

SHARING YOUR FAITH

book thirty-six in the series:

THE OWNER'S MANUAL TO THE NEW YOU

DOUG BRITTON, MFT

Five-day Bible study for individuals, small groups, and churches

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- Day One: Ask God to Help You Share Your Faith
 - Day Two: Examine Your Example
 - Day Three: Develop Relationships
 - Day Four: Talk about Jesus
 - Day Five: Review and Test

Sharing Your Faith: Book thirty-six in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You”

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The Owner's Manual to the New You

Forty-eight short books

(Each book includes a five-day Bible study and homework)

By Doug Britton, MFT

Twelve books on "Knowing God"

Twelve books on "Developing a Godly Character"

Twelve books on "Enjoying Healthy Relationships"

Twelve books on "Overcoming Personal Problems"

For

Individuals

Small Groups

Churches

Available free for personal use at:
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The Owner's Manual to the New You

"The Owner's Manual to the New You," published by LifeTree Books, is a series of forty-eight cross-cultural discipleship books by Bible-based Marriage and Family Therapist Doug Britton. LifeTree Books is making these books available free of charge for individual use.

Each book is ideal for a five-day study by small groups, classes, or individuals. Although this is a forty-eight-book series, each book can be studied as a complete book by itself.

Knowing God

- Book 1: Who is God?
- Book 2: Becoming a Believer
- Book 3: Your Identity in Christ
- Book 4: Quick Overview of the Bible
- Book 5: How to Study the Bible
- Book 6: How to Pray
- Book 7: Key Christian Practices
- Book 8: Successful Christian Living
- Book 9: Living a Joyful Life
- Book 10: Knowing God's Will
- Book 11: Obeying God
- Book 12: Living in God's Power

Developing a Godly Character

- Book 13: Growing in Christ
- Book 14: Changing Your Self-Image
- Book 15: Changing Your Attitudes
- Book 16: Living with Humility
- Book 17: Living with Purpose
- Book 18: Living with Self-Control
- Book 19: Living with Integrity
- Book 20: Growing through Problems
- Book 21: Trusting God
- Book 22: Breaking Free from Our Culture
- Book 23: Handling Money Responsibly
- Book 24: Staying Faithful to God

Enjoying Healthy Relationships

- Book 25: Keys to Healthy Relationships
- Book 26: Making Friends
- Book 27: Showing Grace to Others
- Book 28: Forgiving Others
- Book 29: Serving Others
- Book 30: Resolving Conflicts
- Book 31: Overcoming Peer Pressure
- Book 32: Helping Others with Wisdom
- Book 33: Dating, Marriage, and Sex
- Book 34: Embracing the Body of Christ
- Book 35: Respecting Authority
- Book 36: Sharing Your Faith

Overcoming Personal Problems

- Book 37: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 1)
- Book 38: Overcoming Your Anger (Part 2)
- Book 39: Overcoming Rejection
- Book 40: Overcoming Temptation (Part 1)
- Book 41: Overcoming Temptation (Part 2)
- Book 42: Overcoming Anxiety and Fear
- Book 43: Overcoming Jealousy and Insecurity
- Book 44: Overcoming Self-Sufficiency
- Book 45: Overcoming Guilt and Shame
- Book 46: Overcoming Discouragement
- Book 47: Overcoming Failure
- Book 48: Overcoming the Fear of Death

Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Foreword | 7 |
| Small Group Leader's Guidelines | 8 |
| Day One: Ask God to Help You Share Your Faith | 9 |
| Homework – Day One | 13 |
| Day Two: Examine Your Example | 15 |
| Homework – Day Two | 19 |
| Day Three: Develop Relationships | 21 |
| Homework – Day Three | 25 |
| Day Four: Talk about Jesus | 27 |
| Homework – Day Four | 31 |
| Day Five: Review and Test (may be removed by leader) | 33 |
| About the Author | 37 |
| More Books by Doug Britton | 38 |



Foreword

When I was first asked to write a series of downloadable books for intensive discipleship training, I was excited. Jesus has revolutionized my life, and I am glad to share his truths with you.

The pages you are about to study come straight from God's word. They contain truth that puts our feet on the path to the fullest life possible—truth that sets us free.

