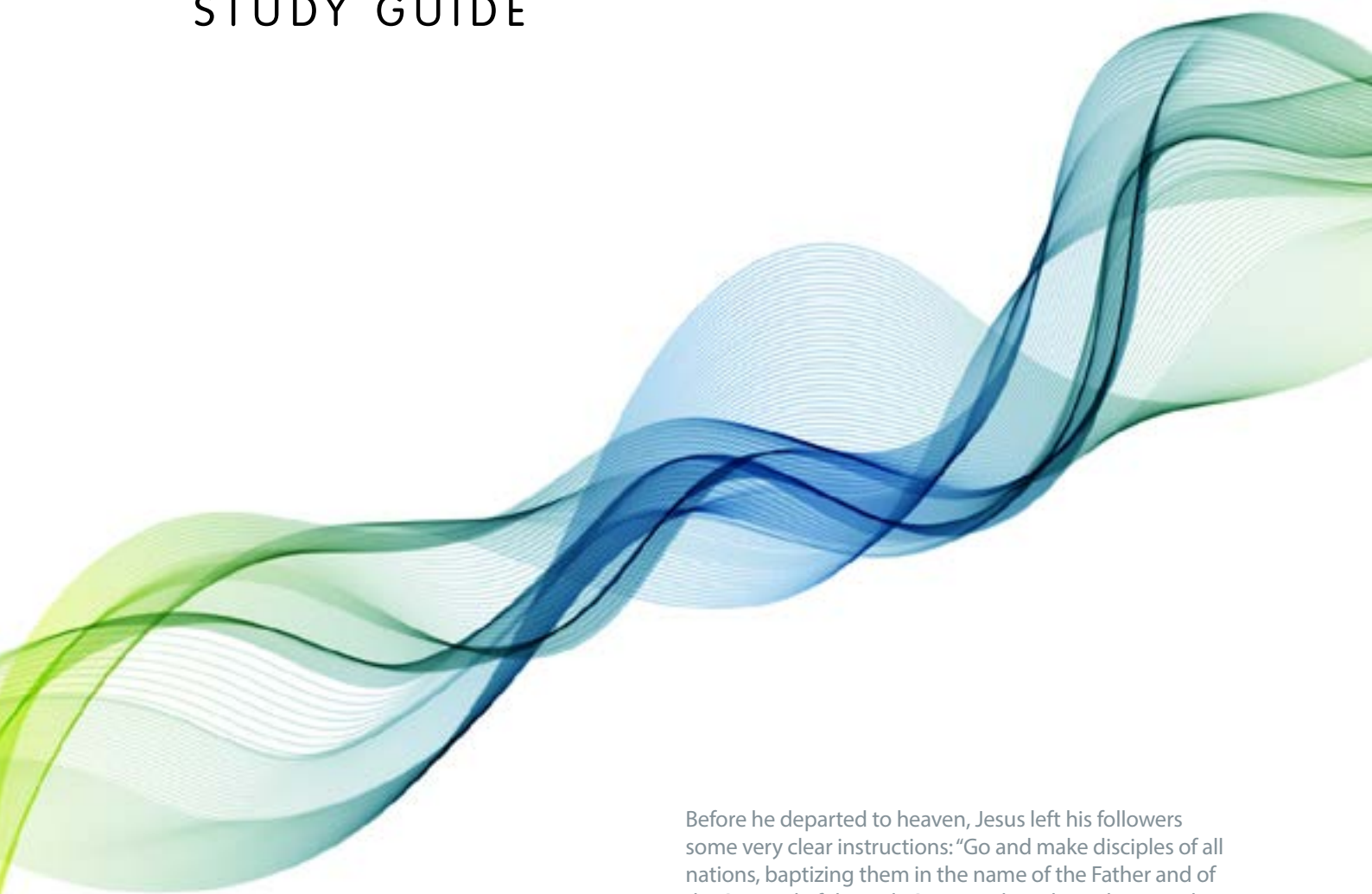


# Gospel Fluency

STUDY GUIDE



Before he departed to heaven, Jesus left his followers some very clear instructions: “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.” **MATTHEW 28:19-20**

■ WRITTEN BY **TRAVIS MUNDY**



# Introduction

*Before he departed to heaven, Jesus left his followers some very clear instructions: “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.”*

**MATTHEW 28:19-20**

As we read these words, many of us may feel excited. We want to be faithful to take Jesus’ commands seriously. We want to reach our friends, our family, our neighbours; to see them come into the love of Jesus. But our attempts don’t seem to have much effect. We begin to question ourselves. Or we even question whether the good news of Jesus is actually good news for everyone.

Others of us, when we read Jesus’ words are downright scared. Me? Make disciples? Baptize? Teach? Go? We may not think we’re qualified. We don’t know how to talk about Jesus to other Christians, let alone strangers or people who don’t believe. We think that perhaps sharing Jesus is not the job for us but for the professionals who have gone to Bible college or who are gifted in public speaking. Or perhaps we have the desire but we feel every time we do speak, incoherent sentences flow out of us that don’t seem to resonate with our audience.

This guide is more than a Bible study. It does, of course, lean into Scripture and help us unpack truths from God’s Word. This guide is more like an intensive course to help us understand God’s love for the whole world and His desire to use ALL Christians to share the good news of Jesus. It’s also targeted training, derived from experts who have studied our current culture well, who have written and taught extensively and who have seen effective biblical strategies work in helping people hear the Gospel afresh.

Our hope is that all of us, whenever it is we stand before the throne of God, because we took Jesus’ commands to share his love with those around us seriously, will hear the words “Well done, good and faithful servant.”

# Week 1

## Everyone Needs The Gospel (even us)

I have a good friend who believes he has access to some good news. He is very excited to share this good news whenever we run into one another. It's all he seems to talk about. The immediate subject matter may change from month to month, but his news runs along the same theme no matter the season. The following are real conversations we've had recently:

Him

"So I'm thinking about putting a pool in. It'll be great. The kids will be able to swim whenever they want. It'll be like having a holiday in the back yard whenever we want!"

Him  
(1 month  
later)

"So I'm looking at buying a boat. Not a yacht or anything. Just a tinny big enough for the whole family. I can take my boy fishing or my girl tubing. It's going to be great."

