

C Change

Small group discipleship resources for the 21st Century



Worksheet 3: Evangelism

the Christian message is good news

The Christian message, the "evangel," is good news. Jesus lived out the good news of the Reign of God, the sign of the presence of God in our midst. This brings new life, new possibilities, new hope, new meaning to life.

In the New Testament, this new life, made possible through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, is presented in a variety of images.

In the first three accounts of Jesus' life, Matthew, Mark and Luke, Jesus speaks of God as the one in the centre of life who is discovered in the parables: a forgiving father, a pearl of great price, a hidden treasure, a banquet. Above all, it is a precious gift of love for those who will receive it.

In the fourth account of Jesus' life, John, Jesus is the word of creation, light, life, truth and eternal life who can be known now, immediately. He can become the window into the heart of God's grace and truth.

In Paul's letters the word of the cross is primary. When a person realises who it is who dies on the cross, they discover God's gift of forgiveness, a reconciling relationship, and a new dimension in life.

(Dean Drayton)

Jess's story

Jess had sunk to a low point in her life. She had a failed marriage, no career and had begun to take drugs.

When she saw a carving of Jesus on the cross, she screamed at it. She felt condemned. Suddenly, she noticed the out-stretched hands. For the first time, she saw them as a welcoming embrace.

Jess found acceptance and love. Instead of condemnation she found forgiveness. Tears streamed down her face. She had been touched by grace.

(Dean Drayton)

This sheet is part of a series on discipleship in the 21st century. It is offered by the National Assembly as a discussion starter for small groups, in congregations, faith communities or other settings. It may also be used for personal reflection. Low resolution copies of this sheet can be downloaded free of charge from the Assembly website or high quality print versions can be purchased from MediaCom for a small fee to cover printing costs.

what one congregation is doing

The congregation of North Ringwood (Vic) runs a daily foodbank.

Voices were being raised, "We want to share more than food!" But how? Would our attempts be rejected? Would people steer clear of us?

One of the volunteers had developed a good relationship with one of the frequent users of the foodbank, a man who was battling drug addiction and life-style chaos.



The volunteer ventured: "What would you think about us screening a video series, for those coming for food, which introduces the Christian faith?"

The response came, "You have a responsibility to share your faith!"

The realisation dawned, "Perhaps the barriers are more with us than with those with whom we want to share!"

(Ian Hickingbotham)

**“Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and reverence.”
(1 Peter 3:15-16 NRSV)**

**“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer anyone.”
(Col 4:5-6 NRSV)**

try these....

- 1) Write out your faith story so you can share God’s loving action in your life in two or three minutes.
- 2) Pray to find a person with whom you can share your faith. Take a chance. Share it.
- 3) Imagine ways in which your congregation can help people discover the possibilities offered by Jesus and grow in faith, hope and love.
- 4) Find out about the Becoming Disciples process. Talk it over with your minister and some people on the church council. Is this something in which your congregation could get involved in?

See <http://assembly.uca.org.au/TD> and follow the links.

Prayer

Loving Saviour,
What good news have I to share?
What word of comfort can I bring?
What burden bear?
Grant me the courage
to speak the truth in love,
to offer grace and hope,
to serve without restraint.
In all things, help me to open spaces
where you may enter in
and transform lives
even as you are transforming mine.

Amen



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fact file

In 1998, 12% of Australians who do not regularly attend church say they had tried to get more involved in a church in the last five years. (NCLS: Why People Don't Go).

Between 1991 and 1996 every denomination had significant levels of newcomers from a non-church background begin attending church.

Unfortunately, the number of church attenders who gave up attending church altogether was even larger for every denomination (with the possible exception of the Salvation Army).

(Source: National Church Life Survey - www.ncls.org.au.)

reflections...

- What is the good news for young people in your community? For new immigrants? For older people?
- Is the way the Gospel is shared sometimes “bad news” instead of “good news”?
- What hinders or prevents us from sharing the good news?