



SHARING OUR FAITH STORIES

A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT EVANGELISM

By Rev. Jennifer Garcia

INTRODUCTION



Evangelism: helping other people find that unmerited grace in Jesus so that they can live a full life.

- Rev. Gerald Sharon

Evangelism can be a scary word, evoking knocking on doors or handing out pamphlets. But we can find different ways to approach sharing our faith. This Bible study is meant to open biblically-based conversations about how to be relational, flexible, and respectful, and more in our evangelism efforts. This study is heavily discussion based to spark ideas, dialogue, and involvement among participants. The sessions can be mixed and matched, so choose which sessions are most helpful for your group.

OBJECTIVES



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- Start a conversation about evangelism
- Explore varied evangelism practices from our own experiences
- Practice sharing parts of our faith stories with each other
- Discuss biblical evangelism stories and identify ways they connect with our evangelism practices
- Brainstorm what evangelism could look like in our specific lives and communities



Each session is designed to be about 60 minutes, depending on the talkativeness of your group.

Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

- Greet participants, pass out handouts and introduce the topic and the theme for the day.

Bible Study (10-15 minutes)

- Scripture is foundational in evangelism but can sometimes be used to justify aggressive, uncompassionate evangelism methods. This series is grounded in biblical evangelism stories that show relational, flexible, respectful, etc. ways of sharing our faith. It may help to reiterate the theme at the end of the Bible study portion before moving on to the group discussion.

Group Discussions (10-15 minutes)

- These can be done as a whole group or in smaller groups.



SESSION OVERVIEW

Storytime (20-25 minutes; 5 minutes per person)

- This is a crucial part of these workshops and should be done in small groups (4-5 people). Sharing our faith involves telling stories about how God is involved in our lives and the world. Storytime is meant to be a practice space where we share stories about God with each other in small, unintimidating groups so we get used to talking about God with others. Leave plenty of time for this portion.

Closing (5 minutes)

- Bring the group back together. If desired, choose a “homework assignment” for the next week. Example: send a personal invitation to friends and family to attend in person or watch a livestreamed worship service.



Ideas for making "Sharing Our Faith Stories" a larger theme in your congregation:

- Pick a season, such as Easter or Lent and make it the theme for the season. Or do a summer or back-to-school series.
- Do a sermon series based on the texts and key takeaways for each week.
- Try the Bible study as a retreat and do several sessions in one day or all of them over a weekend.
- Distribute the handouts for people to use at home for individual devotions or as a family.
- Use the Bible study questions or storytime prompts as devotions or ice breakers before meetings or small groups to get people sharing their faith stories and building community.

<p style="text-align: center;">Week 1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Theme: Relational Evangelism</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bible Story: The Woman at the Well</p> <p style="text-align: center;">John 4:1-42</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Week 2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Theme: Flexible Evangelism</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Bible Story: Philip and the Ethiopian</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Acts 8:26-40</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Relational evangelism: Like the woman at the well, we can share our faith with people we already know through conversations and loving behaviors over time.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Flexible evangelism: Like Philip when he interacted with the Ethiopian, we can be open to the Holy Spirit moving us in unexpected directions without tying ourselves to evangelism scripts.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>What did the woman do after talking with Jesus?</p> <p>Who did she tell?</p> <p>What do you think was compelling about what she shared with them?</p> <p>What does this story have to tell us about how we share our faith?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>What are the differences between Philip and the Ethiopian?</p> <p>How did they connect?</p> <p>What things happen in this story that the characters might not have expected?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>What have your experiences been with evangelism?</p> <p>How can we do relational evangelism in our own lives? In the life of our congregation?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>How did your "homework" go? If it was difficult, what was difficult about it?</p> <p>What was a time you felt completely loved and accepted? What made you feel that way?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Storytime</p> <p>Share a part of your own faith story. This could be about your baptism, a crisis that shook your faith, a time God answered prayer, etc.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Storytime</p> <p>Tell a story about a way you have seen God's love expressed during a difficult time in your or someone else's life.</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Week 3 Theme: Respectful Evangelism Bible Story: Paul in Athens Acts 17:16-34</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Week 4 Theme: Welcoming Evangelism Bible Story: Prodigal Son Luke 15:11-32</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Respectful evangelism: We live in a world of diverse beliefs, so like Paul in Athens, we can find something we appreciate about others' beliefs to start a conversation.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Welcoming evangelism: When we enter into a relationship with God, we enter into relationship with God's family. As a faith community, we need to embrace people newly in relationship with God as they are.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>How was Paul feeling when he was in Athens (vs. 16)? How did he react? What did Paul appreciate about the Athenians (vs. 22)? How did he use that appreciation as a way to start a conversation with them?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>How did the father react to the younger son's return? How did the elder brother react? Since we have all been forgiven more than we could ever know, which reaction should we emulate toward someone newly in relationship with God?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>What do you appreciate about other faith traditions? What have you learned about your own faith from talking with people from other faiths?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>When was a time you felt really welcomed and included (or not)? What made you feel that way? What can your congregation do to be more welcoming?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Storytime*</p> <p>Write and share a no more than two paragraph summary of God's story (creation to Jesus, if not creation to now) avoiding religious language/jargon. It should be understandable to someone who has never been to church.</p> <p>*This assignment is challenging, so assign it as "homework" at the end of session 2. A crucial part of sharing our faith is being able to talk about how God works in the world in non-technical terms, so it's a worthy challenge.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Storytime</p> <p>Tell a story about forgiveness: either a time when you were forgiven or when you forgave someone else. How did that affect your faith?</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Week 5 Theme: Discipling Evangelism Bible Story: Nicodemus John 3:1-17; 7:45-52; 19:38-40</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Week 6 Theme: Justice-Seeking Evangelism Bible Story: Jesus' Mission Statement Luke 4:16-21</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Discipling evangelism: One's faith story does not end the first time one encounters God. When inviting someone into a relationship with God, we need to be prepared to continue with them on the journey.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Key Takeaway</p> <p>Justice-seeking evangelism: Part of living a full life is being a part of God's work on earth now. Part of evangelism is letting people know that our faith leads us to do works of mercy and justice.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>How did Nicodemus's relationship with Jesus change between these three stories? What do you think might have led to that change? (Don't be afraid to speculate: Nicodemus is only mentioned in these three passages.)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Bible Study Questions</p> <p>This is essentially Jesus' mission statement in the Gospel of Luke. What does Jesus say he's here to do? How has this work continued through the Church throughout the centuries?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>What are ways you have been integrated into a community other than a church or faith community (workplace, club, etc.)? How might your congregation help people newly in relationship with God grow in their faith?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Group Discussion</p> <p>Why should we care for others' earthly needs? How can caring for others' earthly needs spread the Good News?</p>
<p>Tell a story about how your faith has grown over the years. Did you have a family member or mentor who guided you? Was there a crisis that deepened your faith?</p>	<p>Tell a story about something you or your congregation has done for the sake of others. Why did you/they do it?</p>