Him  
(2 months  
later)

"We've started renovating our home. The kitchen is going to be amazing. Bigger than before. And the countertops! We might even add a butler's pantry!"

Why do you think my friend shares this good news with everyone?

**READ MATTHEW 19:16-26.**

What is the good news this young man believes?

What hints does the text give us that his good news isn't working out so well for him?

How does the good news Jesus speaks about in verse 21 differ from the man's?

Here's the thing: we all believe in some form of good news. Something that is going to make our life better, more full, complete, happier, easier, less dramatic, more fun. If you listen well, it's not hard to pick up on what good news people believe they have. All of us have faith in something. Everyone hopes for something more. Every person wants to experience some form of salvation, to have access to joy, to enjoy real rest, and a peace that endures.

**READ ROMANS 5:1-5**

What does the “good news” look like here, according to Paul?

Where/who does this good news come from?

What does it offer or produce?

Why is this good news still good even when life is difficult?

*What is the Gospel,  
anyway?*

The Bible has many, many ways to describe the good news. It's the news that Jesus has come as King to set all things right. It's the news that we can be saved – saved from death and guilt and hell and saved to everlasting life, peace and promise. It's the news that those who were thought to be lost, far off, irredeemable are brought in and made God's family. It's the news that for those who belong to Jesus, death does not hold the final word. It's the news that freedom is proclaimed to the captives and victory declared to the oppressed. It's the news God is making all things new. It's personal good news. It's good news for families, communities and nations as well.

Despite all the above mentioned ways at explaining the good news of Jesus, many Christians find it hard to understand how this good news is actually good news. There are those of us who have gone to church for a long time, have heard the multitude of ways Jesus is good news to the world, yet would either find it difficult to explain in our own words why Jesus is good news or we encounter a separation in our minds between hearing about the good news of Jesus and experiencing the good news for ourselves and in our world.

Do you [if even only at certain times] find the good news hard to believe or explain?

Is there a separation for you between hearing about the good news of Jesus and experiencing it for yourself and for your world? Why does this happen?

**READ EPHESIANS 1:15-23**

Paul is writing to a church community in this passage. People who already believe. And yet, he prays that this church would have wisdom and revelation to know Jesus more. That their eyes might continue to be enlightened, that they might know the hope into which they've been called. He's preaching the gospel to those who have already heard the gospel.

Why do you think Paul preaches the gospel to those who already believe the gospel?

Why is it important to hear the good news preached to us (who believe) over and over and over again?

Do we, like the rich young ruler (and like the friend mentioned earlier), ever start to believe in “other” forms of good news? Why do you think that even believers pursue other good news for themselves when they already have Jesus?

We began this week’s study by exploring how every single person believes in good news, or at least some form of good news. Everyone is looking to believe in something, to be delivered from something, to experience joy in something. We all long for good news. We ended this study by asking the question why we need to hear the good news of Jesus. Paul says Jesus is the answer to every question. He is the true hope. He is the one who holds all power and authority. He is the author of joy and peace. Which leaves us one last question:

Before we even think about sharing the good news of Jesus with others, how do we need to preach the good news of Jesus to ourselves?

## Week 2

### What Is Evangelism, Really?

**READ JOHN 14:1-10.**

What good news do you see Jesus talk about in this passage? (Vs 2-4)

What is Jesus’ criticism of Philip (Vs 9-10) all about? Approximately how much time has Jesus spent with his disciples up to this point?

(For reference, John mentions three different annual Passover celebrations Jesus was present for in his gospel, which would equate to at least three years of ministry.)

Why do you think after all this time, Philip still doesn’t seem to get it?

Here we have a vivid example of what a relationship with Jesus looks like. These people spent every single day with Jesus for years and still did not fully believe in or understand Jesus. Christians often talk about discipleship as an ongoing, lifelong experience. But Christians make the mistake that evangelism (which simply means sharing the good news of Jesus) is a one-off event or conversation. Here we see Jesus shared the good news about himself and his kingdom everyday with his followers, but they still didn’t believe.

**READ LUKE 4:16-21**

What is happening in this passage?

What good news does Jesus talk about here?

YOU-AN-GEL-LEON

The Greek word Luke uses in the above passage is **euangelion**, which is a construct of two other Greek words: eu (pronounced “you”), meaning “good” and angelos (pronounced “an-gel-loss”), meaning message or news. This term was often used when a herald or messenger would ride into a town declaring that the king has vanquished the enemy and brought peace and prosperity back to the land. This message that so-and-so is the victorious king was called **euangelion** or “good news”. In the context of the Bible, the **euangelion** was that God has returned to the land as King. That because of who God is and what God is doing, every individual can enjoy peace and they can flourish again. But as we see throughout the Bible, the good news is not just good news for me. The good news of Jesus is that families can be made right again. That nations can be reconciled. That the systemic problems of the world are being set right again. You see, the **euangelion** of Jesus isn’t about going to heaven if we believe the correct theology. It’s about Jesus defeating all the powers of sin, evil and death, both in us and in the world. It’s about the promise of life now and forever.

#### READ ACTS 1:6-9

What “good news” do the disciples seem to be interested in at verse 6?

According to their understanding, who is the one meant to be the good news bringer?

According to Jesus, whose job is it to share the good news?

Are the disciples to do this under their own power and skillsets?

We read earlier that these disciples, even after spending several years at the “Jesus Seminary”, didn’t get it. Later in Acts they are called “unskilled and ordinary” people. They aren’t particularly gifted, natural conversation starters or theologically trained. The pattern unfolds throughout the rest of the story (and really has always been part of the biblical narrative) that those who have experienced the good news for themselves are empowered and enabled to share it with those in their own community, with their neighbours and throughout the world.

#### READ 1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

The word what Paul and his companions did in this community is called “evangelism” (which derives from *euangelion*), which simply means the sharing this good news (gospel) of Jesus. Not as an event or a special sermon by only trained individuals, but by everyone who has believed the good news of Jesus for themselves.

What did Paul’s picture of evangelism (sharing the good news of Jesus) look like here?

Did this community come to know Jesus during one event or over time?

Were they persuaded by an emotive, hard-hitting sermon or of people investing in them over a period of time?

What do you think this sort of evangelism looked like?

