



**ADVANCE
GROUP
MENTORING
GUIDE
YEAR 3**



YEAR THREE CONTENTS

YEAR THREE

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SESSION ONE

PRACTICAL EVANGELISM

– CONVERSATION

This session explores the importance of seeing and acting upon every opportunity to share the good news – not just those provided from an organised mission, event, stage or platform.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

The vast majority of our evangelism will take place in conversation, so we must be prepared to share the gospel clearly in every opportunity that God provides – not just when we have the chance to minister through a church mission, event or from a platform.

SESSION BACKGROUND

We engage in conversations with a variety of people every single day. Many of these are face-to-face, but technology means we can now converse in different ways with people all over the world in real time. While these digitally-based conversations may not offer the same level of personal connection as a face-to-face encounter in the same room, they have become a normal and invaluable way for us to connect with friends and strangers.

Preaching from a stage doesn't often allow for dialogue. We proclaim our message and hope that it takes root in the heart of the listener. In conversation there is scope for questioning, relationship building and – most importantly – for listening. Sometimes the one-directional word received from a platform can be rejected out of hand, whereas personal dialogue provides a greater opportunity

to speak more specifically and directly to the concerns of the listener.

There are more accounts in the Gospels of Jesus talking to individuals than there are of him preaching to the masses. 'What do you want me to do for you?' Jesus asks Bartimaeus in Mark 10:51. 'I want to see,' is the simple response that reveals his need as well as his belief that Jesus has the power to bring healing. This one-to-one encounter offers no explicit explanation of the gospel, but gives Jesus the opportunity to meet the needs of the seeker, who moves from blindness to putting his faith in Jesus.

Even Philip, the only person in the Bible to specifically carry the title of 'evangelist', is instructed by an angel of the Lord to minister one-to-one with an Ethiopian eunuch between mass preaching missions (Acts 8:26–40).

Jesus and the first evangelists were fully prepared to share the good news with the multitudes *and* with individuals. The question is: are we?

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. For smaller groups, ask each person to share one win and one struggle since your last meeting. For larger groups, ask four or five people to share a specific testimony since your last meeting.

PRAYER

Pray to commit the time to the Lord and 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.

- 'Just then his disciples returned and
- were surprised to find him talking with
- a woman. But no one asked, "What do
- you want?" or "Why are you talking
- with her?"
-
- Then, leaving her water jar, the woman
- went back to the town and said to the
- people, "Come, see a man who told me
- everything I've ever done. Could this
- be the Messiah?" They came out of the
- town and made their way towards him.'
-
- JOHN 4:27-30

When was the last time you spoke to a not-yet-Christian friend about your faith? How about a total stranger? Many preaching evangelists can find interpersonal witness quite challenging. Give them a microphone and a stage and they can preach all day, but when the Spirit prompts them to talk to a stranger in a coffee shop it can be a different story.

Discuss: Why do some who can boldly proclaim from a stage struggle in the one-to-one encounters? Do you thrive or struggle the one-to-one situation?

Jesus is interested in individual lives. For all the time he spent preaching to the crowds, the New Testament records him just as frequently engaging in one-to-one dialogue with people he met on his ministry travels, and some who intentionally sought him out. Whether he was preaching to the multitudes eager to hear his words, to

angry religious folk trying to catch him out, or to a diverse array of individuals – the rich and the poor, male and female, sick and healthy, religious and irreligious – Jesus shared the same message with power and conviction.

We can learn a number of key lessons from Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman in John 4.

1. BE READY FOR THE ENCOUNTER

For the Samaritan woman, this encounter was thoroughly unexpected – and potentially inappropriate – but Jesus is ready to talk to her, initiating the conversation with his physical need for water. How many conversations could we begin starting with something simple that we need? How do we talk to our plumber who has come to fix our shower? Or the barista serving our coffee? The doctor giving us a challenging diagnosis? There are opportunities all around us to speak, and while the encounter may take the 'seeker' by surprise, we should always be ready to offer the hope that we have in Jesus. Even if we're exhausted.

2. ENGAGE PERSONALLY AND POSITIVELY

Jesus treats the Samaritan woman with kindness, sensitivity and compassion. He genuinely engages her in conversation and makes personal connections to her life both through prophetic insight and through basic observation and situational awareness. He reveals the truth with compassion, showing us how we can engage in positive dialogue with those we meet.

3. LISTEN WELL

People will always have questions about what we believe, the difference it makes to our lives, perceived contradictions and hypocrisies, and so on. Instead of being placed on the back foot by these questions we should simply take the time to listen well and then offer a sincere response.

Often this will mean asking questions of our own – as Jesus does with the Samaritan woman. Questions invite people to reflect upon the ideas we are presenting (and to reflect upon their own ideas too), rather than simply asking them to accept what we are offering wholesale. Jesus was a master of using questions in his evangelism, gently showing people the frailties of their current worldview while offering them the truth in its place.

4. MOVE FROM MISUNDERSTANDING TO REVELATION

At first, the woman misunderstands what Jesus is saying to her (v. 11). Jesus perseveres until she experiences a moment of revelation. Misunderstanding and misinterpretation are a natural part of human dialogue. Don't panic, just persevere. We must keep building bridges for the other person until what we are saying is clear. This is all we are responsible for. It is the Spirit of God who turns comprehension into true revelation.

5. KEEP THE MAIN THING THE MAIN THING

It would have been easy for Jesus to get side-tracked with political and cultural conversation when the woman showed concern about the appropriateness of his request to her for water. Instead, he keeps the main thing the main thing so that the gospel conversation can move forward. In conversational evangelism there are many ways we can become side-tracked, but our aim (even if we have to take a few detours here and there) is to keep the cross of Christ central to our dialogue.

6. RECOGNISE THE POTENTIAL IN THOSE YOU TALK TO...

...to both receive the gospel and to become a witness for it. Those who have recently come to faith are often the most compelling evangelists. This should both challenge us – that we must never lose the infectious joy of our salvation – and inspire us that those

we witness to can immediately become witnesses for Christ.

Not all of us may have a platform to preach from (or the calling and gifting to be a 'preaching' evangelist), we are all called to engage in evangelism. Most evangelism involves interpersonal conversation – individual believers talking with individual seekers. Jesus and his followers were committed to this kind of outreach, and we should be too.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

1. Why is listening so important when talking to people about our faith?
2. How can conversational evangelism change depending on whether the person is a friend or a stranger?
3. How can you be more intentional in seeking out opportunities for conversational evangelism?
4. How can you encourage and support those who find conversational evangelism difficult?
 - 'Our struggles in evangelism are not primarily about methodology but about maturity. Do we have a heart for God and do we care about the things God cares about (lost people)? If we have God's heart, we will do whatever we can to advance his kingdom purposes in every conversation we have with our non-believing friends.'
 - NORMAN & DAVID GEISLER

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

This week, talk to someone about your faith as part of an everyday conversation. Ask them if they have any questions about your faith and let them know you would be happy to chat, or ask them a question about who they think Jesus is and see where that leads.

PRAYER

Pray that God would help us to better see and act upon the potential around us each day to share his hope with those around us. Give thanks that God places these opportunities in front of us and that he is delighted to make us part of what he is doing in the world. Pray for those who struggle with one-to-one encounters – that God would help them to overcome any fears and anxieties they may have about this kind of evangelism, and that we would cheer each other on as we go.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

SESSION TWO

PRACTICAL EVANGELISM

– APOLOGETICS

In this session we will look at using apologetics in our evangelism, considering how we may need to sharpen up to some of the things the world wants to talk about, while keeping the focus upon the cross of Christ.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Apologetics is a tool for evangelism that attempts to offer a response to any question from the world about our faith, and a defence of the gospel to those who object.

SESSION BACKGROUND

When people have questions it is our responsibility to present them with authentic answers that point to the truth of who Jesus is and what that means for our lives.

Christian apologetics means ‘a defence of the Christian faith.’ Apologetics has its roots in the Bible – from the word *apologia* in 1 Peter 3:15 to the construction and delivery of Paul’s speech to the Athenians in Acts 17. The Bible features more than one account of a well-reasoned or creative presentation of the Christian faith in response to questions, concerns and objections.

The task of apologetics is not primarily to make God plausible, but to connect people to the authenticity of his hope. We defend our faith so that those who question it may come to see their own fulfilment within Jesus Christ. Apologetics will never achieve this goal by itself – only God by his Holy Spirit can save – but it is a powerful tool for removing the barriers

that can prevent people from engaging in an opportunity to encounter Jesus.

- ‘Apologetics does not save; only
- Jesus Christ is able to do that. But
- apologetics can – and should – serve
- as a John the Baptist, making the paths
- straight, facilitating routes to the cross
- of Christ.’

J.W. MONTGOMERY

Apologetics defends against attempts to intellectually or spiritually remove Jesus from his throne. It can lead to challenging conversations, but we must remember that the point of apologetics is not to offend people, but to expose the limitations of any alternative to Christ. Apologetics is not limited to evangelism but can play a key role in our discipleship.

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH-UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. For smaller groups, ask each person to share one win and one struggle since your last meeting. For larger groups, ask four or five people to share a specific testimony since your last meeting.

PRAYER

Pray to commit the time to the Lord and 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.

- ‘But in your hearts revere Christ as
- Lord. Always be prepared to give an
- answer to everyone who asks you to
- give the reason for the hope that you
- have. But do this with gentleness and
- respect.’

