



God's Good News

This Leader's Guide will help you to deliver teaching and leadership about God's Good News.

Sessions at the Clergy College will also help you to lead this session.

AIMS

- To provide participants with an opportunity to discuss their own experiences of evangelism
- To look at some of the Bible's examples of sharing the Good News
- To revisit the question 'Why am I a Christian?', thinking again about the work from week one in the light of today's session

RESOURCES

- A room with comfortable space for all participants
- Bibles
- Handouts and pens

SESSION PLAN

- The timings are flexible and intended to allow plenty of time for discussion.
- A Powerpoint presentation is also available: please ask the AMD Programme Coordinator

A. God's Good News: Evangelism

We are going to look at God's Good News. Another word for 'Good News' is 'Gospel', which comes from the Greek word *euangelion*, from which (via Latin) we get our word 'evangelism'. Some of us have positive experiences and ideas of 'evangelism'; some of us have more negative views. So it's important to think about what we actually mean by 'evangelism.' That's what we will do in this session.

Specifically we will look at the *nature* of evangelism, the *aim* of evangelism and the *message* of evangelism. Finally, we will think about how we can share the Good News ourselves.

The nature of evangelism	10 minutes
The aim of evangelism	10 minutes
The message of evangelism	20 minutes
Practicing evangelism	30 minutes

B. The nature of Evangelism activity

10 minutes including

- William Abraham in *The Logic of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989) challenges an ingrained assumption that because Christianity is part of the fabric of society evangelism is not really necessary (p. 4).
- Abraham also rejects the idea of evangelism as either centred on individuals' need for salvation or the imperative of Church growth.
- Instead he makes a bold proposal: **evangelism is initiation into the Kingdom of God** (p. 13).



- He states that “Evangelism should be housed very firmly within the dynamic rule of God on earth” (p. 18)
- The Kingdom of God presents individuals with a profound challenge. Those who accept the challenge and live with God in God’s ways become a distinct community, witnessing to their Lord.
- This involves proclamation. But proclamation is not evangelism, since the New Testament’s emphasis is upon making disciples, communities of learners who are baptised and taught about Jesus.
- Abraham says this: “What makes proclamation evangelism is not the act of proclamation *per se* but the message being proclaimed: the coming rule of God” (p.59)
- Evangelism, then, is initiating people into the rule of God (p. 95). He proposes that this will include:
 - Conversion
 - Baptism
 - Love for neighbour = Morality
 - Teaching = Creed
 - Spiritual gifts
 - Spiritual disciplines
- Abraham says: “Our conceptions of evangelism have a profound impact upon our evangelistic practices” p. 164. That’s why it is good to think about how we conceive evangelism.
- **ACTIVITY:** *allow 5 minutes*
 - How does Abraham’s proposal fit with your ideas of evangelism?
 - What are its strengths and weaknesses?
 - What might be the practical implications for your ministry?

C. The Aim of Evangelism - Conversion

10 minutes including activity

- William Abraham includes conversion within the idea of ‘initiation into the Kingdom of God’. Another definition of evangelism says: “Evangelism – the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ in order to facilitate *conversions* to Jesus Christ and to Christianity”
Roger Olson, *A-Z of Evangelical Theology* (SCM, 2005), p. 175.
- Important to realise that although conversion can be described from the human side, it is an act of God, a movement of the Holy Spirit:
“Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’ The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit” (John 3.6-8).
- We often have an implicit idea that Paul’s more or less instant conversion on the Damascus Road is the ‘standard’ against which ‘true’ conversions are measured.
- Perhaps promoted by ‘evangelistic campaigns’ like those by Billy Graham, which seek immediate responses.

ASK: What have been your experiences of conversion been like? (Expect variety.)
This variety can be seen in the history of the Church.



