



ADULT CONNECTION



SEPTEMBER 2017

EVANGELISM

Share the Good News

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

The primary purpose of the church is to make disciples, Jesus commissioned the church to replicate itself. The first step in the process, and arguably the most important, is evangelism. This is the intentional effort of believers to share the message of the Gospel with those who are lost. There is not a person that I know, that if they had the cure for cancer would hold it silent and continue to allow thousands of people die of this horrible disease. No, on the contrary, there would be a broadcast around the world that we have a cure. We have the cure for the empty, sin-sick soul and it is the message of the Christ and Him crucified. It is our mission to share this message and evangelize the world with the gospel ...

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God's Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Paul reminds us in Romans 10:14 "How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?" We are all preachers in the sense of proclaiming the good news of Christ.

-Blessings
Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

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September 3, 2017

But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and



*You shall be
witnesses to Me*

in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Understanding Evangelism

Acts 1:1-11

Focal Verse:

“But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

Acts 1:8

Introduce

As you read this story, do you identify with William in any way? As he knocked on the door to a suburban home, William's heart raced and he secretly hoped that no one would answer so that he could just leave a door hanger with information about the church and not have to say anything. A thousand



questions ran through his head while he waited for a response. "Although this family had attended worship on Sunday, should I ask them about their relationship with Christ," he pondered. William certainly didn't want to do anything to upset or offend them. Hearing movement inside, William began to panic thinking, "What if they ask a question that I can't answer? I'm not trained for this, I didn't go to seminary, and I'm certainly not one of the ministerial staff paid to do this." He had attended church with his parents ever since he could remember and had begun a relationship with Christ at the age of ten. He now leads his own family to serve in church, but as footsteps approached he seemed to forget everything in the Scripture that he had ever heard or learned.

The slot on the peephole grew dim so he knew that someone was peering through it. Perspiration began to bead on his forehead as the door slowly opened. Slightly stuttering, William said, "M-m-mr. Smith, I'm William Tell from First Baptist Church Fort Worth." As he paused to take a deep breath, the mint that he had hastily taken clinked against his teeth, but he continued, "We were glad your family joined us on Sunday. I just came by

Introduce

to see if you or your family had any questions or prayer needs.” Mr. Smith smiled and asked William if he wanted to come inside to talk.

After conversing for a while, William felt the prompting of the Holy Spirit to ask: “If Jesus were standing here and asked why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?” A bit bewildered, Mr. Smith looked down and said, “I try to be a good person and take my family to church.” Without hesitation, William boldly asked if he could share what the Bible says. He had written verses in the front of his Bible for evangelism so he started with those. At the end, a surprised Mr. Smith thanked William for sharing the truth in a way that he had never heard previously even though he had gone to many different churches. That night Mr. Smith asked Christ to come into his heart.

As he left the Smith home, William was filled with joy and wondered what had come over him. How did he change from being totally gripped with fear to sharing the gospel boldly? Then Jesus’ words to His disciples popped into his head: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses” (Acts 1:8). When we share the gospel, we should remember that God has equipped us and given us His Spirit so that we may be bold in our proclamation. We must trust that God will give us the words to say and the wisdom to speak rather than fearing that we may say the wrong things. The only thing required of us to share the gospel boldly is to be a willing vessel and tool whom Christ can use.

Key
Question

What prevents
Christians from sharing
the gospel?

THE FOUNDATION FOR EVANGELISM:

The book of Acts opens with a reminder to **Theophilus** that the **account** of Jesus' deeds and teaching didn't end with His death, but rather it continues because of His resurrection (v. 1). The Gospel of Luke ends with Jesus ascending (i.e. **taken up**) into heaven after having appeared to His disciples over a period of **forty days** ([Luke 24:51-53](#)). Because the resurrection, appearances, and ascension of Jesus are the foundation

for our belief, Luke repeats the **account** for added emphasis here in the book of Acts. Thus, Acts begins with the disciples gathered in Jerusalem awaiting the promise of the Holy Spirit who would empower them to continue the ministry of Jesus through the proclamation of the gospel.



Luke reminds **Theophilus** about all that Jesus began to do and teach (v. 1). Although Jesus taught on a variety of subjects, He primarily focused on two: 1) the salvation that would come through His death and 2) how to live according to God's holy standards. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus prepares His disciples for the necessity of His impending death and offering hope with the prediction of His resurrection. Jesus based His teaching on the Scriptures which foretold of His purpose as the Messiah. For this reason, Jesus declares, "Thus it is written, and thus

it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” ([Luke 24:46-47](#)). Long before Jesus had become flesh, God planned at the foundation of the world the means necessary to restore sinful mankind and redeem His creation through the sacrificial death of the Messiah. Thus, this plan was not spur of the moment—concocted haphazardly—but one that God had detailed in His Word centuries before it came to pass.

Why is it important to show people in God’s Word the plan of salvation when we are witnessing to them?

Question
1

Therefore, the foundation of the gospel centers on the person and work of Jesus Christ in two extraordinary events: His death and resurrection. In Acts 1:3, Luke doesn’t use the typical words to denote Jesus’ crucifixion or death, but refers to the event as **His suffering**; likewise, he characterizes the resurrection as **presenting Himself alive**. These two elements, therefore, must be presented together because salvation cannot occur from one without the other. A perfect sacrifice had to be offered in our place to pay the debt of sin that we owe through His crucifixion on the cross. If Jesus merely died and remains buried in the tomb today, then His teaching would have been false and His mission would have ended in tragedy and failure ([1 Cor 15:13-16](#)). The story, however, doesn’t end with His death but rather begins with His resurrection as the triumphant declaration that He as the Messiah has provided life to all who will

accept it ([Rom 1:1-4](#)). These two events are the cornerstone upon which our faith must be built. Trying to build upon any other foundation will ultimately lead to disaster and defeat.

On what other foundations do people try to build today? How can we reorient them to the foundation which is Jesus Christ?

Question
2

In addition, Luke confirms the validity of the resurrection by recounting the **many infallible proofs** that Jesus offered (v. 3). Jesus' appearances happened over a period of **forty days** to various groups including His disciples ([Luke 24:36](#)), doubters like Thomas ([John 20:24-29](#)), and unbelievers like His half-brother James ([1 Cor 15:7](#)).



These appearances validate that the tomb was indeed empty and that Jesus was alive—they are not hallucinations as some people have tried to claim. In fact, we can very easily dispel the notion they were hallucinations by looking at the facts. First, the disciples were in mourning and didn't expect Jesus to rise from the dead—they didn't have the mental expectation that they would see the Messiah again even though He had taught them during His ministry. Second, Jesus appeared to more than one person at a time (including 120 and 500) in which a group of people would never all have the exact same hallucination ([1 Cor 15:5-6](#)). Third, the appearances abruptly stopped at the end of **forty days**. If they were only hallucinations, why would they stop after such a random period of time?

Instruct

Fourth, if they were mere hallucinations, Jesus' enemies should have been able to produce His body to quell the talk of resurrection because He was buried at a well-known and guarded tomb. Thus, the resurrection is verifiable based on eyewitness testimony as historical fact.

What kind of proof can we offer for the resurrection?

Question
3

Acts 1:4-8

THE COMMAND TO EVANGELIZE:

After reminding **Theophilus** of the content of the gospel from Jesus' teaching, Luke recalls the commands that Jesus had given to His followers. With the disciples **assembled** in Jerusalem per His command, Jesus emphasizes that they should not **depart but wait** for the **Holy Spirit** which God had **promised** them (v. 4). Jesus details the coming of the Spirit in [John 14](#) where He promises "not to leave them as orphans," but to send the Spirit in His place to remind them of His teaching ([John 14:18, 26](#)). He continues to explain the nature of the Holy Spirit's presence in our lives by differentiating between His and **John** the Baptist's baptism (v. 5). **John** used **water** which is merely an outward sign of an inward change, signifying that we have died to our old way of life and been forgiven and cleansed from our sins ([Rom 6:3-7](#)). Jesus, however, **baptizes** with the **Holy Spirit** who transforms us from the inside out. **Water** has no ability to change us if we do not already have a relationship with Christ; therefore, when we begin our relationship with Christ, we receive the **Holy Spirit** who not only marks us as a child of

God, but also transforms our hearts so that the works we do outwardly testify that we belong to God. Thus, the Spirit serves as an outward sign to those around us that God is present in our lives and ministering through us—this is borne out in [Acts 2](#) at Pentecost where Peter and the disciples proclaimed the gospel and saw 3000 saved and added to the church.

In what ways do we see the presence of the Spirit manifested in our lives?

Question
4

Like at many points during Jesus' ministry, the disciples were pre-occupied with their own thoughts and desires. Instead of focusing on Jesus' instruction about the **Holy Spirit**, they were interested in when He would **restore** the earthly **kingdom to Israel**, making her an independent and sovereign nation free from the authority of Rome (v. 6). The disciples had missed the point that Jesus' kingdom is spiritual, not physical, and offers eternal life to those who accept His gift of salvation. Consequently, the coming of the Spirit would not help them wage physical warfare, but a spiritual battle to impart the message of the gospel. As a result, Jesus must refocus their attention on the purpose to which they have been called—testifying to the life-changing power of the gospel. Therefore, Jesus tells them **it is not for them to know the times**, but God in His **authority** will set the time that earthly kingdoms will cease and His **kingdom** will come in full (v. 7). Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has already set in motion the full arrival of the **kingdom** with His Son's return; in the meantime, however, we are to remain focused on His kingdom's business which is sharing the gospel faithfully.