What do you think the following phrases mean in reference to sharing the good news of Jesus with others:

“We were like children among you”

“Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you”

“Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well”

“We dealt with you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worth of God”

Paul’s way of sharing the good news of Jesus with this community looks exactly like Jesus’ relationship with the disciples. He moved into the city, developed relationships and over a period of at least a few months, Paul being sharing the good news of Jesus with those he befriended. The language that Paul uses here denotes deep love and commitment. He genuinely cared for these people. He shared his life and was invited into the deepest levels of theirs.

Many of us are afraid when we hear the word “evangelism”. It gives us a fright to think God wants us to talk about Jesus. We often conjure up images of shouting on street corners or cornering the unsuspecting person sitting next to us on the bus. Those can be valid forms of sharing Jesus, but based on Jesus’ and Paul’s examples, I would venture to guess that many of us may be doing evangelism already without knowing it. Many of us walk alongside others. Many of us invite people into our homes. Many of us encourage those around us. Many of us demonstrate kindness. Many of us offer to help when we see a need. We simply often lack connecting those things with Jesus. We help, serve, give, share...but leave the name of Jesus out. We hope people will come to Jesus without connecting the stories people share and the ways we care for them to Jesus.

In what ways might you be doing evangelism without knowing it?



What do you think would happen if you began to talk about Jesus in those spaces?

Evangelism is not a program or an event. It's a lifestyle. The more we talk about Jesus and invest into the lives of others, the easier it becomes. The less afraid we are. If I wanted to be a better athlete, I would not expect that I would be amazing if I walked onto the field with no training. But if I continued to work out, develop regular habits to hone my skills, the better I would be. In the same way, the more we attempt to share the good news of Jesus, the less burdensome and more joyful it becomes.

We want to invite you to be someone who shares Jesus with others. We'll start small. Think of one person or one family that needs to hear the good news of Jesus (that shouldn't be difficult). Start praying for them regularly (maybe daily, maybe weekly), that God would give you opportunities to share with them, invite them over, help them, etc., and that their hearts would be softened to hear about Jesus.

Share the first name (or just their first initial) with your Community Group and spend some time praying together for that person and for opportunities and courage to share the good news of Jesus. Over the next few weeks, let's commit to check in with one another regularly to see how we're going.

## Week 3

### Everyone Has a Story

In our earlier studies, we talked about how everyone believes in some version of "good news" for themselves. Whether it's the good news that having a renovated house will bring them a better life or the good news of getting a job they love which will allow them to live out their passions, every person puts their faith in something (or someone). This "good news" is part of their story. And everyone has a story. A story of where they've come from, who they are, what they are looking for, of where they hope to go, of what is important to them, of what worries them. Every time we see someone in the Bible share the good news of Jesus, they do so by connecting the good news story (the story of God making all things right again) with whatever story the audience finds themselves in. In this study we are going to be looking at how to listen and learn from the stories of those around us.

**READ ACTS 17:16-34**

Without any context other than our passage, what can you discern about the story Paul's audience is living in?

Does Paul use any common Christian evangelistic catchphrases (like "Jesus died for your sins" or "My life changed when I met Jesus")? Why do you think he speaks the way he does?



Now let's add some more background to the story.

Here's a quote from ancient Greek philosopher Plato,

“My good friend, you are a citizen of Athens, a city which is very great and very famous for its wisdom and power – are you not ashamed of caring so much for the making of money and for fame and prestige, when you neither think nor care about wisdom and truth and the improvement of your soul?”

EUTHYPHRO, APOLOGY AND CRITO

Here's another one from an orator named Isocrates:

“So far has Athens left the rest of mankind behind in thought and expression that her pupils have become the teachers of the world, and she has made the name of Greece distinctive no longer of race but of intellect, and the title of Greek a badge of education rather than of common descent.”

ON THE PEACE

Paul quotes here two different Greek philosophers (in verse 28) that speak about the religiosity of the Athenian community.

How was Paul listening to and learning the stories of those in this community?

How does Paul speak the story of God into their stories?



Drawing out  
the heart

“Whenever I consider how I can grow in being a person of understanding who listens well, I think of Jesus with the Samaritan woman at the well. It was high noon, when the sun was at its hottest. There was a reason this woman was getting her water at this time. She chose a time when no one else would be at the well. Nobody went there in the heat of the day. But she probably wanted to avoid running into one of the wives of the men with whom she had been sexually involved. She had had five husbands, and the man she was then involved with was not her husband. However, Jesus didn't start with where she was wrong. He actually started in a humble posture of receiving from her. He asked her for water, and she poured out her soul.”

**Jeff Vanderstelt, Gospel Fluency**

READ JOHN 4:5-26

What do you see Jesus doing here?

What is the story this woman finds herself in?

How does Jesus listen, learn from and then respond to her story?

Bring 'em  
in & preach  
the gospel

Some of us may be old enough to remember Billy Graham Crusades. Billy Graham was the most well-known evangelist in the 20th century. He regularly traveled around the world preaching the good news of Jesus to millions of people. The classic Billy Graham Crusade worked like this: news that Billy Graham's event would circulate around your city. In the lead up to the event, Christians would be praying and inviting their non-Christian friends to this event. Billy would stand up and preach the gospel and invite those who wanted to respond to meet with trained counselors who would pray with them, give them Bibles and encourage them to tell the person they came with. Record numbers of people at these events gave their lives to Jesus. Throughout the 20th century, this form of evangelism was very effective. Churches began to adopt the same model – invite your friends to church where the pastor will tell them about Jesus and invite them to respond. This form of evangelism is still practiced regularly throughout the world. . . but many are noticing fewer people coming and fewer people responding. Why? Most Christians who study the culture believe that events like the Billy Graham Crusades were so effective because they took place in a Christian-ized culture. Where though there were plenty of non-believers around, the Christian worldview was well known, accepted, and looked upon favourably. Bringing a non-Christian to a clear evangelistic event wasn't strange or foreign. But today we live in a post-Christian culture. It's a culture that has moved on from the Christian worldview. It finds Christianity regressive or oppressive. Many people aren't even familiar with the basics of the Bible or the Christian faith, let alone comfortable with it. So although our **message** remains the same, it may be time for us to think through new **methods** of sharing the good news.

