

LEADER'S GUIDE

Preparing to
Proclaim:
An Introduction
to Evangelism

PRAISE & PROCLAIM
MINISTRIES

Introduction

This interactive course is designed for people to learn on their own. We are using this study to introduce Praise and Proclaim's personal evangelism training by examining obstacles and fears that are so common for many church members. Before we train people, it's important to confront those fears and obstacles. This is a primary purpose for this Bible study.

This leadership guide serves to help pastors or lay members to conduct a group discussion after each lesson. It's an opportunity to review the content, ask questions, and gently correct answers from members. It is also an opportunity for members to hear other perspectives and discover they are not alone in harboring fears of personal evangelism.

This guide includes notes and additional insights to help the leader move the discussion along and have a greater understanding of the topic.

Preparing to Proclaim

PREPARING TO PROCLAIM

Allow the group to answer the following questions that were in the lesson.

1. Why ought a Christian believer say proclaiming the gospel is easy?
2. Why would a faithful Christian believer say that proclaiming the gospel is very difficult?

Leader Notes:

Every congregation has one or two members that have the gift of evangelism. They are bold, unafraid, and eagerly volunteer to do scary activities like canvassing. They often get frustrated with the rest of their members because they feel like the only ones who do anything. I tend to go out of my way to verbally acknowledge and appreciate their desire and efforts, but gently remind them that not everybody is in the same boat. I ask them to be patient with their fellow members and trust that the Holy Spirit is at work in them through the power of his Word.

Proclaiming the gospel is a conundrum. It's easy but it's never easy. In many ways, it's a wonderful example of our dual nature in Christ. Evangelism is 100% contrary to our human nature and yet, a 100% spirit-filled response from our new nature in Christ.

A GOOD STARTING POINT

Jesus provides a perfect model on how to prepare his disciples to proclaim the Good News. Surprisingly, the Scriptures seem to reveal that he spent most of his time preparing his disciples on how to overcome obstacles rather than teaching them what to say. Jesus had compassion on people because they were being harassed and helpless. [Matthew 9:35-38]

Discussion Questions:

1. Why would this be important for evangelism?
2. How does it make you feel when Jesus says, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few?"
3. Why are there so few workers?

Leader Notes:

I don't believe "guilting" people to do evangelism work is a successful long-term strategy. Instead, compassion for the lost is a major driving force that compels us to bring a message of salvation. But that's not all. If we could see what Jesus sees, we would also be compelled to share Good News of what he has already done. But we can't. A proper response is to trust that Jesus is right when he says the harvest is plentiful. Right now, there are very few workers who are providing a clear gospel message in this world filled with muddled information.

Preparing to Proclaim

WARNING #1: REJECTION

Discussion Questions:

1. Agree or disagree: The fear of being rejected if I verbally proclaim the gospel to others bothers me. Why or why not?
2. We can say that in the face of rejection, we can be clever in approach and innocent in appearance. How can we be shrewd and innocent to spread the Word in our community?

Leader Notes:

We will be rejected when we step outside of our comfort zone and proclaim the gospel. But who is really being rejected? Even though we may think that we are being rejected, it is really God. We are the messengers. It doesn't happen very often, but whenever I go canvassing and come across a hardened heart that vehemently rejects the gospel message and may even swear at me, it hurts. It bothers me and I feel intimidated. When that happens, I have found it helpful to go to the edge of their driveway and shake the dust off my feet in judgment. That person has rejected an opportunity to hear the gospel and his salvation is in serious jeopardy. This allows me to process the rejection and be ready to joyfully proclaim the gospel at the next house.

WARNING #2: ARRESTED

Discussion Question:

1. Currently, believers in the U.S. do not have to fear being arrested or punished for proclaiming the gospel. What should we be on guard against today? (Matthew 10:17-20)

Leader Notes:

I am discovering in my evangelism training that it's more important to remove obstacles that causes faithful believers to refrain from proclaiming the gospel than teaching them what to say. After making a list of what believers should be on guard against the devil's schemes to keep us quiet, ask how well these schemes are working against us and our congregation. Are they keeping us quiet from personally proclaiming the gospel? Why or why not? I think we can admit that the devil is doing a great job right now keeping us quiet. The obstacles to verbally proclaiming the gospel are really not based on knowing what to say but having the boldness to say something when God provides opportunities.

Preparing to Proclaim

WARNING #3: BETRAYAL

Discussion Question:

1. Agree or disagree: A life in Christ expects to be hated or betrayed by those who don't believe in Christ – even if the hate or betrayal comes from family members. How would this effect our willingness to verbally proclaim the gospel?