Instruct

Unfortunately, we often find ourselves in the shoes of the disciples whereby we have lost focus on our primary responsibility. Probably as a student, every one of us has had an experience in class where we were daydreaming and the teacher suddenly called upon us to see if we were paying attention. As the teacher asks us to recall what has just been said, we enter a tirade of unrelated information far from the topic at hand for which we are then chastised. As Christians, if we're not careful, we can lull ourselves to sleep, failing to hear what Jesus Christ is saying and losing focus on obedience to the command that He has given us—particularly the Great Commission to evangelize. Perhaps, we are like William Tell from the introduction who has all kinds of negative scenarios running through his mind so that he forgets that the Spirit is with him and will empower him to do that which Jesus has commanded. Sharing the gospel should be a priority in our lives, but the world constantly tries to distract us from accomplishing this mission.



What in our lives distracts us from sharing the gospel?

Question
5

Because the disciples had lost focus, Jesus reorients them to their task by explaining their purpose once again. He reminds them that they **shall be** His **witnesses** (v. 8). As **witnesses**, they are to testify to what they have

experienced first-hand—in other words what they themselves have seen and heard. In a court of law, hearsay is inadmissible because the witness has only received the information second-hand from another source. However, anyone who has a relationship with Christ has experienced His transformation first-hand and is, therefore, able to testify. To testify about Jesus Christ doesn't require a PhD or a seminary degree, rather only a personal relationship with Him. If we haven't experienced transformation in our lives, then we must ask ourselves if we truly have a relationship with Him. Therefore, each one of us has a story to tell; we simply must be faithful to tell it.

How have you seen the transformation of Christ in your life personally?

Question
6

To encourage the disciples Jesus explains that they **shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon** them—that is He will empower and equip them to share the gospel. Most of the excuses that we make for not sharing the gospel center around *our* abilities—I'm not trained or don't have a degree, it's not my gift, or I don't have answers for the difficult questions they may ask. All these excuses focus on what we can do rather than what God can do through us if we would only be willing and let Him. God will never call us to do something for which He has not prepared and equipped us. When we rely on our own abilities and let fear dictate our involvement, in effect we are saying that we don't trust God to work through us. Jesus, however, here clearly



promises that the Spirit will empower us when we share the gospel; we are not the ones who do the saving or the convicting, but we are the messengers who bring what the Holy Spirit has given to us. If we are totally surrendered, the Spirit will help us to recall Scripture and use us to speak boldly in ways that will even amaze us (see [John 14:26](#)).

How does the Spirit empower or equip us to share the gospel?

Question
7

Not only does Jesus encourage them to rely upon the Spirit's **power**, but He also explains the scope of evangelism—**to the ends of the earth**. The model that Jesus cites in verse 8 works out from **Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria**, and finally **to the ends of the earth**. In our day, it would be akin to beginning our mission in Fort Worth and expanding it to Texas, the United States, and finally missions around the world. As Jesus relates this command to evangelize, He begins by telling them to witness where they are: **Jerusalem**. Although Jesus did commence His mission with the Jews, the ultimate goal was to bring salvation to the entire world. Too often, we overlook our engagement in evangelism where God has called us to live and we focus on ministry in international missions. There must be a balance and we must not forget to evangelize where we are. Jesus did not specify that we must “go” on mission to share the gospel; instead, He tells us to “be” on mission daily while we are going about our routines. We cannot allow the ordinary routines of life to distract us from our God-given purpose of sharing the gospel wherever God has placed us. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, are we sharing the gospel daily or have

we allowed other things in our lives to take precedence and priority?

How do you participate in evangelism where God has placed you in Fort Worth or even in other locations when you travel for business, recreation, or ministry?

Question
8

Acts 1:9-11

THE TIME FOR EVANGELISM:

After having **spoken these things**, Jesus ascends into **heaven on a cloud** as His disciples gazed as He went out of view (v. 9). Jesus had given the disciples clear instructions which they should have begun to enact immediately, but they remained inactive, **gazing up into heaven** mesmerized. As they remained stunned, **two men in white** clothing **stood** beside them and asked: **Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven** (v. 11)? Instead of returning to Jerusalem and being about the business of which Jesus had told them, they stood there daydreaming and pondering. If we are honest with ourselves, we probably at some point in our lives have heard instructions and then did nothing to fulfill them because we were overwhelmed or simply didn't know where to begin. Obviously, we shouldn't rush into situations for which we are not fully prepared or need more clarification because we don't fully understand. However, sharing the gospel is not so since we are sharing our personal testimony about the transformation Christ brought



Instruct

in our lives and point others to God's Word which explains how we might have eternal life. We have a clear directive and plan; therefore, we should not figuratively stand like the disciples, waiting for Jesus to return, but we are to be busy fulfilling what He has commanded us—**receive the power of the Holy Spirit** to become His **witnesses** so that He might share the gospel through us.

What causes you to procrastinate or hesitate when sharing the gospel?

Question
9

Inspire

As followers of Christ, we all have the responsibility to bear witness to the transforming power of the gospel. We may be nervous like William Tell, but this is a natural response for most of us. However, if we have a relationship with Christ we must trust Him to give us the opportunities as well as the knowledge and words when we share the gospel. If we allow our apprehension, nerves, and fears to stop us from sharing the gospel, the enemy who causes us to doubt and misdirects our trust has won. In [2 Tim 1:7](#), Paul interjects, "For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind." Trust God and submit to Him and He will minister to others through you.

We must actively seek to remove any obstacle that hinders us from engaging in evangelism daily. First, if we are uncomfortable with sharing the content of the gospel, we can write the plan on the inside front cover

of the Bible. There is no shame in being prepared and having the verses listed to which you can refer. Once you have the plan written on the cover, then beside the first verse, such as [Rom 3:23](#), have the next verse to which you will refer written in the margin—[Rom 6:23](#)—and so forth. Second, if you fear they may ask a question that you don't know how to answer, carry a quick reference guide in your Bible that provides Scripture to deal with common struggles that people have. (You will receive one in your Connect Class this Sunday.) Third, if you don't have the opportunity to share the gospel or can't find someone experienced to take with you, at the very least hand them a tract which we have in a rack here at church with the plan of salvation outlined and invite them to church. Above all, let us not stand inactively gazing into the stratosphere like the disciples, but let us be actively engage in sharing the gospel just as Jesus Christ has commanded us to do.

THE ROMAN ROAD

• All have sinned / All are sinners

Romans 3:10: As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one"

Romans 3:23: For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Romans 5:12: Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned.

• God demonstrated His love with the gift of His Son

Romans 5:8: But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

• Confess Him as Savior and Lord

Romans 10:9: That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

Romans 10:13: For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."



Incorporate

In your own words, write the content of the gospel as if you were witnessing. If you need help, find another believer who will practice this with you in a dialogue.

Because we should allow God to speak through us, we need to use Scripture to lead someone to Christ—not just our own words. Find Scriptures for the following topics. Feel free to write them in the front of your Bible; there is no shame in having them recorded there and using them to witness.

a. I am a sinner:

b. Because of my sin I will die:

c. God loves me:

d. Jesus died for me:

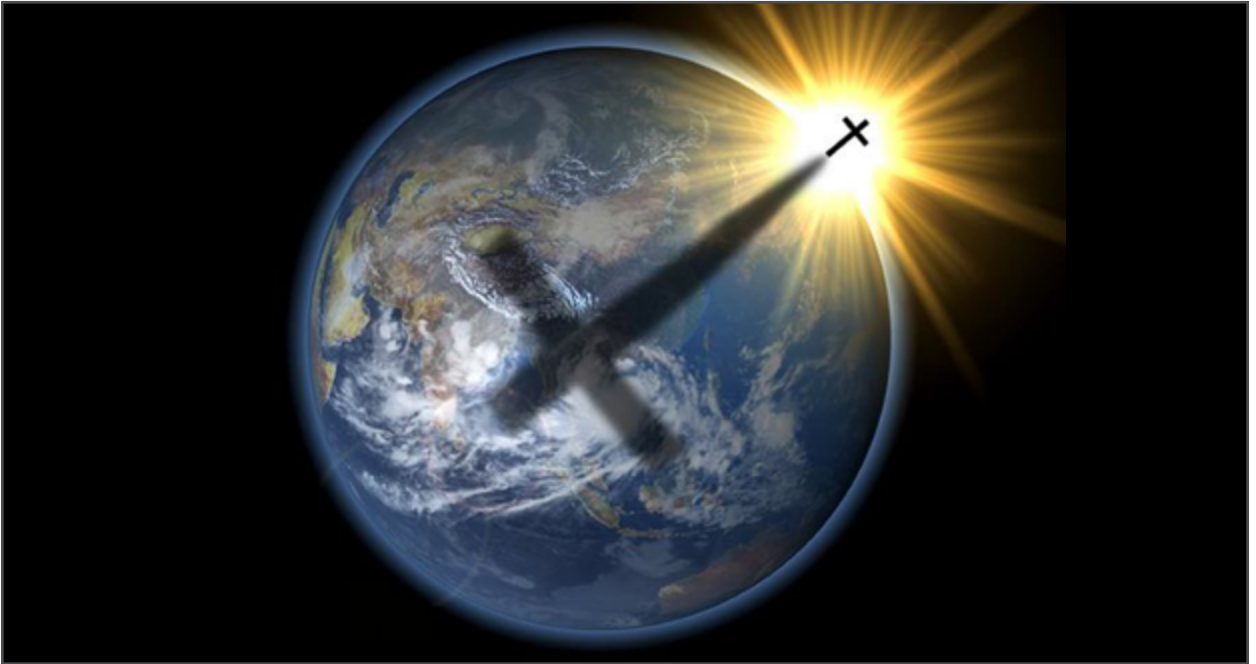
e. Jesus rose on the third day:

f. Jesus is the only way I can have life:

g. To have life I must confess and turn from my sin:

How has the Holy Spirit empowered you to witness in the past? If you can't think of anything, pray and ask God to give you opportunities to witness and then be faithful to respond.

September 10, 2017



Unconditional Evangelism

Acts 10:1-42

Focal Verse:

"Then Peter opened his mouth and said: "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality."

Acts 10:34

Introduce

See if you identify with William whom we met last week as he faces new challenges for evangelism. After seeing first-hand how God empowered him to share the gospel, William Tell became burdened for the nations. God had been confirming to him that Jesus died for people of every nation, language, and ethnicity. Although William did not lead a sheltered life, he began to realize that most of his friends had a similar background to his and shared many of life's experiences in common. One day as he contemplated the scope of the gospel, God clearly spoke to him; He began revealing to William how he had brought the nations right here to Fort Worth.

As he walked down the streets of his neighborhood in North Fort Worth, he noticed people from all walks of life and backgrounds—to this point in his life he had



never really noticed the diversity of people. Yet, all these people had one thing in common—they needed a relationship with Jesus Christ. He noticed how these people trusted in many different gods whether other religions, sports, their cars, and even money as evidenced by how hard many of them worked. William then thought to himself, “Who will tell these people about the love of Christ if I don’t?” At that point, William Tell had an experience like that in [Isaiah 6](#). Through his thoughts, he clearly heard God ask, “Whom shall I send and who will go for us?” Suddenly, William almost blurts aloud, “Lord, here am I send me” ([Isa 6:8](#)).

Introduce

William realized that it would take tremendous work and dedication, but he courageously depended upon the Lord to direct his paths. Before he began evangelizing his neighborhood, God inspired him to learn how to share the gospel with other religions, so he began to read diligently. Instead of fighting those pesky “elders” on bicycles with a torrent of water from a hose, William was now equipped to battle them with the Sword of the Spirit—that is the Bible. Although there is still a great need in international missions, William recognized that missions must begin right here at home by going to those in our neighborhoods. Unfortunately, we as Christians can often overlook our neighborhoods, but there are people right in here in Fort Worth who have never heard about Jesus and have never heard about the gracious gift of His sacrificial death on the cross that makes salvation free to each one of us.

In this week’s lesson, God had to teach Peter about the unconditional nature of the gospel. Peter, like many Jews at the time, considered Gentiles beyond reach and held dear the fact that Jesus came as the Messiah of the Jewish people. Even though the prophets long ago specified that the Messiah would have a Jewish heritage, they also revealed His purpose to draw all mankind unto Him; thus, Jesus came as the Messiah to redeem a lost and dying world of both Jews and Gentiles alike. As we consider the points in this lesson, let us actively commit to share the gospel right here in Fort Worth daily so that we can see others transformed by the sacrificial love of Christ.

Key
Question

In what ways should the sharing of the gospel be unconditional?

OPENNESS TO EVANGELISM FROM THE OUTSIDE:

Too often, we look at the world around us as completely opposed to the gospel, so we don't even see the need to evangelize. However, as the account of **Cornelius** and his family demonstrates, many people are open to the gospel, but severely misguided in their beliefs and practices. In [Acts 10](#), Luke introduces us to a person by the name of **Cornelius** who was a Roman **centurion** stationed to protect the strategic Roman city of **Caesarea** on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea in Western Palestine. In positive terms, Luke describes Cornelius' openness to seeking God by calling him **devout** and **one who fears God** (v. 2). The term **devout** literally means "godly" and signifies that he lived with integrity and tried to live a good life, doing the right things that pleased God. Similarly, the phrase **one who feared God** is often translated as God-fearer which denotes a Gentile who worships the Lord, but doesn't follow Jewish practices fully. Thus, one could say that Cornelius was a good man who lived an exemplary life and tried to worship the Lord the best way he knew how.

In-Depth Information



As a **centurion**, **Cornelius** would have charge over 100 soldiers who were attached to a larger unit called the **Italian Regiment** which would have consisted of 600 men. This **regiment** would then form the basis for the even larger division of 6,000 soldiers known as a legion. The **Italian Regiment**, therefore, supplemented the protection of the Roman prefect (governor) in Caesarea rather than being on active duty in

In-Depth Information—continued



the regular army; thus, in modern terms, **Cornelius** would have been a member of the National Guard. For more information, see Darrell L. Bock, *Acts, Baker Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007), p. 385.

Because he was **devout**, this led **Cornelius** to demonstrate his devotion to God in two ways: 1) **giving alms generously** and 2) **praying to God always** (v. 2). Both giving and praying are certainly good deeds which we should do, but they don't lead to eternal life in themselves. Only a relationship with Jesus Christ results in eternal life. Today, however, some people attempt to find life in many other ways whether through religions, rituals, or good deeds, but the Bible is clear that Jesus Christ is "the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him" ([John 14:6](#)). Although Cornelius was a good man who tried to do the right thing, he didn't have a relationship with Jesus Christ and, therefore, he had no hope of eternal life.



In what ways are people today open to seeking God, but perhaps are still misguided in their beliefs?

Question
1

At 3:00 pm (i.e. **the ninth hour**), the same time as the afternoon sacrifice in the Jerusalem temple, an **angel of God** spoke to **Cornelius** through a **vision** (v. 3). As would any of us, he became startled by the sudden **vision** and asked the reason for the visit. The **angel** then explained that God had observed his devotion to Him through his **prayers and alms**; so the messenger gave him instructions to **send men to Joppa** where they would find **Simon Peter** (vv. 4-5). The men were to bring **Peter** with them so that he could tell Cornelius and his family **what they must do** (v. 6). In other words, Peter will share with them the gospel—that is how to have a relationship with Christ that leads to eternal life. When someone truly seeks God and tries to live rightly, God will always provide a way that they can hear the gospel so that they may know and respond to the truth. Therefore, those of us who know the truth must make ourselves willing vessels through whom God can speak at any moment to impart life to others.

What questions can you ask to initiate a conversation about the gospel with someone who is seeking “spiritual” things?

Question
2

After the **angel** had **departed**, Cornelius obediently summoned three **men**, **two** of his **household servants** and one **soldier** under his command, whom he could trust and explained to them what had transpired (v. 7). Just as God had instructed him through the vision, he sent them to **Joppa** to find **Simon Peter** and bring him back to Caesarea (v. 8). In the meantime, however, God also had to transform Peter’s heart so that he would share the gospel willingly with a Gentile—for they were considered vile and **unclean** by the Jews who did not associate with

Instruct

them at all. Unfortunately, many times Christians, not non-believers, are the ones more opposed to sharing the gospel, especially to people who do not have similar backgrounds or experiences. Sometimes we carry preconceived ideas about who will or will not be saved based on others' outward appearance, their habits, and their customs. On the contrary, we must be prepared to share the gospel in any circumstance and to everyone that we meet.

In what ways do we sometimes shy away from sharing the gospel with people who are not like us?

Question
3

Acts 10:9-20

OPPOSITION TO EVANGELISM FROM THE INSIDE:

While the three **men sent** by Cornelius continued their journey **the next day**, Peter went to the **roof** of the **house** where he was staying at noon (i.e. **the ninth hour**) **to pray** (v. 9). As he prayed, he became famished and desired **to eat**, but while his hosts **prepared** the main afternoon meal he **fell into a trance** (v. 10). In this vision, Peter observed a cloth **descending** from **heaven** which had **all kinds** of **unclean** animals on it that the law forbade the Jew to eat. Suddenly, **a voice** commanded **him**



to **rise**, **kill**, and **eat** (v. 13). Being a Jew who tried to keep the law, this command astonished Peter and he vociferously objected—*never Lord*—and then proceed to explain that he has **never eaten anything common or unclean**—that is anything that violated the law (vv. 13-14). After Peter’s refusal, the **voice** said to him a **second time** he should **not call common** that which God has cleansed (v. 15). This vision occurs three times and leaves him wondering what it meant (vv. 16-17a), but soon he would have his answer. As Peter pondered the vision, the men that Cornelius had sent arrived and inquired at the gate to see if he were there (vv. 17b-18).

