

For the PEARL series, our weekly “Sermon Based Discussion Guide” comes out of our PEARL Devotional Guidebook. These will not be directly based off of Jeff’s messages for these five weeks.

Attached is this week’s devotional followed by the Group Discussion Guide.

PEARL

Guidebook

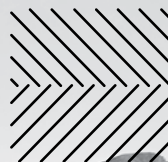
THE COMPASS CHURCH EVANGELISM DEVOTIONAL

DEVOTIONAL WEEK 1



THE **COMPASS** CHURCH
thecompass.net

*Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead,
descended from David. This is my gospel.*



2 TIMOTHY 2:8



What is Evangelism?

You and I are profoundly shaped by the doctrines and perspectives we embrace. Consider, for example, the effects of materialism, relativism, narcissism, moralism, workaholism, atheism. The “isms” we subscribe to, whether good or bad, not only shape our behavior. They end up molding who we become. Among the hundreds of “isms” we could build our lives around, evangelism deserves our special consideration.

What is evangelism? *Evangel* is an English word derived from a New Testament Greek word meaning *Good News* — specifically the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Add the *-ism* suffix and you get *evangelism*, a term that refers to the propagation of the Good News about salvation in Jesus. Do you subscribe to *Good-News-ism*? The Apostle Paul certainly did. “Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (*1 Corinthians 9:16*), he declared. It would be difficult to overstate how much evangelism molded Paul’s life. The Gospel he believed and shared utterly transformed the man. As he put it, “[The gospel] is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (*Romans 1:16*).

So, what exactly is this Good News message at the heart of evangelism? Paul boils it down for us. “Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel” (*2 Timothy 2:8*). Lest we over-complicate it, Paul reminds us that the entire Gospel can be summed up in this cryptic statement. The reference to Jesus being descended from King David assures us that Jesus is indeed the long-awaited Davidic Messiah promised by God hundreds of years earlier. And the reference to Christ’s resurrection is, of course, the centerpiece of the Gospel. Jesus’ resurrection assures us that everything He said about dying in our place to rescue us from sin and condemnation is true. By raising Jesus from the dead, God the Father confirmed that he is fully satisfied with the payment Jesus made

for our sins. God has fulfilled his promise to send us a Redeemer, and the resurrection of this Redeemer means our prison doors are flung open. We have only to step out into freedom through faith in Jesus. This is not just good news. It's great news! Jesus gave his life to make it so. Paul gave his life to make it known.

Pastor Charles Spurgeon was right when he said, "He who preaches Christ preaches the gospel; he who does not preach Christ, preaches no gospel. It is no more possible for there to be a gospel without Christ than a day without the sun, or a river without water, or a living man without a head, or a quickened human body without a soul. No, Christ himself is the life, soul, substance, and essence of the mystery of the gospel of God."

News like this is too good to keep to ourselves. This Gospel changes everything! Can you imagine a more worthy "ism" to invest your life in than evangelism? For those wanting a more detailed summary of the evangel behind evangelism, Paul offers this "manifesto":

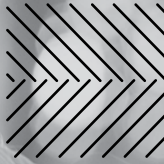
"Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas [Peter], and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also."

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8

If by faith you've embraced this Good News – this evangel – then you understand the importance of evangelism. This is your "ism". Embrace it. Tell someone about Jesus. Perhaps their life will be transformed as yours was when someone evangelized to you. This is what evangelism is all about.

There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

LUKE 15:7



WEEK 1 | DAY 2

Why Would We Want to Engage in Evangelism?

For most of us, delight is a stronger motivator than duty. We get more excited about the things we can enjoy than the things we must endure. Perhaps this helps explain why it's so difficult for many of us to make evangelism a priority. We view it as something we *ought* to do rather than something we *get* to do. But what if by trying evangelism we discovered that it yields more joy than the things we habitually turn to in hopes of finding happiness? What if our evangelistic efforts led to someone's conversion to Christ? And what if the joy we experienced as a result eclipsed the lesser joys we invest so much time pursuing?

This is no hypothetical question. Jesus, in his parables of the lost sheep and the lost coin, paints just such a scenario. In his parable of the lost sheep, Jesus says:

“Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, “Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.” I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.”

LUKE 15:4-7

The joy in this scene is almost palpable. The shepherd “joyfully” hugs his newly found sheep to his shoulders and goes home beaming.