• 1 PETER 3:15

Peter calls us to be prepared to give an answer to all who ask us why we have the hope we have. At first, we should be able to explain the gospel clearly, but when we are asked further questions we should take time to answer them thoughtfully and meaningfully.

The foundational philosophical questions are usually the hardest to answer – questions like, ‘Why are we here?’ or ‘Where did we come from?’ or ‘What is the meaning of life?’ The gospel has answers for each of these, but they don’t often come up directly. More often, we are asked to give our view on the Christian response to issues like sexuality, gender, or abortion. You may be asked to defend traditional faith positions against modern scientific understanding – like defending the Genesis account of creation in light of the theory of evolution. Other questions may explore claims about God’s character – for example, ‘Why does a good God allow suffering?’

Discuss: What kind of challenging faith questions have you been asked? How prepared have you felt to answer them?

It’s a good thing that apologetics itself doesn’t save anyone – otherwise the responsibility of salvation would rest in the strength of our own arguments! Apologetics can help people to move from wrong thinking to right thinking, but it is God himself who will bring a person to

life as they hear and respond to his call through our witness.

It’s like we are standing with those we witness to on a road, at the opposite end of which is the empty cross of Christ. Along the road are potholes, blockages, walls, debris, sharp objects and so on. The cross itself is barely visible through a haze of fog. Apologetics is a way by which we can help a person journey down the road, sweeping away debris, filling in potholes, tearing down walls, removing blockages and clearing the fog to make the journey easier. We long to help the person get closer to the cross, for that’s where they can encounter the risen Jesus and confess him as Lord of their life. Apologetics exists simply to make a way for the not-yet-believing person to encounter and believe.

Here are four things we must consider and commit to for success in apologetics:

1. ENGAGE WITH THE POWER OF PREPARATION

For some, apologetics will become a central focus of their evangelistic outreach – so studying theology, philosophy, the sciences, history, current affairs, world religion and other topics will become a necessary diet. For others, it’s wise to stay on top of the kinds of topics that come up in our conversations, especially where we know someone who has a particular concern. This is to say nothing of our normal commitment to feasting upon the Word of God daily to grow in our understanding of him and the truth he has revealed to the world. Preparation in this sense is not simply preparation for speaking to the world about God, but to prepare ourselves to worship him effectively day by day. Apologetics is about discipleship, not just evangelism.

2. COMMIT TO THE POWER OF PRAYER

As in all forms of evangelism, prayer is essential. When it comes to apologetics, alongside praying that God would reveal himself to the people we are talking

with, we must ask him to help us answer questions with gentleness and respect (as Peter tells us). We speak with gentleness to the person in front of us, but with respect to God – that we would not pander to the world in our answer, but represent God with integrity.

3. RECOGNISE THE POWER OF HUMILITY

Arrogance and belligerence are rarely helpful and attractive qualities. Answering a question with conviction does not mean we have to throw humility out of the window. Being humble in response to those we speak to does not mean we have to sacrifice our convictions on the altar of political correctness or polite conversation. Humility means we are prepared to accept we don't know everything. Sometimes simply saying, 'Good question, I don't know the answer to that,' is the best response we can give – God's ways are higher than our own (Isaiah 55:8-9) and we currently see in a mirror dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12). But through what God has revealed about himself, we can make sense of our existence as we explore his revelation – drawing conclusions about the truth it offers, living and speaking accordingly.

4. UTILISE THE POWER OF A QUESTION

First, we should let others know it is okay to ask us questions. Being happy to answer questions without taking offense creates brilliant opportunities for dialogue, especially with those who might be tentative or afraid to ask about something that matters to them. Second, we mustn't be afraid to ask our own questions. It's not about using clever questions to put people on the back foot, but to gently highlight weaknesses in their own pre-conceptions and thinking. Jesus was a master at asking questions as he ministered, asking significantly more than he answered!

No-one has ever been argued into the kingdom of God, or become a follower of

Jesus merely because they lost a debate. But gentle and respectful apologetic dialogue can help to move people a little further down the road towards the cross, as we commit to intentionally engaging in the topics that matter to people as part of our explanation of the gospel to them.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

1. Why is it important to take questions seriously?
2. What are the limitations of apologetics?
3. Do you feel equipped to answer questions that arise in your evangelism?
4. How can study of apologetics be worshipful?

- 'Apologetics is a resource; it is up to the apologist to make the connections with the lives of real people in the modern world. Without this connection, theories remain theories, abstract ideas hanging in mid-air, and not grounded in the realities of life.'

ALISTAIR MCGRATH

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Take some time to think through some of these common questions about the Christian faith and explore how you might help someone journey from their initial question to the cross of Christ.

- Who made God?
- Has science disproved Christianity?
- What about the big bang theory and evolution?
- If God is good, why does he allow suffering in the world?
- Is the Bible full of mistakes and contradictions?
- If God is real, why doesn't he just reveal himself to the world?

- There is no such thing as absolute truth, so shouldn't we all just believe what we want?
- I'm a good person. Why would God send me to hell just because I don't believe he exists?
- Why Christianity instead of another religion?
- Do you *really* believe in miracles?

PRAYER

Pray together for the wisdom of heaven as we attempt answer the questions and concerns of the world in humility and love, while representing God with integrity and boldness. Pray for open minds and receptive hearts in those we talk to, and give thanks that even though there are sound and reasoned answers to be shared, God's saving work does not ultimately hinge on our ability to successfully answer challenging questions.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

SESSION THREE

PRACTICAL EVANGELISM – CRISIS

This session explores how we can respond to an ongoing crisis by meeting practical needs while always being ready to demonstrate and proclaim the hope of gospel, even in the face of the most difficult, chaotic and confusing life events.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Evangelism shouldn't be put on hold when a crisis hits: rather we must continue to be ambassadors of peace in the world, keeping the hope of the gospel central to our words and actions as we meet the needs of others in crisis.

SESSION BACKGROUND

In the middle of the third century, the Roman empire was ravaged with the plague of Cyprian. As thousands died daily, people began to act cruelly, even without compassion for members of their own family. Fear is a potent force that can cause people to act in terrible ways as our survival drive takes hold.

During this troubling time, one group of people were beginning to stand out as being different to the rest of the panic-stricken population – the Christians. This relatively new sect of religious believers met the horror of the plague with a different spirit to those around them – acting in love and hope rather than fear and despair. Christians cared for the sick and even took responsibility for burying the dead, all while assuring those affected by this confusing and terrifying disease of the eternal hope found through faith in Jesus Christ. While the plague of Cyprian almost destroyed the mighty Roman empire, the response of faithful Christians meant that this otherwise horrific

pandemic significantly helped the spread of Christianity across Europe.

When the Black Death hit the same continent in the fourteenth century, its effects were even more deadly. Catherine of Siena followed in the footsteps of those early Christians by offering practical compassion and the hope of the gospel as the world around her fell apart. Catherine's own sufferings were laid aside for the benefit of others, achieved by the empowerment and new perspective of complete submission to the will of God.

• 'Your eyes will not see anything which
• seems impossible, or the sufferings
• which may follow, but only the light
• of faith, and in that light everything is
• possible; and remember God never
• lays greater burdens on us than we can
• bear.'

• CATHERINE OF SIENA

When Martin Luther was faced with the deadly bubonic plague in the small town of Wittenberg, his response was not to run away as many clergy did, but to come into closer proximity with those in need. For Luther, it was not simply a case of, 'What would Jesus do?' but, 'What would we do if it was Jesus in need?'

• 'Everyone would want to be bold
• and fearless; nobody would flee but
• everyone would come running. And
• yet they don't hear what Christ himself
• says, "As you did to one of the least,
• you did it to me." When he speaks of the
• greatest commandment he says, "The
• other commandment is like unto it, you
• shall love your neighbour as yourself
• ." There you hear that the command
• to love your neighbour is equal to the
• greatest commandment to love God,
• and that what you do or fail to do for
• your neighbour means doing the same
• to God. If you wish to serve Christ and

- to wait on him, very well, you have your
- sick neighbour close at hand. Go to him
- and serve him, and you will surely find
- Christ in him.'

MARTIN LUTHER

Pastor and theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer left his homeland of Germany in June 1939 on the urging of friends to escape the dangers of the Nazi party, only to return a month later, realising quickly that he had made a mistake in walking away from his nation in its time of need.

- 'I must live through this difficult period
- of our national history with the Christian
- people of Germany. I will have no right
- to participate in the reconstruction of
- Christian life in Germany after the war if
- I do not share the trials of this time with
- my people.'

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

Bonhoeffer knew that his Christian witness and integrity would be compromised after the crisis if he did not stand firm during the crisis. It was a decision that would eventually cost him his life – and yet the legacy of that life lives on today. Bonhoeffer holds up to historical scrutiny as a man who lived in complete trust of the hope that he preached, continually counting the cost of following Jesus.

Christians throughout history have followed the lead of their saviour, who in the face of the greatest crisis in all of history – the rebellion of humanity against God – ran headfirst into the chaos of sin and death to bring the hope of peace to all who trust in his truth (John 16:33). And Jesus runs with us into the crises of today as we go in his power to offer the world the everlasting peace of his gospel (Matthew 28:18–20).

