turning to Jesus, and he used Scripture and spoke frankly and earnestly.

*Read Acts 8:26-36. What can we learn from Philip when it comes to evangelism?*

Philip obeyed the Spirit, he asked the man probing questions, and he revealed Jesus. We are to do the same.

Note: Questions are a great way to find out where a person is at, and then to work out how best to share.

*Read Acts 17:22-31. What can we learn from Paul when it comes to evangelism?*

Paul observed the Athenians, explained the true God, and revealed Jesus. Note: Observing helps us to better relate to people and to think about how we can swing the conversation to the Gospel.

**Summary:** **The New Testament is a rich source for us in regard to learning how to evangelise.**

## 5.5 Evangelistic Styles

**Aim:** To help us recognise that there are a number of effective approaches to evangelism.

**Discuss:** *When it comes to evangelism, many Christians envisage that there is but one right style, and that is to be bold and confrontational. Is this right? [Discuss]*

Some may feel comfortable with the bold approach, but others will struggle with it. It will probably be a great relief for us to know that there are many ways to witness to others, and all of them can be used by God in bringing people to Christ. In this study we will consider various evangelistic styles.

### 1. Confrontational Style

*What characterises those who use the confrontational style? (Acts 2:22-24, 32-36; Acts 7:51-53)*  
They are bold and forthright in declaring the truth; not fearing man, but God. They will do it even at the cost of their lives, for to them, the truth is more important than anything else.

*What effect did this style of witnessing have upon the hearers? (Acts 2:37-41; Acts 7:54-60)*  
For Peter, God brought about great conviction and many were saved. For Stephen, God brought about conviction but they hardened their hearts and stoned Stephen (he was the first Christian martyr).

*Did you come to Christ by someone witnessing to you with a "confrontational" style? [Share]*

### 2. Reasoning/Intellectual Style

*What characterises those who use the reasoning/intellectual style? (Acts 17:22-31)*  
They seek to appeal to man's intellect and intelligence to prove the truth by logical and sound reasoning. Such people require a good grasp of the Bible, and also a good understanding of their hearers.

*Why did Paul use this approach for the Athenians? (Acts 17:16-21)*  
His audience was largely a group of philosophers who spent much of the time debating the latest ideas. Paul knew that in order to gain a foothold, he had to present the Gospel in a way that would appeal to them.

*Did you come to Christ by someone witnessing to you with a "reasoning" style? [Share]*

### 3. Testimonial Style

*What characterises those who use the testimonial style? (cf. Mark 5:18-20)*  
They share from their heart what the Lord Jesus has personally done for them.

*What made the testimony of the blind man before the Pharisees so effective? (John 9:24-34)*  
He spoke with great conviction, for he had experienced a miraculous healing. No one present could dispute the change that had taken place. He answered the challenges to his faith quickly and confidently.

*Did you come to Christ by someone witnessing to you with a "testimonial" style? [Share]*

### 4. Relational Style

*What characterises those who use the relational style? (John 1:44-49)*  
Through friendship, they have the opportunity to share their faith and point people to Jesus.

*Why did the woman in John 4 have an influence on people in her town? (John 4:25-30, 39-42)*  
The people in her town knew her well, and as she shared with them, they believed her and came to see.

*Did you come to Christ by someone witnessing to you with a "relational" style? [Share]*

### 5. Service-oriented Style

*What characterises those who use the service-oriented style? (cf. 1 Peter 3:14-15)*  
By their love and service, other people are moved to ask them about their faith.

*How did Tabitha demonstrate effective evangelism for the poor of Joppa? (Acts 9:36-42)*  
She always helped them with their needs. It was this that made the miracle even more effective.

*Did you come to Christ by someone witnessing to you with a "service-oriented" style? [Share]*

### Conclusion

*What potential problems do you see with these different styles of evangelism?*  
Confrontational style - may turn people away; Reasoning/intellectual style - maybe too dry; Testimonial style - may be dismissed by "well that's good for you"; Relational style - limits evangelism to a few; Service-oriented style - not enough unless we share the Gospel (people may draw wrong conclusions).

*There are different evangelistic styles, but which one should we use?*  
We should learn to use them all, as they all have a place. Also, we all have different personalities, and this will dictate which ones we gravitate to more.

**Summary: God uses different Christians with different evangelistic styles to reach different people.**

## 5.6 Telling Our Story

**Aim:** To appreciate the importance of sharing our own personal testimony with others.

**Discuss:** We can share Jesus by telling others about the Gospel, but we can also share by telling people how we came to know and believe in Jesus. We call this sharing our testimony.

