



FOLLOW JESUS - 99 and 1

The goal of this discussion is to learn three keys to effective evangelism: prayer, engaging the lost, and sharing the gospel. If you get a chance, prayerfully go through the following guide, asking the Holy Spirit to show you what you should emphasize and allowing the Spirit to minister to whomever and through whomever he chooses. You might also ask for insight on how to guide the discussion to include and minister to the non-christians who attend.

CONNECT

Don't worry about getting through all the questions

- Who is your best friend outside of your family? How did you meet them and become friends?
Goal is to discover that friendship happens in many ways, sometimes intentional, sometimes not, sometimes immediately, sometimes slowly. But everyone can and has made friends. Just like evangelizing.
- Do you like meeting strangers and getting to know new people? Why or why not?
Can show that even shy people have found ways to make friends.
- Recall a time when you went out of your way to help someone. What happened?
The goal here is to demonstrate the power of kindness and service. Might also demonstrate that, although it sometimes doesn't turn out well, it is a highly effective way of having positive impact and should not be abandoned, but pursued.

THOUGHT

As you read this, it might be a good idea to recap in your own words after reading the paragraph, not just regurgitating the information, but highlighting the thought you feel is most important for your group.

Jesus loved you so much he came to earth to die on the cross for you. He came so that you could know God's love and goodness, live a life that honors him and fulfills you, and enjoy his favor forever. We are all born with a gaping chasm between us and God that only perfection could bridge. God bridged that chasm by sending Jesus to us. We cross that bridge by trusting Jesus to save us. This is good news, the Gospel. But until we trust Jesus, we are like a son or daughter who has been lost. In any family, although all the children may be loved equally, it is the one child who is lost who is the parent's concern, not the children who are safe and sound at home. Jesus came to seek out and save God's lost children. As we follow him, we are to do the same. In this lesson, we will discuss how to do that effectively.

Might be good to tell a personal story of a time when a sibling or child (or you) got lost or left behind (or passed away, if you want to turn the conversation serious) and how your parents and/or others responded. This might help others to get a sense of God's love for the lost. You might point out that children get lost and even die every day, throughout the day, but we don't miss them and feel no, or very little emotion because we aren't aware and/or don't know them. But if it's someone we know or love gets lost or dies, it will be emotionally impactful, even devastating. God knows each and everyone of us and therefore feels the pain of us being separated from him very deeply. We are unaware or vaguely aware of God and thus, generally unaware or unaffected by our separation. But to follow Jesus, we need his heart. This concept is helpful for Christians and non-Christians.

WORD

"For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."

Luke 19:10 (NIV)

⁴Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ⁵And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders ⁶and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.' ⁷I 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 (NIV)

Prayer is the vital power behind engaging people effectively, because it connects us with God and reaching people is all about helping people to be reconnected with their loving, heartbroken Heavenly Father, who misses them deeply.

1. Pray Continually

³And 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. ⁴Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.” **Colossians 4:3-4 (NIV)**

As Paul went to share the Gospel with others he asked for prayer for an opportunity (open door) to share the Gospel and the ability to share it clearly, in spite of opposition. In Luke 10:2, Jesus told us to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send more workers into his harvest field. Who is the Lord of the harvest and where is the harvest field? Why is prayer important before, during, and after sharing the gospel?

God is the Lord of Harvest. It’s important to realize that it is God’s harvest and we work in the harvest at his command and bidding and are dependent on his help. He has a great focus on and desire for the harvest and if we are to follow Jesus, we must go there, too, prayer helps us have God’s heart as we ask for it. Helps us see what he sees, if we ask him.

We pray before sharing the gospel so God can help us share effectively and the person we might be sharing with will be open.

We pray while sharing the gospel so that God can guide us in the moment and keep us focused on him, and undistracted.

We pray after so that God will continue to use our words to touch their hearts and help them find God.

2. Engage

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

Jesus was known as a “friend of sinners,” yet he was without sin. He strategically engaged the lost for the purpose of leading them back to God. He extended love, mercy, and grace to those who did not deserve it. Why do you think Paul said he “*became all things to all people*” to save some (1 Corinthians 9:22)? How can you purposefully reach out to, meet, and engage those who don't know Jesus yet? What might it look like in your life to “*become all things to all people*” in order to save some?

The goal of this section is to see that we all can engage others for the sake of the gospel, but we might have to be willing to adapt and change, just as Jesus did. Guide the discussion toward practical and personal steps group members can take to connect more deeply with specific people in their lives for the sake of the gospel. Some might believe the lie that befriending and helping others in order to invite them into a relationship with Jesus is manipulative or in some way underhanded. This is because we have lost sight of the reality of God's love, heaven and hell, and Jesus' exclusivity as the means of salvation. If the conversation heads that way, The truth is that knowing God and being reunited with him as our heavenly father is the essential fact of life and should be the most important goal of every relationship. As the atheist illusionist, Penn Jillette of Penn and Teller put it, 'How much do you have to hate somebody to believe that everlasting life is possible, and not tell them about it?'

3. Share Boldly

"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have."

1 Peter 3:15 (NIV)

"I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes."

Romans 1:16 (NIV)

We can pray for the lost, befriend and serve them, and invite them to a church service, but the most important thing we can do for them is to share the gospel. We should give them an answer for what we believe. What does it mean to *"always be prepared?"* How can you be prepared? How can you boldly share the Gospel as Jesus did and commands us to do (Acts 1:8)?

Lack of preparation tends to make cowards of us all. Preparation breeds confidence, lack of it breeds hesitation. The two things we should prepare are:

1. A clear, simple presentation of the gospel: God gave us life and loves every one of us. We were separated from God by our Adam's choice and our own sinful choices. Jesus died to bridge that separation. We must choose to trust Jesus' death on the cross as the means to restoring our relationship with God.
2. Your personal gospel story: what your life was like before starting a relationship with Jesus, how you met Jesus, how meeting Jesus has changed your life.

The other concept you might communicate is to 'expect the expected', in other words, prepare to take advantage of the conversations and situations that you know will occur, such as 'what are you doing this weekend?' and 'what did you do this weekend?' You prepare for these by asking yourself, what would be a great way to respond to that question that would cause people to want to experience, know more about, or think more highly of Jesus, church, your church community, or your relationship with God.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

- How has God changed your life? How would you share that with someone else?
- Do you know how to share the gospel? What can you do this week to develop your confidence in telling others about Jesus?
- Name three or more friends, family, co-workers, or neighbors who don't know Jesus yet. What opportunities will there be for you to engage with them and share the gospel this week?

PRAYER

- Thank God for Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and for the salvation that we have made available to all.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to share the gospel, even adding signs and miracles. Pray for boldness, wisdom, and clarity.
- Pray for the three or more friends you know who do not know the gospel yet and ask God for their salvation and an opportunity to share the gospel with them.

NOTES