His joy is so great, in fact, that he can't contain it. He throws a party, inviting a bunch of his friends and neighbors to "rejoice with me." The point of the story is to illustrate how God in heaven rejoices over one lost person who turns to Him. Why did Jesus want us to know this? No doubt He wanted us to know what thrills the heart of our Heavenly Father. But given that He has given us a role in sharing the Gospel, could it be that He is also highlighting the opportunity we have to pursue joy – both in heaven and on earth here and now – by sharing the Gospel with a lost person in hopes of their coming to repentance?

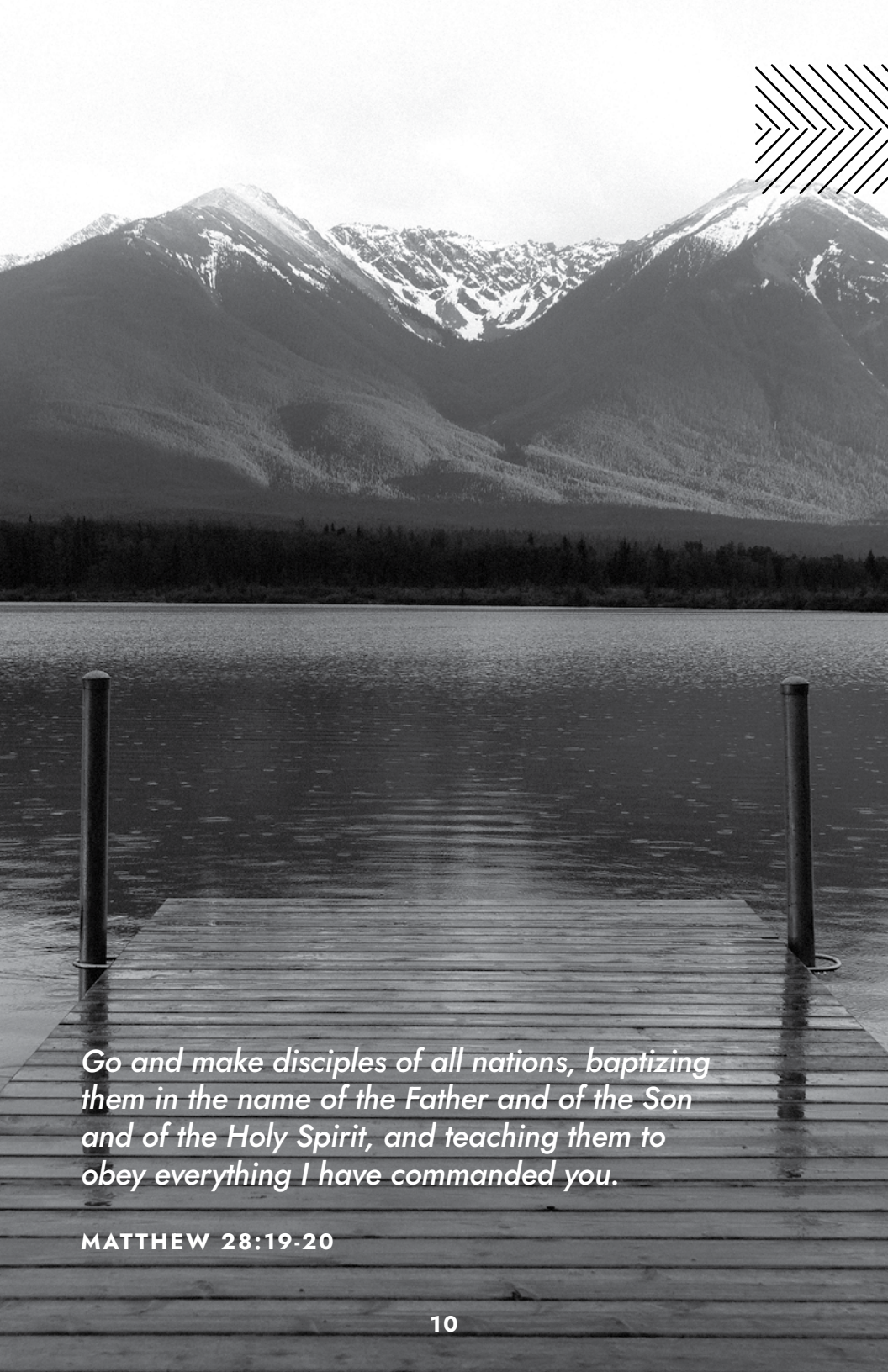
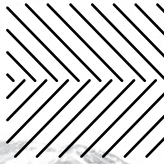
To reinforce his point, Jesus immediately tells another similar parable:

“Suppose a woman has ten silver coins and loses one. Doesn't she light a lamp, sweep the house and search carefully until she finds it? And when she finds it, she calls her friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost coin.' In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

LUKE 15:8-10

As with the lost sheep, the parable of the lost coin points us to the rejoicing that happens in heaven – this time mentioning the angels specifically – when someone comes to God through faith and repentance.

Notice that this rejoicing in heaven does not wait until the person arrives there, which suggests that the celebration is not intended to be confined to heaven. Elsewhere, Jesus taught us to pray to our Heavenly Father “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (*Matthew 6:10*). So, if heaven sponsors a party whenever someone here on earth comes to faith, then it seems the most fitting thing to do would be to join that party, especially if we had a role in pointing that person to Jesus! Evangelism, as it turns out, is our opportunity to participate in heaven's joy. And if the Lord is “not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (*2 Peter 3:9*), then perhaps there's more joy to be experienced in evangelism than we've realized.



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

WEEK 1 | DAY 3

Is Evangelism Optional?

Jesus' Great Commission here at the end of Matthew's Gospel gives a clarion call for the church to make disciples, and most evangelical churches readily acknowledge that *disciple making* (or *discipleship*, understood as "the ongoing process of growth as a disciple" as author Michael Wilkins would define it) is the heart of our mission. But do we understand the scope of disciple making described in this commission? Our commission has one central command: "make disciples," with three participles describing what's involved in making disciples. Those participles are "going" (though it's translated as "go" in our translation), "baptizing," and "teaching." So, making disciples involves *going* to reach nonbelievers (evangelism), *baptizing* them into faith in the triune God (conversion), and teaching them to obey Jesus (spiritual growth). Notice this is a full-circle process.

Teaching disciples of Jesus to obey everything he commanded includes teaching them to obey this commission to go and make disciples. So, we're not making disciples in the way Jesus commanded unless we teach them to reach others as part of their training. Evangelism, then, is an integral part of the Great Commission. It's essential to discipleship, not an optional extra.

This means that when we zero in on evangelism, as we are in this guidebook, we're not trying to provide a counterbalance to discipleship. We're not even trying to provide something complimentary to discipleship. We're talking about a specific aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, namely, the sharing of the Gospel with unbelievers.

The earliest Christians understood that evangelism was part of their commission. The rapid expansion of the early church was not due

solely to the apostles' missionary activity. In fact, after Stephen was martyred, we read that "*all except the apostles* were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria" (*Acts 8:1*, italics added) and "those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went" (*Acts 8:4*). Through their evangelism, these early believers were helping to fulfill the commission Jesus had given them.

This idea that evangelism is the beginning of and integral to disciple making, is reflected in Luke's statement later in the book of Acts where he says that Paul and Barnabas "preached the gospel in that city [Derbe] and won a large number of disciples" (*Acts 14:21*). Notice that these new converts were considered disciples right away, a reminder that discipleship is not something reserved for advanced believers. It's for everyone who has received Christ as Savior, and it begins at conversion. This means that Christ's Commission to make disciples is also for all believers, from the newest to the most seasoned. Author Robert Coleman was right: "The Great Commission is not a special calling or a gift of the Spirit; it is a command - an obligation incumbent upon the whole community of faith. There are no exceptions. Bank presidents and automobile mechanics, physicians and schoolteachers, theologians and homemakers - everyone who believes on Christ has a part in His work."

In our previous reading, we discovered that evangelism is desirable. In this reading, we've seen that it is also necessary. Even if we're willing to deprive ourselves of the joy of evangelism, Christ is not willing for us to do so. His Great Commission does not allow us to view evangelism as an optional extra. Faithfulness to our Master compels us to share the Good News.

