
Evangelism for Non-Evangelists
Study Guide

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This guide has been developed for leading a group study of *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists*. It helps you to think through how to apply the major ideas in the book to your own faith and to the ministry practices of your congregation.

Each of the sections of the guide corresponds to one of the chapters in the main book.

This guide is available for everyone, but it will specifically be used by those who are studying *Evangelism for Non-Evangelists* as part of the five-week online course being conducted through UM Discipleship. There may be additional materials made available online for the course participants, as well.

Introduction

Some Jews who went around driving out evil spirits tried to invoke the name of the Lord Jesus over those who were demon-possessed. They would say, "In the name of the Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out." Seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, were doing this. One day the evil spirit answered them, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know about, but who are you?" Then the man who had the evil spirit jumped on them and overpowered them all. He gave them such a beating that they ran out of the house naked and bleeding. (Acts 19:13-16 NIV)

While this Scripture passage is about exorcism, it probably comes close to how many of us feel about evangelism. We fear being put in a situation in which we are way over our heads and our efforts end in disaster. It's good to acknowledge this up front when we study evangelism.

Questions for Individual Reflection

What is your worst experience with evangelism (either as an evangelist or when being evangelized)? List all the reasons why it was problematic.

Why are you studying evangelism? Is it to meet a requirement, to gain specific skills, for personal growth, to help your congregation or another reason?

What are your current individual practices of evangelism?

What do you expect to get out of this class?

Group Reflection Questions

Share your personal stories of evangelism gone bad with each other. What are the common reasons you have with others?

How would you define evangelism? How do you feel about evangelism being defined as a bias for the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ?

What scriptures or other sources inform your definition of evangelism?

We often think about evangelism in terms of our individual responsibility, but our individual evangelistic work is just part of the work carried out by the whole church. How does your congregation offer excellence in its ministry to reflect well on the gospel? How is it more or less impressive than governmental or corporate organizations?

What are your current congregational practices of evangelism? Who is responsible for evangelism in your church? Does this connect with the individual practices you listed?

Chapter 1

But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. (2 Timothy 4:5 NIV)

For many people, St. Paul is the ultimate example of an evangelist. He was deeply committed to sharing the gospel, even enduring severe persecution to do so. In this passage, he exhorts Timothy to take up the same commitment to evangelism, willingly working through whatever difficulties may confront that ministry. The charge is the same for us.

List all of the people you would describe as evangelists. What common traits do these people have? What stereotypes do you have of evangelists?

Do the descriptions of modernism and postmodernism sound like they might apply to your congregation or denomination? How so?

Would you describe yourself or your congregation as “evangelical?” Can you identify evangelistic activities in your congregation or individual life that come from an evangelical heritage? Do they fit with how you view yourself and/or your congregation?

Does postmodernism or modernism sound more alien or uncomfortable to you? Which sounds more natural to how you tend to operate as an individual or as a congregation?

Do you understand the difference between fundamentalism and a fundamentalist mindset? Are there ways that you or your congregation could be described as having a fundamentalist mindset now? If so, how might that cause problems with evangelism?

If you could remake the world so it was perfect, what would it look like? What would be different from the way it is now?

The New Testament records five commissioning passages between Jesus and the disciples, not just one. These are Matthew 28:16-20, Mark 16:9-20, Luke 24:36-53, John 20:19-31, and Acts 1:1-11. Break into five groups, with each group looking at one of these passages. Answer three questions in reference to each passage: (1) What commands does Jesus give? (2) What promises does Jesus make? (3) What is the hoped for outcome of following Jesus' commands? In doing this, people often find that evangelism is much more multifaceted than they first imagined.

Chapter 2

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 NIV)

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. (1 John 1:1-3, NIV)

God called both the people of Israel and the church to know the core message of their faith and to pass that message along to others. We likewise need to know our starting point of faith and how to articulate it in order to share our faith.

Name all the negative things you can think of that Christians have done or are accused of now. Given all this, why do you remain a Christian?

1 Peter 3:15 says we should always have an answer for the hope within us. What is the hope God gives you? What is the ultimate purpose you think God has for you? For all of creation?

If you have access to the internet, watch this brief clip about people trying to figure out what they believe the meaning of life is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gZjbBuqaT4s>

How do you understand issues of life, death, and suffering? Does God control every situation? Is there any situation that God cannot control? How do you offer hope from God in these situations?

