Sharing Our Faith & Reaching Out Beyond Our Walls

#SEE ALL THE PEOPLE
RESOURCES

#SEEALLTHEPEOPLE

"We cannot disciple people that we are not in relationship with. Discipleship begins with relationship."

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This booklet is a companion piece to:
Engaging Your Community by Rev. Junius B. Dotson

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What Is Evangelism?

Evangelism is the good news of God's healing and saving love in Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, evangelism has become a problematic term for some in the twenty-first century, and negative images and experiences inhibit us from sharing our faith with others. Scare tactics, coercion, and "bad news that has an escape clause" has become synonymous with evangelism in some people's minds. In reading the Gospels (the word gospel means "good news"), though, we acknowledge that Jesus uses none of these approaches. Evangelism is always good news to the recipient.

What good news did Jesus share? We read the first proclamation of the good news Luke's Gospel, where Jesus recites a lesson from Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me. He has sent me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. – Luke 4:18-19, NRSV

The announcement of God's reign signals a key point of the good news. Jesus Christ's foundational message in Matthew 4:17 is this: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (NRSV). Eugene Peterson, in The Message, paraphrases that verse in this way: "Change your life. God's kingdom is here."[1] Jesus emphasizes conversion that leads to radical change in behavior, thought, and action. These changes indicate that a person chooses to live daily as a new citizen in God's reign (kingdom).

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[1] From *The Message* Copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson.

By contrast, many churches and traditions emphasize conversion—"in order to get into heaven after one dies"—as the point of Christian faith.

Notice the marked difference between the two approaches. Salvation with heaven as the only goal has a distant, future orientation. Emphasizing a single future benefit can Christians wondering about behavior and experience in the present—what needs to be happening to and through them. By contrast, salvation that invites us to participate in God's reign has an active, present orientation. It focuses on how to live in this new reality, right now.

The practices and understandings of evangelism vary widely. Some churches understand evangelism as sharing a set of beliefs and accepting tenets of the faith rationally—a "head" style of ministry. Some congregations view evangelism as growing in a personal relationship with Jesus—a "heart" style. Still other congregations believe evangelism is loving our neighbors in tangible ways—a "hands" style. Rarely do congregations employ and integrate all three; yet Jesus' actions contained both words and deeds, and always pointed

to God's goodness and the kingdom of God. We invite people into a lifetime of growing in love of God and neighbor so they may join in God's world-transforming kingdom work. This work of transformation happens only when people know who they are, who God is, and how to live in loving relationships.

How to Use This Study Guide

This study guide uses a video resource in each session. The videos are available on YouTube at **www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLZBIiYrsvunUodpQzqkL8vNhR-tisSIbm**. Currently, these videos are available only online. To show them in your sessions, therefore, you will need access to the Internet in the place where you will gather.

Each session also includes a scripture reading, which makes access to a Bible necessary. This study guide consists of seven sessions. Each session uses the following format:

- **Opening:** a gathering time that will include prayer, exploring a quotation, integrating learnings from the previous session, and offering opportunities to build community within the group
- **Approaching the Theme:** a chance to start exploring the theme for the session and using questions to help people begin to engage
- **Reading Scripture:** a scripture reading and accompanying questions relates to the theme for each day; the scripture will also be revisited later in the session
- **Introducing & Watching the Video Clip:** the video clips for each session are between 2–6 minutes long

- **Discussing:** based on the video and the scripture, these discussion questions allow for further exploration of the theme
- **Responding to the Theme:** an opportunity to further integrate learnings from the session and consider application to broader contexts
- **Closing:** a space for final reflection questions and to close with prayer

This study guide provides a starting point; leaders may change or adapt questions for their own context. Leaders are also invited to be particularly sensitive to people who may be unable to attend every session. As such, the "Opening" section of each session includes two options: one invites the integration of learnings for those who have previously attended; the other facilitates opening the theme without reliance on learnings from previous sessions.

Who Will Benefit from This Study?

