

Proclaiming Jesus

Introduction

Evangelism - It's that dreaded word that every Christian knows they should do. Every follower of Jesus is familiar with Jesus' Great Commission to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). If you have been a Christian for some time, chances are you are also familiar with Paul's encouragement in Romans 10:

¹³ For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

¹⁴ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? ¹⁵ And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

- Romans 10:13-15

The instructions to preach the word, share the good news, and tell people about Jesus are plenty in the New Testament. So, if you are like many Christians, you don't need anyone to remind you that you should evangelise. If anything, reminders to evangelise, no matter how gentle they are, only induce the feeling of guilt. Like many Christians, including me, what you need is not the reminder to evangelise. You know you should, and you desire to see many people come to salvation. Instead, what you need is someone to teach you how to do it. Like me, you want to hear some simple instructions on what to do and where to start.

This is what this series aims to do.

Paul says this in his letter to the Colossians.

² Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. ³ At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— ⁴ that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak.

⁵ Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. ⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

- Colossians 4:2-6

One can discern four components of evangelism from the above passage:

1. The mystery of Christ - the message that we should declare
2. Prayer - the plea to God to make our evangelism effective
3. Walking in wisdom - the way we conduct towards non-Christians
4. Speaking graciously - the way we communicate with non-Christians

We have divided this series into four studies looking at each of the above components. Each study has some discussion questions followed by practical applications. We hope that this study guide will not just become reminders, but they are so practical that you become confident of getting started in evangelism. We hope that as you put what you learn into practice, you will see friends and family members coming to the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

If you are not a Christian and are reading this, chances are you are part of a life group, and you are on a journey to determine whether Christianity is for you. Please allow me to be honest. We want you to become a Christian. We want you to know and experience the forgiveness, security, salvation and eternal life that comes only through Jesus Christ. That is why we want to learn to share the good news of Jesus Christ better and more effectively. We don't want you to feel forced into becoming a follower of Christ. However, we hope and pray that one day, you will know the amazing grace that Jesus offers to you and accept Jesus as your Lord and Saviour.

In Jesus,

Sandy Citro

STUDY 1

OUR MESSAGE

As Christians (or even non-Christians), we often hear the word 'the gospel'. To some people, it means the first four books of the New Testament. To others, it means the life and death of Jesus Christ. To some others, it refers to a specific genre of music. It means good news to some others, even though they are not sure what is so good about the news. And to many others, it is a meaningless and useless word.

In Colossians 3:4, Paul says, "At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak."

So, before we even think about telling people the good news of Jesus Christ, we need to know first what the gospel is and what that 'mystery of Christ' is so that we can communicate it clearly.

What is the good news?

1. What are the essential points that we need to communicate if we are to tell someone what the good news of Jesus is about? Make a list of them.

2. Check out Acts 3:11-26 and 17:22-31, noting the different audiences in each case and the main points of the message. What things are common? What is different? What do you learn from this?

3. Think about the different people God has put alongside you to hear the message of Jesus.
 - a. What has God already revealed to them?
 - b. Where should you start in sharing the gospel?
 - c. What is the best way to communicate the essentials of the good news?

4. Jesus and the apostles called on people to respond to the message. What are the elements of that call? (See Mark 1:14-15; Acts 20:21). Discuss what these actions meant in that context and what they mean in our context. What might they mean for the people God has given you to share the good news with (See Q3)?

Exercise

If you are not a Christian, share with the group what comes to your mind when you hear the word 'the gospel' or 'the good news of Jesus Christ. What is the main message that you have heard about Jesus?

