



Fall 2005 *GOstudents.net* Bible Study

Real Evangelism for Real People

Materials:

- *GOstudents.net* Download Video: *Bullhorn Evangelism*
- Computer, monitor or video projector to display video
- One copy of *GOstudents.net* Group Activity for “Real Evangelism for Real People” for each student

Video:

Begin your group time by inviting everyone to watch the brief video *Bullhorn Evangelism*. Explain beforehand that the video shows one approach to building relationships for the purpose of telling others about the good news of Jesus Christ.

Group Discussion:

After viewing the clip, begin a discussion of approaches to evangelism with the following questions:

- How would you respond to this kind of invitation to become friends with someone? How do you think others would respond?
- Do you know believers who seem to “yell” at people, thinking they’ll be able to win them to Christ? How effective is that?
- What are other kinds of approaches to making friends with new people outside of our Christian circles?
- Should we make friends with people just for the purpose of spreading the gospel? Why or why not? How should you treat a friend who seems unlikely ever to trust in Christ for salvation?
- What relationships were involved in your becoming a believer in Jesus?

Use this conversation with your students as an opportunity to emphasize that people in our lives will be drawn to Christ, in part, by the difference they notice He makes in us.

Group Activity:

Hand out copies of the Group Activity sheet to each student. Explain that you’re going to ask them to share



their opinions about the best in several different categories. However, emphasize that you'll need to hear some evidence for why they think that person or thing is the best. What can they point to in order to back up their claim? As they fill in answers, allow for simple opinion, but steer the discussion back to evidence. Push them to make the case for their choices. You might have to play referee if the debates get heated.

Finally, direct them to the last two questions. As they come up with examples of "best Christians," remind them that we're saved by God's grace, not our performance. That's important to remember. But also help them catch the idea that when pointing others to trust in Jesus, they need to see evidence that He has made a difference in our own lives. It's not always enough to just say, "Jesus changed me, so I know He's real." It helps when people can really see that we're different from the world around us—in positive ways!

Bible Study:

Ask the group to open their Bibles and turn with you to 1 Peter 3:8-16. Explain that you're going to study together the opposite of "Bullhorn Evangelism." You're going to look at just a few of the attitudes and actions Peter taught that friends and neighbors should be able to see for themselves in our lives as evidence that Christ is real and alive in us.

As we grow in these areas, two things will happen. One, it will draw people to want to be friends with us, because of how we treat them. Two, it will draw people to be curious about being in a relationship with God through Jesus.

How We Love

"Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble." (1 Peter 3:8, NIV)

Jesus said his followers would be recognizable by their love for each other (John 13:35). Love is one piece of evidence that Christ is real in us.

The first thing unbelievers should notice about Christians is that there's a difference in how



we treat each other, as well as those outside our church walls. When Christians go to war with their words and actions, especially over small things, we encourage unbelievers to turn away from Christ. But let's be honest; being a Christian doesn't automatically make someone easy to "live in harmony" with.

No, that's why Peter urges us to work at trying to understand where others are coming from. Sympathy and compassion are actions we take when we're trying to give each other the benefit of the doubt. You may not always like your

siblings, but you work to get along for the sake of the family.

What does it take to do that? Humility. If we're going to live in harmony, we'll have to give up getting our own way and being the center of attention. Humility means we let others go before us. Pride is evidence our faith is weak, driving people away; humility draws people to the God we're trusting to meet our needs.

How We Get Even

“Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.” (1 Peter 3:9, NIV)

Another evidence of genuine faith in Jesus is how we get even when we've been treated badly by someone, when we've been wronged. Followers of Jesus stick out in this area almost more than any other. Why? Because the person we're following “got even” by forgiving those who did Him wrong, then dying for their sins.

It's no wonder, then, that He taught His followers to respond to a punch by offering a fresh cheek as a new target. Paul's teaching is equally clear: “Do not take revenge . . . leave room for God's wrath” (Romans 12:19, NIV).

It's a radical idea that we should give up our right to get even with people who do bad things to us. And it's a hard teaching to live by. But those believers who do give blessings in exchange for insults shine like neon arrows pointing straight to Jesus.

How We Talk

“For, ‘Whoever would love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from deceitful speech.’ ” (1 Peter 3:10, NIV)

More evidence of our faith in Jesus and His power to change lives are the words that fall out of our mouths. The point isn't for us to sound like a King James Version Bible or a Sunday school lesson in the school cafeteria. Peter's point is that followers of Jesus learn how not to use their words as weapons.