In Context



Acts 10:10 **trance** (n.) *e-k-stä-sēs* – a vision, dream, or thought whereby an individual is focused on a divine message.

Acts 10:15 **common** (v.) *koi-no 'ō* – to defile, pollute, or make unclean according to Jewish standards.

In the context of the account, the interpretation of the vision is clear, but God has not yet fully revealed it to Peter until the **Spirit** informs him that He has **sent three men** with whom he should **go** without **doubting** (vv. 19-20). Consequently, the dream is not about the freedom to eat any and everything that one pleases, but it’s about the love and devotion that God has for all creation—not just the Jews. Pious Jews in the first century tried to avoid contact with the Gentiles because they considered them **unclean**. They would not share a meal with them, they would not enter their houses or places for social gatherings, and they tried to have the least amount of contact with them as possible in any setting. Seeing

Instruct

themselves “favored” by God, the Jews essentially condemned the Gentiles as hopelessly wicked and unable to have eternal life. Jesus, however, came to provide life through His sacrificial death for all people—people from every ethnic group, language, and nation ([1 Tim 2:4](#); [2 Pet 3:9](#)); therefore, the vision shows Peter that God has a plan even for the Gentiles and they too can be redeemed or saved just as the Jews regardless of how vile or hopeless they may seem. For this reason, Peter should **go** without hesitation to share the gospel with Cornelius and his family.

What stereotypes and misconceptions must we overcome today to bring the gospel to all the nations?

Question
4

Sometimes the greatest opposition against spreading the gospel comes not from outside of the church, but from within it. This opposition can take a variety of forms both within the church collectively as well as the individual. For instance, change in program-oriented churches can cause resistance where people interject that we’ve never done it that way before rather than thinking of innovative ways to share the gospel and connect people with the local body of believers. In addition, we can become inwardly focused on placating and maintaining our membership rather than reaching the community. At other times, we as individuals lose focus on the primary purpose of ministry and become overly concerned with our daily lives and routines; we get out of the habit of reaching the community and compartmentalize our lives leaving a

conversation about Christ out of some areas. Still, others can become complacent and discouraged with the decline of the community—wondering what’s the use no one will listen? We cannot let anything distract us from the primary purpose to which God has called us: sharing the gospel to everyone we meet.

What types of opposition do we face in the modern church to sharing the gospel?

Question # 5

Acts 10:21-33

OVERCOMING OBSTACLES IN EVANGELISM:

Following the guidance of the **Spirit**, Peter **went down** to discuss with **the men** the **reason** they had come (v. 21). So they recounted how the **angel** had spoken to **Cornelius** who had **sent** them to fetch Peter. Because the journey to **Caesarea** would take the better part of two days, Peter **invited them in and lodged** with them that night before they left the next day (vv. 22-23). Hosting Gentiles in one’s home whether to give them food or lodging was uncommon practice for Jews, but Peter overcame this cultural obstacle to minister to them and share the gospel. Although we don’t necessarily need to invite people into our homes, we must overcome any apprehension we or they may have by being kind and hospitable. We certainly should exercise caution and common sense in



Instruct

this day and age to protect us from danger and maintain our testimony, but we must be sensitive to the Spirit to share the gospel. If possible, think of creative ways to overcome cultural barriers, such as inviting them to an informal meal or even fun outings in public to take the opportunity to build a relationship with them.

What are some ways that we can overcome barriers to disarm people so they will be more open to hearing the gospel?

Question
6

As the party traveled from **Joppa** to **Caesarea**, Cornelius had gathered his **friends** and **relatives** to **wait** (v. 24). When the party arrived, Cornelius **fell down** at Peter's **feet** to **worship** him; as a result, Peter had to refocus Cornelius' **worship** explaining that he was **only a man** himself and pointing him into a relationship with Jesus Christ (vv. 25-26).

Through this encounter, we can learn two facets about evangelism: 1) we must focus on Christ through our personal testimony and 2) when we reach people outside of the church they often bring other family



members and friends to hear the gospel. Because many distractions often occur while sharing the gospel, we must purposefully focus their attention on Christ by explaining the gospel in simple, everyday terms.

We don't need to technical theological language, but to testify how Christ has transformed us through our own personal experiences; we too were sinners, like they, in need of a Savior and incapable of saving ourselves. When people hear our testimony, it often reduces friction and helps them to identify with us. If we have a relationship with Christ, therefore, we all have a testimony that we can share with others whether we feel adequately equipped or not.

Why is it important to give our personal testimony when evangelizing?

Question
7

Second, when we reach those outside of the church we will usually have an opportunity to reach their friends and family through them. When Peter arrived, verse 27 notes that he **found many who had come together** inside the house. The good news of the hope and transformation that Christ brings often inspires others to tell their family and friends. As a church, we need to be prepared to fan the flame of new believers for evangelism rather than stifling it. Although new believers may need to be taught doctrine, they aren't afraid of making mistakes or not knowing enough because they have seen first-hand what has happened in their lives. As a church, we certainly should disciple them to live in the right way and teach the right doctrines, but we can't squash their enthusiasm for sharing the gospel by waiting to have them "trained." We must allow the **Spirit** to work through them to bring others to a saving knowledge in Him.

How can we as a church encourage all believers, especially new believers, to evangelize?

Question
8

THE OBJECTIVE IN EVANGELISM:

After recounting what had transpired to bring about this meeting ([10:28-33](#)), Peter begins to share the gospel (v. 34). From Peter's message, we can learn three principles about evangelism: 1) the gospel is for everyone (vv. 34b-36), 2) the content centers on Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection (vv. 37-41), and 3) we are called as witnesses (vv. 39 and 42). First, Peter recognizes the gospel is for everyone; he declares that **God shows no partiality** and **Jesus Christ** who is **Lord of all** brings **peace** to people of **every nation** who have a relationship with Him—both Jew and Gentile alike. Second, the way that God brings **peace** is through the sacrificial death of Jesus which culminates with His resurrection—for **God raised Him on the third day** and offered proof through His physical appearances over forty days. The content of the gospel is simple and can be explained in ordinary language with five words that begin with the letter "p": 1) we have a problem which is sin; 2) the penalty for sin is death; 3) the plan for salvation required Christ to die in our place; 4) the plea we must make is to ask forgiveness for our sins and turn back to God; and finally, 5) the promise that God gives is eternal life.



How can we explain the content of the gospel in simple terms?

Question
9

Finally, as followers of Christ we are called to be **witnesses** of the transforming power of His resurrection in our lives. To be a witness, we must have a personal relationship with Him. Twice in this passage Peter recalls how he and the other disciples witnessed the miraculous events surrounding Jesus' ministry. He notes that they were **witnesses of all things** that Jesus had done both in Israel and **Jerusalem** (v. 39). Moreover, Jesus also appeared to them after His resurrection as witnesses because they had a close relationship with Him—i.e. those **who ate and drank** with Him (v. 41). Peter and the others, therefore, are speaking from personal experience—what they have seen and heard (see also [1 John 1:1-2](#)). Because they had a relationship with Him, Jesus **commanded** them **to preach** the gospel to all **people** (v. 42). Just like Peter and the disciples, we too are responsible for proclaiming the gospel since we have first-hand knowledge of how Christ has changed us. We're not speaking hearsay—that is what someone else has told us—but we are speaking about what we ourselves have experienced. Therefore, let us **testify** to all **people** just as we have been **commanded** by Christ Himself so that we might see others from every nation, ethnic group, and language—such as Cornelius and his family—begin a relationship with Jesus and experience the life-giving power of transformation that only He can offer.

Why is it important that we share the gospel both from Scripture and our own personal experiences?

Question
10

This week as you go about your routines pay attention to the people around you and pray that God will give you opportunities to share the gospel. When we seek the Lord and obey Him, He will be faithful to continue giving us the chance to share gospel—in fact, people will often begin spiritual conversations with us when we pray faithfully. Perhaps, however, you are like William Tell from the introduction and you’ve gone through life oblivious to those around you. Going about your daily business, you never really paid attention to all the people whom God has brought into your life to share the gospel—people from all walks of life and from all parts of the world. We live in a time when electronics and social media have suppressed relationships despite all the good they accomplish because they can make us isolated and disconnected from those around us. Computers, televisions, online gaming, and social media all have benefits, but they tend to keep us from having meaningful personal relationships with other people. We live in apartment complexes and neighborhoods, sealing ourselves off from the rest of the world—not even having a working relationship with those immediately surrounding us. We usually don’t make an effort to get to know our neighbors until they do something that we don’t like or we have some sort of conflict with them. We can’t be like Peter and the Jews of the first-century and have no contact with those around us, trying to isolate ourselves in our “Christian” communities. Instead, we have been commanded to take the gospel into all the world so that all people may hear the good news of salvation which leads to

eternal life. To do this, we must pray and seek unique ways to interact with our neighbors, co-workers, friends, acquaintances, and even strangers to bear witness for our personal Lord and Savior concerning how He has transformed us and made us alive to experience life to the fullest.