If you are a Christian, here are a couple of outlines of the message of the good news:

1. God, People, God, what if I don't, what if I do

(suitable for the person who knows little of the message of the gospel)

- God is the loving ruler and owner of the world and loves us and wants the best for us.
- People everywhere (including us) have rejected his loving rule, either actively (by telling him to get out of our lives) or passively (by just ignoring him). The penalty for this is eternal death.
- God sent Jesus, his Son, to pay the penalty we deserve for rejecting God. Jesus did this by dying in our place on the cross. God calls on us to turn back to him and accept what Jesus has done for us and live in trust in him and his ways.
- What if I don't? I will have to answer to God for the way I have lived my life. I will be cut off from God forever.
- What if I do? God accepts me as His child and forgives me. He gives me eternal life and a whole new start living under the loving direction of Jesus.

2. Do versus Done

(suitable for the person who relies on religious/good deeds to save them)

- Religion is about Do - If I do enough good deeds, rituals, etc., God will be pleased, and he will accept me in the end. It's all about TRYING.
- The message of Jesus is about DONE - Admit that I cannot live the life that totally pleases God. Believe that Jesus has done all that is necessary to make me right with God through his perfect life, sacrificial death, and life-giving resurrection. Confess my need of him. It's all about TRUSTING.

There are many other good news outlines that you might have heard. Think and pray about which outline might be useful with the friends in Q3.

Share with the group what aspects of the good news resonated with you when you became a Christian. During the week, use them to write your personal testimony and be ready to share it in study 4.

Pray

¹For I want you to know how great a struggle I have for you and for those at Laodicea and for all who have not seen me face to face, ²that their hearts may be encouraged, being knit together in love, to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and the knowledge of God's mystery, which is Christ, ³in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. - Colossians 2:1–3

¹⁶For 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. - Romans 1:16

Pray that we will increase in our understanding and the knowledge of the good news of Jesus Christ, become more assured of our salvation in Christ, and grow in our confidence in the power of the gospel to save everyone.

STUDY 2

OUR PRAYER

Imagine a scene of an action movie.

The heroes are fighting with and surrounded by the enemies and seem to be losing the battle. However, when you think that all hope is lost, all of a sudden, one of the heroes unleashes the secret weapon and defeats all or most of the enemies with one massive strike and turns the battle in the heroes' favour. Then, when the heroes have won, frustratingly, you ask, "Why on earth didn't he start with that?" or "Why didn't she use that from the beginning?"

Similarly, when it comes to evangelism, we have a secret 'weapon' that we sometimes forget to use from the beginning. That secret weapon is none other than *Prayer*.

In Colossians 4:2-3, Paul writes, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison— that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak." Paul is clear that his evangelism effort will bear no fruit without prayer.

So, in this study, we will look at the role of prayers in our evangelism. We hope that we will be more earnest in our prayer as we want more people to be saved.

Why do we pray?

1. Read 2 Corinthians 4:3–4 and Acts 26:16–18. Why is prayer crucial to our evangelism effort?
2. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in our conversion? (see John 3:5-8 and 1 Corinthians 2:11–14). How does this encourage us to pray as we share the good news with others?
3. Read Acts 2:37–41, Joel 2:32 and John 1:12–13.
 - a. What do those passages tell us about God's role and our role in someone's conversion?
 - b. What does it mean to our prayer?

What do we pray for?

4. According to the following passages, what or whom should we pray for?
 - a. Colossians 4:2-4
 - b. Ephesians 6:17-19
 - c. Acts 2:39
 - d. Matthew 9:37-38
 - e. 1 Corinthians 2:1-5
 - f. Titus 3:5-6
 - g. 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Application

If you are a Christian, think of three friends who are not followers of Jesus. In the following tables, write their names and specific prayer points that you commit to pray regularly for each of them in light of the discussion above.

	Name	Prayer Points
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
2		<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none">•••

If you are not a Christian, the fact that you are reading this means that you are interested in Christianity. At least, despite your questions and objections about Jesus, you are not entirely against Christianity. We believe that God hears all our prayers, even those uttered by those who are not yet believers.

Imagine that you are now sitting face to face with God. What would you say to Him? What questions or frustrations, or requests would you like to bring to Him? We invite you to write them down in the following space.