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. For smaller groups, ask each person to share one win and one struggle since your last meeting. For larger groups, ask four or five people to share a specific testimony since your last meeting.

PRAYER

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

TEACHING (40–50 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.

- 'On that day a great persecution broke
- out against the church in Jerusalem, and
- all except the apostles were scattered
- throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly
- men buried Stephen and mourned
- deeply for him. But Saul began to
- destroy the church. Going from house
- to house, he dragged off both men and
- women and put them in prison. Those
- who had been scattered preached the
- word wherever they went.'

ACTS 8:1–4

Crisis can come at any time. Whether it's a natural disaster, disease, financial collapse, personal tragedy... the list of potential challenges goes on. When crisis hits, people can begin to panic, fear takes hold and hope can fade quickly. If we believe that the gospel is the source of true hope and peace, then in times of crisis, how

should we respond in a way that uses the circumstances for gospel opportunity?

The idea of leveraging a crisis might seem distasteful or inappropriate. But we're not talking about making profit or personal gain. As the church, we are seeking to make a kingdom gain: the glory of God is our objective.

When God is glorified in our lives and actions, the world moves closer to the full reality of the peace that we were created for and will one day know perfectly in the eternal kingdom (Revelation 21:1-7). Rather than being opportunistic for our own gain, we seek opportunity for the gain of God's kingdom, the very kingdom in which the poor and those in mourning will be blessed and comforted. Word and action evangelism is the most appropriate response to any crisis as it is the announcement and demonstration that there is hope.

When the great persecution Luke describes in Acts 8 broke out in Jerusalem, the early church found itself scattered and in crisis. Rather than wallowing in self-pity or retreating into hiding, Luke tells us that they proclaimed the gospel wherever they went. For all the stories in Acts about the evangelistic activity of the apostles and other leaders like Stephen and Philip, it is this easy-to-miss detail that perhaps best reveals the response of the church as a whole to times of crisis. Whether in season or out of season, the church must prioritise the proclamation of the gospel as a demonstration of our trust in its truth so that the world can know its hope for themselves (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

There have been numerous times throughout history where the Christian response to crisis has directly affected how the world perceives faith in Jesus Christ. Through plague, famine, persecution, war and economic crisis, history paints a clear picture: where Christians have been seen to act selflessly and in line with the eternal hope of heaven and present power of the Spirit, faith in Jesus has spread rapidly and the church has grown.

To provide genuine gospel hope in times of crisis, we need to be intentional both in our

character and in our activity. Here are five practical ways we can reflect the five core characteristics of the evangelist during times of crisis.

1. COMMIT PRAYERFULLY (PRAYERFUL EVANGELISTS)

To be a prayerful evangelist is to know that God is trustworthy (Psalm 100:5), hears our prayers (1 Peter 3:12), is not indifferent to our suffering (2 Corinthians 1:3-4), and empowers us to do good works for his glory (Ephesians 2:10). Our evangelism is always to be done in his power through prayerful lives.

We must **speak to God**. We should acknowledge his identity, worship him for who he is, thank him in all things and grow in confidence that he is good at all times. By confessing our failure and fear, we receive his forgiveness and his grace to move beyond our frailty. By asking him to bring peace to the chaos of crisis we minister to those in need and he uses us for his glory.

We must **listen to God**, taking time to rely on his wisdom, leading and inspiration as we approach challenging and complex circumstances and bring his gospel to bear upon them.

We must **move with God** as his ambassadors, with prayer as the foundation of our activity as we go, and as an offering of activity to those we engage with.

Discuss: What crises are you currently aware of? How can we best pray FOR the situation, and WITH those affected? (We will pray for these situations in the prayer time later in the session.)

2. PROVIDE HELP (COMMITTED EVANGELISTS)

Even those who don't believe in God can receive an offer of prayer as an act of love and kindness, but it is likely to ring hollow if separated from an offer to meet their practical needs. During and after

times of crisis, people need practical help. While our evangelism relies on a verbal communication of the gospel, our broader witness relies on living transformed lives and expressing the love and compassion of Christ to those around us. It means being practical, meeting needs as if we were meeting the needs of Jesus himself (Matthew 25:40). Do people need groceries or supplies from the pharmacy? Do they need their house cleaning, their garden tidied or their meals prepared? Would they appreciate some company and conversation, or perhaps they need a lift somewhere?

What's the best way to find out what people need? Asking them! The very act of listening to people before we steam in with our assumptions or a gospel presentation can often be transformational for how future dialogue about Jesus goes. As we commit to listening and commit to meeting the needs in front of us, opportunities to explain the Jesus story will often follow.

3. PROCLAIM HOPE (BIBLE-TEACHING EVANGELISTS)

As we help those in need with practical help, we should look for opportunities to explain the gospel story. Alongside our actions, the powerful truth of the gospel offers healing and hope on the deepest level of human need – which is not physical but spiritual (Matthew 10:28; Matthew 16:26).

It is crucial that we remain thoughtful, humble and compassionate when we share the truth of the gospel in the light of crisis. This doesn't involve watering down the truth, but it does mean being prepared to engage in a meaningful way with real-world concerns and questions so that the good news is still good news. People's hearts are open during times of crisis, so we must be ready to offer clarity in the face of confusion, helping people realise that, even while crisis surrounds, there is a firm foundation upon which we can build our lives that will help us weather any storm (Matthew 7:24-27).

Discuss: What challenges must we be prepared for as we speak of Jesus in a time of crisis?

4. PRIORITISE COMMUNITY (ACCOUNTABLE EVANGELISTS)

Through Advance we get used to checking in with each other, asking pointed questions and journeying through life with intentionality together. In times of crisis, we are reminded how important it is that we don't become isolated in our own communities that ignore the needs of others around us. Let's hold each other to account for prioritising the needs of others as a core part of our Christian lives, and by extension, our evangelism – never forgetting that the root of our evangelism is found in the dual command of loving God and loving our neighbour.

Accountability doesn't only relate to our experiences of temptation or our devotional lives. It should also give space for reflection and our response to the challenges of justice, care for those in need, our approach to the environment, and other issues that directly affect the way we love our neighbour.

5. ENCOURAGE PRACTICALLY (INSPIRATIONAL EVANGELISTS)

Our job as evangelists is to continually stir the church to be witnesses of the good news. During a time of crisis we should take the initiative to continually reaffirm the gospel to the church so that our brothers and sisters in Christ are reminded of the hope it offers the world. Some in the church may think it inappropriate and opportunistic to proclaim the gospel in times of crisis. Our job is to realign this thinking where necessary and to encourage the church to prayerfully offer the peace of the gospel to a chaotic world at *all* times.

Discuss: How can we stir the church to prioritise evangelism in times of crisis?

Satan loves to grip us with fear and make us ineffective, blunting us in our purpose as carriers of hope. In his famous letter to Johann Hess about whether Christians should flee crisis (for him, the plague) or stay and help, Martin Luther offered this prayer of rebuke against Satan's schemes and a powerful assurance of God's supremacy:

- 'Get away, you devil, with your terrors!
- Just because you hate it, I'll spite you by going the more quickly to help my sick neighbour. I'll pay no attention to you...
- If Christ shed his blood for me and died for me, why should I not expose myself to some small dangers for his sake and disregard this feeble plague? If you can terrorise, Christ can strengthen me. If you can kill, Christ can give life. If you have poison in your fangs, Christ has far greater medicine. Should not my dear Christ, with his precepts, his kindness, and all his encouragement, be more important in my spirit than you, roguish devil, with your false terrors in my weak flesh? God forbid! Get away, devil. Here is Christ and here am I, his servant in this work. Let Christ prevail! Amen.'

MARTIN LUTHER

Fear and chaos don't win. Let's go and tell the world the name of the one who already has.

DISCUSSION (USE EXTRA TIME IF YOU CAN)

1. Where does our responsibility start and end in meeting people's need in a crisis?
2. How do you combat your own fear in times of crisis?
3. Can you think of an example of how your evangelism became *more* effective during a crisis?

- 'You must live with people to know their problems, and live with God in order to solve them.'

P.T. FORSYTH

PRAYER

'Lord, help us in times of crisis. Help us to be aware of the need, to be compassionate in our response, and above all to trust you in the face of uncertainty. Forgive us when we fail to trust you and help us to overcome fear that would hold us back from living as you would have us live. Empower us to be a people of hope and peace for a world in chaos. Would we be faithful to proclaiming your gospel in all situations, and intentional about how we practically meet people's needs in times of trouble. Thank you that you are good in all situations. May your goodness be revealed in our evangelism and witness. Amen'

Take some time to pray into the specific areas of crisis that we looked at earlier in the session.

APPLICATION AND ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Sometimes crisis plays out on a grand scale, like a natural disaster or a pandemic. At other times, crisis plays out in individual lives and family circumstances, and is no less difficult for those who experience them. Take the time to think about what is happening globally, locally, and individually in the world around you and to think about how you can apply the five crisis evangelism actions from the session to these situations. Once you have identified some areas of crisis, and how you can offer the hope of the gospel in and through them, hold each other to account for what you will do to respond in the coming weeks.

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

SESSION FOUR

NEGLECTED TOOLS OF EVANGELISM

— PRAYER

This session expands upon the prayer session from Year One, exploring how we can use prayer in our preparation for and participation in evangelism.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Prayer is vital for evangelism, both as we prepare for evangelism and as a tool for evangelism as we participate in the great commission.

