

# Evangelism for the (sometimes) faint hearted



**WoW 2019**

## **Evangelism for the (sometimes) faint hearted!**

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- 1) God's role and our role**
- 2) What is the gospel?**
- 3) Why are we faint-hearted?**
- 4) Sharing your testimony**
- 5) Answering big questions**
- 6) Being intentional**

### **Introduction**

Welcome to this short course put together with the aim of helping us in our evangelism. For the purposes of this course, the presumption is that we all believe that God wants us to speak to our friends about Jesus. We all know we should do it, and maybe we actually want to do it, but many of us just find it hard, for one reason or another. How do we get on to the topic in a way that isn't weird? What do we say if we do get on to the topic? What if we get asked a question we can't answer? What do we do if they're not interested? What do we do if they are???

Over the course of the next 6 weeks the aim is to think together about how we can bolster ourselves and each other to be involved in this work the Lord has given us to do. Some of us have been trying to speak of Jesus for years while others of us may not have told anyone outside of church that we're a Christian yet. But as we speak together of the highs and lows, as we share ways we have seen the Lord at work, and as we pray together for a breakthrough with those around us who don't know Jesus, the hope is that we will be more equipped and more emboldened to share the life giving gospel with those the Lord has put in our paths.

It would be great to share a few names of people we would love to see come to know Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Over the next 6 weeks pray for them together in your WoW groups.

“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.” Colossians 4:3-4 (ESV)

**Week 1:**

**God's role and our role in evangelism - who does what?**

- 1) What are some of the reasons people who have heard the gospel don't become Christians?

**2 Corinthians 4: 1-6 (ESV)**

(The context of 2 Corinthians 4 - Paul is making a defence of his ministry amidst accusations of coercing and tricking people into becoming Christians)

**1** Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. **2** But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. **3** And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. **4** In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. **5** For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. **6** For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

- 2) From this passage what does Paul say is the reason people do not believe the gospel? Who is the god of this world?

- 3) In what ways do we see that our friends or family or colleagues are blinded to the truth of the gospel (or that we were pre conversion).

4) How then does anyone become a Christian? What is God's role in this?

5) What does Paul say his role was? What is his attitude as he does this? Why is Paul's manner important in the context?

6) What is the danger if we get God's role wrong? What is the danger if we get our role wrong? (What we teach, how we teach it etc)

7) How will these truths encourage us to persevere in evangelism?

Pray: Spend some time praying for specific friends, that God would shine in their hearts as we hold out the gospel to them.

## **Week 2**

### **What is the gospel?**

When we talk about sharing the gospel with someone, what do we actually mean? 'The gospel' is such a complex and multi-faceted truth that it's hard to reduce it to a simple sentence.

In fact, God himself doesn't seem to think that is the best way for us to understand it - sadly there is no verse that says "And thus says the Lord: Here is everything you need to know about the gospel...".

So while we don't want to be reductionist, it can be helpful to have a summary in our minds as we talk to people, to ensure we get the most important bits across. There are several well known gospel summaries, all of which have their strengths and weaknesses... so feel free to come up with your own! But let's think together about one of those outlines to help us think about the gospel we share.

- 1) In groups of two or three take 2 minutes (set a timer) to tell each other the gospel.
- 2) As a larger group, discuss what was helpful in what you heard? Were there any important aspects of the gospel that were not included? How hard did you find giving a summary? Why?

Split into twos for the following questions (3 - 7) and divide the questions out among the group.

- 3) Look at the following passages : Genesis 1:26-31, Psalm 8 What do these verses tell us about who has authority over our world? What kind of ruler is he? How does he exert that authority?
- 4) Look at the following verses: Genesis 3: 1-13, Psalm 14. What do these verses tell us about how mankind has responded to God's authority? Why is this such a tragedy?

- 5) Look at the following verses: Psalm 9:7-10, Psalm 103: 7-13, Acts 4:5 - 12. What do these verses tell us about God's response to man's rebellion?
  
- 6) Look at the following verses: 2 Thessalonians 1:7b - 10. What do these verses tell us will happen to those who do not submit to Jesus' authority?
  
- 7) Look at the following verses: John 3:16. What does this verse tell us about what will happen to those who do submit to Jesus' authority?

Draw back together and share what you have seen in these verses.

Using the aide

**God** (what did God do?)

**Man** (what did man do?)

**God** (how did God respond)

**What if you don't?** (what happens if you don't accept the gospel?)

**What if you do?** (what happens if you do accept the gospel?)

to remind you of what we have seen, practise giving the gospel outline in your groups of two or three.

If you have time, flesh it out using examples, illustrations etc.