*What are the benefits in sharing our testimony?*

It's easier for non-believers to hear our testimony; it's a good way to share with close family members.

Have you ever shared your testimony with someone else? In this study, we will consider what it means to share your testimony, and how to do it effectively.

### **Commanded to Go; But Do What? (Acts 1:6-8)**

*Jesus commands us to be His witnesses. What does it mean to be a witness for Jesus?*

Part of being a witness for Jesus is to share what we have experienced in coming to know Jesus personally, as well as sharing about who Jesus is and what He has done for us. Like the man in Mark 5, it's telling others what great things the Lord has done for us and the mercy we have received (Mark 5:19).

*As we witness for Christ, what are we assured of in Acts 1:8?*

God's Spirit, who was given to the church on the Day of Pentecost, will empower us to be a witness.

### **Paul's Testimony (Acts 26:1-23)**

*Why did Paul feel compelled to share the details of his life before his conversion? (Acts 26:4-11)*

He wanted his audience to be aware of his conduct before his conversion, including his hatred toward Jesus, so that they may realise what a huge change occurred in his life after he came to believe in Jesus.

*Why did Paul include the details we read in Acts 26:12-18?*

He wanted to show how Jesus revealed Himself to Paul, and who Jesus truly is – the risen Lord. He wanted them to understand (cf. v.18) that through faith in Jesus we go from darkness to light, from Satan to God, and we receive forgiveness of sins, and come to be in right relationship with God.

*Why did Paul describe the next details in his testimony? (Acts 26:19-23)*

He wanted them to understand how his encounter with Jesus completely turned his life around, so that instead of persecuting Christians, he proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus so that others could be saved.

### **Our Testimony**

Every Christian has a testimony of what Jesus has done to save them and change their life.

*According to the pattern in Paul's example, what should be included in our testimony?*

Basically, a three-fold division:

- (1) what I was like before Christ,
- (2) how I came to know and believe in Christ,
- (3) the change that has occurred since I believed in Christ.

*What is to be the main emphasis of our testimony?*

The main emphasis is to be Jesus – how He is real, who He truly is, and how He alone can save us and transform us when we believe in Him. We also want to emphasise the key steps in becoming a Christian.

*What are the key steps in becoming a Christian?*

1. Realise who Jesus is      2. Repent of our sins      3. Receive Jesus as our Lord and Saviour

Note: It's important to help people know that it's not enough to give mental assent to who Jesus is. Faith requires action, and the very first action is to call on Jesus (pray to Him) to save you (cf. Rom 10:13).

*What things should we be careful about when we share our testimony?*

Don't "glorify" your past sinful life (we should be ashamed of it); don't gloss over how you became a Christian (explain how you humbled yourself and what you prayed to the Lord); don't use Christian jargon (would a non-Christian understand what you're saying?); don't be sensational - relate truthfully to ordinary people about ordinary things; avoid using negative statements or "preaching" at people.

*When should we share our testimony with somebody else? (cf. John 1:40-42; Mark 5:18-20)*

We should share as soon as possible. We don't have to wait until we are spiritually mature, or until we know the Bible well. As soon as we believe, we have something precious to share. Note: If we delay sharing, it will become harder. Also, a non-believer may conclude that it's not that important.

*As we share our testimony, what do we learn from 1 Peter 3:15 in regard to the manner to do it in?*

We should share with gentleness and respect; ie, we are to respect another person's view.

**Summary: Jesus longs for every person who has experienced His reality to share it with others.**

## **Preparing Your Testimony (Handout for study 6)**

As we see in Paul's testimony in Acts 26:1-23, our testimony is to be in three parts:

- (1) what I was like before Christ,
- (2) how I came to know and believe in Christ,
- (3) the change that has occurred since I believed in Christ.

### **Tips on writing your story**

- Pray to God first, asking Him for wisdom and guidance, as you tailor your testimony for the people you are speaking to (ie, emphasising from your story the things that would best help your hearers).
- Make your testimony centred on Christ – it's His saving work in your life. Don't overemphasise how you found the Lord, or how you figured it "all out" (cf. John 6:44).

### **Telling your story**

The following questions are to help you with your testimony. It is good to write it out before you share it.

(Note: If you received Christ when you were a young child, start with the third question.)

#### **1. My life before I met Christ**

*What was your spiritual point of view before receiving Christ?*

Example: To get to heaven, I thought as long as my good deeds outweighed my bad ones, I was okay.

