

Knowing, Living and Sharing the Gospel

This study is a broad overview of our place in the world as Christians. It touches on how-to-live questions and some of the specifics of our role in God's work of "reconciling the world to himself" (2 Corinthians 5:19). The passages selected and the questions asked are meant to serve as a guide. You should feel free to look at other passages and ask your own questions.

Jesus and the World around Us

Our assumptions about what the world is like and what people really need have a great impact on how we treat people. More and more, we want to see the world and the people around us the way Jesus sees them.

Warm-up

Think about your friends, family and the people you see every day. What are some of the goals, hopes, desires, limits and disappointments that you share with them?

In what ways has God designed life to encourage people to find him?

Study

How does Jesus see people? What goals does he have for them? What needs does he seem interested in meeting? What are his goals for society?

Matthew 9:35-39

John 10:9-10

Matthew 6:9-13

other references?

Our Place in the World

The word “evangelism” does not show up as often as you would expect in the New Testament. Instead, we find a tremendous emphasis on how followers of Christ are supposed to live. Skim through the passages below, looking for insights to the following questions:

What lifestyle is encouraged for followers of Christ?

What kind of impact are we to have on the world around us?

Acts 2:42-47

Romans 12:14-21

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

2 Corinthians 9:8-11

Ephesians 4:17-32

Colossians 3:22-4:1

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12

Titus 3:8-14

Hebrews 13:1-3

other references?

Our Role in Evangelism

Os Guinness has pointed out that many of our techniques in evangelism often leave behind not fruit but an “over-burnt field” because we are insensitive to the needs of our audience and locked into only one role in evangelism: making a presentation and pushing for a decision. From the following passages, make a list of the various ways God uses his people in sharing the gospel with others.

Matthew 5:13-16

Acts 3:12-26

2 Corinthians 5:20

Philippians 2:12-16

Colossians 4:5,6

1 Thessalonians 2:5-12

2 Timothy 2:24-26

Titus 2:9-11

1 Peter 2:11-17, 3:13-16

other references?

What is the Gospel?

Saint Frances of Assisi is reported to have said that Christians should “preach the gospel at all times and when necessary, use words.” Clearly, we are called to live the gospel. But when it does become necessary to “use words,” what should we say?

Before looking at the passages below, briefly describe the following:

- a. What do people usually mean when they say “the gospel”?

- b. What do people usually mean when they say “evangelism”?

Each of the passages below highlights an attempt to influence someone to move closer to Christ. For each, record the content of what was actually shared. Afterwards, answer the questions on the following page.

Luke 1:1-4

John 4:1-26

Acts 8:26-39

Acts 16:26-33

1 Corinthians 15:3-11

1 John 1:1-9

other references?

What is the Gospel? (continued)

How did the people in these passages view the gospel? What did they include? What did they not include?

How much of this content is based on or appeals to personal experience? How much is based on or appeals to logic?

How did the people representing Christ in these passages view evangelism?

Based on your observations, what implications do you see regarding techniques and forms in evangelism?

Becoming conformed to the image of Jesus (Romans 8:29) takes time. Can we say, then, that “conversion is a process”? Can we say that evangelism a process?

Conclusions

In your own words, what is the gospel?

As God draws people to himself, how does he involve his people? If evangelism is a process, what is our role?

What is the relationship between how we live and how others come to know Christ?

What are the essential elements in helping others move towards Christ?

Other conclusions?