



* personal evangelism

the MINISTRY PAPERS

on a mission...

Jesus commanded his disciples to "go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" [Matthew 28:19-20].

This 'Great Commission' sets out two goals for a church:

- * to REACH people for Christ; &
- * to TEACH them to follow him

The same ideas are found in Paul's words in Colossians:

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ". [Colossians 1:28].

A good mission statement will clearly express these two main aims for a church family, e.g.:

- * present Christ to everyone
- * present everyone mature in Christ

Of course, these two aims are always related. It's the same gospel that underpins both aims. The gospel of forgiveness and eternal life through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of both our evangelism (reaching unbelievers) and our edification (teaching believers).

* evangelism

proclaiming the gospel to unbelievers
[present Christ to everyone]

* edification

teaching believers to live the gospel
[present everyone mature in Christ]

As we seek to live out this two-fold mission together as a church, our bible study small groups are a vital part of making it happen (see the 'joining a small group' paper). Not only are small groups vital for edification, they are also vital in the area of personal evangelism. It is through small groups that we can get equipped, encourage each other, pray for each other and keep each other accountable in the area of personal evangelism.

LEADERS:...before taking someone through this paper, review the two key introductory MINISTRY PAPERS: 'the ministry training church' and 'meeting one to one'.

Our church has two main 'arms': small groups & ministry teams. This 'personal evangelism' paper relates within the **small groups** arm. It's designed to help your small group leader encourage you to make the most of every opportunity to proclaim Christ



investigate

read Luke 24:13-27; 44-49

1. What events have just taken place in Jerusalem?

2. What events does Jesus say the entire Old Testament pointed to (verses 26-27, 44-47)?

3. What events are the apostles witnesses to?

4. As a result, what message were they to preach?



think & apply

5. Why is it important to see that the death and resurrection of Jesus is the focus of the whole Bible?

6. Why is proclaiming Jesus' death and resurrection at the heart of following Jesus?



ideas for discussion

In your context, what opportunities are there to proclaim Christ?

- *
- *
- *
- *

know the gospel

The great event of his death and resurrection is the focus of the whole Bible. Everything that came before this event, pointed forward to it. And we who live after this event, are to proclaim it. Everyone's real problem is their rejection of God. The only solution is God's forgiveness through the death and resurrection of his Son. As Christians, this message demands not only our belief... it demands our witness! As 1 Peter 3:15 says, we need to "always be ready to speak of the hope we have in Christ".

Try working through the 'Two Ways to Live Bible Study'. When you're finished, use the spaces below to put into your own words each of the six points covered in the gospel outline. Go over it a few times until you can do it from memory.

- 1 God the loving ruler and creator** Revelation 4:11
- 2 Humanity in rebellion** Romans 3:10-12
- 3 God won't let people keep on rebelling forever** Hebrews 9:27
- 4 Jesus, the man who dies for rebels** 1 Peter 3:18
- 5 Jesus, the risen ruler** Philippians 2:9-11
- 6 The Two Ways to Live** John 3:36



"I don't know what to say..."

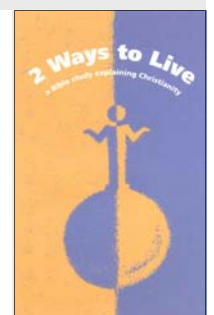
Knowing what to say comes down to being prepared: knowing the gospel. But even when we're clear in our heads what the gospel is – it's not always easy to put it into words when the opportunity arrives!...

That's where gospel outlines like 'Two Ways to Live' are useful tools. It summarises the whole Bible message really well. It captures the Bible's focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus. It also leads to a clear statement of the choice people have to make in response to the gospel.

It's really worth your while getting to know an outline like this. You can put it into your own words and adapt the way you use it from person to person or situation to situation. But the great benefit it gives you is a few clear steps in your head that you can work through – and know that you've covered the essential points of the gospel.

The Bible Study format of 'Two Ways to Live' (pictured below – available from Matthias Media) is great to take people through. It has a few basic questions and takes only about half an hour to work through with someone.

Of course, there are some other good gospel outlines around you might prefer to use. In the end, these things are only tools. But choose your tools well – make sure any outline you use has its focus on the death and resurrection of Jesus.





tell the gospel

I hate aerobics. There's a big difference between aerobics and soccer training, for example. The difference is this: Thursday night soccer training is put into practice on Saturday when you play the game. Aerobics, on the other hand, only leads to more aerobics... never ending practice! Learning gospel outlines must never be like aerobics: all sweat but no outworking. Evangelistic training must be preparation for the *real game*. As Christians, we must not only know the gospel, but tell the gospel. The passages below will help remind us why...

"I don't know when to say it ..."