*Before you met Christ, what was your life like in a positive sense?*

Example: I was a church attender, or I was a good, upright moral person, or I cared for people.

*Before you met Christ, what was your life like in a negative sense?*

Example: I was a selfish person, or I felt anxious, or I felt weighed down by guilt and shame, or I was caught up in immoral behaviour, or I just lived for sport and neglected everything else.

#### **2. How I met Christ**

*How did you hear or learn of the gospel message?*

Example: I became friends with a person at work who was a Christian, and he invited me to go to church.

*What was it about the message that affected you?*

Example: I learned for the first time how God can forgive me of my sins through Jesus' death.

*What was your response to that message?*

Example: I pondered it for quite a while and discovered by studying the Bible that it was true.

*How did you receive Christ?*

Example: It was explained to me that I needed to admit to God that I had sinned and rebelled against Him, seek Christ's mercy and forgiveness, and to follow Jesus. This I did!

#### **3. My life after I trusted in Christ**

*How did your attitudes and life change after you received Christ?*

Example: My anxiety has been replaced by peace because I know I have been forgiven by God and possess eternal life.

*What other benefits have you realised since receiving Christ?*

Example: I've found that my relationships are more meaningful because I'm learning to treat each person as someone who matters to God.

*What problems do you still struggle with, and how is God helping to make a difference?*

Example: I'm still struggling to balance the time demands of work and family, but thanks to wisdom from the Bible and encouragement from Christian friends I'm making gradual progress.

## **5.7 Beginning a Spiritual Conversation**

**Aim:** To learn ways of beginning a spiritual conversation with people.

**Discuss:** *Every Christian should share the Gospel because of key verses that command it. Which ones come to mind?* Consider Matthew 28:18-20, Luke 24:46-48, Acts 1:6-8

*Every Christian should have a desire to share Jesus with others. Why? (John 3:16, 36; Rom 1:16)*

People cannot be saved, and they will perish, if they don't hear the Gospel of Jesus and respond by faith.

In this study, we will consider various ways that we can begin a spiritual conversation with various people who are at different stages in regard to their spiritual understanding.

### **1. The Direct Approach**

Note: This can be used for people who are religious, or who know about Christianity, and even think that they are Christians, but who do not have a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus.

The Direct Approach with Nicodemus: *Who was Nicodemus? (John 3:1)*

He was a religious leader of the people of Israel, and well acquainted with the Scriptures.

*What did Jesus do after Nicodemus greeted Him? (John 3:2-16)*

Jesus directly spoke to Him about his need to be born again; to believe in Him and to receive the Spirit.

*Why did Jesus choose to speak directly like this?*

Jesus knew that Nicodemus believed in God, the Scriptures, and about the Christ to come, but he still hadn't been saved. So Jesus directly told Him what he must do. Notice how Jesus illustrated salvation through the Scriptures (vv. 14-15), which Nicodemus was very familiar with. We should do the same.

*What kind of questions might you ask to begin a discussion on salvation with a religious person?*

Examples: Do all roads lead to heaven? Do you think God will let you into heaven? Do you think you've done enough good things to be accepted by God? What's the difference between Christianity and religion? Who was Jesus Christ? What was His death about? What do you make of His resurrection?

### **2. The Conversational Approach**

Note: This can be used for people who know little about Christianity, and not presently interested in God.

The Conversational Approach with the woman at the well: *What do we know about her? (John 4:16-18)*

She was an immoral woman who was in need; she thirsted for satisfaction in life through pleasure.

*How did Jesus bring about a spiritual conversation with such a worldly woman? (John 4:7-14)*

He asked her for some water, and then used this to turn the conversation around to "spiritual" water.

*How might you steer a conversation on a general topic to a discussion about Jesus?*

Examples: We could talk about the unsettledness of our world and the fear that comes from this, and then speak of how knowing Jesus gives peace and removes fear. We could ask someone about their personal struggles, and then mention how the Lord Jesus can help them, just as He has done for you.

*What do we need to do to have spiritual conversations with people?*

We need to pray and be led by the Spirit (cf. Acts 8:26-31), and we also need to be good observers and use current events or things about us to direct our conversations towards the Lord (cf. Acts 17:22-23).

### **3. Non-Threatening Approach**

Note: This is where we invite people to come to things or do things so that they feel at ease, yet hear.