Pray: Pray that the Lord would help us to be clear on the gospel and that he would give us many opportunities to explain it to those around us.



2 Corinthians 2:12-17 (ESV)

**12** When I came to Troas to preach the gospel of Christ, even though a door was opened for me in the Lord, **13** my spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia. **14** But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. **15** For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, **16** to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? **17** For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

What are the different reactions Paul expected to see to his preaching of the gospel? What is Paul's response to that? How extreme are the responses? Have we seen people respond in this way when the gospel is preached?

- 5) What are the temptations when we face rejection? Why is this so dangerous? Why are we so tempted to act this way? What does this show about our concern for ourselves? Our concern for the lost? Our concern for Jesus' glory?
  
- 6) What is the 'worst case scenario' reaction from our friends that we fear we would face if we spoke about Jesus to a friend? What truths from God's word can we use to help each other to
  - a) have a right expectation when it comes to people's reactions? (e.g. Mark 4, Matthew 10:16)
  - b) speak about him anyway? (e.g. 1 Peter:14-17, Mark 8:34 - 38)
  - c) help ourselves deal with any rejection we may face? (e.g. Romans 8:17, 1 Peter 5:10)

Read Acts 4:29 (see God's answer in v31!) Pray together for the spirit to enable us to speak the word of God with boldness.



- 4) From what was said, what difference do you think a non-Christian would think the gospel would make in someone's life? Are there other things we would want to include?

(Remember, your testimony is your story, so we don't want to say things that are not true, just so we can say everything we would want to. Rather we want to think if there are ways of telling your story that would present the gospel most clearly to your friends)

- 5) Have there been times when you have been able to share your testimony with a friend? How did that come about?
- 6) If a friend never asks "how did you become a Christian?" how might we share at least part of what God has done or has been doing in our lives? E.g responding to stuff that is going on in their lives, when they notice you have different priorities to the world around you, when they comment on news items etc. What kind of things might we want to say?

Pray. Give thanks to God for the ways he has been at work in us, when we first became Christians and in the days since. Pray for opportunities to share some of that with friends and that that would point them to Jesus.

## **Week 5**

### **Answering big questions.**

This can be one of our biggest fears when we think about speaking about Jesus with a friend. What if they ask us a question we don't know how to answer. What if that is our one chance to speak to them about Jesus and we mess it up? Well, don't panic!

Firstly, the Bible has answers to their questions, whatever the question is (they may not like the answers, but that's a different issue!). Secondly, there is nothing new under the sun and it is very likely that their question has been asked, and therefore answered, before. Thirdly, forewarned is forearmed. We (hopefully) wouldn't go into an interview unprepared, and yet we can often not be fully prepared to answer some of these tough questions that our friends might ask. This will take some work but it is definitely worth it!

We're not going to actually discuss the answers to any of these commonly asked questions now - there are countless resources (talks/books/blogs/articles etc) available on the St Helen's website and elsewhere giving faithful, biblical answers. Make the most of these! (see below for some resources) What we will discuss is methods for answering any question our friends might ask about the Christian faith.

- 1) What are some of the big questions that often arise? In what scenarios have our friends asked these questions?

Feel free to pick one of these questions as a case study for the following questions.

- 2) When someone has asked one of these "big questions", how can we establish if they are asking the question because they genuinely want to hear the answer, rather than, for example, trying to catch us out or oppose the gospel? (E.g. if their question is 'Why does God allow suffering?', what has led up to the question in the conversation? Is this part of a philosophical argument they are making? What do you know about their view of the gospel already? What tone of voice did they use?)

- 3) If it is a genuine question, how can we begin to get an understanding of what they think the answer is? Why might this be helpful to do? If they're not genuinely seeking an answer, how might we take the conversation forward? (E.g. asking what do they think God should do about suffering? If they're not genuinely seeking an answer, you could ask if they are prepared to look into the gospel more if you are able to provide an answer to this question etc)
  
- 4) How can we discern what has prompted this question? (e.g a life situation, responding to something in the news or something they have heard someone say)(e.g. we could comment on a particular news item, explaining that when something like this happens, it often makes people question God. Alternatively we could share a time when we have faced suffering and had to think about what it says about God. These may encourage your friend to share their own experience)
  
- 5) When answering someone's question, what pitfalls would we want to avoid? (e.g. preaching at them, being insensitive to what they think or to suffering they may be facing etc)
  
- 6) How can we ensure that the answers we give come from God, not us? How can we answer in a way that points to the gospel? (e.g. opening the Bible and taking someone to John 11, showing them Jesus' response to suffering, rather than sharing our own thoughts)
  
- 7) What are some of the next steps you might take when you have answered a friend's question? What might you say to do that? (ask would they like to understand more of how their question fits into the bible story line/see more of what God says about this issue etc)

Pray. Give thanks to God that his word tells us everything we need to know. Pray we would be faithful & sensitive as we answer some of the big questions our friends ask.