Sunday school classes, small groups, church leadership, and ministry teams have piloted this study, and they allowed 45 minutes to an hour for each session. But remember, evangelism is not the job of a single committee or group within the church, so this resource would also serve as a great congregation-wide study. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we all have the privilege of being bearers of the good news. This resource tool provides a complete Bible study process for use in a retreat setting or weekly format for gathering, praying, and implementing new ways to reach your community.

Session 1: Fears

Opening

Welcome everyone to the group and this time of study; invite participants to introduce themselves if the group members do not know one another.

Begin the session with prayer.

Ask the participants to reflect and respond to this question: What comes to your mind when you hear the word evangelism? Invite participants to brainstorm key words or phrases. What emotions and images does the word evoke? Record the comments on flip-chart paper for easy reference in a later session.

Share with the group that evangelism has been described in this way:

"Something you do to someone that you don't want done to you." – Stephen Gunter

Ask them how they feel about this quote and whether it reflects their own sentiments.

Approaching the Theme

Give the participants some time for individual silent reflection to consider the following questions.

- What has been your worst experience with evangelism?
- What made it such a negative experience?
- When you think about evangelism, what fears come to your mind?

After a time of individual reflection, ask them to share their thoughts with a partner.

Once the partners have had time to share their stories, invite the partners to offer some reflections to the whole group, based on their comfort levels. Remind them that they need not retell their entire story or conversation; rather, they may offer a short summary. Ask them also to focus particularly on the fears that they named. Once all groups have shared, note that they will have more time to explore fears and negative experiences throughout the rest of this session, and they will have time to strategize about what to do about them.

Reading Scripture

Read Exodus 4:10-17 (Moses' call story). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- What makes Moses afraid?
- What excuses does he raise before God?
- How does God respond to Moses?

Advise the group members that they will return to the scripture later in the session. Invite them to keep the story of Moses in mind as they watch the video clip.

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Tell the group that in the video people will speak about their own fears about sharing the good news. People will also talk about negative experiences with evangelism, including encountering people who hold judgmental views on evangelism. The video also describes the importance of sharing stories. Invite the group members to listen for other key themes that emerge for them.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/-MPRbhtF5OI**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following discussion questions:

- In the video, what did people name as fears related to engaging with evangelism?
- One person noted that some people fear that others will ask them about a biblical passage or about why an all-loving God allows suffering. They will not know how to respond. What would you say if someone asked you those questions?
- What fears do you have, or what inhibits you from sharing about your faith?
- What other themes or portions of the conversation resonated for you from the video?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to consider the story of Moses once again. Having heard and discussed the video clip about fears, ask if anyone has something more to share about the biblical passage.

Remind the group that Moses' concern involved self-judgment; he worried about his adequacy to carry out the task. Invite the participants to reflect silently about times when they also have felt judgmental about themselves or inadequate—particularly as it relates to evangelism. Affirm with the group that God calls us all to do good work and God continues to work in all our lives.

Note that this video clip addressed fears and named the importance of telling stories about life and about Jesus. The video clip mentioned the helpfulness of our practicing telling and sharing stories so that it becomes more natural. There is a difference between relating our own stories and telling others what to believe.

Tell the participants that they will now have an opportunity to reflect on their own life story by creating a life map. Affirm that we all have a story to tell. Participants may use a blank piece of paper or a sheet of large flip-chart paper and markers to write and reflect individually. Invite them to note key events in their lives and to draw lines in between them like a timeline. At the completion of this task, raise the following questions:

- Looking back, how did they see God working?
- What portions of their life that bore clear evidence of God's work would they willingly share with others?

Ask them to keep their life maps and bring them to the next session.

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What additional fears about evangelism and faith sharing could they address?

Close the session with prayer.

Session 2: Excitement

Opening

Welcome everyone to the session and open with prayer.

Share with the group the following quote, attributed to an unknown person:

"The only difference between fear and excitement is your attitude about it." – Unknown

Invite the group members to share their reflections about the quote with the whole group. What attitude do they have about excitement?