As Jesus said, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free” (John 8:31-32).

May God speak to your heart as you read, and may he bring his truth alive in your life.

Your brother in Christ,

Doug Britton

P.S. LifeTree Books is offering this downloadable book and all the other books in “The Owner’s Manual to the New You” series free of charge. If you find these books helpful, please feel free to spread the news to churches, ministries, and individuals who might benefit from them.

Small Group Leader's Guidelines

Introduction. These studies are for new believers as well as mature Christians. They are for small groups, discipleship classes, mentors, and individuals. They are ideal for studies lasting from sixty to ninety minutes.

Choose the key points, verses, and discussion questions you will talk about. Don't think you need to cover every verse and question. With new believers, go over the main points, key verses, and selected questions. Go into more depth with mature Christians.

Begin and end each study with prayer. Start by asking God to help each person grow from the study. At the end, ask everyone to pray for help to put God's truth into practice.

Review homework. Before starting the current lesson, ask group members to discuss their answers to some of the previous day's homework questions.

Personalize the lesson. Although it's okay to read each lesson word-for-word, the material will "come alive" if you discuss some of the key points in your own words. Share your own experiences and struggles, and how God has helped you.

As you read, identify important points and key parts of verses. Ask group members to circle them, and then explain why you want to emphasize these points.

Get everyone involved. The more people are actively involved, the more they are impacted by what you are studying. Don't ask questions that can be answered by "yes" or "no." For example, don't ask, "Do you have any thoughts about this?" Instead, ask, "How does this insight speak to you?"

Consider breaking up into smaller groups to discuss the questions if you are leading a large group or class.

Use day five for a review and test. Use the questions in day five as a review and/or test. Remove these pages if you do not want group members to see the questions ahead of time.

Want to Learn More?

Free online resources: For more suggestions for small group leaders as well as many online Bible studies on Christianity and daily living (anger, marriage, self-image, finances, and more), visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/small-groups

Small group leader's book: For detailed information on how to lead small groups and overcome typical problems, visit www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/small-groups.

Day One: Ask God to Help You Share Your Faith

One of the most exciting things you can do as a follower of Jesus is to share your faith with others. When you do this, you invite people to respond to Jesus' love. And you invite them to enjoy the abundant life that Jesus offers.



People need the Lord

The greatest need of everyone alive is to be reconciled to God, and the only way to do this is through faith in Jesus.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)

God calls everyone to share their faith

Some people think it's only the pastor's job to tell people about Jesus. However, the following Bible passages tell us that every Christian shares this responsibility. I have underlined key parts.

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (Philemon 1:6)

I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations. I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you established your faithfulness in heaven itself. (Psalm 89:1-2)

Therefore 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. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age. (Matthew 28:19-20)

Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. (Psalm 96:3)

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. (2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

Discussion questions

1. Who is supposed to tell others about Jesus? Does that include you? Why or why not?
2. How often do you talk with others about Jesus? Explain your answer.

The Bible actually describes us as Christ's ambassadors—people who represent him to others.

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20)

I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Ephesians 6:20)

Discussion questions

3. What is an ambassador? Who does he or she represent?
4. How well do you represent Jesus in your daily life? Explain your answer.

Follow Jesus' example

Jesus lived a life of love and service while on the earth. People didn't just hear his words. They also saw the way he lived. As he said to his followers, *"I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you (John 13:15)."*

It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father. Having loved his own who were in the world, he now showed them the full extent of his love ... After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped around him. (John 13:1,5)

To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:21)

Discussion question

5. What is one way you would like to follow Jesus's example? Explain your answer.

Remember that Jesus died for everyone—even your enemies

God offers salvation to everyone, even to those who deny him or do terrible things to other people. Read about Paul (also known as Saul)—a man who actively persecuted Christians—and how God pursued him in Chapters 8-9 of Acts.

Pray that God will give you a genuine love for other people and an intense desire to see them know Jesus.

Discussion question

6. Do you genuinely desire for everyone—including your enemies— to have a close relationship with Jesus? Explain your answer.

