



Practice Guide | *Preaching the Gospel*

WEEK 3—Sharing Our Hope

Meeting Prep

Watch or listen to one of the following:

1. Session 3 of the *Life Shared* series (17 min): “[Take A Step](#).”
2. “[Sharing Our Hope](#)” from Soma’s *Preaching the Gospel* series.

Read this Overview

While the interior work of becoming gospel people (Week 1) who cultivate an environment of hospitality (Week 2) never ends, at some point we do need to take concrete steps out toward others. How do we go about doing that?

Perhaps you were taught a scheme or diagram of some kind that summarizes the gospel in a way that’s meant to be understandable and compelling to non-Christians. Or maybe you were coached in how to start spiritual conversations with strangers or acquaintances. While God certainly can and does work through those methods, we also see a simpler – and more demanding – picture in Scripture. What might it look like for us to lead “questionable lives” together,¹ ways of being human that make others take notice because they’re so unlike the world, and so much like Jesus?

Begin with Silence & Prayer

Keep silence together before God for a few minutes. Close the silence with a brief prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your time together.

Discuss the Teaching

1. *from the Life Shared series video, “Take A Step:”* What comes to mind when you think about practical steps to sharing your faith?
2. What are some obstacles you face (real ones, not just theoretical ones) to sharing your faith?
3. Jay makes the bold proclamation (6:58): “I believe that evangelism, moving forward, will be mostly lived out and worked out through hospitality; that people will open their homes and their lives to connect with others in a way that they can see the life of Jesus.” Does this ring true to you? How has your picture or practice of evangelism changed over time?
4. *from the “Sharing Our Hope” sermon:* Read 1 Peter 2:11-12. If you know something about Peter’s letter, what do you think he had in mind when he commanded his readers to “live such good lives among the Gentiles?” What might constitute a “good life” that points others toward God?
5. Read 1 Peter 3:13-17. The center of this passage is v. 15. Even though evangelism isn’t the point of Peter’s letter, what does this verse teach about an approach to sharing our faith?

¹ Michael Frost, *Surprise the World: The Five Habits of Highly Missional People*, Colorado Springs: Navpress, 2016, pp. 5-6.

Discussion note: *If your group needs help, you could use an outline of 1 Pet. 3:15 from “The Missional Life Course.”*²

- *Lordship* – “In your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy” (this is the foundation, rather than any evangelistic strategy)
- *Provocative hope* – “Be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have”
- *Gentleness & respect* – “But do this with gentleness and respect”

6. What’s one experience you’ve had in “giving a reason for the hope that you have?” How was it received?
7. Peter links the sharing of our faith (or proclaiming the gospel more broad) with the prospect of suffering (v. 14; compare with Mt. 5:10-11). How have you or someone you know suffered from sharing the gospel?

Individual & Group Practice: Discerning Connections

Previous practices in this series have focused on preparing ourselves to preach the gospel: identifying our barriers to sharing our faith; and cultivating a life of hospitality. Now we begin to sharpen our focus on the people with whom we want to share.