Incorporate

In what ways do you see an openness to “spiritual” matters in our society?

What are some obstacles (both inside and out) that we as a church must overcome here in Fort Worth?

What are some innovative ways you can share the gospel with your neighbors (literally those on your block)?

September 17, 2017



The Urgency of Evangelism

Acts 16:16-33

Focal Verse:

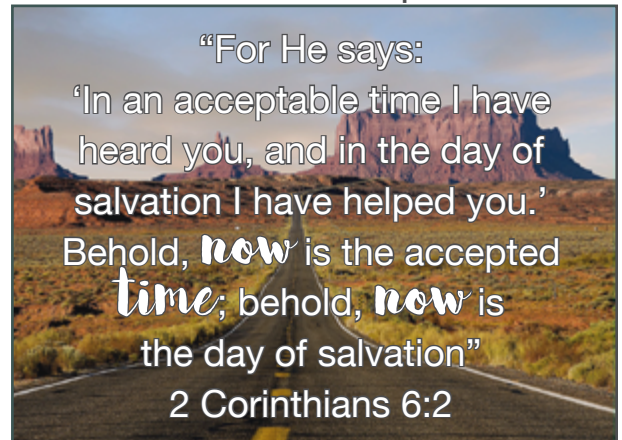
“So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Acts 16:31

Introduce

Most of life's toughest questions deal with the subject of death because it inevitably comes to each of us whether young or old. The two questions that we ponder most are: what happens to us when we die and when will we die? Although most of us think of the second question only when we grow older, it is a question that each of us must face, for we're not assured of tomorrow and we must be prepared to enter eternity at any moment. For James stresses, "You do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even as a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away" (4:14). The fragileness of life, therefore, underscores the urgency of evangelism because the decision we make here in life will determine where we will spend eternity.

Without sounding morbid or macabre, every one of us has undoubtedly known someone to die in their youth or even unexpectedly. Sometimes family members and friends alike lament: I'd give anything if only I would have had another chance to ask them about their relationship with Christ, so I could know for certain they're in heaven. We can't assume people will live long, full lives in which we will have many chances to share the gospel with them, so we need to engage in evangelism today while we have the chance. For this reason, Paul can exclaim, "For He says: 'In an



acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.' Behold, **now** is the accepted **time**; behold, **now** is the day of salvation" (2 Cor 6:2).

Introduce

To speak of the urgency of evangelism shouldn't frighten us and compel us by fear to share the gospel, but it should put life and death into perspective and stress the importance of always taking the opportunity to share. Instead, we should be compelled by love and concern to tell others how to have a relationship with Christ. Whether a young or aged person dies, they don't have a second chance to respond to Christ after their death so we ought to share the gospel with urgency with everyone that we meet. This week we will learn about an instance in which Paul shared the gospel with a sense of urgency with a Philippian jailer who was about to take his own life for fear that his prisoners had escaped after an earthquake. Instead of seizing the opportunity to escape from prison, Paul took time to share the gospel, resulting in the jailer and all his household accepting Christ as their personal Savior.

Key
Question

Why should we share the gospel with a sense of urgency?

Acts 16:16-18

THE OPPRESSION OF THOSE WITHOUT CHRIST:

Starting to journey through Galatia in the region where he had planted churches on his first missionary journey to strengthen them, Paul has a Spirit-inspired vision of a man from Macedonia with outstretched arms inviting him to come and share the gospel in what is modern-day Europe ([Acts 16:4-9](#)). Immediately, Paul dropped everything and traveled to the small city of Philippi which was on an important trade route through the heart of Macedonia and Greece ([Acts 16:10-12](#)). There he found Lydia and other women praying at the river on the Sabbath so he shared the gospel with them which they gladly accepted ([Acts 16:13-15](#)). Although having initial success without turmoil, it would soon turn tumultuous and troublesome when Paul began to minister in the community at large.

As Paul ministered in Philippi and was going to **prayer**, a demon-**possessed slave girl** began to follow him and the rest of the missionary team (v. 16). In bondage not only to this demonic **spirit**, she also was enslaved to her earthly **masters** because she **brought** them **much profit** by being able to predict the future. As she began to follow the team, she began to harass them but in actuality she served to draw attention to their ministry and the sovereign God they served. To



provoke them, she **cried out**, “**These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim the way of salvation**” (v. 17).

In-Depth Information



*In v. 16, the phrase **spirit of divination** when translated literally means the **spirit of Python**. This is a reference to the demonic activity associated with the Greek Oracle at Delphi who supposedly could foretell the future. The priestesses at Delphi were called Pythia because legend states that a snake-like dragon enabled them to tell the future. We, however, know that it was not gods or goddesses who inspired them, but Satan himself through his demonic minions. Therefore, this slave-girl was demon-possessed by a spirit under the guise of Python who could foretell the future.*

Although we may rarely see people oppressed by demonic spirits in our society, sin still enslaves and oppresses in many other ways: alcoholism, drug addiction, pornography and sexual immorality, greed (workaholism), dysfunctional relationships, relativism (no absolute truth or morals), and so forth. Sin oppresses our society and enslaves people because it feels so natural, normal, and right. It deceives us by offering momentary pleasure rather than the long-term benefits of peace and abundance. Consequently, being enslaved to sin causes us to miss out on the abundant life that God has for us in Christ Jesus. Being in bondage to sin also robs us of our joy in life because we no longer have the sole purpose of glorifying the Lord, but we engage in a never-ending struggle to find satisfaction in people and things that can only lead to emptiness and heartache. Pornography, for

instance, can rob a married couple of joy and partnership because it isolates the person involved in watching it. It destroys healthy communication and induces expectations in one's mind that may be unrealistic for a marriage. Instead of talking, bonding, and doing things together for enjoyment, it creates a barrier to a healthy relationship in the way that God intended it from the beginning. Therefore, we ought to have a burden for those enslaved to a lifestyle of habitual sin—whatever that may be—and seek to introduce them to the gospel of Jesus Christ which has the power to transform and set them free.



In what ways does sin oppress us and, especially, the society around us?

Question
1

After **many days** of the **girl** following the group, Paul became burdened and cast the **spirit out of her in the name of Jesus Christ** (v. 18). Many of the translations say that Paul became **greatly annoyed** as if he cast out the demonic **spirit** simply because he grew tired of her following them. However, the Greek term more accurately means burdened or distressed in the sense of the KJV which says **grieved**. Therefore, Paul became burdened or **grieved** for the **girl** because he saw how truly oppressed she was and this led him to minister to her **in the name of Jesus Christ**. As humans, it may take us a while to assess the situation and become burdened enough to act—just as it did Paul. Yet, we need to be truly burdened by those oppressed by sin rather than put off and annoyed. We must exercise

Instruct

patience and understanding—not tolerating the sin, but lovingly pointing them to Christ who is the only one who has the power to transform. Our burden, therefore, must end in the active presentation of the gospel of Jesus Christ and not laments and complaints about another’s behavior.

How do you see a burden in the church today for those oppressed and enslaved to sin? If you don’t see a burden, what can **you** do to rectify it?

Question
2

Acts 16:19-24

THE OPPOSITION BY THE COMMUNITY:

For the most part, the secular world paid little attention to Paul until the ministry that God had given him began to affect their finances. Although the world at times may be directly opposed to the gospel and Jesus Christ, their opposition often stems from the light of morality exposing their sin or the transformation of people affecting their profits—this also happens in Ephesus when people stopped buying silver idols of Artemis and the silversmiths lost revenue ([Acts 19:24-27](#)). In Philippi, when her **masters** realized their **profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas** and brought them before the city council in **the marketplace** (v. 19). Presenting their case before the **magistrates**, the angry owners claimed that **Paul and Silas, being Jews**, were advocating and teaching things contrary to their **customs** and unlawful for **Romans to observe** (v. 20). In reality, they weren’t at all concerned with their teaching, but only that

they had lost a source of income. As a result, they incited the crowd and **the magistrates** to violence; the crowd **ripped** the duo's **clothes off**, had them **beaten with rods**, and thrown **into prison**—all their actions being unlawful and hypocritical themselves because they were Roman citizens who deserved a fair trial ([Acts 16:37-38](#)). Treating them harshly, the crowd **demande**d the **jailer to keep them securely** so he placed them in the innermost part of the **prison** and chained **their feet in stocks** (vv. 23-24).

Even today, the world can react violently and hypocritically to the message of truth. Those who claim to be open-minded, tolerant, and unbiased display the uttermost contempt for the truth because if they acknowledge it then their entire worldview crumbles.

Think about why corporations and Hollywood are so ardently opposed to the truth; if people accept the truth and are transformed by Christ, many CEOs and actors will be out of a job because of the corruption in which they engage and the vile trash which they produce in the name of entertainment.