Pray to be comfortable sharing your faith

Telling others about Jesus may come naturally to you, but if you are like many people, you may feel unqualified, awkward, or embarrassed.

Pray if you feel inadequate.

Don't hold back from sharing about Jesus because you think you don't know the Bible well enough or you aren't sure how to explain your faith. You don't need to be a pastor to tell people what Jesus

has done for you. Ask God to help you talk about Jesus in a comfortable way, then look for practical suggestions as you study this book.

Pray if you worry about people getting upset.

Don't hold back from sharing about Jesus because you are worried that people might get upset or think less of you because you are a Christian. Pray for wisdom about whom to talk to and when to share, then pray for courage. Also ask your friends to pray for you.

Be like Paul, a man who shared the gospel with countless people, but who also asked others to pray that he would fearlessly share the good news about Jesus.

Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should. (Ephesians 6:19-20)

Discussion question

7. Do you feel comfortable sharing your faith? Why or why not?

Pray for other people

The Bible calls us to pray for everyone, including people who don't know Jesus.

But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. (1 Timothy 2:1)

Pray for:

- Politicians and government leaders.
- Your boss.
- Your parents, spouse, or children.
- Your friends.
- Your enemies.

Discussion question

8. Do you need to pray for others more frequently? Explain your answer, then pray for five or more people you would like to know Jesus.

Pray to love others deeply

When you talk with people, they will respond to your love. On the other hand, they will react negatively if they think you dislike them or are angry.

Love your neighbor as yourself. (Matthew 23:39)

This is the message you heard from the beginning: We should love one another. (1 John 3:11)

Loving others doesn't come naturally for most of us. We often give in to selfishness, stubbornness, or irritation. We need Jesus' help to genuinely love everyone. It's a great idea to ask God throughout the day to help you love others.

You will read about how to evaluate your love in Day 2.

Discussion questions

9. Why is it important to love others when you are talking about Jesus? Explain your answer.
10. When is a good time for you to pray to love God and others more? How can you remind yourself to pray at this time?
11. What are potential obstacles that might prevent you from praying at this time? How can you overcome these obstacles?

Do you know Jesus?

This book was written to help believers in Jesus grow in their faith and personal life. You will get the most out of these pages if you know Christ, since it is through his love and power that you can truly change. If you have not yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, let me invite you to accept him as your Savior and Lord. Make this your personal prayer:

Jesus, I believe you are the Son of God, and I need your help. I confess I have sinned and failed you in many ways. I invite you to be my Savior and Lord, and I ask you to help me follow you the rest of my life. Thank you for loving me, forgiving me, and accepting me as your child.

If you prayed this prayer, welcome to the family of God. God has plans for you—to transform you. You have an exciting life ahead of you!

Memory verse

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (Philemon 1:6)

Homework – Day One

1. Do you think God wants you to share your faith with other people? Why or why not?
2. What do you think is the most effective way to share your faith? Explain your answer:
3. Paul wrote, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors” (2 Corinthians 5:20). What does that mean?
4. How comfortable are you when it comes to talking with others about Jesus? Explain your answer:

Day Two: Examine Your Example

Your example is usually more important than your words. The people around you hear how you talk. They see how well you listen. They notice how you resolve problems. They know if you are easily angered. And they see if you are genuinely concerned for others.

As Paul wrote, your life is a “letter” that other people can read.

You show that you are a letter from Christ, the result of our ministry, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2 Corinthians 3:3)

Discussion questions

1. What did Paul mean when he said the Corinthians were a letter? Explain your answer.
2. What kind of letter are you? Would you like to make any changes in your letter? Explain your answer.

As you study today’s lesson, you will read many challenging suggestions. Don’t be overwhelmed by trying to put all of them into practice right away. Instead, identify one or two ways you would like to change, and then ask God for help.

Discussion question

3. Do you agree it’s a good idea to focus on changing only one or two things at a time? Why or why not?

Follow Paul’s example

Paul had a passion to introduce people to Jesus and to help them grow in their faith. He encouraged fellow believers to follow his example, both in his lifestyle and his passion to share his faith in Jesus.

Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. (Philippians 3:17)

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Therefore I urge you to imitate me. (1 Corinthians 4:16)

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Philippians 4:9)

You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. (1 Thessalonians 1:6)



For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9)

Discussion questions

- 4. When others see you, what do they see? What are some ways you think you provide a good example? Explain your answer.
- 5. What are some ways you think you provide a bad example? How would you like to change in these areas? Explain your answer.

Evaluate your example

People watch you. What do they see?

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Rate yourself from 0 to 10 on each of the following:

- "0" means "I need a lot of improvement" in this area.
- "10" means "I do this very well."

My score (0-10)

| | |
|--|-------|
| I am a follower of Jesus Christ. | _____ |
| I act in a gentle manner when I am upset. | _____ |
| I read the Bible daily. | _____ |
| I pray daily. | _____ |
| I tithe and give offerings. | _____ |
| I show a genuine concern for others. | _____ |
| I am generous. | _____ |
| I tell others about Jesus' love. | _____ |
| I praise God daily. | _____ |
| I keep my word. | _____ |
| I do not tell lies. | _____ |
| I am a hard worker. | _____ |
| I am not obsessed with money or material things. | _____ |
| I trust God instead of worrying. | _____ |
| I do not watch questionable videos. | _____ |

I focus on the positive. _____

I rarely complain. _____

I easily admit my mistakes and ask for forgiveness. _____

Discussion questions

- 6. Describe some of the above areas in which you gave yourself a positive score.
- 7. Describe some of the above areas in which you would like to improve.

Evaluate your love

The Bible teaches us that loving others means being genuinely concerned for them. And it means wanting the best for them. As Paul wrote:

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. (Philippians 2:1-3)

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

As you can see, the Bible doesn't define love as sweet, emotional feelings (although these are wonderful). Instead, it describes love as attitudes and actions. In essence, love is a choice.

Discussion questions

- 8. How would most people define love?
- 9. After reading the previous verses, how do you think God would define love?
- 10. Are there any people you have trouble loving? If so, do you think God wants you to be genuinely concerned for them? Why or why not?

How well does 1 Corinthians 13:4-8 describe you? Rate yourself from 0 to 10 on each part of this passage:

- "0" means "I need a lot of improvement" in this area.
- "10" means "I do this very well."

My score (0-10)

I am patient. _____

I am kind. _____

- I do not envy. _____
- I do not boast. _____
- I am not proud. _____
- I am not rude. _____
- I am not self-seeking. _____
- I am not easily angered. _____
- I keep no record of wrongs. _____
- I do not delight in evil. _____
- I rejoice with the truth. _____
- I always protect. _____
- I always trust. _____
- I always hope. _____
- I always persevere. _____
- My love never fails. _____

Discussion questions

- 11. What are some areas in which you gave yourself a positive score? Describe some of the things you do well.
- 12. What are some areas in which you would like to improve? Explain your answer.
- 13. Review all the things you said you'd like to change about yourself in today's lesson, then choose one or two you will mainly work on and pray about. Explain why you chose them and how you will try to change.

Memory verse

I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. (John 13:15)

Want to learn more?

Free online Bible study

You are an ambassador of Christ
www.dougbrittonbooks.com/resources/ambassador

Book by Doug Britton

Getting Started, Getting Connected
www.dougbrittonbooks.com/bookstore/getting-started

Day Three: Develop Relationships

When I was twenty-two years old, I met a man (whom I will call Michael) at work, and we became friends. He and his wife often invited my wife and me over for dinner, although they were so poor that the extra mouths meant some financial hardship. They didn't wait to invite us until they could afford steak. They had us over for soup and bread.

At the time, my wife and I lived in a small shack in the woods. We believed various "New Age" ideas about spirituality. We didn't have running water, so we hauled water in a plastic five-gallon container. We showered every week or two at a friend's house.

I liked Michael. I also felt sorry for him because he was a Christian. I thought Christianity was a goofy religion, so I made it a goal to help liberate him from his old-fashioned ideas.



Michael and I began having long discussions during breaks at work and after work at his home. When we talked, I shared my opinions, some of which were very extreme. Michael gently listened, then he pulled out his old Bible and read verses that addressed whatever topic we were discussing. He never raised his voice. He never argued.