Approaching the Theme

OPTION 1

Invite the group members to reflect on the life maps they created in the previous session. Ask them to consider where in their life journeys they experienced excitement and joy. People may then share this aspect of their stories with a partner; or, if time allows, each person could share a brief story of excitement with the whole group.

OPTION 2

Alternatively, if people were not in the first session, or if everyone did not have a chance to complete a life map, ask the participants to reflect on a time when they felt particularly excited about a life event.

- What happened that made them so excited?
- How did they convey their excitement to others?
- In what ways were their senses (sight, smell, touch, taste, hear) involved in the excitement?

Invite them to share their stories with a partner. After sharing in pairs, give people the option to share with the larger group.

Reading Scripture

Read Luke 9:18-20 (Jesus asks Peter who people say that Jesus is). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- How do the disciples respond to Jesus' question?
- Why do you think Jesus asks the disciples this particular question?
- How significant does Peter's declaration that Jesus is "of God" (NRSV) seem to you?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Tell the group that in the video clip, people will also raise the question about who is Jesus for them. In the conversation, people explore their comfort level with sharing their excitement about Jesus. Some reflect that they prefer not to infringe on other people's beliefs or culture. However, we still do not talk about faith as easily as we talk about sports and other activities that excite us.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/4um_8w570_U**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following discussion questions:

- How do we get that excitement about Jesus?
- Do you find it easier to express excitement for sports teams than to talk excitedly about faith? Why or why not?
- Why do you think that people feel hesitant to speak with others about their sense of hope through faith?
- What other themes or portions of the conversation from the video resonated for you?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to return to the scripture reading about Jesus asking Peter and the disciples who they say Jesus is. Having heard and discussed the video clip, ask if anyone has something more to share about the biblical passage.

Affirm with the group that Luke 9:18-20 is not the only scripture where people ask or wonder about who Jesus is. In biblical times, why do you think people continued to raise the question of Jesus' identity? Note that this scripture takes place immediately after Jesus' miraculous feeding of the five thousand.

- How might the experience of a miracle affect how people talked about Jesus then?
- What current experiences affect how people talk about Jesus today?

Remind the group that this video clip explored questions about how to express excitement about Jesus and that the scripture explored questions about who people said Jesus was. Let the group members know that they will have some time to explore more about who Jesus is for them. Below are a few options for people to explore this question.

WHO IS JESUS?

The Mainline Evangelism Project, which analyzed 1200 interviews of church leaders, was triggered by a conversation that author Martha Grace Reese had with eight pastors of growing churches. She writes about her experience in one of her books (Reese, Martha Grace. Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism [St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2008], 14.). During her time with these pastors, she had posed the question, "What difference does it make in your own life that you are a Christian?"

Reese did not expect the response she received: silence. None of the eight pastors—who were deemed successful by virtue of their growing congregations—could verbalize the difference Jesus made in their lives.

In a recent study of a cross-section of United Methodist congregations, the same trend emerged. Church leaders could share what was great about their church but struggled to make the connection to Jesus.

OPTION 1

Invite people to write the name Jesus in the center of a blank page and to draw a circle around it. Then have them draw lines out from the central word and write down major words or short phrases that relate to who they say Jesus is. People can then connect those phrases to one another or make new connections and draw new lines farther outward. People can continue making connections and drawing new lines outward from their new words.

When participants think they have written all they can, invite them to look at their drawing. How have they described who Jesus is? In a few sentences, what would they say about him?

OPTION 2

Invite people to write their thoughts by journaling about who Jesus is. If they are unsure how to start, encourage them to consider the following prompts:

- What is their earliest memory of who Jesus is? How has that thought changed or evolved over time?
- What is their most memorable scripture about Jesus?
- What do they find challenging or difficult about what Jesus said?
- What excites them about Jesus?
- If they had to describe Jesus in a few sentences, what would they say about him?

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What more would they want to share about excitement and joy? about who Jesus is for them?

Close the session with prayer.

Session 3: Community

Opening

Begin the session with prayer.

Share with the group the following quote:

"Creating community is an important part of receiving the support we all need to navigate through life." – Anonymous

Ask the group members to reflect on this quotation. Do they agree or disagree? How can community be "created"?