RELATIONAL EVANGELISM



Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 1 Handout

Bible Study

John 4:1-42 Woman at the Well

- What did the woman do after talking with Jesus?
- Who did she tell?
- What do you think was compelling about what she shared with them?
- What does this story have to tell us about how we share our faith?

Small Group Discussion

- What have your experiences been with evangelism?
- How can we do relational evangelism in our own lives? In the life of our congregation?

Storytime

Share part of your own faith story. It could be about your baptism, a crisis that shook your faith, a time God answered a prayer, etc.



FLEXIBLE EVANGELISM

Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 2 Handout

Bible Study

Acts 8:26-40 Philip and the Ethiopian

- What are the differences between Philip and the Ethiopian?
- How did they connect?
- What things happen in this story that the characters might not have expected?

Group Discussion

- How did your "homework" go? If it was difficult, what was difficult about it?
- What was a time you felt completely loved and accepted? What made you feel that way?

Storytime

Tell a story about a way you have seen God's love expressed during a difficult time in your or someone else's life.

A photograph of two women from behind, looking out over a city at sunset. The woman on the left is wearing a patterned headscarf and a light-colored top. The woman on the right has long dark hair and is wearing a dark top. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm glow over the city below. The text 'RESPECTFUL EVANGELISM' is overlaid in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters.

RESPECTFUL EVANGELISM

Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 3 Handout

Bible Study

Acts 17:16-34 Paul in Athens

- How was Paul feeling when he was in Athens? How did he react?
- What did Paul appreciate about the Athenians?
- How did he use that appreciation as a way to start conversation with them?

Group Discussion

- What do you appreciate about other faith traditions?
- What have you learned about your own faith from talking with people from other faiths?

Storytime

Write and share a no more than two paragraph summary of God's story (creation to Jesus, if not creation to now) avoiding religious language/jargon. It should be understandable to someone who has never been to church.



WELCOMING EVANGELISM

Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 4 Handout

Bible Study

Luke 15:11-32 Prodigal Son

- How did the father react to the younger son's return?
- How did the elder brother react?
- Since we have all been forgiven more than we could ever know, which reaction should we emulate toward someone newly in relationship with God?

Group Discussion

- When was a time you felt really welcomed and included (or not)? What made you feel that way?
- What can your congregation do to be more welcoming?

Storytime

Tell a story about forgiveness: either a time when you were forgiven or when you forgave someone else. How did that affect your faith?



DISCIPLING EVANGELISM

Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 5 Handout

Bible Study

John 3:1-17; 7:45-52; 19:38-40 Nicodemus

- How did Nicodemus's relationship with Jesus change between these three stories?
- What do you think might have led to that change? (Don't be afraid to speculate: Nicodemus is only mentioned in these three passages.)

Group Discussion

- What are ways you have been integrated into a community other than a church or faith community (workplace, club, etc.)?
- How might your congregation help people newly in relationship with God grow in their faith?

Storytime

- Tell a story about how your faith has grown over the years. Did you have a family member or mentor who guided you? Was there a crisis that deepened your faith?

A young man and woman are shown in profile, facing each other and talking. The man is on the left, wearing a dark green sweater, and the woman is on the right, wearing a red top. They are standing in front of a light-colored wall. The title 'JUSTICE-SEEKING EVANGELISM' is overlaid in large white letters across the center of the image.

JUSTICE-SEEKING EVANGELISM

Sharing Our Faith Stories Week 6 Handout

Bible Study

Luke 4:16-21 Jesus' Mission Statement

- This is essentially Jesus' mission statement in the Gospel of Luke. What does Jesus say he's here to do?
- How has this work continued through the Church throughout the centuries?

Group Discussion

- Why should we care for others' earthly needs?
- How can caring for others' earthly needs spread the Good News?

Storytime

- Tell a story about something you or your congregation has done for the sake of others. Why did you/they do it?