*What kind of events might be especially suitable for having people hear of Christ?*

Examples: Invite people to a Christmas or Easter event; to a Carols by Candlelight service; to a church camp or tea; to a youth rally; to the church's craft group, or a men's and women's fellowship meeting.

*What other non-threatening things can we do?*

Give someone a good Christian book to read in their leisure that speaks of Jesus in a non-threatening way (eg, "*More than a Carpenter*", or "*Nothing in My Hands I Bring*"); or give someone a good Christian DVD to watch (eg, "*A Case for Christ*", or "*The passion of the Christ*", or "*Christianity Explored*").

*What should we do while a person has the book or DVD?*

We ought to be praying for them; praying that God would open their eyes to see their need for Jesus.

*What should we do when they have finished reading a Christian book or watching a DVD?*

We should follow them up. Ask them what they thought of it, and try and have a spiritual conversation.

**Summary:** **We will seldom be able to share the Lord Jesus with others unless we pray, be observant of people, and look for opportunities to share, as the Lord leads us.**

## 5.8 What Next – after sharing the Gospel?

**Aim:** To examine what we should do after we have shared the Gospel with someone.

**Discuss:** *Consider: You have the opportunity to share your testimony with a non-Christian. They listen intently, and then ask you how they can become a Christian. Would you be able to answer them?*

Often, many Christians don't seem to have the confidence or the clarity to lead a person to Christ. They think it's something about going forward at a church meeting, or seeing the pastor. But we can all be used to lead a person to Christ. In this study we will consider what we should do after we have shared the Gospel with someone – for the one who is responsive, and for the one who isn't.

### **People who are not ready yet – what do you do?**

*Not everyone who hears the Gospel wants to be a Christian. What signs are there? (John 4:16-20)*

A person may get you to focus on something else rather than their need for Christ (cf. the woman in John 4 – she brought up a controversial subject to deflect attention away from her sin), or they may become antagonistic to the Gospel, or they may just say that it's not for them (but they are happy for you).

*Should we then just back off and give up when a person doesn't seem interested? (John 4:21-26)*

Jesus didn't give up. He answered her question. This led to her realising who Jesus really was, which led to her becoming a Christian. Never give up – it's not over until a person breathes their last.

*What can we learn from Jesus when a person he met didn't respond to the Gospel? (Mark 10:17-22)*

Jesus let the man go. He didn't chase him down or "water down" His call for the man to follow Him.

*What key truth from 1 Pet 3:15 should we apply when a person doesn't respond? Why?*

We must respect them – and that includes their religious views and their free will. If we are not respectful, we will close the door on future possibilities to share with them (don't "Bible bash" them).

*What can we do when a person doesn't respond to the Gospel? (1 Cor 3:6; Matt 9:37-38)*

We can look for other opportunities to "water the seed" in the future; ie, share further the Gospel. We can pray for others to share the Gospel with them. We can also pray that the person's heart might soften and that they may be given understanding from God to believe and respond to the Gospel.

*Read Isa 55:6-11. How does this passage encourage us when people don't respond when we share?*

It reminds us that humans have a free choice to respond to God's gracious offer, and that God's ways are above our ways (including in evangelism), and that God's Word will not return void.

*Read John 6:44. How does this statement by Jesus encourage us when people don't respond?*

No matter how good our presentation of the gospel is, it's only God the Father (by His Spirit) that can enable anyone to respond to Jesus. So, it's not up to us – we must rely on God to move (cf. 2 Cor 4:6).

### **People who are ready – what do you do?**

*How do you know when a person is ready to be a Christian? (Acts 2:37; 16:29-30)*

They understand who Jesus truly is, and that they are sinners in need of Him to save them.

*People may express their need of Christ and still not be ready. Why?*

They desire Jesus for wrong reasons; eg, they want Jesus to keep them healthy, or to give them a ticket to heaven, or to make them prosperous. We aren't ready unless we understand our sin and the cross.

*So when a person is ready, what should we do? (Acts 16:31)*

We must direct them to believe in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, for we are saved .

*What does it mean to believe in Jesus?*

In the Bible, believing is a doing word. It's not just about knowing about Jesus (as demons do; Jam 2:19). Rather, it's doing the following three things in the light of us being sinners and Christ being our Saviour.

**Confess** your sin (1 John 1:9) - we are all sinners; **Call** upon Jesus to save you from your sins (Rom 10:13) – He died on the cross to save us; **Commit** yourself to follow Jesus (Matt 16:24) – He is the Lord.

