

Life Group Leader Guide #24

September 3, 2017

Sharing the Gospel

No Christian practice strikes more fear and anxiety in most believers than the spiritual discipline of evangelism. Just say the word and immediately visions of awkward conversations, uneasy looks, the rejection of friends and doors slammed in your face come to mind. While we understand that it is something of a responsibility for all Christians—that is, IF we take the gospel accounts of the Great Commission seriously (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8)—it is often a neglected if not outrightly rejected aspect of our Christian faith. That raises an interesting question. Why would otherwise faithful Christian people be so negligent of a singular discipline? Donald Whitney in his book *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* points out the fact that he knows many Christians who would say they feel confident in their practices of serving, giving and reading their Bibles, but not a single one who would say, “Yes, I’m doing all I kind to evangelize.” What about you? What would you say? Are you doing all you can to share the gospel?

Among those who are hesitant or even unwilling to engage in evangelism, the reason -by far- is a fear of not doing a good job. We tend to avoid those things which we don’t feel especially good at. Some are intimidated by the seriousness of it- we realize in any evangelistic conversation heaven and hell may be at stake for that person. That’s intimidating. Many feel simply inadequately prepared to express their own beliefs coherently and do not want to become a stumbling block for someone. There are even some, I am sure, that are hesitant to approach evangelistic conversations because they are afraid their own witness is not up to standard it ought to be. And some are simply fearful of social rejection. Whatever the reason, the sharing of one’s faith is not only a helpful Christian practice, it is a vital one. Nothing is more exhilarating than talking to someone about Jesus and seeing them come to faith for themselves! The angels in heaven rejoice every time that happens and to know that you were a small part of that process is the best feeling in the world. What’s more, it is a command of our Lord’s that we make it a priority in our lives (maybe even THE priority of our lives) to make disciples. Simply put, disciples make disciples. That’s God’s plan.

In tonight’s discussion, you might begin in the Great Commission texts and explore the different aspects of each one... how Jesus describes the mission of the disciples after he has returned to heaven. Then observe how this was carried out in the lives of the apostles in the story of Acts. I’ve always been amazed at how Jesus took a rag tag group of disciples- none of whom had any religious training- and changed the world. By the end of Acts 2 there are over three thousand more believers than there were previously... and they were just getting started. Could the same thing happen today? Finally, you discuss your own road to faith. What events and/or people

contributed to your coming to an understanding of the gospel? What was your conversion like? Often, the most compelling thing you can share with another person is your own personal story. In our tradition we have tended to shy away from using terms like “testimony” or “witnessing” but isn’t that exactly what Jesus told us to do? (cf. Acts 1:8) Isn’t that what the Samaritan woman did after her encounter with Jesus? (cf. John 4:28-30)

Discussion: re-read **Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15; John 20:21; Acts 1:8**

1. What do each of these “Great Commission” texts have in common? How are they different? What are the different emphases in these texts?
2. How does Jesus describe the scope of evangelism in these texts? Who is to hear? How far are they to go?
3. Often, we know we must evangelize, we just don’t know how to get started. How does Luke’s account in Acts 1:8 help? Where did Jesus tell his disciples to start?
4. Should the scope of our evangelistic fervor stop locally? How far does Jesus tell us to take it?

Read: John 1:44-49

1. Philip was one of the first disciples to get excited about Jesus. What was the first thing he wanted to do after discovering Jesus for himself?
2. Notice his ‘witness’ to Nathanael. What did he tell him? How did he say it?
3. Would you say it was more of a lecture or an invitation? What does this tell us about how we approach evangelistic conversations with people- especially people who may be skeptical.
4. How would you describe Nathanael’s level of openness? Was he open or skeptical? How do you know?
5. Brainstorm some other “conversation starters” you might use to invite others to come and see for themselves...

Discuss the Obstacles to Evangelism...

1. What do you see are the greatest obstacles to evangelism today? Broadly as well as locally here in Lincoln County.
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, how well would you rate Washington Street in our evangelistic efforts locally, nationally & abroad?
3. Using the same scale, how well would you rate your own personal efforts?
4. What could this church do to encourage & equip the members here for greater evangelism? What would you personally like to see? What would help you?
5. Through the years, we have held many ‘seminars’, ‘classes’ and heard ‘sermons’ on evangelism. Why do you think these have fallen short of equipping more people to go out and do it for themselves?

Challenge: Strike up a conversation with someone this week with the intent of talking to them about Jesus Christ and sharing your personal testimony with him/ her.