Knowing when to share the gospel with someone is something many of us struggle with. We can be worried about rejection, or about seeming too pushy. However, while a few of us may err on the side of being too 'in your face', most of us err in the other direction! There are a few important things that can help us here:

- remember that sharing the gospel isn't doing something terrible to someone! Rather, it's doing them a favour, like giving them a gift – the greatest gift!
- try not to focus on your own fears but on the other person's needs – this is a message they need to hear.
- realise that most people are actually more willing to hear about Christ than we've guessed they might be.
- when you're getting to know someone, don't leave it too long to bring up your Christian faith. It can get harder to broach the subject the longer you leave it.
- often our conversations with friends about Jesus are very 'bits and pieces'. Ask them if they'd mind getting the 'big picture' - doing a short study like the Two Ways to Live Bible Study.
- remember that it's ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change someone's heart towards God. So speak with confidence knowing that their response doesn't rest on your cleverness.
- especially in the light of the previous point, above all PRAY. It's our job to speak, but God's job to save people!



investigate

read Romans 10:10-15

1. How is someone saved (verse 10)?

2. Who is this salvation for (verses 11-13)?

3. What is needed for people to have the opportunity to be saved (verses 14-15)?

4. Who played a key part in your salvation? How?

5. Could God use you in this way? Why/why not?



think & apply



investigate

read Colossians 4:2-6

1. What does Paul want the Colossians to pray for (verses 2-3)?

2. Why is he concerned that his preaching be clear (verse 4)?

3. What does he mean by 'making the most of every opportunity' (verse 5)?

4. Why does he want our conversation to be dominated by grace (verse 6)?

5. What should fill our prayers in relation to non-Christians?

6. How can we make our message as clear as possible?

7. How can we make the most of every opportunity we have?

8. How can our conversation be dominated by God's grace?



think & apply



keeping the main thing the main thing...

In this study we've seen how vital it is to share the gospel with others. This is something that needs to be part of every aspect of our lives. We need to think about making sure evangelism is a top priority in everything we do as a church family: our Sunday meetings, our small groups, and our lives through the week. The main thing, the gospel message of the death and resurrection of Jesus, must always be the main thing!

idiot-proof church

In 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 Apostle Paul makes it clear that church meetings aren't just for Christians. He talks about the "unbeliever who does not understand" - who may come along to one of our meetings. In the Greek the word is 'idiotes', meaning unskilled, a layman. Paul is very concerned that the meeting be clear to this outsider: idiot-proof, so they may understand the gospel, turn and be saved. The gospel must always be clear and central to our meetings. But what else would we focus on anyway? After all, it's being reminded of the great gospel of Christ that encourages Christians as well - so everyone benefits from keeping the main thing, the main thing! We all grow in the same soil - gospel soil. We need to work hard at making sure our church meetings are user-friendly welcoming to outsiders: (clearly explaining things, avoiding jargon, etc). Our hard work in personal evangelism can be undone if church isn't inviting.

invest and invite

Speaking of inviting, remember that simply inviting people to outreach events or church any Sunday is a great way to put people in a situation where they'll hear the gospel. Although we should all be prepared to share the gospel ourselves, evangelism is also a team thing. If there's a gifted evangelist speaking at an event, invite your friend along. But remember, the likelihood of them accepting your invitation is often connected to how much you've invested in them: time, energy, genuine friendship. That means building relationships so you can "invest & invite". Have a look at the hospitality ministry paper for more thoughts on this.

words or actions?

Some people think that living a good Christian life is the same as telling someone the gospel. This is not true. But the two things are connected. We need to avoid *two errors*:

1. **living but not speaking**: this won't save anyone. People will just think you're a nice person.
2. **speaking but not living**: people might be saved but it will be despite you! More often than not you will do harm to their understanding of the gospel.

We need to do both things: live a good Christian life so that our life doesn't detract from the message; and also *tell* the Christian message. Think of your life as like a signpost: your **ACTIONS** are the signpost, pointing to Jesus and the fact that he is Lord of your life; your **WORDS** add writing on to the signpost. This means people can now actually see where your life is pointing - and why. Rather than leaving it to people to guess why your life is different, you need to tell them. So, words **AND** actions are needed - working together to point to Christ.

all of life

We need to make it our goal to be making friends for life. This means that in all our relationships, we allow *the greatest* relationship - the one we have with God through Christ - to have its influence. We want our friends to have this great relationship with God too! Most Christians know lots of non-Christians, but for a variety of reasons we've stopped seeing them as such. What we need to do is stop and think and pray - and try to make them more than just friends or acquaintances - we need to make them "Friends for Life"! We need to share with them the message of forgiveness through Jesus as clearly as possible. If we don't stop and think and pray like this ... it tends not to happen at all. Why not finish this study by talking and praying about who you can share the life-giving gospel of Christ with?

plan to share the gospel with someone this week... pray about it... do it...share with your small group how you went...pray some more... do it...

small groups and accountability

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." Hebrews 10:24-25

The table below shows a number of key goals that our small groups are aiming for as we seek to encourage each other. It's all about relationships. The small group is a context in which we can be accountable for all the important relationships in our lives.

Evangelism is all about the relationships we have with unbelievers. So it needs to be kept on the top of the agenda in our small groups. We need to regularly talk together about how we're going sharing the gospel. We need others to keep us accountable about how we're going at taking gospel opportunities. Most of all, we need to pray for each other - that we'd stand up for Jesus. Small groups provide the opportunity to pray specifically in this way.

Of course, our small group meetings are not usually the best place for direct evangelism. But it's a good idea for your group to do social activities together that you can ask non-Christian friends along to. It's about relationships building other relationships... for the ultimate: a relationship with God.



a growing relationship with God , especially through personal Bible reading and prayer
growing relationships with other believers , especially through the small group
growing relationships with those in their family/household , as servants
growing relationships with unbelievers, especially through personal evangelism
growing relationships with the whole church in mission, serving in a ministry team