Christian apologist (someone who defends the Christian faith with philosophical and/or scientific arguments) Francis Schaffer once said, "If I only have an hour with someone, I will spend the first fifty-five minutes asking them questions and finding out what is troubling their heart and mind, and then in the last five minutes I will share something of the truth."

Why do you think listening, rather than arguing or trying to convince people of the gospel, is such an effective way to share the good news in today's culture?

Has there ever been a time that you were trying to answer questions people weren't asking because you weren't listening well enough?

What are some of the stories those around you find themselves in?

Your challenge for this week: spend some quality time with the person you started praying about last week. Ask lots of questions and like Jesus, listen to their stories. Over the next few weeks, we will learn how to speak God's story into those stories.

# Week 4

## Gospel Movement

I like to have coffee with people. Or, more specifically, I like to have chai tea while the person I'm with has coffee. Coffee (or chai tea) is simply an invitation for me to listen. I like to ask lots of questions about lots of subjects. Most of the time these questions are random: What do you think of this weather? How good (or terrible) was that team last night? Sometimes I throw in even more random questions: If you could only listen to one music album for the rest of your life, what would you choose? Listening, as we explored last study, is the first step of being able to share the good news of Jesus with others. But where do we go with *1989* by Taylor Swift? (by the way the correct answer to that question is *Abbey Road* by the Beatles). This study will guide us through how we can move from superficial conversations to the conversations of the deep things of life.

**READ JOHN 6:5-13 AND 24-29**

What is Jesus up to here?

How does Jesus take a normal, ordinary thing like food and turn it into a discussion about spiritual things?

### Noumenal vs Phenomenal

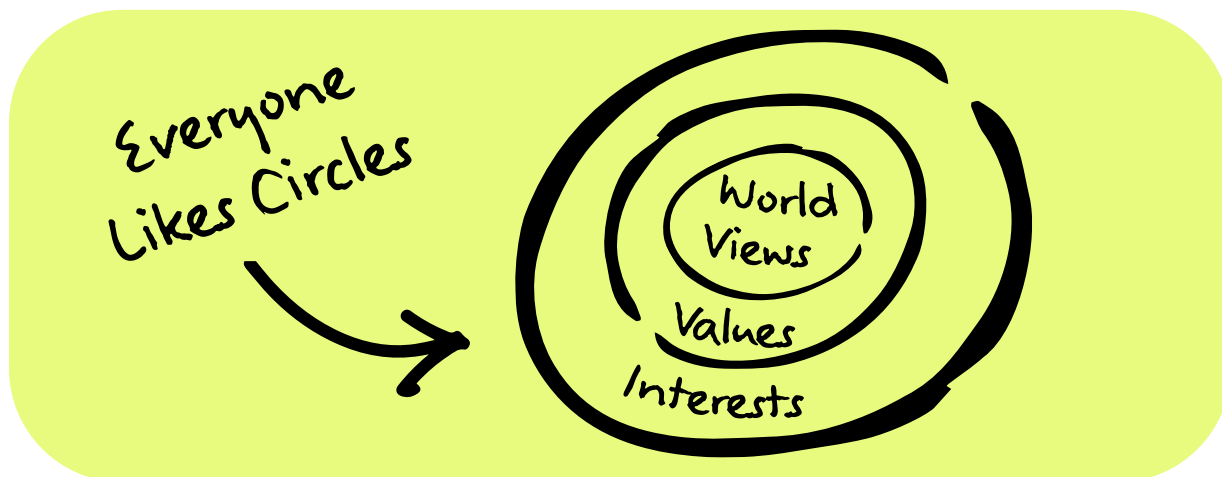
A few centuries ago, German philosopher Immanuel Kant stated there are two realms of knowledge – the noumenal and the phenomenal. The noumenal is the realm of God, ethics and values. The noumenal is the space of statements like “There is a God” or “Gambling is wrong” or “Capitalism is better than socialism”.

The phenomenal, on the other hand, is the realm of facts, evidence and data. It contains statements such as “One plus one equals two” or “The sky is blue” or “Water boils at 100 degrees Celsius”. With noumenal statements, there is room for argument and disagreement because for many, statements like “Capitalism is better than socialism” is an opinion, not a fact. This has created another rift: a sacred-secular divide. We live in a culture where many believe the sacred (the noumenal realm) is a private matter, not to be discussed openly. But the secular (the phenomenal realm) is safe to talk about. . . no one is going to disagree with your observation of the sky being blue. These divides, however, are artificial and culturally conditioned. If I were to talk into an Asian supermarket downtown, I would likely see several religious shrines (like that cat that keeps waving at me) throughout the shop. In biblical times and for most non-Western cultures, these sacred-secular divides don't even exist.

**Sam Chan, *Evangelism In A Skeptical World***

Given the above cultural observations, have you found it difficult to get deep with people about their values and beliefs?

In the passage from John 6 we read earlier, how do you see Jesus moving the conversation from secular/phenomenal things to sacred/noumenal things?



In the diagram above, we see the three concentric circles of conversation. The outermost layer is the realm of interests. These are the sort of conversations we have at school pickups or when we run into someone briefly at the shops. This layer talks about things like “What did you get up to over the weekend?” or “How this weather today?” These are safe topics that won’t start arguments or disagreements. They are merely describing things the way they are.

The middle circle is the area of values. This area is a bit deeper than the previous one as we talk about beliefs and opinions. Here conversations sound like “Where will you send your children to high school?” or “How upsetting was that speech from the PM last night?” or “As you as worried about the environment as I am?”

The final circle is where we discuss worldviews. It’s where we talk about our views on God, life, death, humanity, spirituality and the nature of reality. This circle focuses on what’s beneath our interests and values – the deep questions, worries, joys, and things that make up our identity. Here we ask questions like “Do you think there is a God?” or “Is this life all there is?” It’s the realm that informs why we believe the things we believe.