My Prayer

Pray

In your group, pray for one another and bring the above prayers to God right now.

Finally, remind one another to pray the above prayers regularly.

May God be pleased to bring many of your unbelieving friends to salvation for your joy and His glory.

Application

If you are a Christian:

- Check your diary - how much intentional time have you allocated in the next two months to people who need to know Jesus?

- What activities, groups, etc., are you involved in that help you connect with 'outsiders'? How can you grow in this?

If you are not a Christian:

- How will you spend time intentionally to know Jesus? Is there anyone in your life that can help you know Jesus more intentionally?

Pray

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. ¹² Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. - 1 Peter 2:11–12

Pray for one another - for a good and clear witness to Jesus through our actions, and for God to work in our friends to bring them to faith.

STUDY 4

OUR SPEECH

The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ. What do we do with news? We declare it. We proclaim it. And there is no other way but to do it with words. Paul says in Romans 10:17, “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” So, when we talk about evangelism, at some point (or multiple points), we must tell people the good news of Jesus Christ, share how it has been relevant to your life, and show how it is also relevant to everyone’s life.

However, does it mean we must repeatedly declare the message on the streets? Although there is merit to street evangelism, surely we don’t want to become street evangelists who preach hell and condemnation to any passers-by.

Having instructed the Colossians to walk in wisdom towards outsiders and make the best use of the time, Paul tells them this:

Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. - Colossians 4:6

The message is crucial. However, the manners of the messengers with which the message is shared are not less important. So, this study focuses on how we should speak and share the good news.

Discussion

1. “*Let your speech always be gracious...*”
 - How would you define ‘gracious’? What are the characteristics of gracious speech? (See also Proverbs 16:24; 15:4, 26; 12:18)

 - How do you know when your word towards others is gracious?

2. “*Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt...*”
 - What does ‘seasoned with salt’ mean? (See also Ephesians 4:29-32; Colossians 3:8-10)

 - How do you know when your word is seasoned with salt?

3. "... so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."
- What attitude must we have when responding to people's questions about Christianity? (See also 1 Peter 3:15; Proverbs 15:1-2, 23)

4. Christian apologetics can be defined as the intellectual defence of the truth of the Christian religion.¹ It is the branch of theology concerned with the defence or proof of Christianity.²

Discuss what the role of Apologetics in our evangelism is. (See also 1 Peter 3:15-16; Acts 19:8-10)

Application

5. Please rate yourself in the following areas (some of them may not be applicable if you are not a Christian)

	0 = Never. 5 = Always
I am slow to judge or rebuke others when they share their issues or problems.	0 1 2 3 4 5
People seem to feel comfortable sharing their deep heart issues with me.	0 1 2 3 4 5
People love to talk to me because they feel strengthened and encouraged by me.	0 1 2 3 4 5
In my conversation with others, I talk less about myself and more about them.	0 1 2 3 4 5
People are asking me about my faith.	0 1 2 3 4 5
I feel confident answering people's questions about my faith.	0 1 2 3 4 5
I feel confident sharing my personal testimony with others.	0 1 2 3 4 5

What do they tell you about yourself? What will you do to move your score one point to the right in each of the above points?

¹ <https://www.britannica.com/topic/apologetics>

² <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/apologetics>

6. If you are a Christian, what questions do your friends ask you about your faith?
If you are not a Christian, what question do you have about Christianity?
Take time to address one or more of those questions in your group.

7. If you are a Christian, share the personal testimony that you have prepared from study 1.

Pray

"I thank my God always when I remember you in my prayers, because I hear of your love and of the faith that you have toward the Lord Jesus and for all the saints, and I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective for the full knowledge of every good thing that is in us for the sake of Christ."

- Philemon 4-6 -

Commit to God what you have learned about evangelism from this series.

Pray that we will make the most of all opportunities to share the good news with others.

Pray that as we share our faith with others, we too will grow in our full knowledge of Christ.