Still others avoid the truth because it exposes their sinful deeds; if their sin is exposed, then it will force them to admit the way that they live is wrong and immoral so they try to offer justification—sometimes even through violence. Regardless of the way that the world may respond, we as Christians must stand on the truth of the gospel just as **Paul and Silas** did. Even with verbal badgering and sometimes the threat of physical



Instruct

violence in the name of progressiveness and tolerance, we cannot compromise the truth, but we must endure whatever may result so that the world may know that our Lord is greater than their sin.

In what ways do we as Christians need to stand against the world's opposition?

Question
3

Acts 16:25-30

THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE GOSPEL:

If most of us had been wrongly accused, mistreated, and thrown into prison, we probably wouldn't be jovial, in the mood for worship, and singing praises to God. If you are like me, you probably would have been thinking about getting out, hiring a good lawyer, suing the ones who incarcerated you, and retaliating against them. **Paul and Silas** had plenty of reason to stew and complain, but they didn't. **At midnight**, they were **praying and singing hymns to God** (v. 25). Instead of sulking, they used this opportunity to minister; as they praised God, Luke specifically points out that **the other prisoners were listening to them**. These career criminals and perhaps others wrongly accused had never heard anything like this—someone happy and carefree despite being in jail. Undoubtedly, the songs that duo sang presented the gospel and testified to the goodness of God displayed through His Son's sacrificial death. Despite having dire circumstances like this imprisonment, we must still focus on Christ and the opportunity He has given us to minister. Sometimes we have a captive audience like this and we must use the opportunity to display Christ in our behavior and speech.

How can we use terrible circumstances like this to minister to others and share the gospel?

Question
4

Not only did they minister to the other prisoners in sharing the gospel through song and prayer, they also ministered to the jailer. As they praised God, **suddenly a great earthquake** rattled the **foundations of the prison** and **all the doors were opened** and the stocks **were loosed** (v. 26). Being roused from his **sleep, seeing the doors opened**, and fearing **the prisoners had fled**, the guard unsheathed **his sword** and **was about to kill himself** because he would have been put to death by the government for failing to fulfill his duty and allowing **the prisoners** to escape (v. 27). Anticipating the jailer's response, Paul cried out in a loud voice and bid the guard to do himself no harm because everyone had remained in their cell (v. 28). Unlike the normal response of bolting from their jail cells when given the opportunity, all **the prisoners** remained inside and Paul seized the moment to proclaim the gospel to the jailer. Surprised at the response, **the jailer** obtains **a light** and goes to **Paul and Silas**, asking **what he must do to be saved** (vv. 29-30). Once again, not many of us would have remained in our cells, but would have probably used the **earthquake** as a means to escape. **Paul and Silas**, however, were focused not on their human circumstances, but rather their God-given goal in the kingdom. Paul acted with urgency—



This is what remains of the traditional jail site in Philippi where Paul and Silas were incarcerated.

Instruct

not to flee-but to call out to the guard **who was about to kill himself**. Instead of being self-centered and merely thinking the guard will get what he deserved, Paul acted with love and compassion just as he did with the demon-possessed girl. We ought to have the same urgency and focus when we are sharing the gospel. The world around us is dying and most are dying without a relationship with Christ. Every day people die suddenly without warning from various accidents to undetected physical illnesses. As we go about our daily lives, are we focused so much on our circumstances that we fail to share the gospel with people like the Philippian jailer who may not even have another breath of life left? Seize the opportunity! Share the gospel! This ought to be our motto as a church and practiced by every one of us who has a relationship with Jesus Christ.

What opportunities have you had that you have clearly missed the chance to share the gospel? How can you become more conscious and aware of these opportunities?

Question
5

Acts 16:31-34

THE OUTCOME OF LIVING THE GOSPEL:

Luke presents a summary of Paul's message to the Philippian jailer. In an answer to the guard's question, Paul tells him that **to be saved** he must **believe on the Lord Jesus Christ** (v. 31). We know this to be a summary for two reasons: 1) mental belief without repentance and a relationship with Christ amounts to nothing (see [Jas 2:19](#)); and 2) Luke further notes that Paul and Silas **spoke the word of the Lord to him and all his house**

(v. 32). The content of the gospel is simple; it is fruitful to remind ourselves of the content again and review the five p's of salvation: we have a **problem**—sin ([Rom 3:23](#)); we must pay the **penalty** for our sin—death ([Rom 6:23](#)); God has a **plan** to take our place and pay the penalty for us ([John 3:16](#); [John 1:29](#); [Rom 5:8](#)); we must make a **plea** for forgiveness and turn from our sin ([1 John 1:9](#); [Rom 10:10-13](#)); and finally, God **promises** us eternal life when we have a relationship with Him through His Son ([Rom 6:23](#); [John 14:6](#)). Moreover, the Philippian jailer's question, **what must I do**, is also clearly addressed in Scripture. We can do nothing on our own to earn salvation, but we must accept the gift of grace that Christ Jesus has offered—not through works, being a good person, being a church member, being baptized, or any other human means ([Eph 2:8-9](#)).

Many people often take the fact that the entire **household is saved** out of context; they try to assert that babies and everyone else were saved through the jailer's confession. However, they are not saved through the jailer and his response, but rather they are saved through hearing and responding to the Word that was preached to them—in the same way that their patriarch, the jailer, was **saved**. This is why it is important to know that Paul and Silas preached **to all who were in his house**. In other words, they all had the opportunity to hear the gospel and respond by their own choice.

If we share the gospel in a group setting, why is it important to counsel one-on-one to make sure they have understood?

Question
6

Instruct

Immediately, the transformation of the gospel becomes evident in the jailer's life—for he moves from fear and despair for his life to rejoicing and celebrating in the Lord. No longer did he show callousness and contempt for the prisoners, but he provided for them as an expression of love. After **washing** Paul and Silas' **stripes** and wounds, he and his family who believed **were baptized** that very night (v. 33); thus, baptism is a public expression to the world that they were inwardly transformed by the gospel which was already evident in their outward actions that had changed dramatically. Then, in joyful celebration, he **brought** them into **his house** and they ate a meal together, continuing to **rejoice** (v. 34). Therefore, the outcome of the gospel is two-fold: 1) salvation in which we move from death to life and 2) transformation from the inside out. Although we may still struggle with our sinful flesh at times, the results of salvation are immediate. As soon as we implement the gospel into our lives (that is we are saved), it brings about peace and joy. In addition, we will also notice elements of transformation almost immediately—whether it's the way we think, the attitude we have, the way we speak, or who we hang out with, or a multitude of other things, we will see the transformation evident in our lives.



In what ways have you seen your life transformed by the power of the gospel?

Question
7

None of us know when the last breath that we may ever take will be so we must be ready to face eternity at any moment because once our physical life ends we don't get a second chance. Not only must we be prepared, but we should also make sure that everyone we meet is prepared as well; therefore, we must engage in evangelism with a sense of urgency—for we may not have multiple chances to share the gospel and show others how to have eternal life in Christ. Take a look at the news, whether on television, radio, in print, or on the internet, and you will find headlines of people whose lives came to an end suddenly and many times tragically. As I am writing this lesson, headlines have appeared on all the major news sources which related the story of an eighteen-year-old girl from California who was driving, filming, and streaming video and ended crashing her car. The driver had two occupants in the back—one of them being her fourteen-year-old sister. The teen driver certainly didn't expect this to happen, but she inadvertently caused an accident by filming and streaming it that killed her sister by ejecting her from the car.

As a church, we certainly don't want to scare people to salvation, but we must face the reality of death and the consequences of dying without Christ. The love we have for Christ and others ought to motivate us to share the gospel with urgency even if it seems inconvenient for us at times. It certainly was inconvenient for Paul and Silas who had the opportunity to escape, but they focused on the bigger picture of sharing the gospel as a part of the mission to which they had been called by God. We also ought to focus on the bigger mission to which we have been

Inspire

called; we should engage in evangelism daily. Certainly, our church outreach at 6:30 PM on Tuesdays is one avenue through which we must commit ourselves to sharing the gospel, but it doesn't end there. We need to share the gospel in the workplace, in the marketplace, in the schools, at sporting events, in the gym, in our neighborhoods, and so forth. Although this "inspire" section may not be uplifting in terms of the inspiration that the world wants, it should inspire us to take sharing the gospel seriously and inspire us to commit ourselves to telling people how to have a relationship with Christ daily so that they too may know how to have eternal life.

Incorporate

In what ways is the world oppressed by sin? How can you use your testimony to show the world how Jesus has set you free from sin?

Incorporate

In what ways do you see opposition to the gospel in our world today? How should we as a church continue to share the gospel despite this opposition?

What opportunities do you have to share the gospel? If none, pray and ask God to give you the opportunity, but also to find unique ways to share His message of hope.

In your own words, write what takes to have eternal life.

September 24, 2017



The Uniqueness of Evangelism

Acts 17:16-34

Focal Verse:

"For as I was passing through and considering the objects of your worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: To the Unknown God. Therefore, the One whom you worship without knowing, Him I proclaim to you." Acts 17:23

Introduce

Several weeks ago, I had a discussion with a young man who attends one of the largest churches in this area. After striking up a conversation with him at our Vacation Bible School, I asked him the following question: “If Jesus were standing here and asked why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?” He proudly declared that he is a “believer and has fellowship with other believers.” In response, however, I asked him to clarify and define what he meant by “believer.” To which he replied, “I try to read the Bible, do what it says, and teach my son to do the same.” Throughout his reply, he never mentioned the role that Jesus Christ plays in saving a person and transforming them.