Using the story in John 6, we can see how Jesus jumped from one circle into the next. The “interest” of the crowd was because they were curious about the signs Jesus was performing (v. 2) and were apparently hungry after following him around everywhere (v. 5). Jesus then expresses a “value” of not wanting what God has provided to be wasted (v. 12-13) which then prompts the crowd to talk about their value or belief that God was going to send His Prophet into the world to make all things right (v. 14). Jesus withdraws, but still the crowd, who have now had their interests piqued, follow Jesus to the other side of the lake. Here Jesus then begins talking about worldviews by telling the crowd not to work for food that spoils but that endures to eternal life (v. 27). The crowd then express a worldview question that reveals the deepest question they have:

**“What must we do to do the works God requires?” (v. 28).**

Jesus was obviously a master at getting people to wrestle with the deepest questions and worries in life. He knew that having multiple conversations about the weather or even making a feast from a few scraps of food were not going to convince anyone to follow him. People’s hearts needed addressing, not just their bellies.

If this is the case, how can we engage people on the deepest levels of life as Jesus did?

In his book, *How To Talk About Jesus (Without Being That Guy)*, Sam Chan lays out a helpful progression he calls Coffee, Dinner, Gospel. If you think about our coffee catch ups with friends, these are usually quicker hang outs where the conversation stays at the interest level – we talk about what’s going on lately, but usually that’s where it stays. These are helpful periods where we can listen and build a friendship of trust and care with our friends. After a few coffee catchups, Sam then invites his friends for dinner. At dinner, we welcome our friends into our homes, and by association, we welcome them deeper into our lives. Dinners can go for a few hours and here people will begin to share their values and beliefs around various topics and may even ask us what we think about these same topics. Dinners are invitations to listen well to the stories they find themselves in. Perhaps after a few dinners, our friends may begin to share their worldviews – why they believe what they believe or their history describing why they are the way they are. They may even ask existential questions. This is the Gospel part of the equation. These are all invitations for us to listen and engage their stories with the good news story of Jesus.

Now it’s time for a bit of a role play. It’s one thing to read about going deeper with our non-Christian friends; it’s another thing to listen well, be guided by the Spirit, and prayerfully and lovingly respond to their stories with the story of Jesus. Think of a conversation you recently had with someone who you hope comes into the knowledge of Jesus. Ask the following questions:

What was/were the topic(s) of conversation?

Was it about family? Or holidays? Or sports? Or renovating?

If you were to listen again to that conversation, what interests, values or worldviews would you be able to see expressed by that person?

Whether or not you responded in the moment, what is one way you could follow up with that person and the things they shared?

For example, if they shared their mum was sick, how could you follow up? Or if they shared a little bit of what’s on their heart over a coffee, how could you create a space to talk more at length and dig deeper?

What do the things they’ve shared tell you about the “story” that they find themselves in? About the “good news” they believe in?

How might you connect the good news of the story of Jesus into the stories your friends find themselves in?



This chapter is not meant to be the Christian strategy guide on how to convert your non-Christians friends. Jesus wasn't interested in spending time with people in order to gain a bigger following for himself. Jesus deeply cared for each individual person he came across. Each person was precious to him. Each person was listened to and cared for. What this particular study is helping us to do emulate Jesus' model of listening, going deeper and responding with the good news of the kingdom. So if you find yourself only concerned about strategy and not about people, it might be time to put this study down and ask God to change your perspective.

How might you engage in Coffee – Dinner – Gospel with that friend that you've been praying for the last few weeks?

What sort of questions could you start to ask to move from one level of conversation to the next?

## Week 5

### We Are Not Meant To Go (Han) Solo

In J.R.R. Tolkien's story *The Lord Of The Rings*, a simple hobbit named Frodo comes into possession of a magical ring of power. The great and wise wizard Gandalf tells Frodo that if the enemy (named Sauron), gets hold of this ring, his destruction of the land will be complete. So he sends Frodo on a mission through rugged landscapes, enemy territory, trial and terror beyond measure to journey to Mt. Doom, to cast this ring into the fire from whence it came. Though Frodo accepts the mission and he realizes this role is his alone, he's never actually alone. He's given a fellowship of others who will help him on his mission. The story continues where this fellowship gets split apart, Frodo tries to go it alone, but is accompanied by his friend Sam, who refuses to leave Frodo's side. Near the end of the story, Frodo cannot go on any longer. He's been through too much and is too weighed down by what he's been through. But he knows it's his duty to see this mission through. Sam, seeing his friend falter, but knowing he's not allowed to carry the ring itself (which is what is weighing Frodo down the most), Sam exclaims, "Come, Mr. Frodo! I can't carry it for you...but I can carry you!" Sam then puts Frodo on his back and carries him the rest of the journey. This sort of partnership of one person's mission is shared by a friend, is what this study aims to help us examine.

When you think of sharing the good news of Jesus with your friends/family, do you ever feel alone or that you've run out of ideas or ways to bring it up?

Why is sharing the gospel so hard?

## Community Over Facts

Sociologists (people who study people and cultures) have made the observation that the way we know and understand things (a fancy term for this is “plausibility structures”) has shifted in the last 50-60 years. In the modern era, we know and understand things based on facts, evidence and data. But for many, this is no longer the case. It appears for most (in Western cultures, at least) that our plausibility structures (how we know and understand things) come primarily not from objective data but from the community we are in. Sam Chan gives an example of this when he says imagine I told you a story that last night a UFO landed in my backyard. A green alien got out, invited me onto his ship and took me around the solar system. We landed on his home planet and I had dinner with his family. After saying goodbye, I got back on the ship and the alien dropped me back off in my backyard. I looked at my watch and only one second of earth time had passed. Sam asks the question “Do you believe me?” Most of us would probably say “No, it’s all implausible.” Even if we were shown evidence of divots in the ground where the spaceship had landed, we would explain that away somehow. But then, Sam says, let’s imagine that one night your whole neighbourhood was having a BBQ dinner. As you are grilling up some burgers, all fifty of your neighbours begin telling you the same UFO story; that each of them was visited by green aliens and taken around the galaxy with only one second of earth time gone. Would you believe the story then? You might. Why? Because it’s not evidence or facts or experience that inform our beliefs most – it’s community.

**READ ACTS 2:1-24, 36-41**

What is happening in this passage?

How does the crowd’s understanding (plausibility structures) of the disciples’ change through the course of this passage? What do you think was it that moved them from believing they were looking at a bunch of drunks (v. 13) to three thousand people coming into faith (v. 41)?

What is it about many Christians sharing the good news of Jesus as a community that makes Jesus more believable?