These conversations continued for over a year, and I began to think there was more to the Bible than I had previously thought. I was struck by the wisdom in the words Michael read, and I began to pay more attention to them.

I began to realize there was something different about Christianity—something very different from other religions and my ideas about spirituality. But I wasn't interested in becoming a Christian. Neither was my wife, although she spent a lot of time with Michael's wife.

One night after work, I learned something that deeply shocked me. My wife had visited their home that evening and had surrendered her life to Jesus. The next day it was as if I were married to a different person. Her intense anger disappeared, and she stopped smoking. When she talked, she seemed much more genuine and real. I liked the change.

A few months later, to my deep surprise, I too became a believer and began to change in many ways. I still have a lot of growing to do, but I am very thankful to God for the work he has done in me. And I am thankful to Michael and his wife for reaching out to us and loving us.

Discussion questions

1. Why do you think Michael's friendship was so impactful? Explain your answer.
2. What are different approaches Michael could have taken that would have had a different impact? Explain your answer.
3. Does Michael's example inspire you to change in any way? Why or why not?

Reach out to nonbelievers

Spending time with other believers is important. However, it's also important to spend time with nonbelievers.

Look for opportunities to develop relationships with people who don't know Christ. Your love and friendship will have an impact on their lives.

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ. (Philemon 1:6)

Jesus provided a great example of reaching out to nonbelievers. He spent a lot of time with his disciples, but he also spent much time with nonbelievers (and was criticized for doing so).

Now the tax collectors and "sinners" were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15:1-2)

Consider taking some of these steps:

- Get to know people at work.
- Join an amateur tennis team or softball league.
- Visit a nursing home every month.
- Join a book club.
- Volunteer to help in a food closet.
- Join a neighborhood association.
- Join a hiking club or a gardening club.
- Invite your neighbors to join you for dinner or coffee.
- Offer to babysit someone's child.
- Get involved in politics or civic organizations.
- Take a meal to someone who is elderly or sick.

Discussion questions

4. Do you think you should get to know more people who don't know Jesus? Why or why not?
5. What are steps you could take to spend more time with people who may not know the Lord?

Be wise. Stay away from "dangerous" people.

Reach out to others, but pray for wisdom. If you know people who will tempt (or pressure) you to sin, and you know they might influence you, stay away from them.

A righteous man is cautious in friendship, but the way of the wicked leads them astray. (Proverbs 12:26)

Do not set foot on the path of the wicked or walk in the way of evil men. Avoid it, do not travel on it; turn from it and go on your way. (Proverbs 4:14-15)

Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared. (Proverbs 22:24-25)

Do not join those who drink too much wine or gorge themselves on meat, for drunkards and gluttons become poor, and drowsiness clothes them in rags. (Proverbs 23:20-21)

Interact with non-Christians as well as Christians, but be wise. Stay away from those who will tempt (or pressure) you to sin.

Discussion question

6. Are there any people or situations you should avoid? Explain your answer.

Serve others

A good way to develop relationships is to look for ways to serve others. When you do this, you are following Jesus' example. Although he was God in the flesh, he made himself a servant.

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. (Philippians 2:5-7)

The Bible has many more examples of people who had a servant's heart. For example, read about:

- Paul (1 Thessalonians 2:7-9)
- Dorcas (Acts 9:36)
- Timothy (Philippians 2:19-21)

Ask God to help you identify ways you could help others. Ask yourself, "What would be best for the other person?" Or, "What would Jesus want me to do?"

Discussion question

7. What are some ways you could reach out to others who have needs? Explain your answer.

Stay balanced.

There are many needs in the world. If you aren't careful, you can feel overwhelmed trying to fulfill them all. Paul wrote that our love should be guided by "knowledge and depth of insight" (Philippians 1:9).

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God. (Philippians 1:9-11)

Be willing to say "no."

It's not necessary to say "yes" to every request for help. Be ready to say "no" without feeling guilty. Even Jesus sometimes said "no" when he was asked for help (Luke 4:42-43).

Realize your limits in responsibility.

Serve others, but don't take full responsibility for their happiness. You can help others, but you can't solve their problems.