*What do we learn in Acts 17:30 & John 1:12 in regard to how we are to respond to the Gospel?*

We are to **Repent** of our sins and **Receive** Jesus as Lord and Saviour; it's the same as Confess/Call/Commit.

*It's most important to get a person to pray? What three things should be in the prayer?*

Acknowledgment of sin; Acknowledgement of our need for Jesus; Acknowledgement of Christ being Lord.

*What helpful verses from the Bible can we share with a person who has just received Christ?*

Col 1:13-14/1 John 1:9 • God erases all our sins (past, present and future) through His Son Jesus.

John 3:16/1 John 5:11-13 • God wants us to be sure that we are saved by receiving Jesus.

John 5:24/Rom 8:1 • God grants us life (spiritual & eternal life) immediately, and will never condemn us.

**Summary:** **Let us help people respond rightly to Christ, and to do what we can when they don't.**

## 5.9 Coping with Tough Questions

**Aim:** To help us answer some of the tough questions non-believers ask us when we witness.

**Discuss:** *Have you been confronted with a tough question when sharing the Gospel? How did you go?*

If you have experienced this, you will know how pressured you can feel to come up with a good answer. Christians who share the Gospel with others will run into people who pose tough questions that test their faith and knowledge. This study will help you in answering some of those "tough questions".

### The Example of Jesus

*Jesus was asked tough questions. What can we learn from how He answered? (Matt 22:23-33)*  
Jesus knew the Scriptures well, and through godly wisdom He perceived their intent and was able to give them an appropriate Biblical answer to challenge them in regard to where they stood before God. We also need to grow in our understanding of the Bible, and learn to use the Bible to answer tough questions.

### Tough Questions

*What can we answer when people say "There is no God", or "He's a figment of your imagination"?*

- The order and design of the universe indicates the existence of a Creator (Rom 1:18-20; Psa 19:1-4)
- Most people groups are religious affirming the notion that there is someone greater than us (Eccl 3:11).
- God has revealed Himself to us through Jesus (John 1:18). His teaching, miracles and resurrection, and the way He perfectly fulfilled prophecy affirms the reality and existence of God.
- You could also point to the subjective but real experience of God in your own life.

*Many refuse to believe in God because of the theory of evolution. How would you answer them?*

No "missing link" has ever been found; mankind is very different to any other creature because we have a spiritual make-up (Gen 1:26-27); the perfect fit of animals and plants to their environment; the order of the universe, even down to the atom and the DNA molecule.

*What answer should we give when a person says "If God exists, how can He allow evil"?*

- Even though God made the world perfect (Gen 1:31), when Adam and Eve sinned (Gen 3), they plunged the whole human race into a sinful state, and the world became broken. God never creates evil (Jam 1:13).
- God has chosen not to force us to be perfect and to follow Him. He has given us a free will, from which we can choose to do good and seek Him, or to do evil and hurt others.
- In regard to why God doesn't destroy all evil, we need to appreciate that if He did this, not one person would be left on the face of the earth. But He can and does restrain evil, according to His will.
- God will not always tolerate evil. There will come a day when He will bring in everlasting righteousness.

*How do you answer this: "It doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as you have faith?"*

- It does matter what you believe; it needs to be tied to Truth. God and His Word is Truth (John 17:17).
- Merely believing something doesn't make it true. Christians, on the other hand, base their faith on objective historical truth. We believe the testimony of Jesus is historically true (Luke 1:1-4).
- Sincere people can be sincerely wrong. Faith is only as good as its object. When people have faith in an unworthy object, their faith has no value. Christians centre their faith in God's Word and His Son Jesus.

*Others may say, "Isn't it arrogant to claim that Christianity is the only way?", or "Aren't all religions merely different paths to God?" Again, how would you answer?*

- We cannot brush off the fact that Jesus made it very clear that He's the only way to God (John 14:6).
- People may not like it, but it is the Truth. God has provided one way to be saved (Acts 4:12). Only Jesus saves; He alone came from heaven, He alone died for our sins, He alone rose bodily from the grave.
- Other religions are based on man's attempts to reach God (they are man-made); Christianity is based on God reaching down to man in his helplessness and accomplishing salvation for us through Christ.

*After being confronted with the Gospel and their need to believe in Jesus to be saved, some ask, "What about those who have never heard of Christ? How can God judge them?" What would you say?*

- We can be sure that God will judge everyone fairly and righteously. Besides, what God chooses to do with someone else who has never heard of Christ is irrelevant to that person's case (cf. Matt 16:13-16).
- No one goes to hell for just rejecting Christ. We all deserve hell because we're all sinners (Rom 3:23; Rom 6:23) - rejecting Christ is just one more sin in a long list of other sins (though it is the worst one).

