



**GLOBAL
ADVANCE DAY
30 JANUARY 2021**



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**WELCOME
TO ADVANCE**

THE GOSPEL. THERE IS NO PLAN B.

THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS TO BE PROCLAIMED AND HAS LOST NONE OF ITS POWER TO SAVE. THROUGH SMALL GROUP MENTORING, ADVANCE EQUIPS, ENCOURAGES AND EMPOWERS THE CHURCH IN EVANGELISM WHILE ALSO STIRRING AND DEVELOPING EVANGELISTIC GIFTING IN THOSE CALLED AS EVANGELISTS.

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Advance grew out of a commitment by British and American evangelists Andy Hawthorne (The Message Trust) and Andrew Palau (Luis Palau Association) to gather up to twelve younger preaching evangelists in small group community to intentionally develop and sharpen them.

Through monthly meetings those in a group receive teaching, sharpen one another through discussion, and share openly about personal and spiritual life. Updates are sent regularly to each other between group sessions (using WhatsApp or something similar) about opportunities and engagements they have to share the gospel, and to encourage each other with the fruit from those opportunities.

After one year in an Advance group, each group member can explore finding up to twelve more people who they can then mentor in the same way. Advance sees evangelists developing evangelists, to lead to a huge increase around the globe in the number of Christians who will

unashamedly share the gospel – whether from a platform or through daily encounters with family, friends and strangers.

Advance exists to increase and equip the number of Christians who will unashamedly put the lamp of the gospel on a stand around the globe, be it from a platform or through daily encounters with family, friends or even strangers.

Since its inception in 2015, Advance has grown from the first group in Manchester, UK, to a global movement of hundreds of groups meeting regularly around the world who are committed to fanning into flame the gift of God in their lives that the world may know him.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT

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As you establish your Advance group, there are five non-negotiable principles that must be in play.

1. REGULAR MEETING

Monthly meetings should be made a diary priority by group members. It is essential that when people join a group, they commit to the meetings. Groups should be encouraged to treat these sessions as sacred – members should do everything they can to avoid other engagements or meetings draw them away once the date is agreed. A deep commitment to being prepared for the work God has called us to partner with him in is a foundational element of the Advance group journey.

2. SHARPENING

A commitment to studying the Bible for a deeper knowledge of the gospel takes up a significant part of the session time each month, and also includes opportunities for healthy critique of one another's understanding and

application of evangelism and the gospel, primarily through discussion.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

Honest self-evaluation via feedback questionnaires and open sharing within the group time is designed to ensure that we live accountable and holy lives as we attempt to be faithful to living and sharing the gospel. Vulnerability and honesty in your group can take time to develop, but should be encouraged and led by the example of the group leader.

4. COMMUNICATION

Keeping each other up to date with gospel opportunities, prayer requests and stories of salvation via email and/or group text messaging ensures groups support each other as a community. Staying connected between sessions also creates a more familial dynamic in the group.

5. MULTIPLICATION

A commitment to explore the idea of multiplication with a view to group members taking on their own group (while continuing on in the original group) within 12-18 months of joining. Not all who are in your group will start their own, but by using this resource and being intentional about it, many can and will – ensuring that the equipping, empowering and encouraging of Christians committed to evangelism continues to grow and spread across the world.

IS IT FOR ME?

The bible reveals that the role of the evangelist is a specific gift from God for the building of his church (Eph 4:11-12). The evangelist will be fruitful in winning people to Christ as they share the gospel, but they will also be fruitful in equipping and stirring the whole church to be faithful witnesses of the gospel.

The commission of Christ to go into the world and make disciples is a commission for all believers. Evangelism, accordingly, is the business of every Christian. Whether we are 'gifted' evangelists or not, we are all called

to 'do the work of the evangelist' in revealing Christ to the world in word and deed (2 Tim 4:1-5).

Advance groups are not just for those who are gifted and called to the specific role (sometimes called the 'office') of the evangelist, they are for anyone who wants to grow in their understanding of the gospel and their ability to offer its hope in any and every opportunity that God provides. Along the way, some may even excitingly discover gifting and calling for the role of the evangelist on their life. Either way, unless specified, the word evangelist is used in the Advance Group Guide as a catch-all term for anyone engaging in evangelism.

Whether you have opportunities to preach from a platform or are passionate about reaching those you encounter interpersonally day by day, these three simple questions will help you decide whether starting (or joining) an Advance group is for you...

FAITH

Do you have faith that the gospel has lost none of its power, and is the only way by which a person can know true life and salvation?

CLARITY

Do you desire to communicate the gospel with clarity, through personal conversations or preaching from a platform?

INVITATION

Do you long for opportunities to offer an invitation to receive the hope of the gospel, and see people move into eternal relationship with Jesus?