READ ROMANS 10:9-15 WRITTEN BELOW (this is my translation from the Greek)

<sup>9</sup> If you confess with your mouth “Jesus is Lord” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup> For it is in your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. <sup>11</sup> For the Scripture says “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” <sup>12</sup> Now there is no difference between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord is of all is rich to all who call to Him, <sup>13</sup> for “Whoever shall call on the name of the Lord will be saved.” <sup>14</sup> How then, will they call on Him whom they have not believed? And how will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear apart from [people] proclaiming? <sup>15</sup> And how shall people proclaim if they are not sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those that proclaim the good news!”

Notice how Paul begins this paragraph by talking in the singular case “if you [singular] confess” “for whoever [singular] shall call on the name of the Lord”. But in verses 14-15, Paul shifts to the plural case to talk about two different “theys”: “they” [plural] who need to hear the gospel and “they” [plural] who are invited to share the good news. In Paul’s mind, both individuals [in the singular case] AND communities [the plural “they”] need to hear about Jesus. And whose role is it to proclaim this good news? Not a few singular people, but ALL those [“they” plural] who know this Jesus for themselves. And “they” are to do this... TOGETHER, as a community.

Given this way of looking at this passage, how does that change or inform our view of evangelism (sharing the good news of Jesus)?

Have you ever invited other believers to help carry you as you carry the burden of the sharing the gospel (like Frodo and Sam)?

“Here is the key you need to grasp: people will find a story more believable if more people in their community, their trusted friends and family, also believe the story. Typically when we get fired up about evangelism, we go out solo. But the problem with this approach is that we’re the one and only person in the group who believes the Jesus story. The Jesus story might be true, but it comes across as unbelievable. But what if we were able to get our Christian friends to become friends with our non-Christian friends? Then the Jesus story becomes more believable.”

Sam Chan, *Evangelism in a Skeptical World*

Do you think this is the case? That getting our Christian friends around our non-Christian friends, there is more believability of the gospel?

When you came to faith, was it by one person telling you about Jesus or many, perhaps over a period of time?

Jesus sends the disciples out two by two. The apostles usually go out in groups (think of Paul and his companions or Peter and John). In the early church, small house churches would share the gospel together, invite people for a meal together, pray and chat together. We see Christians going to where non-Christians are. We see non-believers invited to “come and see”. There are only a few moments in Jesus’ whole ministry when he’s alone: when he needs time to refresh himself and pray. Every other instance, Jesus brings people along.

If the biblical model of sharing the good news is together as a community and if the way plausibility structures of our day are most shaped by community, what could sharing the good news with those in your life look like?

How can we grow in this area as a church? What could it look like if we all helped out?

What is one way you can invite your Christian friends into the life of the non-Christian friend you’ve been praying about? What would a relationship being built over time look like?

How can you be a Sam to a Frodo (another believer) this week?

# Week 6

## Gospel Movement

### **READ LUKE 15:1-2**

Before we go further into this story...who is Jesus hanging out with here?

What sorts of stories would these people likely believe about themselves and about God?

### **READ LUKE 15:3-32**

Briefly summarize what these parables are about.

In what ways do Jesus’ story intersect with the stories of his audience?

How do the stories Jesus tells here speak a better story than the ones his audience were living in?

When it comes to sharing the good news, there must come a time when we tell a better story. As we have already wrestled with, sharing the good news is not (usually) a one-off event, but a lifestyle and a relationship developed over time by listening, caring, learning, investing and praying. People come into faith not through arguments or data, but by

loving community, deep friendship of care and respect and through the gospel being lived out visibly. There's a famous quote attributed to Saint Francis of Assisi:

“Preach the gospel at all times, and if necessary, use words.”

He's mostly right. It is the role of ALL Christians to demonstrate the gospel wherever they are, whatever they are doing. But I think a more biblical phrase would say “Preach the gospel at all times AND use words!” Though people can and do come to Jesus in a variety of ways, for most people, a better story must be told.

But how do we tell a better story?

How can we, like Jesus, speak the better story of God and His Kingdom into the stories of those around us?

Perhaps one of the most helpful frameworks I've come across recently is the four-part storyline of Creation, Fall, Redemption, New Creation. Every story will contain each of these four elements. Let me explain:

The Creation part of the story is all about identity. About who we are and how things are meant to be. It's the part of the story full of hope and promise and beginnings.

The second part of the story is The Fall. This part of the story is all about brokenness. It's where something has happened that has disrupted our hopes and prevented us from living how we were meant to be. The Fall recognizes something is wrong; the world is not as it should be; I am not how I should be. It looks and assigns blame for the brokenness around us.

Redemption is the section of the story where we believe help and rescue will come from. It's the “If...then...” part of the story; that if this thing would just happen, then I will be able to...It's where we look for the saviour or hero of the story to come in and change things around so we can get back on track or the world around us can be fixed.

New Creation is where we think the story will end up after the hero saves the day. It's the deepest hope and longing we have for transformation, the climax of the story that describes what life will look like now that things have been made right. The key question here is what has changed or what will change?

**Here's an example of this story at work:**

**[Creation]** I am meant to be happy. I was designed do what I love, be loved by others and through those things experience happiness. **[Fall]** But I'm not happy. I have a job that I can do but don't enjoy and no one around me seems to invest in me as much as I do in them. No matter how hard I try, I feel alone and powerless. **[Redemption]** I picked up a book that told me the power is within myself. My beauty lies within and if I can be happy within myself, then others will be drawn to me. Similarly, I have the power to change industries and find work that matches who I've been designed to be. **[New Creation]** By becoming

confident in myself, I find happiness and satisfaction. My work becomes more enjoyable and people will be drawn to me.

### Here's another example:

**[Creation]** The earth is beautiful and amazing, full of wonder. Humans were made to take care of it and cultivate it where we tap into and enhance its beauty. **[Fall]** But humans are greedy at worst and ignorant at best and we have ruined the planet. Through exploitation and hunger for more we've destroyed rainforest, bleached coral reefs and made whole species go extinct. **[Redemption]** It's not too late to turn the tide. If we can all turn to renewable energy, stop the production of plastic, protest governments who exploit the environment and create green policies to protect what's left, then what is left on the earth can recover. **[New Creation]** When every human can agree to make a change, the planet will flourish again and we no longer have to fear climate change, lack of food, rising sea levels or pollution, because we will be at one with the universe again.