**Conclusion:** *In giving an answer to a tough question, what should we always do? (Mark 13:11)*

Always rely on the Holy Spirit. He will give you the words to say. Also, ask God for wisdom (Jam 1:5).

**Summary:** **Tough questions are to be answered through God's Word and by His Spirit's help.**

## 5.10 Coping With More Tough Questions

**Aim:** To provide further help to be able to answer the tough questions we may be asked.

**Discuss:** *What are some tough questions you asked before you became a Christian? [Discuss]*

Dealing with tough questions is one of the most common reasons why Christians avoid sharing the Gospel. The fear of being asked a question that is hard to answer drives many undercover.

Admittedly, some questions can be intimidating. This study will help us come face-to-face with more tough questions and allow us the opportunity to put together well-reasoned, scriptural responses.

### More Tough Questions

*Many people believe that the Bible is irrelevant. What would your response be?*

- The Bible accurately declares our fallen world and human predicament, as well as our present day before Christ returns. It is also historically accurate, as well as timeless and relevant in declaring how we can be made right with God and be saved (this hasn't changed - 2 Tim 3:15).
- The Bible also gives us God's standards for living. Because God never changes, nor do His standards, therefore, what we have in the Bible is still relevant today (2 Tim 3:16-17).

*Others say, "How can we believe the Bible when it is full of errors?" What would you say?*

- This question is often a smoke screen. If you ask them to point out the errors, they often don't know any.
- The challenge is this: Do we go on hearsay (that's often negative and condemning), or have we read the Bible for ourselves, and seen how it really is inspired of God (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21).
- An honest examination of the Bible will lead us to conclude that it is a very special and unique book.
- It's truly amazing that its forty authors that wrote over a span of 1600 years, should write such a consistent message that ties together perfectly. For example, prophecies written hundreds of years beforehand are fulfilled (eg, the coming of Jesus). There can only be one explanation; its author is God.

*Many argue that if Christianity is true, why is the church full of hypocrites? What would you say?*

- Jesus said that true and false believers would exist side by side until the end (Matt 13:24-30). We need to appreciate that there are people who act and look like Christians, but when they are not with other Christians, they behave disgracefully, because they are not born of the Holy Spirit (John 3:3).
- The church has many religious people who are just like the Pharisees. They look good on the outside, but on the inside are corrupt (Matt 23:23-28). Their presence in the church gives Christianity a bad name.
- But even for a Christian who truly is born of the Spirit, we can do things that make us look like hypocrites (remember "Christians aren't perfect; just forgiven"). We repent, but others only see our sin.
- We need to get people's eyes off the hypocrites, and even our own hypocrisies, and point them to Jesus. He is the only perfect one, without sin or hypocrisy; and He is the One we need to look to, to be saved.

*How would you respond to "If Christianity is true, why do we have all these denominations?"*

- We must admit that there ought not to be all these denominations, as there is only one true church which consists of everyone who has been born again (cf. John 10:16). Sadly, the denominations have come about because of people getting away from God's Word, and/or from demanding their own way.
- What we must look to is God's Word, and not what some particular denomination says. Encourage the person to go to a church that faithfully preaches God's Word, and to believe in Jesus and obey His Word.

*After hearing the Gospel, some will argue, "Isn't it enough that I lead a good life?", or "I'm not as bad as some people?" What answer would you give?*

- It is easy to compare ourselves favourably to obvious sinners who have committed heinous crimes, and to think that God will accept us because we live a "good life". But what God declares about our godness is quite different (Isa 64:6). He finds each one of us guilty of sin, and not good enough (Rom 3:23).
- Why attempt to rely on your own efforts to earn God's favour when He has already provided the only way out of our dilemma? All we need to do is accept God's way of salvation through Christ (Titus 3:4-5).

*How would you respond to this argument: "I believe in God, and have been in the church all my life. Surely God will let me into His heaven."*

- Just like religious Nicodemus, unless we are born again we will not go to heaven (John 3:3,5). This only happens when we believe in Jesus (John 3:36, 5:24). Believing in God and going to church is not enough.

**Concluding Remarks:** Don't ever think you've mastered everything to know to prove Christianity! Be humble and teachable. Make it your goal to discover more effective ways to answer tough questions.

**Summary:** Tough questions are to be answered through God's Word and by His Spirit's help.