If you can answer 'yes' to those questions, then look to gather others who can also say yes to them and use this Advance Group Mentoring Guide to begin the journey together.

THE SESSIONS

This guide includes three sessions that will take you through your first steps of journeying together as an Advance group. If you are an

experienced evangelist and/or confident in leading this kind of thing, you may want to use the sessions as a jumping off point, adding and adapting the content to meet the needs of your group and utilising your own experience. If you are new to all this, then feel free to follow the sessions word-for-word and instruction-for-instruction – you'll have all you need to grow together as a group.

After you complete these three sessions you will need to download your free Advance Mentoring Guide from advancegroups.org which has all the material you need to run groups once a month for at least three years!

RUNNING A GROUP

Encourage a group of up to twelve people (single gender groups often work best for the accountability dynamic of the session but are not essential) to meet once a month for around two hours. During this time the group leader will facilitate the session – including prayer, teaching, discussion and accountability. This guide gives you everything you will need to run a group each month for its first year.

LEADER OR FACILITATOR?

You may be questioning whether you are the best person to lead an Advance group. There are two ways to think about running a group, as a leader or as a facilitator.

Leaders are usually people with a little more experience of evangelism in general and possibly some experience of leading others in teaching and discussion.

Facilitators are people who want an Advance group to launch and as there is no leader who can run the group, they take responsibility for making sure it happens and lead through the session material on behalf of the group.

Whether bringing your own experience to the group or relying completely on the Advance Group Guide material, leading an Advance group has more to do with commitment to the core values than anything else, and either way, it is important the group feels like a peer learning experience where, despite different levels of

experience or knowledge, everyone grows together.

SESSION BREAKDOWN

Each session guide begins with a very brief introduction and the **Session In A Sentence..**

The **Session Background** section offers some teaching upon which the session is built. You will want to read this before leading a session as it will help give you a deeper understanding of the overall shape of the session. Feel free to incorporate any of this material into the session if you have time to do so and think it will be helpful, but it is primarily there to aid you as you prepare to lead the teaching that follows.

From here you can follow each session guide, from the content to the timings (in brackets next to each section of the session), as closely or loosely as you feel helpful so long as the main point of the session is presented clearly and accurately, and there is space made for prayer and accountability. However, it's a good idea to stick as closely to the session guides so as to get the best from the material.

Each session starts with a time to **Catch Up**. In the early sessions this is about getting to know each other and exploring how the group will work. As the sessions progress, more time is given to sharing stories with each other and feedback from the previous session's **Application**.

Then, it's time for **Prayer**. There is no guidance on how long this should take, and no real right or wrong way to do it. You could pray as a whole group or with partners, for a short or extended time.

The main **Teaching** section follows and includes scripture references, quotes and points for discussion. This is where you'll most need to keep an eye on the clock. There is still more discussion time ahead, and crucially, you will need to leave space for the accountability section at the end of the session. Don't let that time get squeezed by slaving over a teaching point a little too laboriously! (Also note that the timings for this section vary from session to session, so be sure to pay attention to the suggested timings and adjust accordingly).

After the Teaching section is the **Discussion** section, which includes a few questions and a quotation relating to the topic of the session. You likely won't have time to discuss everything there, but we've included more content than you'll need so you can pick and choose what would be most helpful. Don't feel like you have to rush through this section to get it all done - instead, just focus on a few elements.

Each session features an **Application** section towards the end, which is something to be done between now and the next session in line with the teaching. Feel free to come up with your own - as long as it supports the teaching and will help your group to grow in that area.

Another **Prayer** time follows, this time with some guidance on what to pray for in light of the session, but how you go about this and for how long is up to you.

Finally, each session ends with an **Accountability** time where a specific reflection relating to the session is offered alongside self-evaluation sheets which are to be completed, shared, and prayed over. You can make photocopies of the sheets from the back of this guide or download a PDF version from advancegroups.org.

If you haven't already set a date for the next meeting, be sure to do this before the end. It will be much easier to communicate this in person than over email a few days later, and in parting offer the content of the 'Don't Forget...' section which includes a little reminder of something your group can engage with on the website or a feature of Advance that may help them along the way.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR STARTING YOUR GROUP

1. Schedule group meetings as far ahead as you can and keep those dates as sacred. Use something like doodle.com as a handy tool for this..
2. **WhatsApp** or a similar messaging app is perfect for group communications, prayer requests and salvation stories between

group times. As the group leader, attempt to keep this going by contributing as much as you can. Share your stories, ask people for their prayer requests, give links to resources, podcasts and YouTube clips. If you lead the charge, others will engage with it.