SESSION BACKGROUND

Not having the right tool for the job at hand can be frustrating. When it comes to evangelism, there is no shortage of ‘tools’ that have been produced to help the church become effective in its witness. As helpful as these tools can be, we probably wouldn’t go so far as to suggest that any particular individual resource is *essential* to the task of evangelism.

But there are some ‘tools’ for evangelism that transcend any resources we produce. Their effectiveness doesn’t hinge on context or culture. These tools are *essential* to evangelism because they directly affect the faithfulness of our witness and the fruit that comes from it.

In reality, these ‘tools’ are actually spiritual practices – and like all spiritual practices they are profoundly powerful *and* practical. Spiritual practices can be easily neglected when it comes to evangelism, perhaps because we forget their practical value.

Across three Advance Group sessions we’re going to look at three spiritual

practices – *prayer, listening, and thanksgiving.*

In Year One, we explored the relationship between prayer and evangelism in three primary ways.

First, as part of the process through which we can grow in maturity as children of God and as disciples of Jesus Christ who help others to grow likewise (Ephesians 4:14–16).

Second, as the way by which God’s power can bring opportunities to witness *and* work through us and shift our evangelism from merely marketing the Christian faith to stirring hearts from death to life (Colossians 4:2–6).

Third, as the way by which we can be equipped with spiritual armour to defend against the attacks of the enemy as we go onto the front lines of spiritual battle and to open the eyes of any who may have been deceived by his schemes that they may instead see and know the light of Jesus (Ephesians 6:10–20).

Keeping those three things in mind, let’s expand upon them in this session to think practically about how we might pray in preparation for evangelism, and how we might pray as we participate in it.

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group.

PRAYER

Pray to commit the time to the Lord and 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.

- ‘And pray in the Spirit on all occasions
- with all kinds of prayers and requests.
- With this in mind, be alert and
- always keep on praying for all the
- Lord’s people. Pray also for me, that
- whenever I speak, words may be given
- me so that I will fearlessly make known
- the mystery of the gospel, for which I
- am an ambassador in chains. Pray that
- I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.’

• EPHESIANS 6:18–20

It might seem odd for prayer to be first on our list of neglected evangelism tools. The truth is, even though our prayer lives might be thriving in general, our enthusiasm to *get up and go with* the gospel can leave us neglecting the need to *spiritually sow* the gospel.

- ‘Prayer is crucial in evangelism: Only
- God can change the heart of someone
- who is in rebellion against Him. No
- matter how logical our arguments or
- how fervent our appeals, our words
- will accomplish nothing unless God’s
- Spirit prepares the way.’

• BILLY GRAHAM

Prayer plays a part both in the way we prepare for evangelism and in how we participate in evangelism.

PREPARATION

Power

As we pray we put the power where the power belongs – in the hands of God, the only one with the power to save (Romans 1:16). We ask God to move beyond our limitations, to soften hearts, to reveal himself in our witness, to move miraculously, to save. Prayer enables us to go as an empowered people.

Confession

We are to be a holy people who carry a holy message, but we are not perfect. To paraphrase William Secker, we should not fall into the trap of blushing over confession more than the sins we commit. As we make mistakes and fall short of God’s standard, we can confess to our Lord and know his forgiveness and restoration. Prayer enables imperfect messengers to go as carriers of the holiest message.

Transformation

If Jesus makes no difference to our lives, then the gospel we proclaim has no integrity. Yes, we’ll make mistakes, but we don’t want to be making the same mistakes over and over. We don’t need to be perfect to share the good news, but we do need to be experiencing something of its transforming effects in our lives for it to be revealed as truth. D.L. Moody said, ‘The Bible was not given to us for information but transformation.’ Our evangelism is not about sharing information, but about inviting others into the same transformation we’re experiencing. Prayer enables us to go as a transformed people.

Provision

There are many prayers of supplication we can pray when it comes to evangelism, but perhaps the best of all is for opportunity: ‘God, would you provide opportunities for me to share my faith today.’ As we step into these opportunities, we can pray for the provision of boldness, compassion, clarity, wisdom, and more. Prayer enables

us to go into every opportunity as an equipped people.

Discuss: Does your prayer life feature these characteristics?

In failing to prayerfully prepare for evangelism we are preparing to fail in evangelism. That doesn't mean that prayer guarantees that our evangelism will lead to immediate decisions to follow Jesus, but it does mean that we will continually be drawn into a more faithful witness of his truth.

PARTICIPATION

There are many ways in which we can use prayer as a practical element of our evangelism, but these two are a good place to start.

Prayer Walking

What could happen if we did a prayer walk around our neighbourhoods at least once a month? By inviting God to move among the people who live in the streets surrounding our own homes, and making ourselves available to be an answer to that prayer, opportunities will often arise *while* we're out prayer walking. People will say hello, conversation follows, an explanation of what we're doing and why can be expressed, and an opportunity to share our faith naturally presents itself from there.

Prayer Talking

In our conversations with people, one of the best tools we have is to offer to pray for them. We can offer to pray there and then, or if they are not comfortable, then at a later time when we are alone in prayer. Prayer itself becomes an opportunity to show the heart of the gospel (loving kindness) and the gospel power of God (as he moves in response to the prayer).

Discuss: Do you have experiences of prayer walks or of using prayer as a tool in your witness? What happened? Sharing stories where things didn't go so well can be as helpful as sharing 'success' stories.

Many of us might not think we're neglecting prayer in our evangelism, but upon reflection we may be surprised to discover that we don't press into the power of prayer in all the ways we might. Paul's prison-based prayer request to the Ephesians was not for freedom from his circumstances but boldness to proclaim the gospel in the opportunity before him (Ephesians 6:18-20). Likewise, let us pray that whenever we speak we might receive the words and power we need to fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

1. Does your personal prayer life have a healthy focus on evangelism?
2. Are you comfortable offering prayer to others? If not, what are the barriers?
3. Reflect together on these verses from Psalm 17. How do they instruct our prayer, especially as a tool for evangelism? Use the words in bold to focus your discussion.

- 'I call on you, my God, for you
- will answer me; turn your ear to
- me and hear my prayer. Show me
- the wonders of your great love,
- you who save by your right hand
- those who take refuge in you from
- their foes.'

- PSALM 17:6-7

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Put into practice the Preparation and Participation prayer characteristics from this session. Consider how to establish a rhythm of prayer walking around your neighbourhood – and if you don't already, keep a prayer journal. Note down people you meet and prayer requests you receive, and update it with answers to prayer as an encouragement along the way.

PRAYER (10 MINS)

Pray that God would prepare you as an empowered, forgiven and transformed disciple who steps into the opportunities he provides. Thank him that he is at work in and through you day by day. Pray for those you know who do not yet know Jesus as Lord. Pray for each other, that you would all keep prayer central to your walk with Jesus and to your evangelism.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

SESSION FIVE

NEGLECTED TOOLS OF EVANGELISM – LISTENING

This session explores the art of listening. We will explore practical ways in which we can become better listeners as we attempt to help people connect to the truth of the gospel.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Listening well to people demonstrates our love for them, helps us to avoid treating them as mere evangelistic targets, and gives us opportunities to identify gospel connection points in their lives.

SESSION BACKGROUND

Richard ‘Dick’ Bass was known for going on ambitious expeditions and talking about them at length with anyone in earshot. On one flight, he chatted incessantly to the gentleman next to him about his exploits climbing Everest and his plan to do so again. As the flight was landing, Bass realised that he hadn’t made time for his unknown travel companion to introduce himself. ‘That’s okay,’ the man said, ‘I’m Neil Armstrong. Nice to meet you.’

Dick Bass missed out on a great conversation with the first man to walk on the moon. When we fail to listen to others, we are likely to miss out on more than an interesting anecdote or two. We risk missing the person themselves.

If we were to ask people about the skills or character traits needed to be a good evangelist, what would come out on top? Perhaps good communication skills, confidence, winsomeness and passion would all feature, but what about listening? Would it even make the list?

Jesus asked many more questions than he answered. Of the more than 180 questions Jesus was asked, he only directly answered a few, often preferring instead to offer a question in response. Jesus asks more than 300 questions in the pages of the New Testament – questions to provoke thought or self-reflection, to reveal hypocrisy, to keep a dialogue flowing, to probe, to enlighten, to restore, or to heal.

Jesus was always prepared to listen to the answer to his questions. The gospels are full of examples of him listening to those around him (see John 3–5 for a great example). Jesus listened to questions, needs, fears and concerns, objections and accusations. Jesus was available to listen, and his profound and powerful use of questions in response was not just a conversational technique but a revelation that those he spoke with had been heard. It’s a great place for our evangelism to start from.

In Jesus’ willingness and ability to listen and question, we see a hope for our evangelism that does not miss the person in front of us as we seek to faithfully connect them to the truth of the gospel.

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group.

PRAYER

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

TEACHING (30–40 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.

- ‘To answer before listening – that is folly and shame.’
-
-
-
- PROVERBS 18:13

Have you ever been in a conversation with someone where you couldn't get a word in edgeways? It can be deeply frustrating to feel spoken *at* – to be the recipient of a monologue rather than the partner in a dialogue. For most of us, not being heard is worse than being misunderstood – it's like we haven't been seen or valued.