Approaching the Theme

OPTION 1

Ask the group members to state one key thought from the previous session about what they noted about who Jesus is for them. This could come from either their journal writing or their drawing. Consider inviting participants to share their summary sentences with the larger group. Then, they can reflect on the following questions:

- What might it mean to share their excitement about Jesus in the context of a supportive community?
- What does community mean?

OPTION 2

Alternatively, if participants are new to the sessions, they could explore the following:

- What does community mean to them?
- How have they found strength or support in community in their lives? Ask them to share a few examples.
- What would an ideal community look like for them?

Invite the group to share initial reflections in groups of three; then each triad could share a few ideas with the larger group.

Reading Scripture

Read Esther 4:5-17 (Esther responding to community). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- How does Esther respond to the happenings within the community?
- What are the significant relationships in this story? Describe them.
- What do you think Mordecai means when he refers to "such a time as this" (v. 14, NRSV)?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Tell the group that this video clip emphasizes the importance of relationship. In the conversation, people note that everything starts with relationship; sharing faith is not part of a broader agenda. The video also explores how the word evangelism doesn't have to be a scary one and what it could mean to practice evangelism in the twenty-first century. The video clip also mentions the significance of a community being grounded in faith practices prior to reaching out to others.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/4Ip0oRKffb8**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following discussion questions:

- Why is evangelism an activity in which the church engages?
- How did the video describe the relationship with the community? Why do you think people emphasized the importance of relationships without an agenda or without making "them join us"?

- What faith practices does your community of faith have in place to inform the way you relate to others?
- What other themes or portions of the video conversation resonated for you?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to return to Esther's story. God called her to speak in that time and place. God's voice, however, was not the only voice in that story. Some voices actually encouraged the destruction of the people. Despite the many voices, Esther still heard God's call.

- When have you heard God's voice?
- Describe what hearing God's voice and listening for God's call means for you.
- How can we listen for and hear God's voice in the midst of other voices?
- In what ways did Esther live out her call in the context of community?

Ask the group to consider that Esther's call story did not involve a dramatic conversion; rather, she lived out a call and spoke out in the context of community. Pose this question: How can we be like Esther for other people (by hearing God's call and speaking at the right time)?

OPTION 1

Esther lived out her call and influenced her community. Invite the group to reflect on the following questions and to weave together a story.

- What has God's call meant in your life?
- How have you heard God's voice in your life?
- In what ways has community been part of your faith journey?

Invite participants to respond to these questions as a way of writing and telling their own faith story.

Explore with the group members their willingness to share their testimonies during an upcoming Sunday worship time!

OPTION 2

The video clip also noted that we can speak and act after being grounded in faith practices. The United Methodist congregational study (referenced in session 2) indicated a direct link between congregations creating space for people to practice telling their story and be in authentic community and individuals' comfort with evangelism. Only one of the churches involved in the study practiced regular testimony and accountability. That church was also the only congregation where leaders expressed their comfort in being vulnerable and no hesitation about inviting friends and coworkers to worship.

- How is your congregation creating a culture of authenticity and vulnerability?
- Where can you practice and share your story with others?
- Are you comfortable inviting friends, coworkers, or neighbors to your church? Do you have any hesitation? If so, what and why?

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What more would they want to share about community and call? about speaking at the right time?
Close the session with prayer.

Session 4: Changes

Opening

Begin the session with prayer.

Share with the group the following quotes:

"If we don't change, we don't grow. If we don't grow, we aren't really living." – Gail Sheehy

"The first step toward change is awareness. The second step is acceptance." – Nathaniel Branden

Ask the group members to share reflections they have about these quotations and whether they agree or disagree. If change is connected with fullness of life, why are we sometimes so hesitant to embrace change?

Approaching the Theme

OPTION 1

Invite the group to form pairs or trios and share their faith stories from the previous week and the places of intersection between God's voice in their individual lives and the role of community in their faith journey.