3. If meeting in person is possible then **Food** can be a great way to bring people together and connect, so you may want to run these sessions over an evening meal.
4. Also if you are able to meet in person then choose a space where people will be comfortable discussing, praying and sharing during the accountability time. A public space like a coffee shop works great for some, but others need more privacy as they journey, so consider your meeting space carefully.
5. Everything presented in this guide is an ideal and we recommend you stick as closely to the suggested method and content as possible, but that doesn't mean you can't tweak it to meet the specific needs of your group. For example, you want to meet for three hours instead of two? Feel free. If meeting up once a month feels too irregular you are welcome to meet more regularly. If the sessions feel too insular and you want to include more practical elements like prayer walking or witnessing on the streets, then go for it! As long as the five core principles are in place, Advance will be a framework through which you and your group can grow.

It really is easy to get a group up and running once you have found some other people who want to grow in their ability to live out and speak out the gospel. As you launch your group on Global Advance Day 2021, we are praying that this will be the beginning of a journey that will impact you, and those you encounter, for eternity.

SESSION GUIDE

SESSION ONE: WELCOME TO ADVANCE

This first group meeting should be used as an opportunity to get to know each other and establish the framework for what the group will be. Alongside this introduction you will begin a dialogue about what evangelism is and explore the five characteristics needed to do the work of an evangelist.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Through the first twelve sessions of Advance we will grow together in five evangelistic characteristics, encouraging and equipping each other as we rely on God's empowerment for the task.

SESSION BACKGROUND

A good place to welcome people to the Advance journey and to start a discussion of evangelism is to remember that the call to evangelism is personal. Look at how Jesus calls Andrew and Peter to follow him at the start of Mark's gospel (Mark 1:16-18). He calls to the young fisherman from the shore and asks them to lay down their nets (their trade) and follow him, for he will teach them how to fish for people. Does God call you using those exact same words today? Unless you share the same career path as the brothers to whom Jesus called, it is unlikely. Jesus called out to Andrew and Peter personally, using the fishing metaphor as a connection point.

God calls each one of us personally to his mission, by connecting our passions to opportunities to make sense of who God is. Whether you're a musician, artist, scientist,

nurse, business owner... whatever your vocation or gifting, God can use it to create opportunities to proclaim his good news.

The goal of evangelism is to connect people to God's good news. More fully though, the message of evangelism is a call to faith in Jesus Christ – to trust and be obedient to him, that we would turn from our rejection of God to an acceptance of his lordship. When we recognise that we are created for him, we understand what worship is, and experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. People know wholeness when we turn our lives into living expressions of worship through obedience, sacrifice, faith and love (Galatians 5:13-26).

In Exodus 8:1, God instructs Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to 'Let my people go...'. Today, God desires to set captives free from sin. Like Moses, we are asked to go into the world and declare a message of freedom – that there is no need to be enslaved any longer for God has made it possible for us to live in freedom through Jesus and by the power of his Spirit (Romans 8:2). The purpose of evangelism is as it was for Moses and the people of Israel – worship.

• 'Let my people go, so that they may worship me'

We are to be worshippers who witness so that others may come to worship and witness.

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (20-30 MINS)

Take the time to introduce everyone in the group and begin getting to know one another. You might decide to do some kind of ice-breaker activity, or just go round the group

and ask people to share some basic information about themselves. After this, present in your own style or read through the Introduction section on page 6 as a way of explaining what the group will be and how it will run in the coming months.

PRAYER

Take some time to commit the whole Advance experience and journey to the Lord, as well as any specific prayer needs that may have arisen during the introduction/ice breaker.

TEACHING (20-30 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

- However, I consider my life worth nothing
- to me; my only aim is to finish the race and
- complete the task the Lord Jesus has given
- me—the task of testifying to the good news
- of God’s grace.

ACTS 20:24

Put simply, ‘to evangelise’ means to ‘proclaim good news’. The good news in question is the gospel of Jesus Christ: that sinful (rebellious) humanity has been reconciled to God through the saving work of Jesus. We can know eternal life today and forevermore, enjoy restored relationship with God because Jesus took the death we deserved.

Look at the following two definitions of evangelism:

- ‘To evangelise is to **present Christ Jesus**
- to **sinful people** in order that, through **the**
- **power of the Holy Spirit**, they **may** come to
- put their **trust** in God through him.’

J. I. PACKER

- ‘The **proclamation** of the **historical, biblical**
- **Christ** as **Saviour and Lord**, with a view
- to **persuading** people to come to him
- **personally** and so be **reconciled** to God.’

BILLY GRAHAM

Question: What can we learn about the task of evangelism from these short summaries (some words highlighted for specific discussion)?

Evangelism involves a proclaimed message, a presentation of the risen Jesus, and an attempt to persuade the listener to receive and accept the good news. But as essential as words are to evangelism, we must go beyond verbal communication.