REFLECT

1. What excuse do you most often fall back on for not sharing the Gospel with others? How does this reading address that excuse?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand your responsibility for evangelism?
3. What one thought, if any, did you encounter in this reading that makes you want to rethink the priority you place on personal evangelism?



How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

ROMANS 10:14

WEEK 1 | DAY 4

Is It Enough to Serve People in Jesus' Name?

Saint Francis of Assisi has often and mistakenly been quoted as saying, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." The idea is that the Gospel is conveyed primarily by serving others or by living a godly lifestyle. According to this view, our good deeds should ideally make a verbal witness to the Gospel secondary if not unnecessary. Given the fear that often accompanies evangelism, this may sound like an appealing excuse for not having to talk about sin and our need of repentance and faith in Jesus. But is it really possible to preach the Gospel, to evangelize, without using words?

As many authors have pointed out, Francis of Assisi never said anything like, "Preach the gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." This is an unfortunate perpetuation of a misquotation of the man. But more importantly, the statement does not accurately portray the Gospel as presented in the Bible, where the Good News is depicted as inherently verbal.

People need a verbal Gospel witness, not just to see a godly lifestyle, to exercise saving faith. The Apostle Paul makes this clear when he asks, "How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'" (*Romans 10:14-15*). Paul makes this more personal when he writes to the Ephesian believers, "You also were included in Christ when *you heard* the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When *you believed*, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit" (*Ephesians 1:13*,

italics added). What both of the preceding passages make clear is that salvation is based on a faith response to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and this implies a basic knowledge of this Good News, which requires that someone conveys that message with words.

To be sure, our actions are an important aspect of our witness. Elsewhere Paul says, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (*Philippians 1:27*). But this is not to suggest that the power to bring people to salvation is in our “worthy” conduct. Who could bear that responsibility except Christ alone! No, even when our conduct falls short of being worthy of the Gospel, it is the Gospel itself that can win people to Christ. “I am not ashamed of the gospel,” Paul says, “because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes” (*Romans 1:16*).

Duane Litfin, President Emeritus of Wheaton College, puts it this way:

“The belief that we can “preach the gospel” with our actions alone represents muddled thinking. However important our actions may be (and they are very important indeed), and whatever else they may be doing (they serve a range of crucial functions), they are not “preaching the gospel.” The gospel is inherently verbal, and preaching it is inherently verbal behavior. If the gospel is to be communicated at all, it must be put into words.”

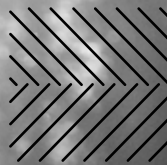
Here’s the Apostle Paul’s conclusion of the matter: “Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ” (*Romans 10:17*). And this is where God is pleased to use you and me, whenever we are willing to give a verbal witness to this saving message.

REFLECT

1. Which would you rather do, serve someone or tell them about Jesus? Why is that?
2. In what ways, if any, has this reading helped you better understand the need to share a verbal Gospel witness in addition to leading a godly life?

Do the work of an evangelist.

2 TIMOTHY 4:5



WEEK 1 | DAY 5

What if I Don't Have the Gift of Evangelism?

The Apostle Paul's cryptic command to Timothy here is instructive in that it implies that evangelism is not just for gifted evangelists. To be sure, there is such a thing as gifted evangelists. To put it more precisely, these evangelists themselves are God's gift to the church. Scripture says God gave these "evangelists," along with "apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers," to the church "to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up" (*Ephesians 4:12*). "Philip the evangelist," as he is identified in *Acts 21:8*, is apparently one such evangelist. Philip is said to have "traveled about, preaching the gospel in all the towns until he reached Caesarea" (*Acts 8:40*). It's likely no one ever had to tell Philip to "Do the work of an evangelist." It's who he was. Yet this is exactly what Paul tells Timothy. Now, if Timothy was not known first and foremost as an evangelist, then we have a biblical precedent for the notion that evangelism is not just for evangelists. This, of course, confirms what we've already noted in an earlier reading that evangelism is for all of us who have received Christ as Savior.

While Timothy may not have been known as a gifted evangelist, he was certainly no stranger to the Gospel. Paul testified that "[Timothy] has served with me in the work of the gospel" (*Philippians 2:22*). In his first epistle to the Thessalonian church Paul wrote, "We sent Timothy, who is our brother and co-worker in God's service in spreading the gospel of Christ, to strengthen and encourage you in your faith" (*1 Thessalonians 3:2*). So, Timothy was Paul's co-worker in the Gospel (a kind of evangelistic support role) as well as someone who could strengthen and encourage the Thessalonian believers in their faith. In other words, Timothy was a disciple maker. (Recall how

we pointed out in an earlier reading that evangelism is a vital aspect of disciple making.)