After confirming that all the things he mentioned were good things to practice, I asked him to explain to me how I could have a relationship with Jesus Christ if I were a non-believer. Never mentioning the sacrificial death of Jesus or the need for personal confession, forgiveness, and repentance for our sins, he shockingly asserts, “You must listen to the little voice inside of you.” So I posited, “How do you know what little voice is right? People devote themselves to following the lies of other religions all the time—which religion is correct and how do I know which little voice inside of me is right? Therefore, I explained that there must be a standard by which we judge truth from the lies.



Introduce

In response to my question about knowing which religion is correct, he exclaims, “You’ve got to feel it, man.” Once again, I inquired, “What if I don’t *feel* that I have ever sinned and believe sincerely that I’m living the best life I can? There are many days that I don’t *feel* saved. Or what if I *feel* compelled to murder those who do not share the same religious beliefs as I do?” A relationship cannot be based on a mere feeling, but rather it is founded upon the truthfulness contained in God’s Word—the Bible. Using the Roman Road, I showed him from Scripture what it means to have a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Christianity differs from any other religion because it signifies a relationship whereby the only true and living God made Himself flesh and dwelt among men so that He might pay the penalty for our sins by dying upon the cross—something we could not do ourselves ([John 1:1, 14, 29](#)). In all other religions, mankind searches for ways to access “god” and eternal life by what he can do, but God through Jesus Christ sought us while we were yet sinners and died for us ([Rom 3:10; 5:8](#)). Yet, the story doesn’t end with the death of our God, but it begins with His resurrection—something that no other religious leader, educator, or philosopher can claim. This, therefore, is the uniquely good news that Paul brings to the “religious” citizens of Athens. Jesus, through His death and resurrection, is the *only* God with the power to give life and save.

Key
Question

What distinguishes being a follower of Christ from all other religions in the world?

Acts 17:16-18

THE COMPULSION TO SHARE THE GOSPEL:

Having journeyed from Philippi through Thessalonica and Berea, Paul stops in Athens to wait for Timothy and Silas to join him. Although he experienced persecution throughout his mission from being imprisoned in Philippi, sought to be stoned to death in Thessalonica, and harassed in Berea by the Jews, Paul still had a deep burden and concern to share the gospel. **Athens**, as a university town and a self-proclaimed center of philosophy and ideology, was filled with incorrect beliefs and erroneous ideas. As Paul traveled throughout **the city**, he realized it was utterly filled with **idols**, so his spirit was burdened to the point of action (v. 16). Paul's burden inspired him to go to the **synagogue** to **reason with the Jews**, but also to **the marketplace** where the **Gentile worshipers** gathered to go about their **daily** business (v. 17). He didn't merely sit idly and lament their **idol** worship or *only* pray about it, but he went to where the people were to bring the truth to them.

In Context



Acts 17:16 **provoked** (v.) *pä-ro-ksü-nō* – to cause arousal, urge on, stimulate; to provoke with anger.

The translations handle this word in various ways: was stirred ([KJV](#)), was troubled ([HCSB](#), [NLT](#)), was upset ([ESV](#)), and was provoked ([NKJV](#), [NASB](#)). In the context, the KJV has the closest meaning to the Greek. Paul wasn't provoked by anger, but instead his spirit was

In Context—continued



motivated to action because he was troubled or grieved over what he saw. He was, however, angered by the sin of idolatry whereby the people had turned to worship false gods instead of the true Lord and God who created the universe and all within it.

Why is it important that we both pray for those who don't have a relationship with Christ and to put action to our prayers and share the gospel with them?

Question
1

We must ask ourselves if we truly have a burden for those who do not have a relationship with Christ. If we truly have a burden, it should motivate us, like Paul, to tell others the truth in love. Motivation is not displayed *only* when we come to church every Sunday, pray for the lost, and sit idly doing nothing. We should come to church to be equipped and to pray, but we must also go into the **marketplace** to proclaim the good news. We live in a society much like Athens—self-proclaimed educated, independent, and the purveyor of all ideologies except for the truth. People in our society, like Athens, will accept and tolerate anything but the actual truth. For those of us who have the truth, we must be willing to stand and proclaim it regardless of the consequences.

As Paul began reasoning with both Jews and Gentiles, he aroused the curiosity of some of the local secular **philosophers**: the **Epicureans** and **Stoics** (v. 18). These two groups have many similarities in common with

secular views held by many in our society today. The **Epicureans** were agnostics; they didn't deny the existence of the gods, but they were wholly unconcerned seeing them as irrelevant and distant to the physical things in life. Therefore, they chiefly pursued pleasure in life because they focused only on what they could experience through their five senses. Many in our society share this same view; the motto of our day has become "if it feels good then do it" regardless of the consequences. The **Stoics**, on the other hand, were pantheists who believed that "god" or the divine was in everything. They prized logical thinking which guided their moral decisions and they were deeply devoted to their communities. Today, many

people claim to assess ideologies and principles rationally, but they skew facts and information to fit their preconceived ideas. In addition, many cults, like the Mormons, Jehovah's



Witnesses, and secular spiritualists, teach that everything and everyone is divine or can become divine by finding the right path in life.

In what specific ways can you cite that our society mimics that of first-century Athens?

Question
2

The secular **philosophers** began to challenge and even mock what Paul proclaimed about **Jesus** and the **resurrection**. Some of them called him a **babbler** and mocked him as foolish and uneducated. Difficult to

Instruct

translate, the term **babbler** is a reference to a chicken pecking randomly in the dirt for food. In this context, it carries the idea that Paul has randomly selected certain philosophies and beliefs and confidently speaks as if he knows about the subject, but doesn't really grasp what he is trying to teach and say. In reality, however, these learned **philosophers** are the ones who have failed to understand what Paul has clearly spoken unto them. Many in our society refuse to listen to a logical presentation of the gospel and grasp the truth actually being stated. Christians are portrayed as uneducated, illogical, and backwards in our thinking—even though we may even have more intelligence than they do. Their ignorance is displayed through their intolerance to evaluate new ideas honestly and openly instead they disparage them immediately without thinking.

In what ways does the world mock us as Christians today? How should we respond to them?

Question
3

Although known for their intelligence and philosophical wisdom, the citizens of Athens couldn't truly comprehend the message that Paul spoke—not because the gospel is unclear, but because they refused to listen and evaluate it on its own merits. Instead, they saw their view as superior and didn't truly listen to the message. Therefore, they accused Paul of being **a proclaimer of foreign gods** (v. 18). Thus, some of them simply dismissed the gospel as a new religion unworthy of much attention; they indeed were correct about the message being something new to their ears, but they were incorrect about it being simply another religion. In all

of Greek mythology, not one god or goddess desired a relationship with humanity, instead they often used them for pleasure by inflicting pain and torture upon them; none of them expressed love toward people—they only saw them as objects for amusement. The Lord through Jesus Christ, however, desires a



Bas-relief of Poseidon, Apollo, and Artemis from the Acropolis in Athens.

relationship with each one of us because He loves us beyond compare and comprehension. Because this belief did not fit with their traditional understanding of religion, rather than evaluating it the learned people of Athens simply dismissed it.

In what ways does Christianity differ from any other religion?

Question
4

Acts 17:19-21

THE COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMUNITY:

Because the majority of the people didn't understand the message, **they brought him** before **the Areopagus** so they could hear the its content further (v. 19). **The Areopagus** was the place where the philosophers met to adjudicate new ideas and test their validity. Luke notes that both the **Athenians and foreigners** would spend **all their time in nothing else but to tell or hear something new** (v. 21). In other words, they were given over to speculation and novelty for the sake of entertainment. Rather than

Instruct

evaluating principles of the world in practical terms, these individuals met and addressed philosophical questions that had no real bearing on actual life. Consequently, they asked Paul to expound upon this **strange doctrine** which he espouses; they indicate a sincerity for knowing **what these things mean** that he teaches (vv. 19b-20).

In our world, we don't have **the Areopagus**, but we have entertainment and



The Areopagus in Athens—also known as Mars Hill

media which debates unimportant ideas and offers wild speculations. Entertainment has effectively blurred the line between reality and fiction. Video games, role playing games, internet blogs, and television with its manifold immorality are some of the causes whereby society in general has become more self-centered, less able to reason, less educated, and less able to differentiate truth from falsities. For example, look at the preponderance of talk shows, including much of the news, where people, particularly celebrities, babble and debate topics about which they know very little. People are often passed off as experts in fields in which they have very little expertise. Because many in our society cannot reason and evaluate ideas, they take this useless talk on these mediums and hold it as fact. Instead of going to the right source which contains truth, that is the Bible, many in our society like that of Athens turn to useless speculation.

from the media for the sake of novelty and entertainment in hearing the newest, latest, and greatest thing.