Evangelism is a spiritual activity, effective only when God moves in power. If evangelism was just about changing people’s minds, we could rely on persuasion alone. But evangelism is about salvation: through our message, the Spirit of God convicts, gives faith, and begins transformation of hearts. Evangelism without the power of the Spirit is merely marketing. Conversely, to paraphrase the evangelist Leonard Ravenhill - we can have confidence that any method of evangelism can work if God is at work in it.

The purpose of evangelism is to form disciples - worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). So evangelists must too be authentic worshippers. It’s been said that worship and evangelism are two sides of the same coin, and it’s true that our witness to the world is an act of worship - an act of obedience and devotion to the king of whom we give witness to in the world.

THESE ADVANCE GROUP SESSIONS WILL HELP YOU TO MATURE AS AN AUTHENTIC WORSHIPPER AND SEE YOU GROW IN FIVE CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EVANGELIST.

BIBLE-TEACHING EVANGELISTS

We must know the message we proclaim as deeply as possible. To do this we must be committed to the reading and study of God’s word, so that our proclamation is not based on our own ideas and assumptions about the gospel, but in what the word of God teaches.

PRAYERFUL EVANGELISTS

We are to submit to the power of the Holy Spirit for the task of evangelism, for it is not our power but the power of God which brings salvation. So, we commit to living prayerfully, asking God to

provide opportunities to share our faith and see lives transformed as a result.

ACCOUNTABLE EVANGELISTS

Holiness is at the heart of the gospel. Sharing the transforming power of the gospel in an authentic way means living accountable lives, where our so called 'on-stage' matches our 'off-stage'. Cheering each other on in success and standing with one another in failure is crucial as we seek to grow as holy people sharing a holy message.

COMMITTED EVANGELISTS

Intentionality is key to evangelism. We must be aware of – and seize – everyday opportunities to share God's love, not simply sharing the Jesus story but inviting those who hear it into the new life it offers, and helping to start them on a discipleship journey.

INSPIRATIONAL EVANGELISTS

As we share the gospel message with a world who needs it, we must also stir the church to do the same. Evangelism is the business of every Christian, and so encouraging and stirring the church to the task must also be a commitment of any gifted evangelist, and the desire of any witness of the gospel who longs to see the church truly be the hope of the world and live out the commission of Christ.

Question: Consider these five core characteristics. Where do you identify your own strengths and weaknesses in each area?

DISCUSSION (15 MINS)

Explore the following questions and/or the discussion quotation:

- What is our role in evangelism and what is God's role in evangelism?
- How do we ensure we are authentic evangelists and authentic worshippers?
- How do you hope to grow in the coming months through this Advance group?

- 'If sinners will be damned, at least let them
- leap to hell over our bodies. And if they will
- perish, let them perish with our arms about
- their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell
- must be filled, at least let it be filled in the
- teeth of our exertions, and let not one go
- there unwarned and unprayed for.'

CHARLES SPURGEON

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Come up with your own biblically-sound definition of evangelism (preferably with references to scripture) and send it to the group via your chosen communication method (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, email etc.). The goal here is not to get a word perfect definition, but simply to express how you now understand evangelism based on this session and some further thought and reflection. If there is time in the next session you could look at a couple of these definitions in more detail together.

PRAYER

Give thanks to God for his amazing gospel. Thank him that he chooses to make you part of his saving work in the world. Pray he would empower you to be his messengers in word and deed, as you worship him in spirit and truth. Ask him to help you to grow in the five characteristics of an evangelist as you move forward and grow together in this Advance group.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Explain how the accountability forms work, fill them out and share together in pairs or smaller groups. Finish by praying for one another.

MESSAGES AND DATES (10 MINS)

Close this first session by asking everyone to download and log into a messenger system that works for everyone in the group. WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are both free and work well. Create a group that you will use to

communicate between sessions, with updates, prayer requests, testimonies and so on.

Finally, set the dates for as many of the upcoming sessions as you can. Six months in advance is ideal so that everyone can commit to the dates early and make them a diary priority.

DON'T FORGET...

Every group member can register themselves as being in an Advance group at www.advancegroups.org and receive a monthly email update with encouraging stories from Advance groups around the world, links to great resources and the latest news from the movement.

SESSION TWO: THE IDENTITY OF THE EVANGELIST

In this second group meeting you will explore the identity of an evangelist as it relates to the identity of God himself and his gospel story.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

The identity of an evangelist is rooted in the identity of God the Father: we are his messenger children.

BACKGROUND TO SESSION

At the peak of Billy Graham's ministry, Christian young people were inspired to follow his example and become preachers of the good news. Over the last twenty years there has been a perceptible shift in the aspirations of Christian young people. Where once the role of an evangelist was seen as the pinnacle of Christian service, the more common aspirations for Christian young people today are often to become a worship leader, youth worker or church pastor.