**Resources:**

**Why does God allow suffering?**

Passages to turn to: Luke 13:1-7, John 11, Rev 21:1-8

‘The hard question of suffering’, Joe Tandy (3 minute read):

[www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/article/1661/](http://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/article/1661/)

‘Why suffering?’, Roger Carswell [www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/54888/](http://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/54888/)

‘Trusting God even when life hurts’, Jerry Bridges.

**Is there only one way to God?**

Passages to turn to: John 1:1-18, John 14:6-7

‘Is Jesus the only way to get to heaven?’ Dan Gomes,(3 minute read)

[www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/article/1664/](http://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/article/1664/)

‘Can we be sure of Christ’s exclusive claims?’ Dick Lucas

[www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/4009/](http://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/4009/)

‘But don’t all religions lead to God?’ Michael Green

**“Surely I’m good enough”**

Passages to turn to: Psalm 14, John 3:1-15 (several technical points that are a bit more tricky but captures the simple point that one must be born again), 1 John 1:8, Mark 7:14-23

‘How good is good enough?’, William Taylor

[www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/51443/](http://www.st-helens.org.uk/resources/talk/51443/)

The Christianity Explored Book and website have very helpful answers to many of the big questions we or our friends might ask -

[www.christianityexplored.org](http://www.christianityexplored.org) (Tough Questions section) as does the little book ‘If you could ask God one question’ by Barry Cooper and Paul Williams.

**Week 6**  
**Being intentional**

The hope is that these last 5 weeks have been helpful as we've chatted together about our evangelism. As we have shared stories and spurred one another on, the big prayer is that we are more emboldened and equipped to go out into the world and speak to those around us about Jesus.

So what now?

Being intentional with our friends as we think about evangelism can be massively beneficial - it's too important not to think seriously about. What do we mean by being intentional? Well, simply thinking through where they are at, and what the next step you would take with them as we hold the gospel out to them.

(Caveat: Remember session one - it is God who unveils hearts and helps people to see who Jesus is, but we do have a role to play!)

So, take a few minutes on your own to jot down 4 or 5 people who you would love to put their trust in Jesus. It might be a close friend, a distant relative, the person who serves you in your local supermarket or delivers your groceries, an old colleague, a neighbour...

Name	What stage are they at?	Next steps?

## **What stage are they at when it comes to knowing Jesus?**

Here are a few questions that might help as you think that through. (Not an exhaustive list!)

Do they know you're a Christian? Do they understand what that means (i.e. not just that you go to church, are Christian, rather than Muslim, that it means you're a good person etc) What do they make of that?

Have you ever had a conversation about Christianity with them? If so what have they been most willing to talk about? Have you shared any of your own testimony with them?

Do they believe in a God? Is it the God of the Bible? Are they a devout follower of another religion? Have they ever read the Bible as an adult?

Do they have specific objections to the gospel (e.g. any one of the big questions we discussed in session 5 - or something else) Have you discussed those objections with them?

Are there specific lifestyle issues which may prevent them from wanting to know more about Christianity or even make them hostile to it?

How optimistic are you about whether they will be receptive to the gospel? Why do you think that?

## **Next steps**

For each individual then, think through what a potential next step might be. So, for example, if they don't know you are a Christian yet, the next step might be to let them know.

Below are a few suggestions (also not exhaustive)

Ask if you can take them for a coffee as you'd love to know more about what they believe

Ask if you can take them for a coffee and tell them what it means that you're a Christian

Ask if they know what you believe as a Christian! And then asking if you can clarify anything they may have misunderstood.

Invite them to an evangelistic event at church. Suggest you go for dinner afterwards and ask what they made of what they heard.

Give them a book/article/link to a talk which tackles their particular question - or read/listen to it with them.

Invite them to your Bible study group/Christianity Explored/Church on Sunday

Invite them to spend time with you and your Christian friends

Speak more openly about what difference being a Christian makes as you bring up children/think about relationships/spend money/view the world/plan for the future/deal with suffering/respond to the news etc

Ask if they would read a gospel with you.

Follow up on something they had previously said explaining that you've been thinking about it more and would love to chat about it again.

Each share one of the people you have been thinking about, and what your next steps might be and pray for each other the courage and the opportunity to take that step. And share with the group when you see answers to those prayers - it helps us all to keep persevering in this wonderful work that God has involved us in.