Discussion question

8. Paul wrote that our love should be guided by "knowledge and depth of insight" (Philippians 1:9). What does that mean?

Encourage others

Have you ever known someone who believed in you, someone who frequently spoke words of praise and encouragement? The kind of person who made you feel you could do it, whatever "it" was? That's the kind of person God wants you to be when you are with others.

We can build people up or tear them down. For many of us, it's much easier to say something cynical, critical, or condemning than it is to say something positive, uplifting, or encouraging.

An anxious heart weighs a man down, but a kind word cheers him up. (Proverbs 12:25)

Ask God to help you recognize decision points, times when you are about to say something negative. Then say something positive instead. Build relationships instead of tearing them down.

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. (Ephesians 4:29)

Look for opportunities to:

- Compliment or praise someone.
- Say, "You can do it."
- Encourage someone who is going through a hard time.
- Tell someone that you appreciate, respect, or admire him or her.
- Reassure someone that Jesus loves him or her.
- Encourage someone with a phone call, text, email, or comment on social media.

Memory verse

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Day Four: Talk about Jesus

In today's lesson, you will read several ideas that can help you talk about Jesus. But first, remember the key guidelines you read in Days 1-3. They provide the foundation for good discussions.

- Love others.
- Examine your example.
- Develop healthy relationships.

Discussion question

1. Which of these three guidelines is most helpful to you? Explain your answer.



Pray for “open doors” to talk about Jesus

Pray for opportunities to share your faith, but don't think you must tell everyone you see about Jesus. Be ready to talk when people show an interest or when it seems appropriate, but don't force conversations. Instead, ask God to open up opportunities to share.

And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. (Colossians 4:3)

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6)

Discussion question

2. Do you agree you should step through open doors, not kick them down? Why or why not?

Pray for wisdom.

Sometimes God may want you to talk about Jesus the first time you meet someone. However, as you read in Day 3, it's often wisest to first develop a relationship so people will know that you are a loving person who genuinely cares for them.

Some ways you could start a conversation:

- Ask someone if he or she goes to church.
- Say you heard a really good lesson on forgiveness (or another topic) at church and ask if it would be okay if you share it.
- Ask if someone who brings up a problem would like you to pray about it.
- In a conversation, say how the Bible helped you in a situation.
- Ask someone if he or she is a believer.

Some ways you could respond to people's comments or questions:

- If people say they are angry, depressed, or discouraged, you could say you've battled something similar and ask if it would be okay to share some things that helped you.
- If people ask what you did over the weekend, you could say you went to church and heard a great message about God's love (or whatever topic the pastor discussed).
- If people talk about a self-help book that helped them, you could listen politely and then share something that helped you from the Bible (or a Bible-based book such as this one).
- If people say they would like to understand the Bible better, you could invite them to your church or to a home fellowship group that you attend.

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. 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, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (Colossians 3:16-17)

Discussion questions

3. What are some ways you could initiate a conversation about Jesus? Explain your answer.
4. How can you determine when it is a good time to share with others? Explain your answer.

Share your personal story

You don't need to go to Bible college or be an expert in theology before you tell people about Jesus. The most effective way to talk about Jesus is usually to share what he has done for you personally. (Many Christians call this sharing their "testimony" or their "story.")

Here's what Jesus told a man who had been demon-possessed, someone who knew little about Jesus, but who knew that Jesus had delivered him:

As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your family and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed. (Mark 5:19-21)

Discussion question

5. Why do you think Jesus told the man to tell others what he had done for him? Explain your answer.

Your own story might not be as dramatic as the man who had been demon-possessed. However, even if you lived a relatively "normal" life before becoming a believer, your testimony about God's love and faithfulness, and ways he has helped you grow, can encourage others.

Whatever your background, you have experiences you can share. You could talk about:

- What life was like for you before you became a believer.
- How you became a believer.

- How Jesus has helped you change.
- How God has helped you overcome guilt or depression.
- Something you learned in the Bible that made a difference in your life.
- A practical lesson you learned in church or a small group study.

Discussion question

6. What are some things Jesus has done in your life that you could share with others?

Hints to help you talk about Jesus

Talk in a personal, friendly manner.