If a person were to say “absolutely yes!” to your evangelism, what would happen to them? How would his or her life change on the inside and on the outside? What sort of beliefs would they have? What sort of morals would they have? What sort of activities would they undertake? Who would they relate to and how would they relate to those people?

Based on all of your answers above, what is your starting point? What is the big idea about God’s goodness that is so good you want people to believe it and change their lives to fit it?

How do you pay attention to God’s nudges in your life? What are some ways you can be more attentive to God’s activity?

Does your church have a mission or vision statement? What does it express about who God is and what God wants to accomplish in the world?

Use the line exercise from the book: (1) Draw a line that represents your life. It should include peaks, valleys and plateaus to represent the high, low, and mundane periods of your life. (2) Once you have finished your line, label the parts of the line that are most important to you. (3) After you have added these first labels, write what you believe God was doing during those same moments. This should be based on your current understanding of what God was doing in your life, not on what you thought God was doing at the time those periods of your life occurred. Once you have finished, you have an integrated depiction of your personal narrative and your metanarrative. You have explained your life and have also shown how you used your metanarrative about God to make sense of what happened in your life. A secondary result of this activity is that you have shown that you are equipped to serve as an evangelist. All people have peaks, valleys and plateaus. An evangelist’s job is not to refute this or try to explain away those instances, but to share how the metanarrative of Jesus Christ to make sense of their own peaks, valleys, and plateaus. This is not something to force on others, but an invitation for others to consider what it would look like to reconsider their own lives through the lens of a Christian metanarrative. This understanding of evangelism helps to overcome the fear many people have of not being prepared or educated enough to evangelize. We do not need the answers. We just need to articulate how the good news of God through Jesus Christ has made sense of our personal stories.

Chapter 3

This chapter includes several technical terms for dealing with theology. Here is a brief glossary of them in case they are new to you:

Affections: Our deep seated feelings about an idea we encounter.

Apophatic theology: Theology that comes from being quiet and contemplating what the voice of God is telling us. It is often connected to mysticism.

Christology: The study of Jesus Christ.

Divine revelation: The way God reveals information to people about who God is, how God acts, and how we are to respond to God.

Doctrine: Formal teaching of the church about Christian beliefs.

Interpretive matrix: Our personal way of making sense of ideas we encounter, including our affections and our reason.

Kataphatic theology: Theology that comes from using words to write about and speak about God, seeking to understand God better through our reason.

Theology: The study of God and God's actions.

Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth. (2 Timothy 2:15, NIV)

Having discerned our starting point, we are still exhorted to study it so we can share the word of truth appropriately. This points us to theology. Take some time to answer the questions laid out in the text. Answer them first for yourself individually and then for your congregation.

Have you ever thought about why you believe what you believe?

Who is God?

What does God do?

How should we respond to God based on who God is and what God does?

What are the sources you believe are revelation from God?

How do you interpret those sources?

Are there other sources that influence your beliefs about God (politics, social media, family, work)?

Based on the answers from all of the above, say more about your starting point. What sort of God do you believe in and what are the good things that God invites people to share? How does God invite people to share them? How does that God want people to share the good things with each other?

What are some alternative perspectives Christians might have about how they understand the good news, God, and God's activities? Do you see ways you could work alongside of people with these different views to share the good news? Does your congregation currently partner ecumenically with other churches in your community? If not, where might be some areas of collaboration?

Chapter 4

Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: to an unknown god. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you. (Acts 17:22-23 NIV)

After receiving the commander’s permission, Paul stood on the steps and motioned to the crowd. When they were all silent, he said to them in Aramaic: “Brothers and fathers, listen now to my defense.” When they heard him speak to them in Aramaic, they became very quiet. (Acts 21:40 - 22:2, NIV)

St. Paul was aware of who he was and who he was speaking to when he evangelized. He could speak in Greek to the people of Athens about the relationship of God to their culture and could speak in Aramaic to the Jews in Jerusalem about the relationship between Jesus and Jewish beliefs. Likewise, we are called to know what we have to offer and the people we offer it to so we can offer it well.

What strengths and weaknesses do you have as an individual?

What is the group of people that defines the culture in which you will evangelize? Think of some of the most common practices and items used by that group. What are the core values you can infer about the culture based on those practices and items? (It can help to look at where the group spends most of its time, energy, and money.)