The church has certainly benefitted from talented musicians, film-makers and other creatives using their gifts to facilitate others in personal and corporate worship, and God has been celebrated and glorified through the efforts of these faithful people. However, before somebody can become a true worshipper - a worshipper in spirit and truth (John 4:23) - they must have heard and responded to the gospel (Romans 10:14-17).

Similarly, the role of pastor or teacher is essential to discipleship and is not to be sidelined. But the pastor will have no congregation to look after if the seats become empty due to a lack of missional engagement and evangelism into the world.

Bringing people to a place of true worship requires us to explain the gospel to them, and with that in mind none of us should shirk our responsibility to share the good news with the world, by witnessing to our faith in Christ to all people in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Bible teaches that *all* believers are called to *do the work of an evangelist* (Matt 28:19; 2 Tim 4:5), yet there are those who are specifically called to be evangelists (Eph 4:11). For these people especially, preaching the gospel isn't only day-to-day witness, but the primary focus of their lives.

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (20-30 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, encouragements, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. Ask the group to share their biblical definitions of evangelism (Session One: Application) and discuss them together for a few minutes as a recap from the last session. For smaller groups this can be done as a whole group exercise, for larger groups you may want to split into smaller groups for discussion. It may also be worth covering the basics of how the group works for anyone who missed the first session..

PRAYER

Commit the time to the Lord and pray over any situations, positive or challenging, arising from the catch up time.

TEACHING (20-30 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

‘In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.’

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5

What does it mean to be *called* to be an evangelist? Aren't all believers called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world? Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28 appears to be a blanket call to *all* of his followers to go into the world and make disciples. But then we come across a short passage in Ephesians 4 (vv. 11-12) that highlights the specific role of the evangelist alongside that of pastor, teacher, prophet and apostle, which are each to be used to build the body of Christ. We also encounter a man named Philip in Acts who is given the specific title of evangelist (Acts 21:8). So what are we to make of the calling of the evangelist? Is it for everyone or for a specific few?

You may know the words of 2 Corinthians 5:17, where Paul talks about becoming a new creation through Christ. You've almost certainly used this verse when you have preached the gospel. However, we don't often go on to quote the rest of the passage:

‘Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in

Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.’

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20

Question: How does this bible passage confirm or change the definitions of evangelism that were shared at the start of today's session

God is in the business of reconciling creation back to himself and wants us, his reconciled people, to be ambassadors for his transformational message. This is not just for 'professional' evangelists, this is a call for all believers. However, this ambassadorship can look very different from individual to individual.

Think about it like this: in a football team, every player is pursuing the aim of winning the match. However, the strikers are those who are specifically tasked with scoring goals. This doesn't mean that other players can't and won't score from time to time, but the primary function of the striker in the team is to score.

Another illustration that might help would be to think of wedding day. Any guest with a smart phone could take a great picture to capture memories of this special day, and some of these photos may well even make it into the official photo album of the couple. And yet, the bride and groom will also bring in a professional to capture the day. To use their skill, equipment, and singular focus on the day to capture some great images.

As the church we are all pursuing the aim of the restoration of God's perfect kingdom. For this reason we all have a role to play in witness and evangelism. But there are some who are specifically called to prioritise the proclamation of the gospel, most likely at the cost of other pursuits. These are the evangelists, like Philip who we read about in Acts 21:8.

If some of the following statements ring true with you then the calling of the evangelist could well be upon your life:

- You long to see the lost saved.
- You are compelled to proclaim the gospel in season and out of season.
- You persevere in the task no matter what hardships come upon you.
- You will not compromise the integrity of the message you share no matter what the itching ears of your audience may want you to say.
- You are utterly single-minded in reaching the lost with this powerful, transformational, saving message of the gospel.
- You have had prophetic words spoken over you about being an evangelist.
- You are a clear communicator.
- You find yourself praying for the lost regularly.
- You are willing to go wherever the gospel takes you.
- You desire to help others share their faith.

Question: Spend some time talking through these statements and whether some or even all of these things ring true for you. If there is an evangelist in the group then ask them to share how they came to the realisation of that gifting and role.

The Bible tells us that God desires for no-one to perish (2 Peter 3:9). The evangelist is compelled to go into the world having the same heart as the Father. We do not proclaim because we have to (from a place of duty or fear), we proclaim because our hearts are in line with our heavenly Father's. The evangelist's identity is not found in this role, but in being a child of God, having become his heirs through the very gospel we now proclaim (John 1:12).

Regardless of gifting or calling, no-one has the power to save themselves or anyone else. We can only be the messengers for it is God alone who saves. He invites us to share in his heart for the lost as we grow to know him more fully as

our loving heavenly Father and reveal his saving power to the world.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

Explore the following questions:

- Is there a difference between personal witness and evangelism?
- If all are expected to do the work of an evangelist, why are there those who are called to be evangelists?
- Evangelist or not, how do we develop in ourselves the Father's heart for the lost?
- How could you help encourage those who think evangelism is only for the 'professionals' to become 'ministers of reconciliation' themselves.