Unfortunately, evangelism can too often become one-way communication. There will always be a place for public evangelism from a platform, but when it comes to personal evangelism (daily opportunities for most Christians) then one-way communication falls short. It treats the other person as an evangelistic target rather than a real person to whom God is offering a restored relationship. It is hard to help people see God's love for them when his followers don't show them any love in the first place.

The value of listening is not found merely in the information we receive about a person, but in the value a person receives as we give them our loving attention.

One-way communication is the tool of the marketer. Evangelism is not about selling a product, it is an introduction to the living person of Jesus Christ. God wants to be in a relationship with people – not statistics, demographic targets or missional

objectives, but people – who are unique and valuable and who have his attention.

- ‘62 percent of non-Christians and
- lapsed Christians say that someone
- who listens without judgment would be
- the best person to talk with about faith:
- significantly higher than any other
- quality reported.’
-
-
- BARN A GROUP
-

People want to be genuinely heard without prejudice. That's not to say that people are unwilling to disagree, but before we can disagree in a healthy way, we first need to understand. By listening we show people that we care about them and that we don't only want to point out all the ways in which they are wrong.

Truly listening to people is really useful, too. We can learn about what is going on in their lives, we can meet their actual needs rather than what we think they need, and we can make connection points to the gospel that address their actual questions rather than those we think they must be asking.

Discuss: Work through the following seven points together, reflecting on your own strengths and weaknesses in listening to people as part of evangelistic conversations.

1. ASK QUESTIONS

A huge part of listening well involves asking good questions. It reveals that we are listening thoughtfully, keeps the conversation moving into interesting areas, and gives us a chance to better understand the thoughts (and needs) of our conversation partner. Jesus modelled this to us, perhaps most clearly in the healing of Bartimaeus: ‘What do you want me to do for you?’ (Mark 10:46–52).

2. BEWARE 'WINNING'

What's the fastest way to kill a conversation? Trying to 'win' it. We don't need to have all the answers. Research conducted by Barna suggests 'know-it-all' conversation partners are not well regarded by non-Christians. We don't need to walk away from every conversation as the victor. A conversational win is where both parties were able to share their thoughts clearly with the other.

3. CREATE SPACE

We don't need to force conclusions. It's better to create space for people to think about what they are saying and hearing in response, and give ourselves space to reflect rather than always rushing to respond. As the Friar reminds Romeo in *Romeo and Juliet*: 'Wisely and slow; they stumble that run fast.'

4. DISCOVER TOGETHER

When we listen to others, we often realise that God is teaching us something new *through* them. We mustn't limit our evangelism to an attempt to draw someone to exactly where we are already, but realise that evangelism is a journey we are on together towards Jesus.

5. EXPLORE CONFLICT

Other worldviews can contain truth. There are questions about Christianity that are helpful and objections that are insightful. We shouldn't dismiss everything that is counter to our own views, especially without first listening carefully and taking time to understand why it's important to the person we're talking to. We should be inquisitive and affirm what is good.

6. FIND COMMON GROUND

There are likely to be plenty of areas of agreement in any conversation. Finding these areas of common ground can help

to build affinity, giving us a foundation of agreement from which disagreements can more graciously be explored, and leading to unexpected gospel connection points.

7. GROW

Listening to people – with real feelings, thoughts and experiences – is an opportunity to grow in compassion. Our motivation for evangelism can easily become skewed: how often do we share the gospel *only* to obey a command, *only* because our church is running a mission week, or *only* because we have a good head knowledge of the gospel and we know it needs to be shared? How often is our motivation simply love? Listening helps us to grow in compassion, empathy and love, and become the kind of messengers who represent the gospel not just in what we say, but who we are.

As we attempt to listen well to those around us, we must also listen carefully to the Holy Spirit – both in our prayerful preparation for evangelism and actively while we are in conversation with others. It has been said that evangelism is simply 'joining in the conversation the Holy Spirit (the greatest evangelist) is already having with a person,' so let's turn our hearts to him as we turn our ears to the ones in front of us.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

1. What makes a good listener? Would you consider yourself one?
2. What is the 'folly and shame' of not listening to those we witness to?
3. Is there a way of incorporating listening into public evangelism as well as personal evangelism? How might you do this?
4. How might you encourage those you speak with to open themselves to listening to God?

APPLICATION (10 MINS)

Practice listening by engaging a not-yet-Christian in conversation. You could start with a simple question such as, 'If you could ask God one question, what would it be?' and see where the conversation leads. Be present as they talk with you, asking good questions in response to the things they say that don't *lead* or *coerce* the conversation but *enrich* it. Resist offering too much of your own insight (unless requested), and create space for your conversation partner to be heard. Affirm that you heard them and appreciate their input by restating some of the things they said and how you will enjoy reflecting on these after the conversation.

Reflect afterwards with these questions for yourself:

1. How would I feel if I had been listened to in the way I listened in this conversation?
2. Do I understand their feelings, thoughts, ideas, concerns, or objections more clearly?
3. Did I learn anything new or helpful?
4. How might I get more insight about, or respond to, some of the things we discussed?

PRAYER

Spend some time waiting upon and listening to God together. Ask him to speak to you and make yourself available to hear his voice. Share encouragement with each other as and when members of the group feel they have heard from God.

Pray that God would help you to listen well to those around you. Ask him to help you grow in compassion and love for those you reach out to.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

SESSION SIX

NEGLECTED TOOLS OF EVANGELISM — THANKSGIVING

This session considers the role that thanksgiving plays in our faith and evangelism. We will consider the emotional and psychological benefits of a thankful life posture, and the importance of remembering who God is, what he has done, and why we have cause to be eternally thankful to him.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

Thanksgiving plays a vital role in our walk with Jesus and the witness we offer into the world, helping us to be emotionally healthy messengers who continually remember the goodness of God even in the face of great challenges.

SESSION BACKGROUND

- ‘Remember, remember the fifth of
- November...’

Bonfire Night celebrations happen annually in the UK to commemorate Guy Fawkes and the so-called Gunpowder Plot. Across the nation people light bonfires, set off fireworks and enjoy warm food and beverages in an atmosphere of family fun and festivity. But what precisely is being remembered?

In 1605 a group of conspirators hatched a plot to assassinate King James I by blowing up the House of Lords with 36 barrels of gunpowder. The plot was planned for 5 November, during the State Opening of Parliament, but thanks to a tip-off, the authorities found out about it – and during a search of the House of Lords they found Guy Fawkes, one of the

conspirators, watching over the barrels of gunpowder.

The plot was foiled, and Fawkes and many of his partners in crime were found guilty of treason and sentenced to being hung, drawn and quartered.

At some point, someone decided that the remembrance of these events would make a fun night out for families across the UK who could enjoy a hot dog while watching a ‘Guy’ (an effigy a bit like a scarecrow made of old clothes) thrown onto a bonfire! What strange customs we can have – and what strange things we often choose to remember.

Truth be told, most Brits probably couldn’t tell you the specific details of what is supposed to be remembered on 5 November each year, and it has little effect on their lives. But when God tells the Jews to remember being delivered out of slavery in Egypt with the Passover meal, he didn’t intend it to become merely an excuse for an annual festival. It was to be a way of remembering very clearly and powerfully what God had done (Exodus 12:1–14). The observances and details of Passover week have great significance – they are not arbitrary but vividly tell the story of God’s faithfulness in rescuing the Jews from slavery. To celebrate Passover is to *remember*, and in remembering, to give thanks.

Remembrance is a theme that appears throughout the Bible – the word ‘remember’ is used more than 200 times. A number of these occurrences are God himself telling his people to remember who he is, what his commands are, and what he has done. This remembrance is essential because it is the way by which

God's people can keep him at the centre of who they are.

We can remain thankful even in times of distress, remembering that he is good.

We can remain hopeful even in times of seeming defeat, remembering that he has saved.

We can remain faithful even when idols tempt, remembering that he alone is God.

Whenever the people of God forget these things, we are prone to fall into chaos and calamity. In being brought to remembrance we rediscover truth and hope.

'Remember, remember' – God tells his people over and over, through festivals, songs, prayer, community, the word, story, tradition, service – 'remember,' because in remembering, we will be transformed.

SESSION GUIDE

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CATCH UP (10–20 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group.

PRAYER

Pray to commit the time to the Lord and 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.

- 'Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.'

1 THESSALONIANS 5:16–18

The modern US observance of Thanksgiving is a wonderful idea. Setting aside an entire day to thankfully reflect on all we have, and to share in the company of others, is something we would all benefit from. We would also benefit from applying the same approach to our evangelism. We are better at celebrating 'successes' – salvation stories – than we are at being thankful simply for the God-given opportunities in front of us.

Paul reminds us in 1 Thessalonians that we should give thanks in all circumstances, because that is the will of God in Christ Jesus for us. Paul knew that the posture of a thankful heart impacts a person spiritually, emotionally, and physically. It should come as no surprise that psychologists recognise the value of thankfulness or gratitude in helping people to sleep better, raise their self-esteem, grow in empathy, and increase in mental strength, to name just a few.

Thankfulness is a valuable tool for evangelism simply by virtue of the way that it helps us go into the world as healthier people. But beyond the mental and emotional benefits, thankfulness helps us in our evangelism because it serves as a reminder of God's work in and through us.