FINAL THOUGHTS

Discussion Questions:

1. Did Jesus know that evangelism would be difficult? Why?
2. Do you agree with Dave's reasoning in the video that evangelism is more difficult today than two thousand years ago because we are comfortable in the U.S. or is it the same?
3. What are your thoughts about lesson one? What stood out for you?

Leader Notes:

A major point in this bible lesson is to let people know and acknowledge that the fear of personal evangelism is real. The fear doesn't come from God but his adversary on earth. We are attempting to establish a foundational truth in our evangelism training – verbally proclaiming the gospel is far more about God than it is about ourselves.

Trusting God's Promises

EVANGELISM REQUIRES BELIEVERS TO WALK ON WATER

Discussion Questions:

1. Agree or Disagree: To go and verbally proclaim the gospel to others feels like it would take a miracle. Why or why not?
2. What did you think of the survey? How did you respond?

Leader Notes:

When I provide evangelism training for others, I rarely, if ever, tell stories about my experiences proclaiming the gospel. Members love hearing evangelism or mission stories, but they cannot personally relate to them. Instead, I tell stories of “normal” people conquering fears and how the Lord provided amazing evangelism opportunities. Our priority is to equip members to proclaim the gospel. It's okay for called workers to be transparent and let our members know that we struggle with fear, too. We are all in the same boat.

A BIG STEP OF FAITH

Discussion Questions:

1. Agree or Disagree: I think that I would have been like Peter and asked Jesus if I could walk on water. Or, I can relate to other disciples who probably stayed in the boat. Why?
2. How did you answer the question? When the Lord provided you with an amazing opportunity to give a reason for the hope you have in Christ, what answer did you select? Share your experience.

Leader Notes:

There are many stories in the Old and New Testament where God used ordinary people to do extraordinary things. It's amazing to me that the Holy Spirit inspired writers to be transparent with people. They shared stories about heroes of faith who struggled with doubt, disappointment, fear, and sin. They acted because they trusted God's promises. Despite their failings and inadequacies, God used them in a powerful way. Small victories accompany every verbal proclamation of the gospel. Heaven wins! These same thoughts can be means of encouragement for “witnessing wimps” like myself.

Trusting God's Promises

THE ROLE OF THE SPIRIT

Discussion Question:

1. How can these three gifts of the Holy Spirit be applied to proclaiming the gospel to others?
 - Dynamus: Whenever we feel timid, God promises to give us power. This will help me whenever I step out in faith to proclaim my faith to others by...
 - Agape: Whenever we feel timid, God promises to give us love. This will help me whenever I step out in faith to proclaim my faith to others by...
 - Sophronismos: Whenever we feel timid, God promises to give us self-discipline. This will help me whenever I step out in faith to proclaim my faith to others by...

Leader Notes:

Ask people to refer to their worksheet and provide answers to these questions. A main point of this exercise is to help believers trust God's promises. Christ's perfect love drives out fear. (1 John 4:18) Let our members know that Christ provides remedies to overcome the devil's traps to keep us silent. We do not have to succumb to the spirit of timidity when the Lord provides opportunities to share Good News.

TRUST GOD'S PROMISES AND IT WILL BE OKAY!

Discussion Question:

1. How could these promises be attached to Christian believers who step out in faith to proclaim the gospel with others?
 - Matthew 4:19:
 - John 20:21:
 - Luke 11:9:
 - Acts 1:8:

Leader Notes:

Matthew 4:19: When Jesus says come, he provides. When he sends, he provides opportunities. Disciples drop the nets to follow Christ. He will send us where to fish – even provide the fish to fill the nets if this is according to his purpose.

John 20:21: Again, Jesus desires for us to have peace. This includes a peace in our hearts, minds, and emotions. We have peace in knowing that as God sent Jesus, he is sending us. With that commission, we have peace in knowing that Christ goes with us.

Trusting God's Promises

TRUST GOD'S PROMISES AND IT WILL BE OKAY!, CONT.

Luke 11:9: When the Holy Spirit compels you to proclaim the gospel, our first response is to pray. Whatever we ask to help equip us, God will provide. Wherever God desires us to be, he sends us. And whenever we have a willing heart to proclaim the gospel he tell us to go, proclaim, knock, and he will provide opportunities specifically designed for us.

Acts 1:8: Equipping is not self-driven. We can receive evangelism training and take full advantage of God's means of grace to remain in Christ, but it is the power of the Holy Spirit that makes us witnesses. Evangelism is not about us, but God's work in us.