OPTION 2

Alternatively, if people were not in the most recent session or if everyone did not have time to process their faith story, they could also explore the following:

- In what places in your life is change the most difficult?
- Where does change come easily or naturally?
- Why do you think change tends to be especially difficult in the church?

Reading Scripture

Read Acts 9:1-16 (Paul's conversion story). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- What is Saul's original direction and perceived mission in the story?
- The Lord instructed Ananias to restore Saul's sight so that Saul could be God's agent to carry the message to the Gentiles. What do you think was going through Saul's mind during his period of blindness?
- How would you have responded to Jesus if you were in Ananias's position?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Share with the group that this video clip emphasizes the ways society changes more rapidly than churches. Church has tended to remain one of the consistant and stable places of grounding in people's lives, despite the breakneck pace of change in other areas. This reality can cause increased hesitancy and resistance to change in our congregations.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/ijIDhP8Gs1U**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following discussion questions:

- Do you agree that the church tends to evolve more slowly than society and current culture? If so, why?
- Where does your church still evidence the "if we build it, they will come" mentality?
- What ministries or mind-sets in your ministry context need to die in order to bring about new life?
- What other themes or portions of the video conversation resonated with you?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to return to Saul's story. Saul was a religious leader, firm in his convictions and beliefs. Jesus challenged him to not only quit what he was doing, but to instead take a leadership role with those he was persecuting. In the meantime, Jesus calls Ananias to take Saul under his wing, to embrace a person who had initially sought to do him harm. We often refer to this story as the conversion of Saul, but these verses include two call and conversion stories, both Saul and Ananias.

- We often think of conversion as agreeing to a certain set of beliefs, yet Saul was not simply called to affirm a new set of belifs for himself. He was called to action and to share the message with others. How has your faith called you to act differently?
- Saul was convinced he was doing the right thing prior to his Damascus Road experience. Where in your life might your zeal be misdirected from God's will?
- Who in your life would you find difficult to embrace or difficult to trust that God is doing a new thing in your life through them?

Ask the group to consider that while Saul had a jarring, dramatic experience, he did not begin his public ministry immediately. Many years intervened between the Damascus Road experience and Paul's first missionary journey. He needed to spend time with Jesus and in discernment before he could serve as Christ's ambassador.

- What places in your personal life or ministry setting could use a period of discernment and alignment with Jesus?
- This story reminds us that God can take the "no's" and "we've never done it that way before's" and transform them into new ways of seeing, being, and acting. What areas of your life and church do you need to release, allowing God's transforming power to work?

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What more might they want to share about discerning God's call or places of transformation?

Close the session with prayer.

Session 5: Words

Opening

Begin the session with prayer.

Share with the group the following quote often misattributed to Saint Francis:

"Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary."
– Unknown (Often misattributed To Saint Francis)

Ask the group members to share reflections they have about this quotation and whether they agree or disagree.

Approaching the Theme

Give participants some time for individual silent reflection to consider the following questions:

- What are some ways a person could preach the gospel without words?
- Are you more comfortable sharing the gospel with your words or actions? Why?

Invite the group to share their initial reflections in groups of three; then each triad may share a few ideas with the larger group.

Reading Scripture

Read Ruth 1:15-22 (Story of Ruth and Naomi). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- What explains Ruth's willingness to leave her homeland behind to follow Naomi?
- In the face of struggle and barrenness, Ruth finds God's story—or at least Naomi's relationship with God—

appealing. When have you experienced God's speaking a word of hope to situations that seem impossible and barren?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Tell the group that this video clip emphasizes the importance of connecting an individual story with the community's story and the gospel story. It notes a disconnect between the good things we do and our faith. We know we should be good people and do nice things, but we sometimes struggle to articulate the connection to Jesus.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/tnwwBkHOwhE**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following discussion questions:

- How would you describe what mission, discipleship, and evangelism mean in plain language?
- In what ways do you naturally connect mission, discipleship, and evangelism?
- In the video clip, one person referred to the paradigm shift in the entry points to faith. Worship used to be the primary entry point, but now fellowship or mission comes to the fore. Where did you enter faith or the church?
- What other themes or portions of the video conversation resonated for you?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to return to Ruth's story. Ruth felt like she belonged to Naomi's faith tradition and community before she adopted the beliefs or behaviors of Judaism. Yes, Ruth had immediate physical needs to be met, but she also needed a connection to community.