What are some stories you've heard? How have you seen this four-part story in them?

What's the biblical version of this four-part story?

### Just for reference, here's my version of the four-part biblical story:

**[Creation]** We are designed by the God of the universe, special and precious to Him. He created us to be His image bearers, who demonstrate His kindness, love, compassion and justice to the world and to one another as well as experience the fullness of God's love for us. **[Fall]** But instead of choosing to live in partnership with God under His rule and reign as His image bearers, we decided to be in charge of the universe, to decide for ourselves between what's right and wrong, what's good and evil. As a result, we have become broken images. We doubt and hate ourselves, we experience brokenness and distrust with others and there is enmity between us and the world. Things are not as they should be. **[Redemption]** But while we were still bent on our own destruction, God intervened. He sent His perfect Son, Jesus, who took all our pain and brokenness upon the cross and put it to death. More than that, Jesus rose to life, demonstrating that he is victorious over everything and that he, and not death and despair, holds the final word. **[New Creation]** Through believing in Jesus, we can be restored image bearers of God, able to love God and live for Him, experience wholeness and forgiveness with one another, and are partners with God to bring beauty and justice back into the world. One day God will restore all things right again and we will live as partners with Him in His kingdom forever.

What would it look like to weave the better version of this story (of the good news of Jesus) into the stories around us?

### This is your time to experiment and share.

In your group, Take turns sharing a four-part story of someone you've talked to recently. The story could be on anything: home renovations, holidays, work, sex, kids, relationships,

money. How then could the good news of Jesus interact with and tell a better story (about home renovations, holidays, work, sex, kids, etc) than the ones your friends are living in? Spend time discussing and giving feedback.

If you examine all the “good news” speeches in the Bible, you will see that ALL of them speak the story of Jesus into the stories of the audience. Those that share have done their homework – they’ve listened well and spent time with those they are talking to. These conversations aren’t the flashiest or most eloquent. They didn’t come with the most persuasive arguments or presentations. If you remember, people even rejected and questioned Jesus on multiple occasions. As Jesus taught, there will always be different soils in which the good news that gets shared lands on. The question for us is: **are we being faithful at sharing?** If so, we must trust the Spirit to do the rest.

# Week 7

## Moving Out Of The Friend Zone

What is it that makes someone go from being hostile to Christianity to being a devoted follower of Jesus?

**READ ACTS 16:22-34 AND LUKE 19:1-10**

What happens in these stories that moves these people from being strangers to the gospel to believing it?

All of us have different stories of how we came into the love of Christ.

Who or what brought you to Jesus?

Most people who minister recognize that while the stories that take place of seemingly instant turns to faith definitely happen, there is usually a series of gates that people move through over a period of time from hostile disbelief to loyal belief. This spectrum might look like this:

**Open Hostility** (tries to prevent gospel spread) → **Disbelief** (argues against the gospel) → **Agnosticism** (doesn’t know the gospel, but not really interested) → **Neutral** → **Openness** (doesn’t know the gospel but willing to learn) → **Belief** (arguing for the gospel) → **Loyalty** (committed to living out and spreading the gospel)

Each of these stages acts as a gate. People can move between gates through various gateways. For example, one might move from being neutral to being open because they’ve been invited to an Alpha course. Or they might move the other way, maybe from agnosticism to disbelief because they had a negative experience with a church community. The question for us to wrestle with is what are the gateways that invite people to move forward (instead of backward)?

Looking back over your own life or in family/friends who came to faith in Jesus, what were some of the gateways that moved you/them from one gate to another?

**READ MATTHEW 13:1-9**

If you were in the audience and had not read the Gospel of Matthew ahead of time and had never heard of Jesus or knew what he was on about, how would you respond to Jesus' story here?

Why do you think Jesus tells farming stories?

**READ MATTHEW 13:10-15**

What is Jesus' explanation why he talks this way?

Does Jesus really want people to walk away from him?

One way to provide a gateway for people (Jesus knows) is to tell stories. Here in Matthew 13, Jesus tells many parables of God's kingdom but only to his disciples (who ask about it) does he give further explanation. From this, we can learn a few things: Jesus isn't interested in "churchy" or religious language – he uses stories and images and words his audience would be familiar with. Jesus doesn't have a debate, he tells stories. Stories invite people to think, wrestle and possibly inquire further. Jesus is intentional in what he's doing – an audience was waiting in the wings, so he chose to speak to them instead of choosing to pass. Jesus connected God's story with the stories people find themselves in (farming, fishing, land, baking). He also welcomed conversation. He didn't overshare or try to force people to believe in him – he told a story and left a door open for people if they wanted to respond.

How can we respond to our friends like Jesus?

What are some things we can do individually to help move our friends from hostility to faith?

What are some ways our church can do this?

There are a lot of gateways already present, we just need to invite our friends along. Here are just a few:

**Tell your friend you're a Christian and explain what that means**

**Ask lots of questions and listen to your friend's stories**

**Offer to pray for your friends when they share something**

**Go to their things, then invite them to yours**

**Introduce them to your Christian friends**

Have them over for dinner

Offer to serve or help them in some capacity

Tell them about and invite them to different church events/programs where they can hear about Jesus and meet other Christians (Kids Arvo, Kid Time, NBC Youth, Alpha, Community Group, Women's Morning Tea, etc).

Offer to read the Bible with them

Check up on them regularly to show they're important to you

What gateway can you invite your friend along to this week?

Spend some time praying that God's Spirit would be at work providing opportunities for your friends to come to know Jesus more.

