

Elim Fountain of Hope Church, Oldham

The Manna

THEME: EVANGELISM – Being Salt & Brighter Light

SESSION 5

TOPIC: DISCOVERING YOUR STYLE: PART 1

TEXT: Acts 17 v 16 – 34; Acts 2 v 14, 36; John 9

REFLECTIONS FROM SESSION 4

1. For those of you who wrote out your testimony, would you be willing to read it to the group? What kind of person might this testimony speak to?
2. If you have been learning one of the other Gospel presentations, set up a time to practice it on the small group or the small group leader.

INTRODUCTION

The key to this entire study guide is helping people discover the evangelism style that fits them. For too long, the church has called people to go out and be evangelists but has failed to help them discover how they should do it. God has wired each of us differently. Each of us has a style somewhat different from the other. However, there are some general styles that will help every member begin to identify how they can most effectively explain their faith.

In this session we look at the three specific styles of evangelism most often identified as the standard way for Christians to do evangelism.

People with a *confrontational style* put the message right on the table.

Those with an *intellectual style* are very comfortable explaining the truth of the Bible and the meaning of the Christian faith.

And people who have a *testimonial style* do evangelism by telling their personal stories of faith, helping others see the presence and power of God in their lives.

As we look at these three styles, we will study a biblical example of each, as well as take steps for group members to begin identifying their particular style.

THE BIG PICTURE

As you begin this lesson, use your imagination. Slowly read the list of people below and try to bring a clear picture of each person to the screen of your mind.

What do you see when you think of:

- A librarian:
- A fighter pilot?
- A Sumo wrestler?
- A kindergarten teacher?
- A used car salesman?
- A ballet dancer?
- A doctor?
- An evangelist?

Each of these titles causes some kind of picture to form in our minds. Many of these images are positive, but some are not.

When some people think of a stereotypical evangelist, they picture an animated, extroverted, finger-pointing, Bible-pounding preacher who spews out hellfire and brimstone sermons. This is not an attractive picture. It certainly does not make the idea of being an evangelist very appealing to most followers of Christ.

Others may have an entirely different picture of an evangelist. They see a dynamic, powerful, eloquent communicator - a fluent and effective preacher of the Gospel like Billy Graham. Some picture an evangelist as a specially chosen person with rare and unique gifts that most "ordinary" Christians could never hope to duplicate.

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What we *don't* see when we picture an evangelist is ourselves. Our mental image of an evangelist just doesn't match up with the person we see every morning in the mirror.

A WIDE ANGLE VIEW

1. What images come to your mind when you think about an evangelist?

Positive.

Negative.

Who are some effective evangelists you have known? What makes them effective?

A BIBLICAL PORTRAIT

Read Acts 17:16-34

2. How would you describe Paul's style of evangelism in this passage?

What made his approach effective?

SHARPENING THE FOCUS

Read Snapshot "Intellectual Style"

INTELLECTUAL STYLE

In Acts 17, the apostle Paul is trying to spread the message of Jesus Christ to philosophers and scholars of the city of Athens by reasoning in the synagogues with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles and in the marketplace with those who would listen. Some of the philosophers conversed and debated with him. As you read this passage, you will discover that Paul used an ingenious approach. He referred to an altar in their city "to an unknown God" and then wove that into the thrust of his message.

Paul's approach was an intellectual one. A confrontational approach was not going to work with these philosophers. They needed to be presented with a thinking approach that appealed to their sense of reason, and Paul was the man for the job.

3. What are some values of an intellectual style of evangelism?

What are some possible problems with this approach?

4. How can a person with an intellectual style of evangelism develop their ability to effectively communicate their faith?
5. What kind of people can be reached with this style of evangelism?

Specifically, who are some people you know who might respond to this style of evangelism?

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Read Snapshot "Confrontational Style"

CONFRONTATIONAL STYLE

The apostle Peter had a confrontational style of evangelism. In Acts 2:14, he took a stand, raised his voice and said, "Listen carefully to what I say." Then in verse 40 he tells the crowd that they crucified the wrong man —the Son of God. He then exhorted the crowd to repent, saying, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

Peter's confrontational style was a frontal assault that required confidence and courage. And it was effective! Over 3,000 people trusted Christ after Peter shared the Gospel. The fact is some people will only be reached when they are confronted courageously and straightforwardly with the message of Christ. Thankfully, some people are uniquely designed by God to be able to use a confrontational style of evangelism.

6. What are some advantages of a confrontational style of evangelism?

What are some possible problems with this approach?

7. How can a person with a confrontational style of evangelism develop their ability to more effectively communicate their faith?

8. What kind of people can be reached with this style of evangelism?

Specifically, who are some people who might respond to this style of evangelism?

Read Snapshot "Testimonial Style"

TESTIMONIAL STYLE

In the ninth chapter of the book of John there is a story of a blind man who was miraculously healed by Jesus. After his sight was restored, everyone kept asking about the one who healed him. They questioned him, saying, "Could it be the Messiah, the Son of God who healed you?" The man admitted he did not have all the answers to their questions but told them what he knew for certain: "I was blind but now I see." It's as if he said, "Draw your own conclusions. I've drawn mine; I know who it was." This is an example of a testimonial approach to evangelism. In this approach, someone experiences a miraculous transformation through the work of Jesus Christ and then simply looks for opportunities to tell their story to others.

They're not very confrontational or oriented toward an intellectual approach, but they can tell their story. They can give their testimony. They can say, "I was spiritually blind, but now I see. Christ changed my life, and He can change yours."

9. What are some advantages of a testimonial style of evangelism?

What are some possible problems with this approach?

10. How can a person with a testimonial style of evangelism develop skills to explain the Gospel more effectively?

11. What kind of people can be reached with this style of evangelism?

Specifically, who are some people who might respond to this style of evangelism?

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Note: If you didn't personally relate to any of these styles of evangelism, hold on. We'll discover three more styles in the next session.

PUTTING YOURSELF IN THE PICTURE

THINKING ABOUT YOUR FAITH

In 1 Peter 3:15 we read these words: "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." For some people, explaining their faith comes fairly naturally. For others, it takes more work and effort. Take time in the coming days to work at preparing yourself to give an answer for your faith. Prepare yourself to answer these three questions:

1. Does the Bible really say Jesus is the only way to heaven?
2. Aren't all religions just different paths to God?
3. How do you know the Bible is reliable?

As you think about these questions and develop your ability to answer them, you will want to use a few resources. A Bible concordance will be helpful as well as books on apologetics (defending the faith). You may also want to ask your pastor to answer these questions for you as part of your study.

TALKING ABOUT YOUR FAITH

Take time in the coming week to practice your testimony. The best thing you can do is learn to communicate your story of faith often and to different kinds of people. Try to practice giving your testimony to a child, a teenager, and an adult. Be sure your vocabulary makes sense to each person. Also, be sure to use only terms a seeker would understand. Although you will most likely be practicing on Christians, you want to be ready to tell your story of faith to seekers in a way that makes sense to them.