



Practice Guide | *Preaching the Gospel*

WEEK 1—Becoming Gospel People

Meeting Prep

1. Watch this [quick preview](#) (1 min) of Session 1 from the *Life Shared* series.
2. Watch Session 1 of the *Life Shared* series (15 min): [“Join His Heart.”](#)

Read this Overview

“Evangelism” is a word that probably conjures up an emotional reaction. For some, it’s excitement about a friend’s newborn faith in Jesus. For others, it’s anxiety about having the right answers or damaging a close relationship. For even others, it’s pain or disgust at the idea of “forcing” faith on someone else, or reducing the gospel to clichés and a tidy process to get into heaven when you die.

But the gospel that Christians “evangelize” is *good news*. Literally. “Gospel” in Greek (*euangelion*) means “good news.” And good news is meant to be shared! While we most often think of this as speaking a message with our mouths, it’s so much more. We can think of the practice of preaching the gospel as “announcing the good news of Jesus and his kingdom in life, word, and works.”

In “life, word, and works,” *life* comes first. Before strategizing any words or delivery methods for speaking that gospel, our lives need to embody it. We need to become – and keep becoming – gospel people.

To do that, one of our first steps is to face our fears about “evangelism.” What scares or concerns us about sharing our faith? What assumptions or bad examples might we be reacting against? And how can we open ourselves to the surprising work of God that makes us become “gospel people?”

Begin with Silence & Prayer

Create a space to meet where your group can be comfortable yet alert. Open your time with a few minutes for silent reflection on your day. (This doesn’t have to be about “evangelism” or “preaching the gospel.”) Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to guide your time together.

Watch & Discuss the Video Teaching

As you watch this session, take time to pause the video and discuss the on screen questions when prompted. After the video, discuss some or all of the following questions:

1. What stood out to you from the Session 1 video?
2. After listening to this session, how has your idea of embodying the gospel, or “being gospel people,” changed?
3. Had you ever connected the “Son of Man” passages together the way Jon did? How does this collection of Jesus’ own descriptions of his strike you? “The Son of Man came...”

- i) “...to seek and save the lost” (Lk. 19:10) – *Jesus’ mission (what he did)*
 - ii) “...to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mt. 20:28) – *Jesus’ mission (what he did)*
 - iii) “...eating and drinking” (Mt. 11:19) – *Jesus’ methodology (how he did it)*
4. How have you experienced spiritual growth through the hospitality of others, opening up their hearts and lives and inviting you in?
 5. Jon said that “we just need to reclaim the art of paying attention to what God’s doing around us,” slowing down enough to notice the ways and the people in whom God is already working. How is that easy for you? In what ways is it difficult?
 6. The big idea from this session was, “God is already at work around us, and we’re invited to join him.” What obstacles stand in the way of you living with this expectation or awareness of God? How could you nurture a holy curiosity about God’s subtle work in the people and places around you?

Individual & Group Practice: Personal Evangelism Narrative

To grow as gospel people, we need to understand not only the content of the gospel we received, but the way in which we received it. By what methods, and by what kind of messengers, did we hear the good news of God’s kingdom? Whatever “preaching the gospel” looks like for us now, we were formed into that practice by a long, and perhaps unexamined, history.

Were we introduced to a God who graciously forgave our sin, but then expected us to clean up our act in response? Was it a gospel overly focused on “going to heaven when I die?” Or on establishing a particular kind of society? Did this gospel seem more like a process or series of steps, or was it an invitation to a lifelong relationship?

Take some time to think through your personal evangelism narrative, “the story of how you heard The Story.” Below are some questions you might consider to help fill out your narrative. You may even want to draw these things out on a timeline.

One quick note: it’s possible you’ll encounter some hard or complex emotions about people or institutions who have had big impacts on your understanding of the gospel. Of course, it’s easier to see mistakes or wrongs after the fact. In this practice, assume the best about the people involved in your story. Treat them as though they were doing the best they could with what they had. Allow yourself to notice the failures without judgment – others’ *and* your own.

- Who were the key people, churches, or ministries who first introduced you to Jesus and the gospel?
- What life events or circumstances made you open to the gospel?
- When your “evangelists” interacted with you, what kind of people did they seem like to you? What sort of relationship did you have with them?
- Over time, have you come to see any of those key people in a different light (positively or negatively)? How has that changing image of your “evangelists” changed your understanding of or belief in the gospel?
- What messages, themes, or ideas were emphasized in your early encounters with the gospel?
- What were the primary passages of Scripture that played a role in your understanding and believing the gospel (even imperfectly)?

- If a system or tool of some kind was used to share the gospel with you, what was helpful or unhelpful about it at the time? How do you feel about that tool now? Would you use or adapt it yourself in sharing the gospel with others?
- Have you ever shared the gospel with another person? What did you feel before, during, and after your conversations? What made you comfortable or uncomfortable?
- What was the focus of your sharing? Your personal faith story? Scripture? A tool of some kind?
- What was helpful about your methods of sharing? What would you like to have changed?
- How easy have you found it to connect the gospel to your everyday life? How easy is it for you to help others see how it connects to their everyday lives?
- What do you need to lament in how you were formed to preach the gospel? For what do you need to forgive others in that story? Of what do you need to repent in your own “life, words, and works” for the gospel?

After sketching out your personal evangelism narrative, plan to share it with a trusted friend.

[Optional Family Practice: Asking Curious Questions]

Kids have a knack for asking questions. Adults would do well to learn from their infinite curiosity! Is this something your family or community could learn together?

It’s natural for children to think and behave in a “self-centered” way. They are usually more aware of their own internal world (desires, joys, fears, disgusts, etc.) than they are of others. But by learning to ask curious questions about other people they grow in empathy and hospitality, foundational traits of any preacher of the gospel.

This week at family meals or play dates, coach your children in being lovingly curious toward other people. When someone talks about an event in their day, model what a “curious question” could be. “That sounds really cool! How did it make you feel?” Or, “Wow, I’m so sorry. Did that make you sad?”

Try to avoid “Why?” questions, as tempting as they are. “Why?” is wonderful for learning about the world, but in relating to people it can come across with condemnation or a sharp edge, even unintentionally. “Why did you do that?” or, “Why are you so angry?” might be what we’re most curious about, but they don’t make a person feel safe to open up. Instead, model *curious noticing* for children as they interact with others: “Do you like that toy? What do you like about it?” “I’m sorry that you’re crying. What’s making you feel sad?” And don’t stop at modeling! Invite children to ask these kinds of questions of each other and adults as well. At the end of the week, take a look at how relationships have grown!

Close with Prayer

*O God of mission,
 God who sees and knows me,
 God who loves and forgives me,
 God who delights to work in and through me,
 you have given me a story of faith
 that you desire for the world to hear,
 so that they might know, love, and delight in
 you, too.*

*Make me to be a gospel person this week,
 a person of the good news of your kingdom
 in my life, word, and works.*

In Jesus’ name, amen.