Thankfulness helps us to see beyond our ordinary daily lives to the extraordinary ways in which God is at work. When we face discouragement, we can be thankful for what the Lord has done previously and trust him to work again. We can stir others to join in the commissioning call of Christ by giving thanks corporately for the opportunities we have to share our faith each day. This can help people who may be anxious about sharing their faith to see that not every act of evangelism needs to have a neat salvation ending to be an example of successful obedience to God. Thanksgiving is like a multi-tool for evangelism.

Discuss: There are two parts to Christian gratitude: remembering and thanksgiving. How do you create space in your walk with Jesus to remember who God is and what he has done, and give him thanks accordingly?

Here are a few ways we can make thankfulness part of our regular response to God as we seek to be faithful in our witness.

PERSONALLY

Keep a note of every opportunity God provided to share his hope with others (whether you took it or not). This will remind us of how God is at work in this way and remind us to pray for those we encountered. It may also help us to recognise new opportunities more readily in future.

FAMILIALLY

Be deliberate when around friends and family about expressing gratitude to God for how he has been at work in your life. We might be used to doing this kind of thing in a formal way once a year (like at Thanksgiving), but why not once a week? We can build each other up in regular fellowship of thanks.

COMMUNALLY

Create space in your gatherings and services to celebrate stories of opportunity, not just salvation fruit. We should always celebrate salvation, but it is often the stories of God at work in the 'ordinary' opportunities of 'ordinary' people's lives that can resonate most strongly. If we are thankful for and celebrate the planting of the seed as much as it coming to fruit, we will certainly see more seed planted.

BIBLICALLY

Give thanks creatively using the Bible, which is full of creative expressions of thanksgiving. Read through a Psalm of thanksgiving and use it to express your own gratitude to God, or use it as inspiration to creatively express that same gratitude in another way. Taking the time to creatively express our thankfulness through poetry, painting, songwriting or other creative pursuits is a great way to reflect upon, declare, and reveal to others our thankful hearts.

JOYFULLY

According to Karl Barth, 'Joy is the simplest form of gratitude.' When Roberto Benigni received the Oscar for Best Foreign Film at the 1999 Academy Awards he jumped up onto the seats in front of him and began celebrating wildly. After clambering over the rows and hugging everyone he met, he eventually got to the stage and tried to express his thanks through broken English and a thick Italian accent. He needn't have bothered. Benigni's limited English vocabulary couldn't have expressed his thankfulness any more effectively than his heartfelt expression of joy. Living joyfully as an expression of our thanks to God directly impacts the power of our evangelism and raises the curiosity of those around us.

NORMALLY

As we go into the world we can use thanksgiving as part of our witness by explaining to people why we are so thankful to God. As we express our thanks in these conversations we can reveal more of God's character, his work historically (the gospel) and presently (testimony), and our eternal hope in him. Treating gratitude to God as a normal and everyday part of our lives speaks volumes about the reality of our relationship with him and the hope it holds for those yet to trust him as Lord.

We are more acutely aware of mental health issues today than at any other time

in history. It is no surprise that we have a multi-million dollar 'wellness' industry powering global campaigns and social media stars. But what does it truly mean for us to be 'well'?

When one of the healed lepers returned to bow before Jesus in thanksgiving, Jesus responded: 'Rise and go; your faith has made you well.' The leper had already been blessed with healing to bring physical wellness, but in the posture of thanksgiving and submission to Jesus he discovered a richer understanding of what it means to be well (Luke 17:11-19).

Discuss: What does 'wellness' mean to you in light of your walk with Jesus? How might we express this idea of wellness to the world in a way that doesn't trivialise real challenges people face, but reframes them through the hope of the gospel?

For the wellness of our relationship with Jesus, the wellness of our hearts and minds, and the wellness of our witness in the world, let us fall at his feet daily in thanksgiving. May the church of Jesus Christ grow ever more confident in his goodness and with joyful hearts hear his voice afresh: 'Rise and go.'

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

1. What methods do you use to remember who God is and what he has done?
2. How could you encourage others to use thanksgiving in their walk with Jesus and their evangelism?
3. How do you perceive success in evangelism?
4. Are there ways in which thanksgiving could be part of the way we speak to others about Jesus?

PRAYER AND ACCOUNTABILITY (20 MINS)

In smaller groups, pray in three ways together.

1. Share one thing from this past week that you want to thank God for.
2. Spend some time praying about your own wellness. Which areas of your life do you need Jesus to bring hope or healing to? Share together and pray for each other.
3. Pray for those you reach out to, that they will come to give thanks to Jesus and know his ongoing wellness for themselves.

Fill in accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for each other.

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Make remembrance and thanksgiving a discipline in your own life, through journaling, making notes alongside your daily Bible reading, recording voice memos on your phone, sharing a time of thanksgiving before eating with your family or friends at least once a week... Get creative!

Talk to your pastor or church leadership to see how the two elements of Christian gratitude can be brought into your church gatherings regularly if they are not already consistently present. It doesn't have to be something extravagant, often it is a little change regularly observed that can have the biggest impact.

YEAR THREE: RETREAT

The climax of each year of Advance is a time of retreat. How you decide to do this is up to you, but here you will find suggestions for how to spend the time together in keeping with the general principles of Advance group meetings and to bring the third year to a focused end.

HOW TO RUN AN ADVANCE GROUP RETREAT

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The general idea is to get away from your normal location and set aside a longer period of time than you would normally for your Advance group sessions. If you can only spare a morning, afternoon or evening, then do what you can in this time, but retreating for a whole day is especially beneficial.

Here are some ideas of what to do during your retreat.

KEY SCRIPTURE

The following passage from 2 Corinthians will work well as a key scripture for your time together if you are looking for a specific focus during the retreat:

• 'Therefore, since through God's mercy
• we have this ministry, we do not lose
• heart. Rather, we have renounced secret
• and shameful ways; we do not use
• deception, nor do we distort the Word
• of God. On the contrary, by setting forth
• the truth plainly we commend ourselves
• to everyone's conscience in the sight of
• God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it

• is veiled to those who are perishing.
• The god of this age has blinded the
• minds of unbelievers, so that they
• cannot see the light of the gospel
• that displays the glory of Christ,
• who is the image of God. For what
• we preach is not ourselves, but
• Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves
• as your servants for Jesus' sake. For
• God, who said, "Let light shine out
• of darkness," made his light shine
• in our hearts to give us the light
• of the knowledge of God's glory
• displayed in the face of Christ.

• 'But we have this treasure in jars of
• clay to show that this all-surpassing
• power is from God and not from us.
• We are hard pressed on every side,
• but not crushed; perplexed, but
• not in despair; persecuted, but not
• abandoned; struck down, but not
• destroyed.'

• 2 CORINTHIANS 4:1-9

This passage shows at least the following twelve things for us to reflect on:

1. Evangelism is a gift of God's mercy ('through God's mercy we have this ministry')
2. Our method should be pure and holy ('we have renounced secret and shameful ways')
3. Clarity is our goal ('setting forth the truth plainly')
4. Satan has deceived those we speak with ('The god of this age has blinded')

5. The focus should not be us but Jesus (*'For what we preach is not ourselves'*)
6. We serve the lost through evangelism as worship to Christ (*'ourselves as your servants'*)
7. God is at work in our lives (*'made his light shine in our hearts'*)
8. God's power is made perfect in our weakness (*'we have this treasure in jars of clay'*)
9. Hardships of life need not crush us, we have strength in the joy of the Lord (*'We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed'*)
10. Confusion of circumstance need not leave us without hope, we can trust in the goodness of God (*'perplexed, but not in despair'*)
11. Persecution need not leave us isolated, we have Christ and his church (*'persecuted, but not abandoned'*)
12. Facing great personal cost need not be fatal, we have an eternal hope (*'struck down, but not destroyed'*)

What other points of encouragement to our evangelism can you draw from these nine verses?

How you study the passage together or alone (see below), how you bring these points out, and how you discuss them together is entirely up to you depending on how you are running your retreat time. But keep this passage and these points in mind as you look at the suggested activities below.

WORD

A key aim of the Advance group is to help each other grow as evangelists who are committed to the Word of God. This retreat time is a great opportunity to go deeper into his word.

EXTENDED BIBLE READING (SOLO READING)

Extended time spent with the Word of God is never time wasted. Having explored the first half (nine verses) of 2 Corinthians 4, why not now go and spend time alone reflecting in the same way on the final nine verses of the chapter?

Alternatively, taking the time to read alone through all of Mark's Gospel or one of the New Testament letters in one sitting is a great way to get a full perspective on the contents of that book. If it is a shorter book, why not re-read it multiple times, praying and reflecting between each reading, making notes, and then going again? You could all choose to read the same thing, or have a few different options that people then share about their time of reading and reflection.

BIBLE STUDY (GROUP READING)

There are a number of ways that you could facilitate Bible study together on the retreat. Perhaps you will want to revisit some of the key passages you have explored over the Advance group sessions. Alternatively, you may feel led to a particular passage or theme that will set the tone for the retreat. As ever, be sure to keep it in line with developing each other as evangelists.

You could also work through the Advance/City Gospel Movements 'Exploring Evangelism Myths' Bible study on YouVersion.



BONUS SESSIONS AND OTHER ADVANCE RESOURCES

One of the bonus sessions in this guide could be used to run a regular Advance group session as part of your retreat. You may also have your own ideas for how you could run an Advance group session in the same format we have been using.