What are the major social structures that the people you want to evangelize must interact with? How frequently must they interact with them? How specialized are the structures? Does the church engage with them as an institution?

Crouch suggests that at times all of us will condemn, critique, copy, or consume cultural practices or artifacts. Name something from the culture that you would react to in each of these four ways. Now repeat the process for your congregation.

Does your congregation foster an alternative set of values for relating to the culture and social structures around it? What might strengthen it in doing this?

Has your congregation ever taken time to be quarantined away from the culture and society in order to be clear about its beliefs, identity, and values?

If you could have any impact on your culture or society as a congregation, what would it be? What sort of culture would you need to create in order to have this change? How could you cultivate the space, time, people, and resources to create this alternative culture?

Chapter 5

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. (Genesis 1:31-2:1 NIV)

God was amazingly creative in bringing forth the universe, and “all their vast array” pleased God as “very good.” The practice of evangelism should be no different. We are given the ability to engage in a wide variety of activities through which to embody the good news of God. We should not limit our practice to just a few of these.

Evangelism literature and teachers often present “best practices” for practicing evangelism well. What are some of those “best practices” that you have heard of?

Look back at your starting point and at your theological reflection. Based on these, which of those best practices flow naturally from what you believe as an individual? As a congregation? What practices do not fit with your beliefs (even if you are trying to do them now)? What new practices might you add that flow naturally from those beliefs?

As you look at possible new practices, consider whether your practices

- make room for God to be involved directly in evangelism through acts of power?
- allow for the evangelist to be formed in the faith?
- allow for evangelists and those they evangelize to meet without a sense of coercion and with an openness to hearing each other?
- involve ways that both individuals and the congregation as a whole can participate?
- make use of creative and immersive ways to tell the story of the Christian faith?
- recognize the connections between evangelism and hospitality, reconciliation and/or stewardship?

How does your congregation make room for word, deed and sign? Think about Jesus when he fed the 5,000 or when he healed people. He spoke words of truth to guide them to the Kingdom of God, he acted with compassion to meet people’s needs, and he made room for God to act in a supernatural way. Are there ways that your congregation does all three of these? If so, do these various activities have a way to connect with each other so that people outside the church could be touched in all three ways?

Do the Immunity X-Ray to determine what commitments might keep you from changing once you have come up with some practices you may need to stop or start. Do this for both yourself and your congregation.

Commitment that Requires Change	Doing or Not Doing to Resist Change	Worries about Other Commitments	Big Assumption Against Change

Based on your immunity x-ray, if you have current practices you need to stop or new practices you might want to try (either individually or as a congregation), what are some modest goals you could set for making those changes?

Remember a time when you were evangelized, whether it went well or not. Retell the story in a way that describes that evangelism being done well. What sort of evangelistic activities would convey God's goodness if practiced on you? Would you be more comfortable practicing evangelism in this way?

Chapter 6

David said to the Philistine, "You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel." (1 Samuel 17:45 NIV)

When considering evangelism, we often feel like David: facing down a very difficult and powerful foe. We are not armed like the great saints or large churches, but we are still called to go evangelize. David reminds us that we have enough. We go in the name of the Lord, and if we have reflected on the good that the Lord has done, we will be well equipped to face whatever struggle confronts us.

What are the riches your congregation has to share with others already? How might you bring them out for people to see them and better know the gospel from them?

Share with the group:

Have you ever felt you did not deserve to be an evangelist? Have you changed your mind about that now? Why?

Have you ever felt ashamed or guilty in reference to evangelism? Do you still feel that way? Why?

Who might you choose as a new example of the kind of evangelist you could aspire to become? How can your evangelism role model fit with others' role models to develop a whole congregational approach to evangelism, with each presenting the good news in a way that builds on and supports each other while inviting the people being evangelized more deeply into the Christian faith?

Look up the Bible passage that is related to the next major holiday at which it is likely you will see a large number of people who do not usually attend church (e.g., Luke 2 for Christmas or Matthew 28 for Easter). What new meanings do you find in that passage in the light of how you have navigated evangelism? Based on what you have learned and discovered over the course of this study, what is an authentic way to share the good news both with those who are in the pews on that holiday and more broadly with those in your community during that holiday time? Take time to develop a strategy for this, being as creative as necessary.