- Who helped you develop a sense of belonging in your Christian journey?
- When have you served as a Naomi for another person?
- How have you helped others claim God's love and presence in their lives?

Ask the group to consider the following:

- A recent study showed that many congregations struggle to differentiate between doing good because it's the "nice" thing to do or out of civic duty and serving out of love and in response to God's love. What is your motivation for serving?
- How do you intentionally build relationships while serving, or do you only think about meeting a physical need?
- How might outreach differ if the church viewed people's needs and longings holistically: physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual?
- In what ways does your church default to addressing physical needs only, assuming that people of a certain educational or socioeconomic level do not need to hear the gospel message or experience Christian community?

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What more would they want to share about helping others experience God's love? What additional insights surfaced about serving as a response to God's love?

Close the session with prayer.

Session 6: Go

Opening

Begin the session with prayer.

Share with the group the following quote:

"If you want a love message to be heard, it has got to be sent out. To keep a lamp burning, we have to keep putting oil in it."
– Mother Teresa

Ask the group members to share reflections they have about this quotation and whether they agree or disagree.

Approaching the Theme

Give participants some time for individual silent reflection to consider the following questions:

- Do I understand myself to be sent in love? From where? To whom?
- Do we understand ourselves to be sent people?
- What places in your community could use a love message?

Invite the group to share their initial reflections in groups of three; then each triad may share a few ideas with the larger group.

Reading Scripture

Read Matthew 28:16-20 (The Great Commission). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- These final words of Jesus to his disciples in Matthew serve not only as a charge but as a promise. Jesus entrusts us with the continuation of his work. What aspects of the Great Commission challenge you the most?

- The Greek word for "go" does not necessarily refer to physical travel but places a sense of urgency on Jesus' words. Do we operate out of a sense of urgency or complacency when we read this text?
- The text reminds us that Jesus has given us the authority to serve on his behalf and that we are never alone. In other words, Jesus is already working in every situation. He invites us to join him in kingdom work. How does this acknowledgment make this work seem less daunting?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

Share with the group that this video clip emphasizes the ways we are to live out our discipleship in our everyday lives.

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/LacYgG6XfUg**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following questions:

- Some critics suggest that in recent decades, churches have focused more on making good members than on making disciples of Jesus Christ. What difference do you see between membership and discipleship?
- How do you understand church membership: as the goal of Christian faith or a vessel through which we find community and grow in our love and knowledge of God to transform the world?
- From the original Greek, we can translate the word go as "as you go." How do you understand the Great Commission? How do you live it out in your everyday life?
- What other themes of the video conversation resonated for you?

Responding to the Theme

Invite the group to return to the Great Commission text.

- In a time when congregations and denominations are losing members, how do we move beyond fear and use that aspect as an opportunity to go and see the new things God is doing beyond our walls?
- A major aspect of evangelism comes in paying attention: paying attention to God and paying attention to others. In what ways do you practice paying attention to God in order to know what God is up to in your neighborhood?
- How does your congregation select mission opportunities? How often does mission arise out of assumed needs and member interests rather than as a response to expressed needs by people in your community?

OPTION 1

If you are holding this study in your congregation, consider taking some time to examine current mission and outreach opportunities in your church. As you reflect on your setting, ask if the congregation is using its gifts and strengths to connect and offer hope to the community. How do the efforts speak to the demographics of those beyond your walls? Consider obtaining some demographic information about your community and talking to community and civic leaders about the hopes and dreams of people in your area.

OPTION 2

Invite participants to consider "as they go" in their daily lives. They spend only a small portion of their week at church. In what other places do they spend significant amounts of time? Ask them to consider ways they can serve and join in what God is doing in their homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and other places where they spend time.

Closing

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from this session. What more would they want to share about going versus staying?

Close the session with prayer.