There are many more verses in the Bible that can be a source of God's promises for evangelists. Another exercise is to pour through the Scriptures and add verses to this list.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Discussion Question:

1. What are your thoughts about lesson two? What stood out for you?

What Do I Say?

INTRODUCTION

Discussion Question:

1. How did you respond to the survey question below?

When I see people in my congregation who are actively proclaiming the gospel in my community, I tend to think:

- a) That's great! But I don't have the gift of evangelism like they do.
- b) They are kind of weird fanatics.
- c) I sure hope they don't stand up in church again and implore people to go proclaim the gospel. It's getting irritating.
- d) That's awesome! I sure wish I could be like them.

Leader Notes:

This is supposed to be a fun question that people can chuckle about. It's fun for people to see others agreeing with them.

WHAT DO I SAY?

Discussion Question:

1. Agree or Disagree: When a person places too much emphasis on their ability to verbally proclaim the gospel rather than trusting the power of God's Word, it can keep them from participating in evangelism activities. Explain your answer.

Leader Notes:

Too often, people have little confidence in their ability to proclaim the gospel. They immediately default rather than trusting in the power and the ability of God's Word. There is certainly a measure of properly preparing ourselves to give an answer for the hope we have in Christ, but it can't be our emphasis. As we will find out later in this lesson, people already know what to say, they just need the confidence to say it.

What Do I Say?

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

Discussion Question:

1. Complete the exercise in the lesson together. Have each participant share their answer.

If you were only given seven words to proclaim the gospel to your neighbor, what would they be?

Leader Notes:

Can you really proclaim the gospel in seven words? That may be hard to believe. It is my experience that receiving faith is often a process. There are cultural barriers, previous bad experiences with the church, and a host of other issues that have caused a person to leave church, never go to church or have no faith. As believers, we can't judge hearts nor God's will for each soul. It's true, very few of us will witness an experience like the jailer in Philippi. But God uses every word that comes out of our mouth – even if its seven words.

REASONS FOR HOPE IN CHRIST

Discussion Question:

1. Complete the exercise in the lesson together.

You walk into an elevator with another person and the door shuts. The awkward silence ensues while you both stare at the numbers above and wait for your floor to arrive. Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appears and tells you to share a message about your Savior to the stranger next to you before the elevator door opens at the top floor. You have thirty seconds. What would you say?

Leader Notes:

Allow every person, no matter how reluctant, to share their answer with the class. Celebrate every answer and provide loving correction to help bring scriptural clarity to their answer if needed. A purpose of this exercise is to help people recognize that they already know what to say to proclaim the gospel. Furthermore, people today want to hear our answer for the hope we have in Christ, not a memorized answer given by somebody else. You may assure people that most of the time, people are only ready to hear a thirty-second elevator witness. The conversation can be extended if you sense the person desires to hear more or ask a question.

What Do I Say?

BUT WHAT IF I SAY SOMETHING WRONG?

Discussion Question:

1. Discuss the question asked in the lesson. Ask, “What is really the worst thing that could happen?”

After verbally proclaiming the gospel, what is the worst thing that could happen?

- a) *They will call the police.*
- b) *They will swear and call me a fool.*
- c) *I will mess up and embarrass my Savior.*
- d) *They will think I'm strange and reject me.*

Leader Notes:

It's interesting how fear can create in our minds unlikely scenarios that rarely happen. When you treat people with love and respect, the majority of people will be polite even though most of them will probably not be interested. And that's okay! If you want to get into a debate or aggressively ask pointed questions about a person's eternity, then you will receive confrontation. The exercises in this lesson have already revealed that a person knows what to say. So, it's impossible to mess up. Furthermore, if a person says something unpleasant after proclaiming the gospel, can you handle that? I think so. Trust me. When you step out in faith to share your faith with others it is going to be okay.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Discussion Questions:

1. What is our role in proclaiming the gospel?
2. What is God's role?
3. How does that help you proclaim the gospel to others?
4. What are your thoughts about lesson three? What stood out for you?

Defining Success

INTRODUCTION

Discussion Question:

1. What was your reaction to the opening video in lesson four?

Leader Notes:

It's hard to process disappointment. When you feel that you or your congregation has been faithful in proclaiming the gospel, it's hard to process a lack of membership growth. Fingers can be pointed at others or at themselves. If disappointment is not processed in a healthy, scriptural manner, then it can lead to congregational despondency and little outreach activity.

WHO'S SUCCESS?