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

We do not share the gospel simply because we are 'evangelists' any more than those who are not called as 'evangelists' are exempt from sharing it. All believers are to share the gospel as a natural response to who God is and what he has done. As we are transformed by the Father's love, so we long for others to know that same transforming love for themselves.

Over the next month, work through the gospel of Mark in your daily devotional time and pay attention to one of Mark's main themes - that Jesus is the Son of God, a servant who has come to do the will of the Father. As you read and re-read the gospel with this perspective, ask God to affirm your identity not in light of a gifting or ministry calling, but in light of who he is and what he has done.

PRAYER

Give thanks to God, our heavenly Father, that he desires for no-one to perish and has made the way by which all can be saved, through trust in Jesus Christ. Spend some time praying for each other that God will bring more clarity to your calling as an evangelist, that he might provide more opportunities to share the gospel, and

that you would have more boldness as you do so.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

In pairs or small groups, ask each other if you consider yourself to be an evangelist or as someone who is to do the work of the evangelist. The objective here is not to persuade each other that you are in fact the other, but to provide space to reflect on the call of God in your life, and what that means for being faithful to whatever gospel opportunities God places before you. To finish, fill out the accountability form, feedback in smaller groups and pray for one another.

DON'T FORGET...

There are some great insights from experienced evangelists in our "One Thing" blog series, where an evangelist explains the one thing they wish they knew when they first started preaching the gospel. Read them and be encouraged at advancegroups.org

SESSION THREE

THE MESSAGE OF THE EVANGELIST

In this session we explore the message of the gospel itself. What is the gospel? Do we have a sufficient understanding of the message we preach to communicate it clearly?

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

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The message of evangelism is Jesus Christ – Christ come, Christ crucified, Christ risen and Christ returning.

SESSION BACKGROUND

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St Augustine famously declared, ‘You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.’

The gospel moves people from despair, darkness, brokenness and hopelessness, into joy, light, love and hope. The gospel moves restless hearts to fulfilment in their creator. But tragically, it seems that many followers of Jesus have lost confidence in the power of the gospel today. There are many reasons why believers don’t share the gospel with others – fear, feelings of inadequacy, and hoping someone else will do it all play a part. In essence though, these reasons all find their root in the same place – a lack of understanding about what the gospel actually is and a lack of trust in its power.

In Romans 1 Paul boldly declares, ‘I’m not ashamed of the gospel’ and then immediately goes on to qualify why this is so: ‘because it is the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes’ (Romans 1:16). Understanding that the gospel as the power of God to bring salvation is to understand something of who God is, what he has done, and what that means for the world. It’s all wrapped up in the reality of who Jesus Christ is. But this is not detached or

abstract philosophy with no significance beyond the lecture hall or debate room. For one thing, understanding the gospel helps us to approach foundational questions about our existence and the identity of the God who created us. Questions such as:

WHO AM I?

Everyone asks this question in some way. What is the meaning of life? Is there purpose? What is my identity? The answer is that you are a child of God, created and loved by him. In many contexts around the world today, the primary concern of a person is no longer what will happen when I die, but, who am I while I am alive?

WHO IS GOD?

There are so many religions in the world. Even if God exists, how can we possibly know who he is and that we are worshipping the right one? God has made himself known through creation, through the Bible, through the experiences of Christians all over the world, and through the person of Jesus Christ. He is the creator and sustainer of life, the king of the universe, a perfect and loving heavenly Father who longs to bring a broken and rebellious humanity back into relationship with himself.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

The most compelling figure in all of human history. Few historical scholars doubt that Jesus existed, but who was he? A wise teacher? A con man? A mad man? Actually, Jesus is who he says he is: the Savior of the world who, through his life, death and resurrection, has made it possible for a person to become a child of God and know the eternal King eternally.

While these types of question can serve as a starting point for a conversation about the gospel, they don’t necessarily lead us to a fully sufficient understanding of what the gospel

means. Rather, they are connection points on which we can begin to build a relationship. And so we must dig deeply into scripture to ensure that through these question we can point to the full and powerful gospel of Jesus Christ.

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH UP (15-25 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, encouragements, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. Ask the group to share about their journey through the Gospel of Mark over the last month (Session Two: Application). Use this time to explore and affirm true identity as children of God because of the saving work of God's eternal Son, rather than a ministry calling, and our response to that identity is to become ministers of reconciliation on behalf of the family. To seek out the lost so that they too may know that they can come home..

PRAYER

Commit the time to the Lord and pray over any situations, positive or challenging, highlighted in the catch up time.