Session 7: Disciples

Opening

Begin the session with prayer.

Share with the group the following quote:

"Those who aren't following Jesus aren't his followers. It's that simple. Followers follow, and those who don't follow aren't followers. To follow Jesus means to follow Jesus into a society where justice rules, where love shapes everything. To follow Jesus means to take up his dream and work for it."
– Scot Mcknight

Ask the group members to share reflections they have about this quotation and whether they agree or disagree.

Approaching the Theme

Invite people to reflect on a question below.

- What comes to your mind when you consider the twelve disciples?
- What qualities and attitudes surface?
- What would being a disciple mean to them in today's context?

Share with the group that when Jesus sent out the disciples, he sent them without purse, bag, or sandals, and they did not lack anything. (Read Luke 22:35.) Ask the participants, if you were asked to go out and be a disciple now, what would you want to take with you? Give the group time to brainstorm ideas and create a list.

Reading Scripture

Read Romans 12:1-18 (Being living sacrifices and the marks of a true Christian). Invite the group to share initial reactions to the scripture.

- God has equipped each of us uniquely. What gifts can you contribute to the body?
- Paul challenges the Roman church to live differently from others in their community. What aspects of the passage especially challenge you?

Introducing & Watching the Video Clip

In this brief clip, we are reminded that we are not, and people do not expect us to be perfect. However, they do expect us to be authentic and to be different than the secular world. How does our behavior and actions reflect kingdom values over worldly values?

View the video clip here: **https://youtu.be/5nzXs1qqO8s**

Discussing

Invite the group to consider the following questions:

- When you reflect on what kind of church you want to be, what characteristics would you name?
- What kind of Christian do you want to be?
- The video names stresses the importance of Christians behaving differently from the world at large. How would you describe that difference? How can Christians be different?
- This video lifts up the importance of a life of discipleship. What does being a disciple of Jesus mean to you?

Responding to the Theme

At the beginning of the first session we brainstormed the words, phrases, and emotions evoked by the word evangelism. As we conclude this study, let's revisit that exercise and see how our responses compare seven sessions later.

Ask the group participants to reflect and respond to a question, "What do you think about when you encounter the word evangelism?" Invite participants to brainstorm key words or phrases. What emotions and images does the word evoke? Record the comments on flip-chart paper.

Closing

In the introduction to this study, we looked at Jesus' proclamation of the good news. We read Luke 4:18-19, where Jesus recites a lesson from Isaiah 61:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives/ and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. – Luke 4:18-19, NRSV

The year of the Lord's favor, also called Jubilee, represented a forgiveness of past burdens and a fresh start. This passage underscores care and concern for the poor and marginalized people in society. The good news promised relief and release. Evangelism is a lifestyle in which a follower of Jesus both shares faith and serves others in need.

Invite the group to reflect on key learnings from the sessions.

- How has this study transformed your previous understanding of evangelism?
- How will you embody the gospel and share your story in your everyday life?

Thank the group members for their participation and close the session and the study with prayer.

Evangelism Connections

This study guide was written by Heather Heinzman Lear, the Director of Evangelism Ministries at Discipleship Ministries, and Adele Halliday, the Team Leader of Discipleship and Witness for the United Church of Canada, and was produced by Evangelism Connections. Evangelism Connections is an ecumenical group of North American Christians who strive to frame evangelism, hospitality, and church vitality in a twenty-first century context and to provide shared resources toward that end. We invite you to participate, comment, and offer your own thoughts and ideas on sharing Jesus' message in a postmodern world.

Our advisory group is a partnership of evangelism staff persons from the following denominations:

- African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church
- American Baptist Churches
- Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Church of the Brethren
- Episcopal Church
- Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
- Moravian Church Northern Province
- Presbyterian Church in Canada
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- Reformed Church in America
- United Church of Christ (USA)
- The United Church of Canada
- United Methodist Church

Find more information about Evangelism Connections at **www.evangelismconnections.org**.

For More on Evangelism

For additional resources or assistance with evangelism in your local church, please contact Heather Lear:

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Notes

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