



EQUIPPING FOR... **EVANGELISM & MISSION**

Speaking about Our Faith

Produced by Canadian Ministries

“Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.” — Mark 16:15

Serving, loving, or doing good works in the community can attract people’s attention to who we are. But can we assume people will make the leap from our loving actions to the love of Christ? What if they don’t know the gospel story to enable them to connect our actions to the good news? These questions were posed by Rev. Jonathan Shively in “Do we actually need to use words?” Part 2 of the *Evangelism Connections* video *Evangelism in the 21st Century* available at <http://www.evangelismconnections.org/evangelism-in-the-21st-century-our-new-video-series/>

Many Christians agree that speaking about their faith – and about the difference it has made in their own lives – is necessary at some point, as a fundamental part of both evangelism and mission: part of partnering and being with people; part of inviting people into the church. But what does this mean for us individually and for others in our faith community? Are we equipped and ready to do this? If not, how will we address this?

This *Equipping for Evangelism and Mission* draws on the work of three projects (*Invited* in Canada, *Fresh Expressions* in UK, and *1001 Worshiping Communities* in U.S.) that offer free online resources to help equip people to speak about their faith and encourage

congregations to discuss, discern and share their Christian identity.

Read Acts 8:26-35.

Reflect on times when you serve in the community, alongside people with a range of religious backgrounds and experiences. If someone sees in you something different and loving (or you see this in them), how might you talk about the faith behind actions and how God’s love extends to all of us?

Sing

“We are one in the Spirit?” Book of Praise #471, Verse 2. Silently reflect on how you “spread the news that God is in our land”?

Pray

Lord you nudge us, prepare us, open us to the possibility of your work in us. Strengthen us for the work of invitation. Help us to have the ears to hear and the eyes to see where you are working – where you are present in peoples’ lives and then give us the courage to let nothing get in the way of that invitation. Amen.

(Based on *Invited: Exploring Genuine Christian Invitation*, p, 33)

1. “When it comes to invitation, we have some issues”

(The section below comes from *Invited: Exploring Genuine Christian Invitation* and its *Video 2: Home*)



Questions

1. How does Sheila’s experience compare with your own?
2. How do you feel about talking to other people (e.g. neighbours, colleagues) about your faith? About talking to other people in your church?
3. Watch the *Invited Video Episode 2: Home*, available at <http://spiritofinvitation.com/episode/episode-2-home/>
4. Consider your own church and how people could help each another engage in real conversations about their faith. How can we make “a place in our relationships” to talk about our faith?

A Story (from Session 2 in *Invited*)

Sheila had, over the course of her life, been asked many times why she was so happy. It wasn’t that she didn’t experience un-happiness at times, but that in the general run of things – when life was ordinarily moving along – she was happy; and seemed able and willing to extend herself, her time and even her finances to help when these things were needed. She had a sense that this was all connected to her faith in Jesus Christ and her membership in her church family. The well of security and love she experienced in these things freed her to feel and act as she did. But she’d never invited anyone into that relationship herself; she’d kind of kept it all to herself. Not intentionally mind you, just because. Partly, it was because she didn’t really feel like it was something she should do... Partly, she was reticent... Partly, it felt like a risk to her relationships.

And yet... she couldn’t escape the conclusion that talking to people about Jesus and inviting them to follow him in a gathered community of fellow followers, was what being a Christian was all about. That well of love and security she’d always experienced was supposed to be passed on! But it was a part of her faith life that she hadn’t quite come to terms with. And yet, people kept on asking her that question: why did she seem different.

Pray

Loving God, you are continually calling to people everywhere in the ordinariness of their daily lives: while at work in your world, in their families, and in the midst of the many things they do each day. You are there first, loving and offering the depth and warmth of a relationship with you. We are thankful for this and all your gifts. Amen.

Suggestion

To promote discussion in your church about conversing about our faith, consider downloading the *Invited* resource (see sidebar) and using it in study groups.