TEACHING (25-35 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

- 'And so it was with me, brothers and
- sisters. When I came to you, I did not come
- with eloquence or human wisdom as I
- proclaimed to you the testimony about
- God. For I resolved to know nothing while
- I was with you except Jesus Christ and him
- crucified.'

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-2

Paul shows his commitment to the truth and power of the Jesus story by declaring, 'I decided

while I was with you to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.' This is the heart of the gospel: that God himself stepped into the mess of our world in the person of Jesus Christ, lived a perfect life, died upon a cross to take the death we deserved, and rose again three days later, breaking the curse of death once and for all. Salvation and true life is found through faith in him alone. We share this truth not merely to bring about changed minds, but to bring about new life - a transformation that can only be achieved by faith in Jesus Christ.

Question: Much of this session will explore what the gospel is. Use the following sections (found at the back of this guide) to spark discussion about what we believe the gospel to be.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE (PAGE 28)

The systematic layout of the gospel.

GOSPEL NARRATIVE (PAGE 29)

Broadly speaking, the same gospel is presented here as in the more systematic approach, but here there is more emphasis on a narrative explanation that reads more like a story.

Ensuring we are proclaiming the truth of the gospel is imperative. Remember, we can't save anyone, the gospel is the power of God to bring salvation (Romans 1:16). If our gospel messages are watered-down, one-dimensional attempts to appeal to the heart of the listener, we might see lots of hands up 'responding' to the message, but to what have they really responded?

The gospel message brings with it some incredibly challenging ideas. It describes us all as 'sinners' and claims we are broken beings who deserve death. The good news of the gospel is so good because it is the saving response to a human condition that is so bad.

Our concept of how loving and gracious God is will hinge on how much of a problem we think our sin is. People struggle with the idea of a God who judges us for our sin and the thought of a loving God who would allow people to go to hell. It's easy to be tempted to play down these aspects of the gospel, or to ignore them

completely, but this won't do. Our evangelism has a responsibility to unpack the problem of sin so that the power of the cross and the hope of the resurrection is understood for what it really is – the undeserved grace of God given lovingly to his children and the only hope for humanity.

Sin is a great problem solved by a greater God. To water down one is to weaken our perception of the other, and so we must commit to the truth no matter how challenging it seems.

Another area that can easily be missed is the idea that we are to die to our self-centredness, to take up our cross and follow Jesus with everything we have (Matthew 16:24). The call to a life defined by sacrifice is often minimized in favour of a 'God will make you happy' message. But again, any attempt to add, subtract or rely on our own communication skills to win people over will only end up turning the true and powerful gospel of salvation into no gospel at all.

We must present the full gospel clearly, for a deficient gospel will lead to deficient Christians.

Prioritising daily Bible study is essential for every believer, but especially for those who are communicating its truth on a regular basis. How can we claim to have revelation from scripture if we are not allowing it to feed our lives on a daily basis? We are called not only to be evangelists, but Bible-proclaiming evangelists.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

Explore the following questions and/or the discussion quotation:

- How well do you think you understand the gospel?
- What are the challenges of explaining the gospel well today?
- How can we create connection points with contemporary listeners?
- What does it actually mean to be a 'Bible-preaching' evangelist?

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Encourage every member of the group to start or continue a daily reading plan using the YouVersion phone app or other Bible reading notes. Our engagement with scripture is essential if we are to grow as followers of Jesus and understand the gospel deeply so that we can share it simply.

Using the material about the gospel in this booklet and your Bible, produce a concise explanation (3–5 points) of the gospel with supporting Bible verses that you can share with the group next time. This task is not a test, it is a devotional activity, a way for you personally to make sense of the truth of the gospel, from which you could potentially share it with someone else. The gospel doctrine page at the back of this book may be of help to you in this task.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came and lived a perfect life, that you took our place upon the cross, and that through your resurrection we can share in new life. Help us to trust in you and to grow in your love. Help us to understand your Word more fully, to know your gospel more deeply and to be able to share it simply and truthfully with those around us. Thank you for the opportunities you give us, and please equip us to be faithful to those opportunities as we spend time in your word and in your presence.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Today we are going to be honest with each other about our bible reading habits. In small groups or pairs, discuss your daily reading habits – good or bad – and some of the things you love about reading the word and some of what you find difficult. Think carefully about what a new season of bible engagement looks like for you, set a target - stretch yourself a bit, but don't feel the need to bite off more than you can chew and set yourself up for failure - and ask your accountability group to check in with you next month to see how you've been getting on. Remember, it's not just about a bible reading target, it's about the joy of knowing God and his gospel more fully day by day.

To finish, complete accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for one another.

DON'T FORGET...