In what ways can we overcome useless speculation in our society to share the gospel?

Question
5

Acts 17:22-28

THE CONVEYANCE OF A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CREATOR:

After being invited to speak at **the Areopagus**, Paul begins to address the people by positively noting they **are very religious in all things** (v. 22). As he traveled on the hill leading to **the Areopagus**, Paul noticed their **objects of worship**, even finding **an altar** with an **inscription “To the Unknown God”** (vv. 22b-23). Beginning with an illustration with which they were familiar, Paul emphatically states that he will reveal to them **the One whom** they have worshiped **without knowing**. Although Paul starts with a secular illustration from their culture and later uses one of their poets, everything he preaches to them comes directly from Scripture. We can certainly use secular illustrations to help people understand how culture perceives and even misunderstands God; however, when we are sharing the gospel, we must focus their attention on Scripture. God uses His Word to bring people to salvation. In Romans 10:17, Paul writes, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Just like Paul does here in Acts 17, we also must point people directly to God’s Word so that they may hear and comprehend the truth so that they too may know how to have life through Jesus Christ.

Why is it of utmost importance to use Scripture when we evangelize or share the gospel?

Question
6

Instruct

Through Paul's message, we can observe six ways that he incorporates Scripture so that the **Athenians** would know who the one true and living God is. First, he identifies God as the Creator: He **made the world and everything in it** (v. 24; see [Gen 1:1](#)). Second, he relates the uniqueness of God: He **does not dwell in temples made with hands** (see [Exod 20:4-6](#)). With these first two statements, Paul differentiates the Lord God from all the other Greek gods and goddesses. Yahweh alone created the universe and all its contents, and no other god exists but Him alone. Therefore, all the other gods that these citizens of Athens worship are simply made of stone and metals—lifeless objects that have no ability to interact with humans. God, however, as the Creator has interacted in a magnanimous way toward His creation as Paul will demonstrate.



As he continues, Paul points to Scripture in a third way by demonstrating that God alone is the source of life: He **gives to all life, breath, and all things** (v. 25). In Scripture, God gives physical life by breathing into the nostrils of the first man ([Gen 2:7](#); [John 1:3-4](#)), He sustains us and gives us abundant life ([Job 33:4](#); [Psalm 16:11](#); [36:9](#)), and through His Son Jesus Christ He gives spiritual or eternal life which he will address later in his message ([John 11:25](#); [14:6](#)). Fourth, Paul affirms that God is sovereign over all the families of the earth. Not only has God created every person from one source (i.e. **blood**), but He has also **determined their preappointed**

times and the boundaries of their dwellings (v. 26; see [Dan 2:21](#)). Thus, Paul is saying that God has a plan for our lives. Even though man rebelled against Him and disobeyed willfully, God had a plan to redeem humanity from the beginning. In fact, those who **seek** or **grope** for **the Lord** will find Him because God loves His creation and wants to redeem us.

In Context



Acts 17:27 **grope** (v.) *psā-lä-fä-ō* – handle, feel, touch, or grope. In this context, it has the connotation of flailing one's arms about while in darkness.

It would be like searching for the light switch in an unfamiliar dark room. We would run our hand along the wall until we found the switch. In the same way, people are groping in darkness for God, hoping that they might somehow find him.

In what ways do people search for “God” today? How can we use their seeking to help point them to Christ?

Question
7

Fifth, Paul encourages those who are seeking the Lord that they will find Him because **He is not far from each one of us** (v. 27). Actually, God sought us before we started seeking Him. God **is not far**, unlike those in Greek mythology, but He made Himself flesh and came to dwell among men, having the same trials, troubles, and temptations that we ourselves have yet remaining without sin so He could provide life for us ([John 1:14](#); [Heb 4:15](#)). The Lord has not hidden Himself from humanity, but instead has revealed Himself in a personal way by sending His Son to die on the cross so that we might have eternal life ([John 3:16](#)). By having a relationship with Christ, we have been given the right to be called

children of God ([John 1:12](#); [1 John 3:1](#)). We owe our very being, our existence, our lives, and our eternal life to the Lord: **For in Him we live and move and have our being** (v. 28).

Although we are not divine nor can we ever become divine, God has adopted us as His children and given us all the rights and privileges to dwell with Him in His house, that is heaven, forever ([Eph 1:5](#); [Rom 8:16-17](#)). Paul appeals to **the Athenians** own knowledge by showing them their misguided worship. Although they have concepts which are similar to biblical principles through their **poets** and philosophers, anything that does not point to having life in Christ falls short and can never offer life. Therefore, Paul demonstrates that they can only have life in Christ because of the finished work that He has done on the cross.

In-Depth Information



*As an illustration, Paul uses one of their own **poets** who claims: “**For we are also His offspring.**” In Greek mythology, the gods and goddesses actually procreated with one another to form mankind. Although we are created by God in His own image, we only become His children when we accept the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ by confessing and turning from our sins. We are all God’s creation, but according to Scripture we are not all God’s children.*

Why is it important to look at secular philosophies and ideas closely in terms of what they try to espouse religiously? How should we respond to such ideas that may seem close to the truth but are not?

Question
8

THE CONVICTION OF SINFULNESS BY GOD:

After explaining who God is and what He has done for us, Paul challenges the people not to think **gold, silver, or stone** which is **shaped by man's** wisdom represents God (v. 29). God, however, has clearly revealed Himself through Jesus (i.e. **the Man**) whom He **raised from the dead** as a testimony to His triumph over sin and death which has plagued mankind from the beginning. Although the gift of eternal life is free through Jesus' death and resurrection, it still requires a response on our part (v. 31). Because God will **one day judge the world** according to its **righteousness**, we must **repent** or turn from our sins, accepting the **righteousness** which is offered through Jesus (v. 30). The Athenians no longer have an excuse that they were **ignorant** about **God** because Paul has plainly told them in His message. Because God has clearly spoken through history in His Son as well as through His Word, we have no excuse in failing to heed His warning of judgment and to follow His path for eternal life; therefore, God has commanded **all men everywhere to repent**. For us to have salvation, therefore, we must remove our ignorance, turn from our sin, and accept the **righteousness** that Jesus Christ offers through His sacrifice.



Why is ignorance not a plausible excuse for failing to accept the salvation that Jesus offers?

Question
9

THE CONCLUSION DRAWN BY SOME:

Paul encountered various responses when he preached the gospel to the people of Athens. Some who heard the message **mocked** him because they didn't understand what the **resurrection** meant (v. 32). Still others were intrigued and wanted to discuss the matter further once they had thought about it. Lastly, others like **Dionysius** and **a woman named Damaris**, **believed** what Paul had said and they placed their faith in Christ by repenting and surrendering their lives fully (v. 34). We can encounter these same types of decisions today: some will reject and mock the message, some will hear the message and want to ponder it, and others will believe and have their lives transformed. Regardless of the response, we must not grow discouraged and continue to share the gospel. Moreover, we must not base our success on numbers—those who began a relationship with Christ—but on our obedience. We are successful when we obediently follow the Lord's call to evangelize. Therefore, let us be faithful in sharing the gospel of the only God who loved us so much that He Himself became the way for us to have eternal life.

Why should we not be discouraged if people continually reject the gospel and mock us? Instead, how should we handle it?

Question
10

Through religion, man has attempted to devise a plan to reach God through works, having a good character, ritual, overcoming or transcending impure thoughts, etc. All these attempts fail because they are imperfect ways of reaching God. The uniqueness of the gospel is this: God has reached down to man so that we might have life in the only way possible—through His Son Jesus Christ. Therefore, salvation is something of which we can be assured. It's not based on a certain feeling or even a little voice inside of us telling us what to do, but it's based upon the knowledge of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Not only must we have this knowledge, but we must also respond to it by repenting of our sins and turning to Christ.

The world has wisdom and knowledge that seems right to it; in fact, Proverbs 14:12 accurately declares: "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death." For those of us who have a relationship with Christ, we have the truth; therefore, we cannot be influenced or manipulated by the world, but rather we should be compelled by love to show them the error of their ways and help them to see the truth in God's Word. We must make this a priority in our lives because as Christians we are the only ones whose God loved the world so much that He sent His one and only Son to die for our sins and redeem us into everlasting life. Consequently, we must ask ourselves two questions: have we founded our lives on the truth of God's Word and are we living that truth in such a way that we put it into application by sharing the gospel and relating the truth to a lost and dying world? If the answer is "yes" to both of these questions, then let us continue in our

Inspire

journey of faith, doing what God has called us. If the answer is “no” to either of these two questions, then we need to repent and surrender our lives to God so that these two things will become a priority no matter how busy we are, where we are, or what we are doing.

Incorporate

In what ways is the gospel unique from any other religion? What are the unique elements that we must emphasize when evangelizing?

What are some common, everyday illustrations that you could use to help begin a discussion about the gospel? What are other illustrations that you can give to help people understand the gospel?

Incorporate

What are some of the world's philosophies that sound almost like truth, but aren't? What Scriptures can you use to help reveal the truth?

Explain the concept of repentance to someone who has never been to church. What are we repenting from and turning to?

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