

SESSION FIVE: EVANGELISM (1 hour)

We recommend you read through these notes before leading the session. They are intended to help you understand the purpose and journey of the session, and to help you keep the group focused on the core issues.

OVERVIEW:

The focus of this week's session is understanding how explaining our faith plays a part in mission. We recommend getting the group to engage with at least a couple of these core ideas:

- Jesus didn't ask us to make converts but disciples.
- We are all called to proclaim the good news and in each context we must choose the most appropriate way – through words, actions, prayer or anything else the Holy Spirit prompts us to.
- "The greatest single cause of atheism in the world today is Christians: who acknowledge Jesus with their lips, walk out the door, and deny Him by their lifestyle. That is what an unbelieving world simply finds unbelievable" (Brendan Manning). Our words and actions need to match before anyone will listen to us.
- Evangelism has an essential place in the wider call to mission, although mission is more than evangelism. We must be ready to give the reason for the hope that we have.

START (5min):

Share how you got on with the lifestyle change.

Read out the Brendan Manning quotation above. Do you find it more of a challenge to "acknowledge Jesus with [your] lips" or to live up to being a Christian through your lifestyle?

Watch the vox pop clip. Share as a group some of the experiences you have had in talking about Jesus with people who are not Christian.

DISCUSS (20min):

Read Acts 1: 1-11 and answer these questions together:

1. Jesus told the disciples that they were to be his "witnesses" (v8). If you had lived for three years with Jesus, what would you most want people to know about him?
2. The disciples didn't just know about Jesus - they knew him as a friend. What difference do you think that made to the kind of witnesses they were?
3. In verse 3, Jesus makes sure the disciples a) know he is alive and b) understand the kingdom of God. Which of these do we find easier or harder to speak about with confidence?
4. In verse 6 the disciples show that they still misunderstand what Jesus' mission is, and yet Jesus still trusts them to carry it out. Are there things that we think disqualify us from being able to be Jesus' witnesses?

Some thoughts on the questions:

1. *Many tools are available today to help us communicate the 'good news' with clarity, but they can often reduce the enormity and beauty of Jesus to a few short sentences. To be Jesus' witness is to be able to talk about who he is, how he lived, what he has done (for us and for others), to speak about our personal experiences. Encourage the group to think beyond the facts of Jesus, to what he means to them.*
2. *Witnessing to Jesus does not simply involve relating facts about who Jesus is and inviting others to believe the same. We witness to the kind of man he is, how he has loved and transformed us, and the kind of person he makes us want to be – and we do this in all kinds of ways which are verbal and non-verbal.*
3. *Both of these topics can seem hard to communicate as relevant ideas today, although they go right to the heart of our greatest hopes and fears as humans. Encourage the group to reflect on how they have tried to communicate these realities, or how they might.*
4. *Speaking about faith is not something which only very articulate or 'holy' people are called to do, but something that Jesus trusts all of us to do. Jesus does not wait until we have everything together, or are sure of everything before he asks us to talk about him to others.*

WATCH (6min):

Watch the DVD clip 'Evangelism' in which Elaine Storkey, Tim Keller and Tom Wright offer their thoughts on sharing faith. Choose one of the following statements to discuss:

- The disciples risked absolutely everything for the gospel; we are only called to risk superficial things.
- The disciples are called to be witnesses to the good news of the kingdom ... God in Christ reconciling the world to himself.
- Often the story can only be told when something has been done, which forces people to ask the question.

STORY (5 min):

Watch the DVD clip of either:

- Café Church – Sharing faith in a relaxed and familiar environment
- Amigos – Evangelism through hospitality and sharing faith in culturally appropriate ways
- MOSAIC Converts (description)

What inspired you about this example of evangelism? How would this work in your local context?

REFLECT (Optional Extra):

J John shares about the importance of evangelism (5 min).

PRAY (10min):

Spend some time quietly giving your fears and anxiety about evangelism to God. Think of a friend who you could share your story of faith with and pray for an opportunity in the coming week.

ACT (10min):

The next session is the last in the course. Talk in the group about how you want to take things forward after the course. What have you been challenged about in your thinking and in your living? How can you involve the wider church in what you have been learning and what you intend to put into practice? Who else in the church will need to be involved?

Over the next week, read through the list of suggested next steps at [website] to put what you have been learning as a group into action. Spend some time asking God about what kind of action or changes as a group or church you could make, in preparation for the final session.

EXTRAS:

Don't forget to visit [website] for further reading and resources.

Extra film clip:

J John shares about the importance of evangelism.

Suggested further reading

- D. A. Carson, *Telling the Truth* (Zondervan)
- Steven Croft, *Evangelism in a Spiritual Age* (Church House)
- Michael Frost, *Exiles: Living Missionally in a Post-Christian Culture* (Baker)
- Michael Green, *Evangelism through the local church* (Hodder)
- J John, *Breaking The News* (Authentic)
- Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker* (IVP)
- Brian D. McLaren, *More Ready Than You Realize: Evangelism as Dance in the Postmodern Matrix* (Eden)
- Graham Tomlin, *Provocative Church* (SPCK)
- Howard Webber, *Meeting Jesus* (Salvation Army)