Paul advised Timothy to “Do the work of an evangelist” while Timothy was stationed in Ephesus at Paul’s direction. Paul himself had established the Ephesian church some eight years earlier. Now, Timothy’s assignment was primarily to guard the doctrinal purity of that church (see *1 Timothy 1:3-4*). How interesting that Paul would be so concerned about evangelism in Ephesus even after the church was so well established. It seems the work of evangelism is never done. No doubt this is because, as the Apostle Peter assures us, “[The Lord] is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (*2 Peter 3:9*).

Gifted evangelist or not, our charge is to “Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect” (*1 Peter 3:15*). But doing the work of an evangelist involves more than a passive responsiveness. It also involves an active proclamation of the evangel, the Good News of salvation in Jesus Christ.

What Paul’s parting admonition to “Do the work of an evangelist” teaches us is that evangelism is too important and too expansive to be accomplished by gifted evangelists alone. Our Lord Jesus himself, the one who summons His disciples to “Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (*Matthew 9:38*) and then sends them out to do the work of evangelism in answer to their own prayers, calls us to participate in the harvest as well.

The power of the Holy Spirit that enabled those first disciples to be Christ’s witnesses (see *Acts 1:8*) is the same power that’s available to us today. Few of us may qualify as gifted evangelists. But all of us who follow Christ can, in the Spirit’s power, do evangelism. May we, like Timothy, take up the work of an evangelist!

WEEK 1

Group Discussion Guide

CONVERSATION KICK-STARTER

- If you are comfortable, share about your fears with the group:
Why does it feel scary to share your faith with strangers or even people you may know?
- What part of discussing your faith feels most intimidating?

DEVOTIONAL DISCUSSION

- What challenged or impacted you from your reading and journaling this week?
- What from your processing this week are you feeling prompted by God to act on?

Group Facilitator | Consider picking one question from each Daily Reflection and discussing as a group.

Nearly all of the Apostle Paul's New Testament letters explain "who you are" before instructing "here is what you need to do." Paul starts with helping us identify ourselves before he explains our roles or what actions to take.

Read these verses and discuss what the verse says about who we were apart from Christ and who we are in Christ.

Before Jesus, we were:

Romans 3:7, 1 Peter 4:8,
Ephesians 5:5, John 12:35,
Romans 2:9, Ephesians 5:8,
Galatians 4:7, 23, Ephesians 2:3

**But in Christ, we have a
new identity as:**

Romans 12:2, Ezekiel 36:26,
Ephesians 5:8,
2 Corinthians 5:17

Second Corinthians chapter 5 explains our new identity and reminds us that it's only through Jesus that taking on this identity is possible. But Paul doesn't stop there! What else does God do? He "gave us the ministry of reconciliation." He entrusts us with His "message of reconciliation." He calls us His "ambassadors." Many Bible passages that speak of salvation echo the idea that our new identity calls us to demonstrate the Gospel.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul exhorts us that the Gospel is "the power of God for salvation," enabling us to live by faith. In Ephesians chapter 2, the same God who saves us by grace, through faith also calls us "his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." Throughout most of the Bible, we see that our decisions, actions, and even roles stem from our new identity in Christ.

God doesn't change our identity so that we can hide away from the world and wait for eternity. No! In our spiritual conversion, God changes our identity; our identity impacts our roles and changes our actions.

The Gospel is not just for the purpose of individual reconciliation. The Gospel does not just call each of us out of our old identity. The Gospel also calls us to participate in God's reconciliation of all things. The Gospel also calls us to live out our new identity, every day as His ambassador. Why do we care as Christians about everyday mission? Surprise! The fact that you call yourself a Christian, God calls you a missionary.

GROUP REFLECTION

1. What is your profession or area of study? What are some of the things you need to know and do to be effective at your job or area of interest?
2. How does your identity in Christ impact your confidence in evangelism?
3. In Christ, we are now His ambassadors with the ministry of reconciliation. How can you be an agent of reconciliation between non-Christians and God?