Talk in a conversational manner. Don't think you need to sound like a preacher or a polished speaker. Speak with love and grace. Remember Colossians 4:5-6:

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6)

Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones. (Proverbs 16:24)

Don't think you must follow a formula.

Although sharing your story in a gentle manner is often the most effective way to talk about Jesus, there may be times when God leads you to take another approach.

For example, Paul talked to Felix about "self-control" (Acts 24:25). On another occasion, he talked with the Athenians about the "unknown god" (Acts 17:18-25). Stephen talked to one group in a way, not gently (Acts 7:1-31).

Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation.

Pray for wisdom as you talk. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide the conversation and speak to the other person's heart.

Listen.

When you listen to others, showing respect, you will have a much better idea about how to speak with them. Plus, they will be more likely to listen to you if you listen to them.

Be ready to share "the four spiritual laws."

These aren't really laws, but they give a quick summary of key points on the path to salvation you could share: (1) God loves you. (2) We are sinful and separated from God. (3) God provided a way we can connect with him through Jesus' death and resurrection. (4) The only way to be reconciled with God is through faith in Jesus (often described as accepting Jesus as your Savior).

Be prepared to pray with people who want to be reconciled with God.

If people want to follow Jesus, you could ask them to pray the prayer under "Do You Know Jesus?" on page 12 of this book. Encourage new believers to find a Bible-believing church, join a small group, read the Bible, and make daily prayer a part of their life.

Grow in knowledge.

Although you can share your testimony even if you don't know much about the Bible, don't stop there. Also make it a goal to grow in knowledge and wisdom. Study the Bible. Listen attentively to sermons. Join a Sunday school class. Pray throughout the day.

Don't overreact or argue if someone criticizes the Bible or Christianity.

If someone says something negative about Christianity, Jesus, or the Bible, don't get mad. See this as an opening to respond with love and respect. Likewise, if someone brings up the failures or sins of an evangelist, don't be upset or defensive. You could simply say, "God is upset about that too."

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. (Colossians 3:12)

One more point: Some people are very familiar with certain topics and may try to trap you in an argument (rather than have a respectful two-way conversation). There's no point in arguing with them since they have studied the topic and are ready to criticize anything you say (1 Corinthians 1:18-25 and 3:18-20, 2 Timothy 2:23).

Be prepared to be rejected or persecuted.

People rejected Jesus, and people persecuted him. Even his family members rejected him at first (Mark 3:21). Don't be surprised if people reject you. Pray for them and put them in God's hands.

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:12)

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

Along the same lines, don't be ashamed of being a Christian if someone thinks you aren't intelligent, logical, or sophisticated. Remember that Jesus is your best friend and your God.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels. (Mark 8:38)

Don't feel hopeless about anyone.

The early Christians couldn't imagine Saul becoming a Christian, since he had been actively persecuting the church (Acts 9:1-2). Yet, God saved him, renamed him Paul, and used him to write much of the New Testament.

Leave people in God's hands.

You can't "save" anyone yourself. Love people. Share your faith with wisdom, love, and gentleness. Then leave them in God's hands. Pray for them, and be open to talking again.

Discussion question

7. Identify three of the above points that will help you, then explain your answer.

Memory verse

Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (Colossians 4:5)

Day Five: Answer Key to Test (may be removed by leader)

Note to teachers and small group leaders

Remove this page if you do not want group members to see these answers ahead of time.

True or false (circle one)

- F 1. God only wants certain Christians to share their faith.
- T 2. It's good to pray for your enemies.
- F 3. Your words are usually more important than your example.
- F 4. Paul did not share the gospel with nonbelievers.
- F 5. Paul said we are a letter, but that doesn't apply to us since we use email.
- T 6. Christians should spend time with nonbelievers.
- T 7. Christians should not spend a lot of time with nonbelievers who pressure them to sin.
- T 8. When building relationships with others, it may be a good idea to serve them.
- F 9. Sharing your personal story is usually a bad way to tell others about Jesus.
- F 10. If someone criticizes God or the Bible, they can't ever be saved.

Memory verses

- 1. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

- 2. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. (Colossians 4:5)



About the Author

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