



Getting the Most Out of *Evangelism*

One day on a plane I happened to sit next to a rather intellectual-looking professor. We leaped into a stimulating conversation, and I intended to tell him about my faith—at the appropriate time. But abruptly he asked me what I did for a living. I said, “Well, I’m in Christian work.” (It’s one thing to be a Christian; another thing to do it for a living.)

A look of amazement spread across his face. He was clearly thinking, *Funny—she looked so normal!* Immediately his demeanor changed, and he was clearly trying to find the appropriate words to use for a “Christian type.” He asked, with the slightest condescension, “Well, what’s the name of your little organization?”

“InterVarsity Christian Fellowship,” I replied. He looked bewildered. I asked, “Is something wrong?”

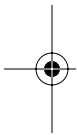
He said, “Oh, nothing really. It’s just . . . well . . . you don’t *look* like a Christian athlete.”

Thinking at that point that he was joking, I said, “Well, yes, I play basketball for Jesus. It’s a living.”

Without a hesitation he said, “Oh, I’m sure it must be very rewarding.”

It was a great temptation to play along with his feigned religious behavior and say, “Yes, well, it’s such a little blessing. You know, we never lose a game.” However, with uncommon restraint, I told him, “No, actually that was a joke. We make jokes sometimes. However, you asked me if my work is rewarding. I would prefer to say it is terribly intriguing.”

And almost in spite of himself he asked, “Intriguing? Well, *why* is that?”





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I answered, “Because I work with students. And we constantly face the question ‘How do we know anything is true? How do we know that we aren’t taking our own little world and labeling it reality? Is there any basis for our faith or is it mere wish fulfillment?’”

He answered, “You may not believe this, but those questions were going through my mind as well. Okay. What kind of evidences *do* you have?” And so we talked about the evidence for Christian faith. Then he said, “You know, besides the evidence I think what impresses me most in this conversation is that you seem to be a person of hope and not despair. Why is that?”

Then I was able to share for the last five minutes of our descent that the reason is Jesus Christ.

My experience with the professor was vastly different from my embarrassment in first sharing the gospel. At that time I was in Spain as an undergraduate student. I knew God had called me to be a witness, but for the first several months I allowed the fears and insecurities of sharing Christ, as well as my discomfort with being a witness in a different culture and a different language, to intimidate me.

For example, one day I was reading the Bible for my devotions when a cynical friend entered my room unexpectedly and said, “¿Que estas leyendo?” (What are you reading?)

I was sure she would think I was a religious fanatic—not only reading my Bible but on a weekday! So I quickly slipped my Bible under other books and tried to look as cool as possible. “Oh, nothing, really.”

“Yes you were. What were you reading?”

“Oh, not much,” I answered.

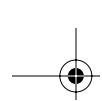
“Becky, what were you *reading*?” she demanded.

“All right! It’s the Bible!” I confessed. (And I behaved this way so she would not think I was strange!)

I slowly began to realize that we are called to expose our faith, not impose it or hide it. As I read the Gospels and saw how beautifully Jesus dealt with people, it began to free me up.

It’s a long story, but God gave me an antidote for my fears and timidity about sharing my faith. By the time I left Spain, God used a Bible study that I was leading to win five people (including avowed atheists and one





Marxist) to Christ. Until that time I had never seen one person become a Christian. Today I am the godmother of one of the former atheists' children. If you had asked me at the time if any of those five students seemed open to God, I would have laughed out loud. But I could not see their hearts, nor the power of God's Spirit to penetrate their hearts.

Since that experience in Spain I have seen many people turn their lives over to God and be changed. And yet the awesome miracle of conversion never fails to move me. What can be more miraculous than seeing a person who was once dead in sin become alive to God?

Even more remarkable is that God invites us to be a part of that process. We not only have the honor of sharing God's message, but we even have the awesome privilege of inviting a response. It is because of the enormity of this privilege that Ruth Siemens and I have written these Bible studies.

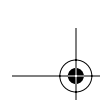
How do we get to the point of discussing Jesus Christ with our friends or with strangers? And how can we overcome our fears and insecurities about evangelism? How do we find the boldness and confident faith that we need? This study guide helps us answer these questions. It consists of twelve studies which look at the example of Jesus and the early evangelists. They teach us how to communicate the gospel clearly and creatively.

I have written these studies with Ruth Siemens, my former housemate in Spain. Ruth helped me get over my initial fears about sharing my faith in Jesus Christ. With great wisdom, encouragement and patience she helped me see that evangelism can be a way of life.

Suggestions for Individual Study

- 1.** As you begin each study, pray that God will speak to you through his Word.
- 2.** Read the introduction to the study and respond to the personal reflection question or exercise. This is designed to help you focus on God and on the theme of the study.
- 3.** Each study deals with a particular passage—so that you can delve into the author's meaning in that context. Read and reread the passage to be studied. If you are studying a book, it will be helpful to read through the entire book prior to the first study. The questions are





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written using the language of the New International Version, so you may wish to use that version of the Bible. The New Revised Standard Version is also recommended.

4. This is an inductive Bible study, designed to help you discover for yourself what Scripture is saying. The study includes three types of questions. *Observation* questions ask about the basic facts: who, what, when, where and how. *Interpretation* questions delve into the meaning of the passage. *Application* questions help you discover the implications of the text for growing in Christ. These three keys unlock the treasures of Scripture.

Write your answers to the questions in the spaces provided or in a personal journal. Writing can bring clarity and deeper understanding of yourself and of God's Word.

5. It might be good to have a Bible dictionary handy. Use it to look up any unfamiliar words, names or places.

6. Use the prayer suggestion to guide you in thanking God for what you have learned and to pray about the applications that have come to mind.

7. You may want to go on to the suggestion under "Now or Later," or you may want to use that idea for your next study.

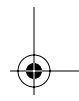
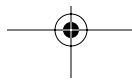
Suggestions for Members of a Group Study

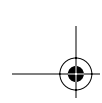
1. Come to the study prepared. Follow the suggestions for individual study mentioned above. You will find that careful preparation will greatly enrich your time spent in group discussion.

2. Be willing to participate in the discussion. The leader of your group will not be lecturing. Instead, he or she will be encouraging the members of the group to discuss what they have learned. The leader will be asking the questions that are found in this guide.

3. Stick to the topic being discussed. Your answers should be based on the verses which are the focus of the discussion and not on outside authorities such as commentaries or speakers. These studies focus on a particular passage of Scripture. Only rarely should you refer to other portions of the Bible. This allows for everyone to participate in in-depth study on equal ground.

4. Be sensitive to the other members of the group. Listen atten-





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tively when they describe what they have learned. You may be surprised by their insights! Each question assumes a variety of answers. Many questions do not have “right” answers, particularly questions that aim at meaning or application. Instead the questions push us to explore the passage more thoroughly.

When possible, link what you say to the comments of others. Also, be affirming whenever you can. This will encourage some of the more hesitant members of the group to participate.

5. Be careful not to dominate the discussion. We are sometimes so eager to express our thoughts that we leave too little opportunity for others to respond. By all means participate! But allow others to also.

6. Expect God to teach you through the passage being discussed and through the other members of the group. Pray that you will have an enjoyable and profitable time together, but also that as a result of the study you will find ways that you can take action individually and/or as a group.

7. Remember that anything said in the group is considered confidential and should not be discussed outside the group unless specific permission is given to do so.

8. If you are the group leader, you will find additional suggestions at the back of the guide.