James wrote that the tongue is one of the most destructive forces in all of nature. Saying hurtful things and telling lies comes to humans as naturally as breathing. That's why it's so attractive to unbelieving friends when they start to notice that we tend not to cut people down with our words and that we refuse to lie to get ourselves out of sticky situations.

Want to really stand out in the cafeteria as a Jesus-follower? Ask God to help you encourage and spread only truth with your words.



What We Chase

“He must turn from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”
(1 Peter 3:11, NIV)



Unsaved friends and family are going to notice something else about your life too. Where is it headed? What are you chasing? When a Christian is chasing “evil” (sinful goals), the world can’t wait to point fingers and shout “Hypocrite!” Everyone sees it.

But they notice, too, when a Christ-follower spends her time and energy in hot pursuit of good things like helping others, making peace in relationships, and creating a positive impact on the world.

But you and I know that Christians don’t expect to change the world on our own. We get that we’re not that powerful. When we go running after good things, we stop long enough to ask for help from the only Person who can make any real difference. In other words, we pray to our Father in heaven to help us live the way He wants us to.

This might be the most important point. Christians are not people who are just really good or pretending to be really good. Genuine followers of Jesus are people who trust God for the power to live changed lives. In other words, they pray. They know they’re helpless without His help.

Now, nobody may ever see you pray. The act of praying in itself does not make unbelievers say, “Ooh, I want the life that person has.” Instead, prayer is one way we access God’s power to lead a life that draws unbelievers to Jesus. Without God’s power, all we have to offer the world is theology. With prayer, God helps us do more than just talk a good game. He’s listening right now.

What We Fear

“Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. ‘Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.’ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord.” (1 Peter 3:13-14, NIV)

Sometimes, we Christians try not to draw attention to ourselves, because we’re afraid. We might be afraid that people will mock us for our belief in Jesus. We might be afraid that being open about our relationship with God will create an awkward barrier in our friendships. We might be afraid that if we come clean about being a Jesus-follower that we’ll then fall into sin and make ourselves appear to be hypocrites. All of those fears are understandable.

But Peter urges us not to be scared. Christ is our Lord. Yes, it might cost us status or relationships we value to let others see Him at work in our lives. But that's the choice we made, to follow His path. Remember where His path led?

And if we don't let others see into our lives, we won't get the chance to point them to the path that leads to eternity in heaven with the Father. We're convinced it's the only path worth walking; why would we want to keep that from people we care about? Even if they see us struggling with sin, our struggle is evidence that we think sin leads us away from a life that really matters.

How We Answer

“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.” (1 Peter 3:15-16, NIV)

Peter says people will notice. If you build friendships with people and open up enough to let them see into your life, they will catch on that something is different about you. They'll see that you're relying on something bigger than yourself. They won't miss your growing ability to love, to forgive when wronged, to avoid using words as ammo, to run toward good things, to live fearlessly in Jesus.

And especially when your life gets very hard, your friends will notice that you've got a hope that doesn't disappear on the bad days. Eventually, the moment will be right to tell them what makes your life different, where your power and hope come from. Then it matters, obviously, how you answer.

Instead of assaulting them with a bullhorn, Peter encourages us to be gentle and respectful in explaining the gospel. Tell the whole truth. Be honest about the reality of hell and heaven. Be honest that it's still a struggle to live a hopeful life all the time. And be honest that there's no other path worth following. Invite them to join you on it.

Conclusion:

Finish this lesson with a challenge and an encouragement.

These words from 1 Peter should do two things for us right now, today. First, they should be a kind of spiritual kick in the pants to get us up off the couch and back to work on following Jesus in every area of our lives. We should ask ourselves: Do my friends and family—believers or not—see that I'm growing in how I love others, the words I choose and what's most important to me? Am I praying, asking God for the power to walk Jesus' path?

The second thing Peter's words should do is encourage us. As we live like Jesus through God's power, it will draw unbelievers to Christ. It does make a difference. It is worth the struggle.

Close in prayer, thanking God for the power to live changed lives in front of our friends and family members, both saved and unsaved. Ask Him to help your students to choose to walk Jesus' path and to be ready to answer when the opportunities come to point others in the same direction.

As they leave, remind your students that they can find lots of helpful articles about missions and evangelism at GOstudents.net.

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