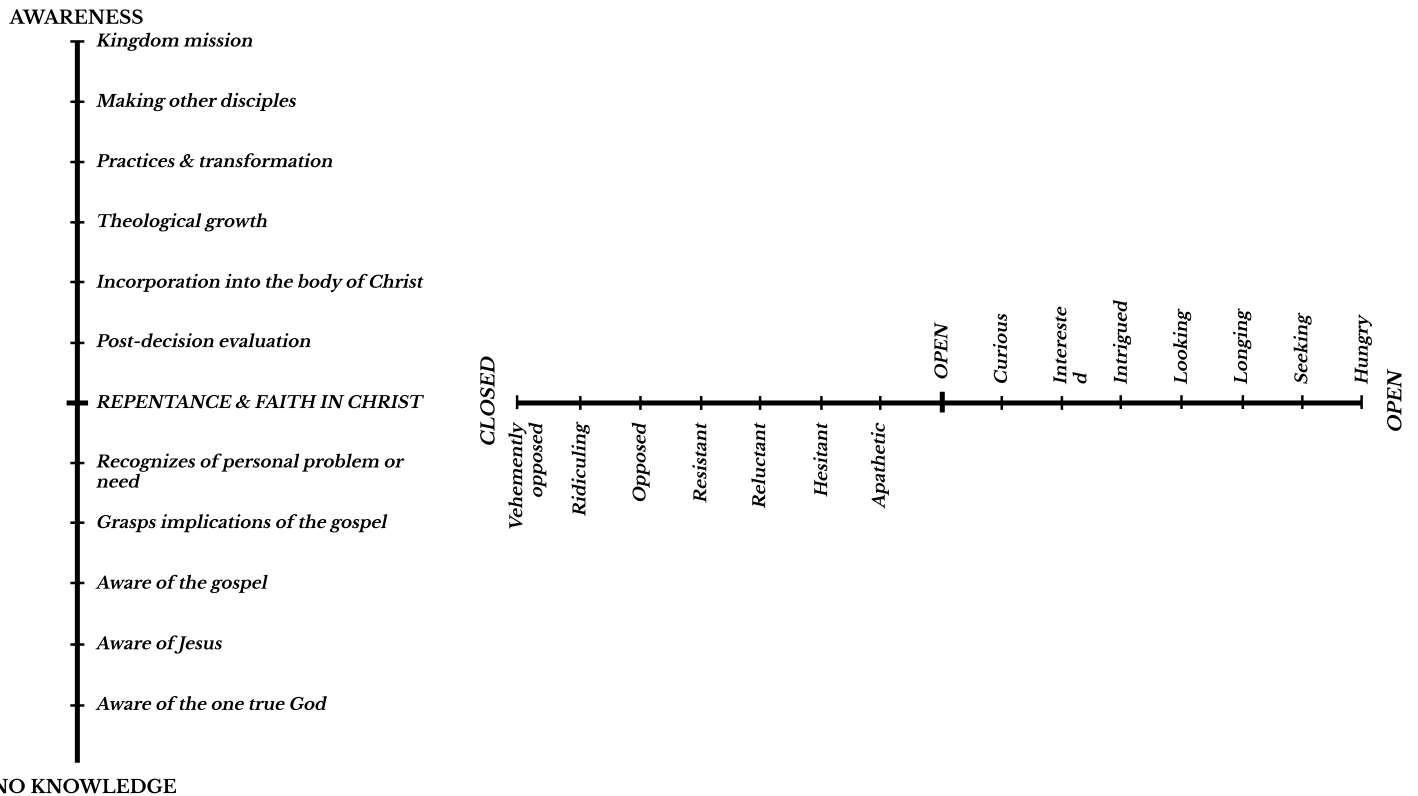
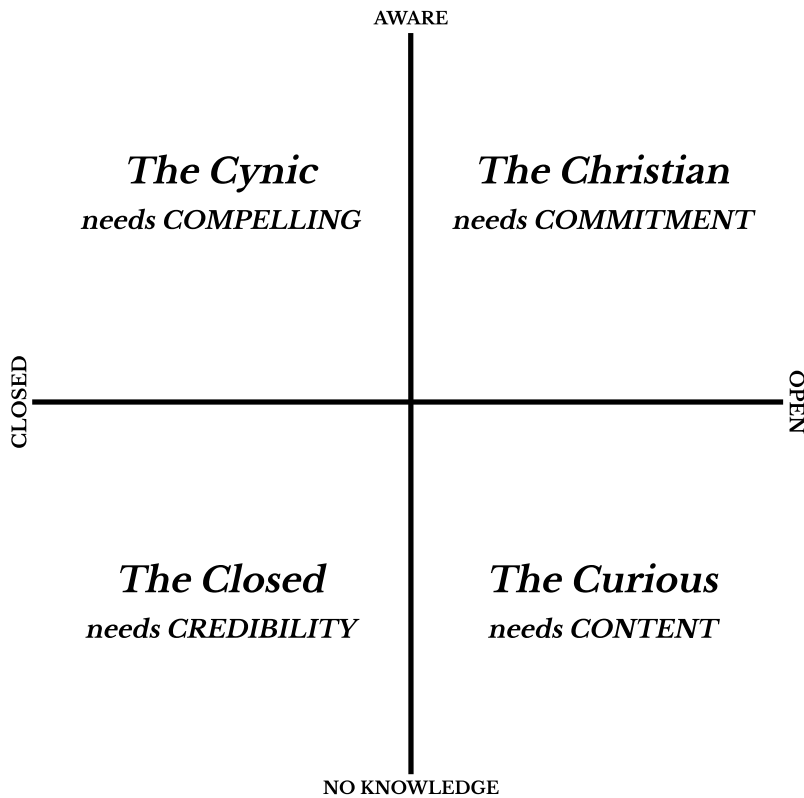
The work of two missiologists, James Engel and Frank Gray, has given us a tool to help us understand where our neighbors are coming from in spiritual conversations and how we can connect with them.³ It’s a simple “2x2” matrix that compares a person’s *awareness* of Jesus and the gospel to their *attitude* about (or openness to) them. Though we should be careful not to reduce any person (or to restrict God’s work) to this simple framework, it can help us in a few ways. We gain more clarity on where someone is in their spiritual journey. We are reminded that simply imparting knowledge about God isn’t enough, but building real relationships is also essential. And we start to see what our spiritual connection points with them might be, what conversations might engage their interest and understanding:

- The **Closed** person is one who lacks awareness the gospel *and* is not open to it. What he needs is our **credibility** as witnesses, people who are living proof of the God we claim to know.
- The **Curious** person is the one with little to no knowledge of the gospel, but who is open to it. She’s willing to engage in spiritual conversation and consider how Jesus might impact her life. Her primary need from us is the **content** of the gospel, in the context of relationship.
- The **Cynic** is the one who has some (maybe a lot of) awareness of Jesus or the gospel, but is spiritually, emotionally, or mentally closed off. What he needs isn’t primarily answers, but to see a **compelling** way of life in Christ: radical love, forgiveness, generosity, justice, life change.
- The **Christian** is self explanatory! But that doesn’t mean we barely cross the line of faith and then stop. Preaching the gospel to one another is an ongoing call to **commitment** to Jesus as Lord.

This week, think of the friends, family members, or neighbors whom you long to see follow Jesus. Where are they in this matrix? What is God inviting you to in response?

² Jon Tyson and Tyler Prieb, *The Missional Life Course*, 2021, p. 36.

³ Learn more on Gray’s website, thegraymatrix.org/index.php/the-matrix, where he talks about building on Engel’s earlier observations.



Close with Prayer

Spend a few minutes praying for the people you'd like to share the gospel with. Close by thanking God for his love and grace, asking for his empowerment to be faithful witnesses.