

What Should I Say?

1: Good News or Bad News?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together (How was summer?)

NOW: Please begin this series by doing this section before reading the Bible passage (even if you don't normally use the 'Welcome' idea)

In 2s/3s:

- Share any good experiences you've had of a conversation with someone about your beliefs or theirs.
- If you weren't (or aren't) a Christian, what do you think would make you comfortable or uncomfortable in the way someone talked about their beliefs?
- What might hold you back from talking with someone about Jesus?

As a whole group:

- Share anything particularly helpful that you've heard in your 2s/3s

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Find a Christian song video on a DVD or YouTube – which has pictures as well as words, and sing along together.

WORD

Do you struggle to talk to others about your faith? In this series, we join Paul on part of his journeys around Greece and Turkey. We're looking at how he shared the good news and the different reactions he got.

Read Acts 17:1-15

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?

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- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- On arriving in Thessalonica, Paul begins by going to the synagogue where he would find Jews (like him) and people discussing faith (verses 1&2).
 - * Why do you think he did this?
 - * What would be the equivalent people/places for you to explore faith with?
- Paul got a whole range of reactions to his message in these towns. Why? What sort of reactions do you think he would get if he came with the same news to Alsager today?
- Despite the hostile reaction Paul got from some in Thessalonica (and elsewhere previously), he carries on in the same way in Berea.
 - * Would you have kept going or given up? Why?
 - * What do you think motivated Paul to keep going?

WHAT NEXT?

- Amongst yourselves: How many different events can you think of coming up at church that are opportunities to invite people to?
- In 2s/3s: Talk about who you could invite and pray for them.
 - * Talk about a few people that you will meet this week who don't follow Jesus. Pray for one another that you would have opportunities to share your faith with them
 - * Who could you invite to an event at church?
- In 2s/3s: Share anything you personally want prayer for, then pray for one another.
- If you want to read more of Acts in 50 daily readings, you could use 'The Essential Question' by Whitney T Kuniholm.

When printing PDF set: Page Sizing=Multiple, Pages per sheet=2, Orientation=Portrait

What Should I Say?

2: How to Start?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Imagine you were opening a new restaurant in Alsager. How would you ensure a successful launch?

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Share things that have happened since you last met that you are thankful for. Then say short one line prayers: 'Thank you God for... Amen.'

WORD

Read Acts 17:16-34

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- Luke says that the Athenians 'spent their time doing nothing but talking & listening to new ideas' (v21).

First, each on your own: quickly write down a few answers each to these 3 questions...

1. How would you complete the sentence 'Alsagerians spend their time...'?

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2. What things do people in Alsager make a priority in their lives ('worship')?
3. What are people here 'religious' about?

Now together:

- * Share your answers.
 - * Discuss: How could these answers shape the way that Christians share the good news of Jesus with people here?
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- In the Jewish synagogue of Thessalonica (v2-3), Paul begins from the Bible. In the Areopagus, Paul begins by talking about their objects of worship (v23) and creation (v24). Why?
 - * How many different starting points can you think of for explaining the gospel? Which are most likely to be effective today?
 - * When we seek to share the good news today, how can we better identify with people and begin from 'where they are at'?
 - * How do you feel about 'journeying with people exploring faith' compared to 'telling the good news'? What pros & cons do you see with each approach?
 - Paul talks of people 'seeking God' and 'perhaps reaching out for God and finding him' (v27). What evidence have you seen of this today?
 - Paul's message sounded strange to the Athenians (v20). In what ways does the Christian message sound strange to people today?

WHAT NEXT?

- We would like each Growth Group to choose:
 - * One of the church's Far Out organisations
 - * AND a local community group or organisation (eg school, emergency service, care provider, council etc).
- Try to find out regular information from the organisation (eg website or personal contact) and pray for them regularly. One member of the group might be best as the link person.

What Should I Say?

3: Spirit-Fuelled Sharing

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each share a time when something went wrong, but you learnt from it.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

Sing or listen to a song addressed to God the Holy Spirit. In a time of quiet reflection, ask the Holy Spirit to move amongst you and guide you in your discussion.