## Week 8

### Mastering Gospel Fluency

When I was in high school, I took four years of Spanish. By the end of that four years, I spoke it with near fluency. When our youth group went Mexico to build houses, I served as the translator for our team. Knowing another language is a handy skill to have! But when I moved to the Northern Beaches 12 years ago, I started losing my vocabulary. We humans have limited brain space and with no exposure to Spanish speaking people (or tv) and no opportunities to use Spanish and due to my own laziness of not continuing to practice, my abilities went down the tubes quickly. I forgot words, tenses, intonation. If I did run into someone speaking Spanish, I embarrassed myself stumbling through trying to remember the right words. When you don't use a gift, you lose it. Several years back, however, I found myself in Spain on holidays. All the places in Spain we were there were very few English speakers, so I was required to practice my Spanish whether I liked it or not. Again, I stumbled around and probably sounded quite silly at first. But by being enmeshed in Spanish culture, hearing Spanish everyday and practicing it almost every hour, I found by the end of our trip, I had very little trouble understanding and responding to others. The more we immerse ourselves and practice a language, the more fluent we become.

In what way(s) is the gospel like language?

Have you ever tried to speak the good news of Jesus without practicing or immersing yourself into the story? How did that go?

**READ EXODUS 4:1-13**



Exodus 4 comes (clearly) after Exodus 3. In Exodus 3 God meets Moses on the mountaintop in the form of a burning bush. God tells Moses about the storyline he's in (he's an Israelite whose people are enslaved in Egypt). God then tells Moses how God's story speaks into that story (I heard their cries and I'm going to deliver them). Finally, God tells Moses that He's going to send Moses as His representative to bring the people out of their slavery. To this, Moses has quite a few questions and reservations.

What are some of the objections Moses lists out to God of why he may not be suitable for the job?

In what way does Moses' reservations sound like ours?

How does God let Moses know that he's not going alone?

**READ DEUTERONOMY 6:1-17**

After this episode (and a few others like it), Moses finally agrees to do the job. He'll go and proclaim the good news. Throughout Moses' lifetime, we see other struggles he has with being God's instrument to help people understand the good news of God. Yet, when we get to the book of Deuteronomy, we see the speech of someone who has immersed themselves and practiced the story over and over again. He's a natural by this point. He's fluent.

How did Moses get to be this way (in Deuteronomy)

**READ MATTHEW 6:19-34**

If you were to summarize these verses into one or two sentences, what would it sound like?

What does Jesus mean when he says "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also"? Doesn't Jesus get this the wrong way around?

How do all of these verses inform us on how to be fluent in the gospel?

Essentially Jesus reminds us of several things: we know what we love by how much time we spend on it, think about it and talk about it. We are influenced by what we spend our time looking at and focusing on. Humans cannot divide their loyalties well. And when we seek God first, all the stuff we worry about won't seem so worrisome. If we apply this paradigm to being able to share the gospel well it means: we learn to think about and talk about Jesus more than anything else, we fix our eyes on Jesus and don't become distracted looking at other things, we say no to other idols that want to vie for our attention and we trust that God will take care of us, no matter what.

If this is true, how can we be people who immerse ourselves in the good news of Jesus? What does this look like each day or week? Be specific!

**READ MATTHEW 25:14-30**

What is this parable about?

How might this parable relate to the idea of the gospel being like a language?

How can we practice speaking the gospel regularly so that we don't forget how to use it and see it active in our own lives?

Who can you share the gospel with this week?

# Week 9

## Making A Plan – Bonus Study

Read the following passages:

**PSALM 68:4-6**

**ZEPHANIAH 3:14-20**

**PSALM 146:5-9**

**MATTHEW 11:28-30**

**PSALM 23:1-6**

**ISAIAH 61:1-4**

**JOHN 13:12-17**

What do these verses tell us about the nature and character of God? What is God like?

What are some other attributes of God that you know and love?

How do these verses inform us about the good news?

Let's do an experiment based on the good news we've just read about and the attributes of God we've just explored. This is the last study in this booklet. So let's end with a bang... by taking all we've learned and making an action plan on how to live this out. Here's our experiment. List out the attributes of God (or keep them at the forefront of your brain). Then ask the question:

**If God is a (name the attribute here), what would it look like to be a (same attribute) to those around me who don't know Jesus?**

Here's a quick example of this: If God is a Provider (that's the attribute), then I can demonstrate this attribute of God of prayerfully listening to needs within my church or community and give generously. Or: If God is a Welcomer, then I can demonstrate God's welcome by inviting my neighbours into my home for a BBQ.

Your turn. Let's see what you can come up with. Here's a few of my favourite attributes of God (just to wheels churning):

God is a Father to the fatherless (Psalm 10:14)

God cares for the broken and vulnerable (Genesis 16:6-13)

God forgives even the most wretched of sinners (John 8:1-11)

God is the good and perfect gift giver (James 1:17)

God remembers the forgotten (Luke 12:6)

How can you live these attributes of God out as His ambassador right now? This should not just be theoretical answers, but real actions plans!

We've also already explored how we are to be witnesses of the God news of Jesus by speaking His story into the story of others (see Matthew 28:19-20, Acts 1:8). We've also seen how our actions need to be coupled with our words – both work together to demonstrate God's good news to the world. Consider this story from *Spiritual Disciplines For The Christian Life* by Donald Whitney:

“ I heard the story of a man who became a Christian during an evangelistic emphasis in a city in the Pacific Northwest. When the man told his boss about it, his employer responded with: 'That's great! I am a Christian and have been praying for you for years!' But the new believer was crestfallen. 'Why didn't you ever tell me you were a Christian? You were the very reason I have not been interested in the gospel all these years.' 'How can that be?' the boss wondered. 'I have done my very best to live the Christian life around you.' 'That's the point,' explained the employee. 'You lived such a model life without telling me it was Christ who made the difference, I convinced myself that if you could live such a good and happy life without Christ, then I could too.’ ”

Who around you might have seen your good deeds and joyful life but needs to hear about how it's your faith in Christ who makes those things possible?

**READ JOHN 16:1-15**

What is this passage about?

According to Jesus, is everyone going to listen to and respond positively to us?

Whose job is it to bring people into the love of Jesus?

How can we keep sharing the good news of Jesus even when it seems like no one is listening?

How can we continue to hold each other accountable and encourage one another in sharing the gospel with those around us?

If you haven't already done so, spend some time praying for God to give you opportunities to share the good news, for boldness to step out of your comfort zone, for God to send people to help you in reaching your friends, and for the heart of your friend to be softened. Perhaps it's appropriate to end time fervently praying for one another for all of these things...

...but that's not all. Let's go in the power of His Holy Spirit to share what we know is the BEST NEWS with those around us. Amen and amen!