- *Apostolic Tradition of Hippolytus* (4-5th century but probably describes v. early practices) indicates that early church practice was to baptise *upon confession of faith*.
- This led to all sorts of problems and the practice became one of recognising conversion only after a *fairly long period of instruction* (catechism). Modern examples: Roman Catholic catechism classes, *Alpha*, *Emmaus*
- Rule of St Benedict: very influential for Western Christianity. Vow of obedience *after many months* of reflection. Chapter 58.
- Calvin on regeneration: "This renewal, indeed, is not accomplished in a moment, a day, or a year, but by uninterrupted, sometimes even by slow, progress God abolishes the remains of carnal corruption in his elect, cleanses them from pollution, and consecrates them as his temples, restoring all their inclinations to real purity, so that during their whole lives they may practise repentance, and know that death is the only termination to this warfare" *Institutes* 3.3.9.
- An important stream of Christian thinking sees conversion as a *process*.
- And modern studies support idea that conversion is complex, possessing a theological core but also involving social context and personal transformation.

ACTIVITY

allow 5 minutes

- How does the idea of conversion as a process relate to your expectations about people turning to God?

D. The message of evangelism

20 minutes to cover Jesus and Paul

- Jesus and Paul as models. Not always right to copy what they did. But there may be lessons for us.

Jesus' Evangelism

10 minutes

- According to the gospels Jesus was often asked "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

ACTIVITY: Let's look at two answers he gives (GET PEOPLE TO READ):

- **Luke 10:25-28** an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" 27 He answered: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'" 28 "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live."
- **Luke 18:18-20** A certain ruler asked him, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-- except God alone. You know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother.'" "All these I have kept since I was a boy," he said. When Jesus heard this, he said to him, "You still lack one thing. Sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."
 - Give people just a couple of minutes in pairs then discuss in single group.
 - What do you notice?



- Note that Jesus gives slightly different answers to different people. Perhaps we might even think that Jesus' answers are "contradictory".
- o Note what Jim Currin says after a lifetime as a Church Army evangelist:
"For many outside church, the complicated and contradictory connects with their everyday lives and this is precisely what Jesus wants to address."
Currin, *360 Gospel of Jesus*, p.23

Paul's Evangelism

10 minutes

- The writer of Acts includes a number of summary speeches of St Paul as he shares God's Good News. We will look at just one and identify . Comparative work: essence of message

ACTIVITY

5 minutes discussion and 5 minutes feedback

In groups of three examine Acts 26.19-29 and identify key points of Paul's message.

- **Acts 26:19-29** "After that, King Agrippa, I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision,²⁰ but declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout the countryside of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God and do deeds consistent with repentance.²¹ For this reason the Jews seized me in the temple and tried to kill me.²² To this day I have had help from God, and so I stand here, testifying to both small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would take place:²³ that the Messiah must suffer, and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."²⁴ While he was making this defense, Festus exclaimed, "You are out of your mind, Paul! Too much learning is driving you insane!"²⁵ But Paul said, "I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I am speaking the sober truth.²⁶ Indeed the king knows about these things, and to him I speak freely; for I am certain that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this was not done in a corner.²⁷ King Agrippa, do you believe the prophets? I know that you believe."²⁸ Agrippa said to Paul, "Are you so quickly persuading me to become a Christian?"²⁹ Paul replied, "Whether quickly or not, I pray to God that not only you but also all who are listening to me today might become such as I am-- except for these chains."
 - o Get the group to identify what they have found. Make sure they have identified at least the following (underlined above):
 - An experience of Jesus (v. 19)
 - Priority of preaching to Jews (v. 20)
 - But message will reach Gentiles (vv. 20,29)
 - Repentance (v. 20)
 - Conversion demonstrated in life (v. 20)
 - Messiah had to die (v. 23)
 - Jesus rose from the dead (v. 23)
 - A message based upon the OT (v. 27)

Our Evangelism (brief review and lead into last section)

2 minutes

- If we were to draw some conclusions from these brief Bible studies they might be the following:
 - o The Good News has a specific content.



- The content of the Good News might depend, to some degree, upon context.
- The Good News centres upon Jesus.
- With these thoughts in mind let us turn to consider our own evangelism

E. Our own evangelism re-visited

5 minutes

Last week, you thought about the question “Why are you a Christian?”. Considering what you’ve learned today, re-visit the question and ask yourself if your thoughts have changed since last week.