PRAYER

Set aside significant time for prayer during the retreat. Plan for prayer times with a specific focus, as well as time for both praying through scripture and spontaneous prayer. Whatever else you do in prayer during the retreat, the following three focuses are recommended.

PRAYING FOR EACH OTHER

Be sure to pray for one another as a primary element of your time together. Ask people to share one area they are feeling thankful to God for and one area in which they need provision or breakthrough. Encourage people to be specific and honest in their requests, and don't rush through each person but dedicate real time to one another. Be sure to keep a note of words and encouragements that come from this time.

PRAYING FOR THE LOCAL AND THE GLOBAL

Take time to pray for your local context and also the global spread of the gospel. If there are specific situations you have a heart for in either a local or global context then pray for them. Lift up individuals, churches, ministries, missionaries, situations from the news and so on.

PRAYING FOR THE ADVANCE JOURNEY

Give thanks for the journey that you have been on in this group, reflecting on personal growth and stories of fruitfulness

and salvation. Ask the Lord to continue the work in you that he has begun, and that you would be transformed into his image with ever increasing glory (you could pray through 2 Corinthians 3:17-18).

WORSHIP

Time spent in God's Word, prayer and fellowship are all part of worship. But spend time in additional specific acts of collective devotional worship – whether it's through singing or other creative expressions.

SUNG WORSHIP

If you have someone who is musically talented, invite them to lead a time of sung worship. Alternatively, there are many great collective worship apps and videos available online, many of which are free. A quick YouTube search for your favourite worship songs will likely bring up a version of the song with lyrics that can be played for the group to sing along to. There is power in the people of God joining together in song to declare his glory.

STORIES AND PRAISE

Spend time sharing stories of how God has been at work in your life this year – stories of growth, breakthrough, evangelistic opportunity and fruit. After each story spend time praising God through prayer, song or any method that works for your group as you seek to give thanks to God for who he is and what he has done/is doing.

COMMISSIONING

Another way in which you could share in a corporate act of worship would be to commission each other before God in the evangelistic task that he has called you to and empowered you for. At the end of this third year of your Advance group it will be encouraging and affirming to recognise this milestone, so give thanks to God for it

and pray over each other as you look to go again with the gospel for the salvation of the world and to the glory of God.

ANNUAL REFLECTION

Using the form found on page 40 create space to reflect on the questions provided, fill in the form and pray over the answers given. You may also want to look back on last year's form to help you reflect on your growth. This can be done individually or as a group.

FELLOWSHIP

As we gather together, we grow in friendship with and trust of one another. The fellowship of your Advance group has hopefully been a blessing to each person, and on retreat you can continue in your commitment to hold each other to account and your enjoyment of each other's company.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability has been a core part of every session so far, and in this final session of the year, once again commit to the same process to ensure you are living holy and humble lives.

FASTING/FEASTING

You may want to commit to a period of fasting as part of the retreat, or base your time together around meals through which you can gather together and make space for discussion. There is no right or wrong way to do this – all that matters is that it helps you achieve the goals of your retreat time.

ACTIVITIES

You may want to plan an activity together – for example, if you are retreating into nature somewhere, go on a walk together

and fold some of the devotional activities above into this time. If based in a more urban environment, you could visit an art gallery together and do the same thing, using some of the art as a stimulus for reflection and devotion.

Equally, you might want to do something simply for fun together – a team activity, sport, entertainment option... Whether it's fellowship to encourage devotion, or fellowship to enjoy each other's company and grow in relationship with each other, invest in quality time with each other.

NEXT STEPS

The third year of Advance is done. Before you bring the year (and the retreat) to a close, be sure to look at the next steps for this group.

THIS GROUP

Create space for people to share about how the Advance group experience has been for them. Share feedback about how you've all grown and developed, and think about what the biggest learning has been from the year. How has the group enjoyed a more tailored, less prescriptive guide structure? Encourage each other in these things.

Having been together for three years, will you continue? You could run another year using resources suggested from this guide, or something else entirely. You may want to go back to the beginning and explore Year One again – perhaps the sessions will take on a new dynamic. Whatever you choose, share about what people are excited about in the upcoming year, whether that will be together in Advance or not. If you haven't already, pray and give thanks for the third year of Advance, and commit what is ahead to the Lord.

Take the opportunity to set dates for starting Year Four together.

NEW GROUPS

Make space to talk about the development of new groups that have been launched throughout this year. Multiplication is an important part of the Advance group journey. If you need any support in launching new groups, get in touch with us via the Advance website and your local Advance Ambassador will be in touch to support you in any way possible.

Ask how everyone is getting on with any groups they have started and pray over them.

However you run your retreat time, keep the core values of Advance in focus, reflect on the journey you have been on as a group, and pray for what lies ahead. Give thanks to God for the growth and fruitfulness you have experienced together and commit the future to him.

APPENDIX

OTHER SESSION IDEAS

Use these session ideas in your own way. Each idea includes a suggested key Bible passage along with questions for discussion.

SPIRITUAL PARENTS

.....

Reflect on the 'spiritual parents' who have helped shape our faith and journeyed with us through our discipleship journey. Reflect on Paul's relationship with Timothy as a spiritual father, but also the roles that Timothy's mother and grandmother played in his journey. Use this session as an opportunity to reflect on these special people, encouraging each other through sharing stories and lessons learned, and explore who your spiritual children might be.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Who has been instrumental in your faith journey and why?
2. What is the biggest thing you have learned from them?
3. What makes a good spiritual parent?
4. Is there anyone who would consider you a spiritual parent?

KEY PASSAGE

2 Timothy 1:1-13

LIFE VERSES

.....

Each of us will likely be able to point to some key Bible verses that have shaped our faith, encouraged or challenged us at specific times, or have been the way through which God has spoken to us most profoundly. In this session, take time to reflect on these passages, sharing them with each other along with the story about their significance to you.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you share three Bible verses or passages that have had a big impact on your faith or ministry?
2. Why do these hold significance for you?
3. Have you ever been surprised at how the Bible has spoken to you?
4. What Bible reading rhythms do you have in your daily life?

KEY PASSAGE

Psalms 119:9-16

KEY TERMS

.....

In this session, explore some key terms relating to evangelism and discuss them together. You could discuss the importance of having clarity about certain terms and expressions and help each other to come up with straightforward definitions. You could explore and define together:

- Evangelism
- Evangelist
- Gospel
- Witness
- Mission
- Proclamation
- Discipleship
- Christian
- Worship

KEY PASSAGE

Proverbs 2:1–6

TESTIMONY

.....

Testimony is a great tool for evangelism. Sharing testimony by itself is not evangelism – we always need to communicate the gospel too – but as part of our overall evangelism practice, sharing the story of how we came to faith and what God has been doing in our lives historically and recently is a precious thing. In this session, talk about the place of testimony in evangelism, and share your stories with one another. Take the time to refine them together, to question each other and draw out details that perhaps get missed in your usual telling. Learn to make your testimony a fluid and living thing that includes up to date information of God at work in your life.

KEY PASSAGE

Mark 5:1–20

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to have a good grasp of what these words mean?
2. Can you express these concepts simply to help others understand their meaning?
3. While the passage from Proverbs is about the wisdom of the ultimate truth about God, what can it also teach us about understanding specific aspects of our faith and practice?
4. How do we move from defining terms to applying them?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What value do you place on the testimony of how you first came to trust Jesus as Lord?
2. Are you good at sharing recent activity of God in your life?
3. What role can testimony play in healthy evangelism?
4. What does the story of Jesus and the demoniac from Mark 5 tell us about the power of testimony?

HOLY SPIRIT

.....

Without the Holy Spirit, evangelism is a waste of time. Only he can take our efforts and use them to bring about new life. In this session, spend time reflecting on the Holy Spirit as the greatest evangelist, and ask him to fill your lives again. Create space in this session to allow the Holy Spirit to minister to you.

KEY PASSAGE

John 16:7-11

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you describe your relationship with the Holy Spirit?
2. In what way can the Holy Spirit be described as the 'greatest evangelist'?
3. Jesus says in John 16 that it is better for him to go and the Spirit (the Advocate) to come. Do you understand why?
4. Will you ask the Holy Spirit to come right now?

THE LIVES OF OTHERS

.....

You could spend a session reflecting on the life of an evangelist or missionary and the inspiration and lessons to be taken from their journey (suggestions below but feel free to choose anyone you find interesting). If you plan in advance you could find a biography of the evangelist that everyone could read over the course of the month before you meet together to then discuss in the session time. There are also documentaries and short programs available about some of these evangelists that you can find on YouTube which could be watched before or during the session.

KEY EVANGELISTS AND MISSIONARIES

- D. L. Moody
- John Wesley
- William and Catherine Booth
- Gladys Aylward
- Aimee Semple McPherson

- Eric Liddell
- Selina Hastings
- John Wimber
- Billy Graham
- Rienhard Bonnke
- Luis Palau
- Brother Yun

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What stood out to you the most from the life of this evangelist?
2. Are there any warnings from their life you need to take on board?
3. Do you feel intimidated or inspired when you look at lives such as these?
4. What learning would you hope for someone to take from your evangelism journey if they read your biography?

HOSPITALITY

.....