Discussion Question:

1. Agree or Disagree: We sometimes place too much emphasis on attracting people to come to church in place of delivering personal messages about the risen Christ. Why? What is a proper balance?

Leader Notes:

Many outreach activities used today are meant to attract people to come to church to attend a worship or a youth event. The intent is to proclaim the gospel to the adults who come or the children who participate. And that is good! But how should a congregation respond if those events are no longer providing new members? Processing disappointment can also include evaluating outreach strategies. Our society is changing at such a drastic pace, it is healthy for congregations to consider other ways to spread the Word. Instead of inviting people to come and hear the Word, what if congregations brought the Word to the community. What would that look like at your congregation?

Defining Success

OUR RESPONSIBILITY

Discussion Questions:

1. *“Jesus does not call us – his farmers – to judge the condition or the receptivity of the soil. If we perceive someone to be rocky soil, then we may refrain from plantings seeds. It seems that Jesus calls his disciples to sow his Word everywhere even though seeds will land in unproductive soil.” (Quote from Lesson 4)*

Agree or Disagree: Christians tend to judge how a person may respond to hearing the gospel before the proclaim a gospel message to them. Why?

2. Agree or Disagree: It is okay to be disappointed when results from our efforts to proclaim the gospel don't match our expectations. Why or why not?
3. What would be a proper way to define evangelism success? How would this help in your evangelism efforts?

Leader Notes:

Properly defining outreach success makes a huge difference to sustain evangelism activity. In my experience, a mission-minded congregation is one that is far more concerned about bringing as many people as possible to heaven than they are in finding new members. In the meantime, we can trust that God's Word works and that he is far more concerned about the health and sustainability of a church than the pastor or the members. The Lord will bless evangelism activity in his own way.

THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO OVERCOME IN EVANGELISM

Discussion Questions:

1. *“Guilt does not motivate us to proclaim the gospel, because God is not going to love us less if we don't participate – nor love us more if we do.” (Quote from Lesson 4)*

Would you agree with the author that guilt is the biggest barrier to overcome in evangelism?

2. Do you have bad experiences from proclaiming the gospel that has prohibited you from proclaiming the gospel today?
3. Does it make you feel guilty that you have not been proclaiming the gospel to others or not participating in evangelism activities at church? Why or why not?

Defining Success

THE BIGGEST BARRIER TO OVERCOME IN EVANGELISM, CONT.

Leader Notes:

It is often that a member will pull me aside during evangelism training and confess their guilt of refraining from proclaiming the gospel when the Lord provided a golden moment. I even hear confessions of guilt from pastors, too. Perhaps it would be healthy to confess our guilt or repent from not taking part in evangelism. Perhaps it would be healthy to pronounce the complete forgiveness of our sins. We are right with God because of faith alone. With a clean slate, we can make ourselves available to God and be used in a powerful way to spread the Word.

EVANGELISM USES WORDS

Discussion Question:

1. Agree or Disagree: Jesus tells us to “let your light shine” in the world. It’s important for people to see good deeds from a person who professes faith, but it is not a substitute for proclaiming our faith.

Leader Notes:

Good works are an important non-verbal testimony of our faith in Christ. People are watching and observing those who profess to be believers. They carefully watch how Christians respond when difficult life circumstances are thrust upon them. Yet, how can they know the reasons for the hope that you have in Christ in they have not heard them. Even though being a light for the gospel is a wonderful precursor for evangelism, it cannot be a replacement or an excuse to refrain from saying anything. There are people who are longing to hear despite how they may appear.

PROPER RESPONSES

Discussion Questions:

1. How can you process disappointment or rejection when a promising family no longer comes back to church after attending for several weeks in a row?
2. How can church members process disappointment when an aggressive outreach program that brought many kids and families to church did not yield any new members?

Defining Success

PROPER RESPONSES, CONT.

Leader Notes:

Disappointment, rejection, and guilt are very difficult to process. But thanks be to God who does give us the victory in Christ Jesus. We tend to give up on people and ourselves far too soon. Resiliency does play a significant role in evangelism. In Christ, we can persevere and keep working while it is day to bring as many as possible to heaven.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Evangelism is far more about God than it is about us. It's far more about Christ's work in us, for us, and through us than it is about our work for God. It's far more about Christ's ability in his Word rather than our abilities for Christ. With eyes fixed on Jesus and his promises, we can dare to step outside our comfort zones and deliver the message of what Christ has already done for us.

Perhaps after this Bible study, you can say to yourself, "Maybe I can proclaim the gospel through the power of Christ in me." And that's a good place to start.