WORD

Read Acts 19:1-12 & 23-41

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- When these believers were baptised and prayed for, 'the Holy Spirit came on them' (v6) – as with Jesus (Mark 1:10). What does this mean?
 - * Do we expect this when people are baptised today? Why?
- In his letter to this church in Ephesus, Paul urges them to 'Be filled with the Spirit' (Eph5:18) – more accurately translated as 'Go on being filled with the Spirit'. On many different occasions in Acts (eg

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2:4, 4:8, 4:31, 7:55, 8:18, 10:44), we read of new or existing believers being filled with the Holy Spirit, with a variety of responses.

- * How do these stories make you feel?
 - * In 3s/4s: Share (sensitively!) stories from your own experience of people you feel have been full of the Holy Spirit. How have you recognised this? How do you feel about these stories?
- Paul was sharing the gospel using words. But he was also spending time with people, praying for people and allowing God to do miracles through him.
 - * What place do prayers for healing or deliverance from evil have in how we should share the good news of Jesus?
 - * Personally, do you prefer to use words, presence, works or spiritual gifts in sharing the good news?
 - * How would you like to get better at using different methods? What could you practically do to help this happen?
 - * How about as a church?
 - In Acts, we also find people misunderstanding the work of the Holy Spirit or misusing the name of Jesus (19:13-16, 8:18-19). How might this happen today?

WHAT NEXT?

- **A Challenge!** Can you think of a way that you as a group together could bring some good news to people in your local community over the coming weeks? Then plan how to do it! (The community organisation you chose last week might be a starting point?)
- In 3s/4s: Briefly share anything coming up in the fortnight ahead that you're worried or excited about. In turn, pray simply for one another that you would be filled with the Holy Spirit today and in the fortnight ahead.

What Should I Say?

4: What Will They Say?

WELCOME

Spend time relaxing & sharing together. You could try this...

Each talk about a film, TV or radio programme that you've seen/heard recently that made you think about something 'deep'.

WORSHIP

Use music, silence, prayer, meditation, reflection, songs, hymns, etc. or be creative with drawing, writing, symbols, poetry etc to help people to draw near to God. You could try this...

In Acts 20:22-24, Paul is saying goodbye to the church leaders in Ephesus. Read this passage, then spend time in silence reflecting on the words and talking to God about your thoughts.

WORD

Read Acts 19:23-20:2

Discuss your initial reactions to the passage:

- Does anything in the passage jump out at you? Why?
- Does anything connect with something you've been doing, reading or thinking about?
- Is there anything you haven't noticed before?

Now use **some** of the questions below (*and set a time limit to leave yourselves time to pray!*)

- In v23, Christianity is described as 'The Way'.
 - * Why do you think this description was used?
 - * How many other words can you think of that people use to describe Christianity or Christians?
 - * Which do you feel most comfortable with?

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- Demetrius says he's scared of losing money because of Christianity (as well as Artemis losing her divine majesty) (v24 & v27).
 - * What are the main priorities people have in their lives today? How might Christianity be a threat to these?
 - * 'Christianity is about making God the number one priority in your life.' To what extent do you agree with this?
 - * Are there areas of your life that you struggle to put God first in?
- Are there people today who feel threatened by Christianity? Who? Why? Are they right to be worried?
- The Ephesus Theatre holds about 25,000. Paul sees the angry crowd as a great opportunity to tell people about Jesus. His friends are not so sure! (verses 30-31).
 - * In what situations does fear stop you from telling others about Jesus? What are you afraid of?
 - * Are there times when it's right to hold back and be quiet?
- In v32, Luke tells us that 'Most of the people did not even know why they were there'!
 - * In what ways do people today 'go with the flow' in their attitudes towards Christianity without finding out more?
 - * How can you help them explore for themselves?

WHAT NEXT?

- As a group: How are you getting on with the Challenge from the last session?
- Pray for the Far Out and local organisations that you've chosen to support as a group.
- The aim of this series has been to encourage us to get better at sharing and exploring our faith with others. How has it helped you?