We could think of hospitality as another neglected tool of evangelism. Throughout the Bible we see hospitality play a key role in how God’s love is shared. This is not just a historical or cultural quirk that we can ignore today – extending hospitality is a key part of our Christian lives and brings with it plenty of opportunities for evangelism. In this session, explore hospitality together – sharing stories of how you have used it evangelistically, exploring creative ideas with each other and even being accountable to one another for being more deliberate about hospitality in the coming weeks.

KEY PASSAGE

Luke 14:12-14

SERVICE

.....

Similarly to the session idea for hospitality, explore together creative ideas for what it looks like to actually serve those around you in such a way that it opens up gospel opportunity. As William Booth said, ‘You cannot warm the hearts of people with God’s love if they have an empty We could think of hospitality as another neglected tool of evangelism. Throughout the Bible we see hospitality play a key role in how God’s love is shared. This is not just a historical or cultural quirk that we can ignore today – extending hospitality is a key part of our Christian lives and brings with it plenty of opportunities for evangelism. In this session, explore hospitality together – sharing stories of how you have used it evangelistically, exploring creative ideas with each other and even being accountable to one another for being more deliberate about hospitality in the coming weeks.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the word ‘hospitality’ mean to you?
2. How do you use hospitality in your evangelism?
3. What are some of the challenges that can come with extending hospitality?
4. Explore Luke 14 carefully. What is Jesus really saying about true hospitality and the Kingdom?

KEY PASSAGE

Luke 14:12-14

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What does the word ‘hospitality’ mean to you?
2. How do you use hospitality in your evangelism?
3. What are some of the challenges that can come with extending hospitality?
4. Explore Luke 14 carefully. What is Jesus really saying about true hospitality and the Kingdom?

TEAMWORK

Lone evangelism is rarely a good idea, yet it's often the case that we find ourselves alone as we share the gospel with others. Use this session to explore the biblical ideal of and need for teamwork in evangelism.

KEY PASSAGES

- Luke 10:1-3
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Proverbs 27:17
- 1 Peter 4:10
- Hebrews 10:24-25

A BIBLICAL MODEL

The Bible instructs as to the truth of the gospel, informs us as to the kind of messengers we are to be, and inspires us with various examples of early church evangelism. And yet, the Bible never actually gives us a neat step-by-step guide in how to evangelise from which we can build the perfect strategy for all people at all times. But this is no mistake. Cultures change and methods come and go, whilst the gospel remains the same. So, our evangelism will need to be dynamic and adaptable. Helpfully though, Acts 2 does offer three simple evangelistic principles that will guide us in any culture and season, to ensure our witness is biblically faithful and God-honouring. In this session you can dig into Acts 2 to explore the biblical evangelism model of:

Prayer: Seeking the Lord (Acts 2:1-13)

Proclamation: Speaking the Word (Acts 2:14-41)

Presence: Showing the Love (Acts 42-47)

KEY PASSAGE

Acts 2

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Looking at these verses, what are the values of teamwork?
2. What are the challenges of teamwork?
3. Do you have people you rely on and support in the way the Bible verses express? Who are they and what does this look like for you?
4. How does teamwork in evangelism better reveal the church in evangelism?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think prayer, proclamation and presence can be called a biblical ideal for evangelism?
2. Why is it significant that the giving of the gift of tongues led to evangelism?
3. What are the essential elements of Peter's proclamation for us to consider for our own proclamation today?
4. How do we balance being in our Father's presence, being present with our church family, and being present in the world as witnesses?

THE GREATEST EVANGELISM CHAPTER

It has been said that 2 Corinthians 6 is the greatest single chapter in the Bible on evangelism. Paul reminds us of the staggering reality that God has chosen to make us co-labourers with him in the world, and that often struggle and hardship will follow. However, rather than be defeated by this reality, we can recognise that this actually authenticates our witness - the truth will always be met with opposition, but opposition need not ultimately overwhelm us, for the truth is our hope. Use this session to explore this evangelistically rich chapter and the opportunity and challenge it presents.

KEY PASSAGE

2 Corinthians 6

FAITH, CLARITY, INVITATION

At the beginning of the Advance journey, you were asked the following three questions to help you decide if you wanted to be part of an Advance group:

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 want to share the gospel with clarity whenever you have an opportunity?

Invitation: Do you long to extend an invitation to the hope of the gospel, and see people move into eternal relationship with Jesus?

In this session you can explore these three questions together in more detail and with fresh insight at this stage of your Advance journey.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think this passage has been referred to by some as the greatest biblical chapter on evangelism?
2. What kind of stumbling blocks might we put in people's paths and how can we avoid these?
3. Paul says we are authenticated in our evangelism through the struggles we face. How does this encourage you in your witness?
4. How do we reconcile the call to lovingly share the gospel with the challenge to not be "yoked together with unbelievers?"

KEY PASSAGES

2 Corinthians 4:5-18

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think these three questions, specifically, are helpful in deciding whether or not Advance is right for someone (and did they help you)?
2. In what ways have you seen the power of the gospel at work since starting Advance and how has this impacted your faith?
3. Can you see ways in which you have grown in clarity around the gospel and if so, how has this impacted your gospel conversations and proclamation?
4. Has Advance had an impact on how you offer gospel invitation to those around you?

GOING OUT

Some groups have a practical element to every session and use the first part of their session time as a catalyst for then going out together in some way. You could use one or more of your sessions together to go out together. You could prayer walk, engage in street evangelism, pre-plan a mission opportunity or event to happen in this time, or any other number of practical 'goings'. Make sure you allow time to pray together and look at your accountability forms even if you spend the whole session time out and about.

QUESTIONS BEFORE

1. Why are we going out today?
2. What do we need to be aware of as we go?
3. What can we pray about before we go now?

QUESTIONS AFTER

1. What encounters did we have today?
2. Is there any follow up needed?
3. How can we pray for what has happened today, and for those we have spoken with?

YEAR THREE REFLECTION

HOW DID YOU HOPE TO GROW THROUGH THIS YEAR OF ADVANCE?

HOW HAVE YOU GROWN?

WHAT IS YOUR BIGGEST LEARNING FROM THIS YEAR?

WHAT IS THE MOST SURPRISING THING TO COME OUT OF THIS YEAR IN ADVANCE?

WHAT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST ENCOURAGEMENT IN YOUR EVANGELISM?

WHAT HAS BEEN THE GREATEST CHALLENGE?

WHAT SCRIPTURE HAS MOST IMPACTED YOU THIS YEAR AND WHY?

HOW HAS GOD BEEN AT WORK IN YOUR PRAYERS THIS YEAR?

HOW DO YOU HOPE TO GROW IN THE COMING YEAR?

WHAT EVANGELISTIC OPPORTUNITIES ARE YOU LONGING FOR IN THE YEAR AHEAD?

At the end of this third year of Advance, use this form to reflect on what you've learned, how you've grown, and what your hopes are beyond this year. If there are any stories you reflect on here that you think would encourage others, share them with us at advancegroups.org/stories

ACCOUNTABILITY FORM

KEY

✓ Good

— Okay

✗ Bad

• ‘Search me O God and know my heart’ (Psalm 139:23)

Accept one another (Romans 15:7)

Confess your faults to one another (James 5:16)

Encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

• ‘Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously towards others the way God lives towards you.’ (Matthew 5:48, MSG)

How clear is my vision for my life?	Are my relationships with those I serve healthy? (Peers, leaders, the opposite sex)
How clear is my vision for the work I'm involved in?	How healthy is my response to being hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?
Am I enjoying what I do?	Am I engaging in inappropriate lustful thoughts?
Do I feel God's pleasure in what I'm doing?	Am I getting enough rest?
How passionate am I?	Am I managing my time well?
Am I pursuing intimacy with Jesus?	Am I spending my spare time in a healthy way?
Am I making enough space for prayer?	Am I keeping a healthy balance between church, work and home life?
Am I spending time in personal Bible study?	Am I forming and maintaining relationships with non-Christians?
Did the Bible come alive for me today?	Am I exposing myself to sexually alluring material?
Am I seeking evidence of God's power in my life and ministry?	Am I defeated in any part of my life: jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
Is Jesus real to me?	Am I managing my money well?
Am I teachable and accountable?	Am I giving generously?
Am I available and approachable?	Am I choosing not to envy other people?
Am I listening well?	Am I choosing to not grumble or complain?
Am I making myself vulnerable to others?	Am I walking with integrity?
Am I leading with a servant heart?	Am I decisive and confident?
Am I trustworthy?	Am I willing to take risks?
Am I keeping my promises?	Am I making goals and reaching them?
Am I holding on to healthy perspective?	Am I willing to make sacrifices?
Am I handling pressure well? (from people, work, circumstances)	Am I keeping my cutting edge?
How is my health?	Am I moving in the power of the Spirit?
Am I eating healthily?	Am I withholding forgiveness from anyone?
Am I sleeping well?	Am I pursuing freedom from destructive patterns and strongholds?
Am I allowing my mind to dwell on inappropriate thoughts?	
Am I remembering the sick, hurting and needy?	
Are my family happy?	
How are my friendships?	

• ‘Trust God from the bottom of your heart. Don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go. He's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil.’ (Proverbs 3:5-7, MSG)

THE GOSPEL. THERE IS NO PLAN B.



ADVANCEGROUPS.ORG

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ASSOCIATION



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