Advance has bible study material available on YouVersion. Why not give the seven day devotional "Guardians of the Gospel" a go this week alongside your other daily reading plan.

APPENDIX:

GOSPEL DOCTRINE

You are not an accident. You are created by and in the image of the perfect and loving God (Father, Spirit, Son) who is the source and sustainer of life (Genesis 1).

All have rejected God (sinned) by going our own way, instead of living in obedience to our creator. This is why the world is broken and full of suffering. This injustice aggrieves God, who does not trivialise sin by ignoring or excusing it, but who justly punishes those who offend (Romans 3:23).

We are powerless to put things right once we have rebelled against God, having committed an act of treason against the king of the universe. Rejection of God is rejection of life itself. We are left with eternal death, the natural product of our rejection of life and of God's punishment (divine justice) for breaking his standard for right living (Romans 6:23).

But God desires for none to know death, for he is love itself and wants to be in eternal relationship with us, his dearly loved children. God graciously set in motion a rescue mission to save us (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a human being, to live the perfect human life that never rejected the Father. Jesus was killed upon a cross, acting as our substitute and choosing to take upon himself the death we deserved for our rejection of God (John 3:16; Romans 3:23-25).

Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead, showing that the curse of death is broken. New life is possible only through trust in Jesus Christ and the seeking of forgiveness for sin (Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 John 1:7-9).

Jesus' death and resurrection achieved reconciliation, redemption, propitiation (appeasement), and the defeat of evil. Our sin was credited to Jesus, and his righteousness is credited to us. The only requirement on our part for this transaction to take effect is that we trust in Jesus as Lord (faith), and believe that God raised him from the dead. We are saved by faith alone. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15).

We can now access a restored relationship with our heavenly Father. We have peace and are adopted into his family. We die to our old life and are born again into a new life. (Luke 9:23; Colossians 1:20, 2:13-14; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 4:4-7).

Jesus ascended to heaven, where he reigns at the right hand of the Father, but he has sent believers the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower us to live obediently in the fullness of life, and to help us share his good news with the world. We become new creations – disciples – transformed by the work of the Spirit in our lives, which leads to fruitfulness. We work as God's ambassadors in the world, representing the kingdom of peace, serving as witnesses to the truth of the Jesus story in word and deed (Micah 6:8; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Galatians 5:22-23).

One day, Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. God's perfect kingdom will be restored and eternal life with our loving Father awaits those who trust in Jesus as Lord. Eternal death (hell) awaits those who do not. The good news is that no one needs to perish eternally, all can know eternal life and joy in relationship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5).

APPENDIX:

GOSPEL NARRATIVE

Before all things, God existed in perfect relationship with himself, Father, Spirit, Son. God created the world and it was very good, and he shared a unique relationship with humankind. We were created for perfect life with him, the king of the universe, and life itself! But God did not force humanity to love him, he let us choose for ourselves. With this free will humanity chose to go their own way, rejecting God.

Rejecting the king of the universe is treason without equal, rebellion against life itself. Death, suffering and pain entered the world. Humanity doomed itself to separation from their perfect heavenly Father with no way back. God couldn't excuse the rebellion, for there would be no justice in that action. A just and righteous God must demand a penalty be paid for the crimes committed. The punishment for rebellion against life is death.

But God so loved the world that he initiated a plan to save humanity from death - to make it possible for us to know the fullness of his life and love forever. God sent his son Jesus into the world to live the perfect human life, a life that never rebelled and became guilty of any crime against God.

Jesus willingly died upon a cross to take the punishment of death that humanity deserved for its rebellion and in doing so he became our substitute. Three days later he came back to life, because he is God and death cannot hold him. In this moment it became possible for humanity to not only receive forgiveness for rebellion against God, but to share in the new and eternal life that Jesus has made possible. The curse of death was broken.

All we need to do is believe that Jesus is who he says he is - the crucified and resurrected saviour of the world, the king of the universe - and choose to make him Lord of our lives. There is salvation and life for all who trust in him, and the empowering of his Holy Spirit enables us to live the kind of lives we were created for: lives that reveal the image of God so that all may know true life. By placing our trust in Jesus, we die to our old life and are born again into new life. One day Jesus will return and his perfect kingdom will be restored. All who trust in him will live forever within his kingdom, and so we are called and compelled to share God's love with the world so that all may know this eternal hope today and forevermore.

THE NEXT STEP...

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Thank you for launching your Advance group on Global Advance Day 2021. This is just the beginning of the journey. Please download the full Advance Group Mentoring Guide from advancegroups.org which contains everything you need to continue with your group each month for at least three years.

We would love to hear from you about how it's going too. Contact us via the stories page on the website to let us know how you've been getting on with the sessions, and any fruit that has come from your Advance journey so far.

**THE GOSPEL.
THERE IS NO PLAN B.**



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