Invited: Exploring Genuine Christian Invitation is a parish/congregation-based resource developed by the Anglican Church of Canada. The authors Susan Bell (Canon Missioner) and Judy Paulsen (Wycliffe College Professor of Evangelism) hope that it will inspire and equip Christians to share their faith, and invite their family, friends, colleagues and neighbours to explore a relationship with God for themselves. Drawing on stories from people’s lives today, together with stories of invitation from the Bible, they hope people will be excited by, and grow in comfort with, sharing the good news of the gospel. A printed resource is available free online along with six video episodes at <http://spiritofinvita.wpengine.com/invited/>

2. Bringing Faith into Everyday Conversations

(The section below comes from “Moving from ‘loving’ to ‘exploring’” in “God Talk”, *Fresh Expressions*)

Fresh Expressions “seeks to transform communities and individuals through championing, resourcing and multiplying new ways of being church.”

For more information and resources go to <https://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/home>

As we love others and build community among them, deeper relationships will develop naturally. Questions about life and what makes us tick will surface. [Some] may share their faith stories, others may ask questions and spiritual interest begins to grow. In time, individuals may welcome an opportunity to explore the Christian life in more detail.

Some... may share their faith stories as a matter of course, while others may feel more reticent and awkward – “Who am I to tell other people what to think?” They may prefer to let their actions speak for themselves, in the hope that their lives will reflect Christ.

A Godly life on its own doesn't automatically point people to Jesus

Others may imagine that the individual is just naturally a nice person and not think to probe deeper. Or they may be too shy to ask a leading question. The believer may have to say something to help others in the group make the connection with the Christian faith. What is said needs to be at the appropriate level of communication. Without wanting to over-simplify, people talk to each other at broadly five levels:

level 1: an exchange of greetings –

“Hi! How are you?” “Fine, thanks.”

level 2: an exchange of information –

“What time's the football match this evening?”

level 3: an exchange of opinion –

“The manager should be sacked.”

level 4: an exchange of feelings –

“I was so disappointed.”

level 5: a sharing of one's innermost self –

“I felt humiliated by my attempt to play football on Saturday.”

Much everyday communication exists at levels 1 and 2, but when Christians think about sharing their faith they frequently imagine saying things at levels 3 or 4 or even 5. Yet in a level 1 and 2 exchange, it can feel awkward to inject something appropriate for the deeper levels. So Christians may struggle to find an opportunity to share their experience of God.

Christians may need help in thinking how to share their faith appropriately at levels 1 and 2

Hi! Did you have a good weekend?

Yes, thanks. We had a brilliant weekend away with our church.

That would be enough for someone else to connect the person's life with the fact that they are a Christian. Later the other person might say, *Did you mention the other day that you go to church?* and that might become the opportunity for a level 3 or 4 conversation about God. Of course, Christians don't need to have all the answers! It would be sufficient for the comment, *How can God allow all that suffering?* (a level 3 comment) to provoke the response, *I can't get my mind round it either. But I do know that when I lost my mum recently, Jesus felt very close to me.*

The bottom line for a level 3, 4 or 5 conversation about faith is for the believer to have a personal story – preferably recent – of how Jesus has made a difference to their lives. Any question they can't answer can be met with a frank, *I don't know, but I do know that God made such-and-such a difference to me the other day.*

The key thing is authenticity. Thinking about these different levels of communication shouldn't be a tool to encourage pat responses. Rather, it may be a helpful way to encourage some Christians to grow in confidence about sharing their faith. As they imagine things that would be natural for them to say at conversation levels 1 and 2, they may find it easier to bring their faith into their everyday chit-chat.

3. Establishing Our Christian Identity

(The section below comes from *Starting New Worshiping Communities: A process of discernment*)

1001 Worshiping Communities, a project of the Presbyterian Church (USA) offers the new resource *Starting New Worshiping Communities: A process of discernment*. It is available free – for download or for ordering the bound resource book – at <http://www.onethousandone.org/#!training/c1v2k>. In addition, short YouTube videos about new initiatives are also available free for download at <http://www.onethousandone.org/#!video-playlist/ctm5>

Our identity as Christians is an important part of renewing existing church communities and forming new ones. It is also integral to what we do in mission and why we do it.

Read Matthew 16:13-25

Discuss

1. What phrases and ideas jumped out at you?
2. What were some of the differences between Peter “getting it” and Peter being a “stumbling block”?
3. How would you answer the question “Who do you say that I am?” Who is Jesus to you?
4. Read “Connecting” and “Being church in a new way.” How might you change your description of Jesus if asked to talk about him in non-churchy language?

Connecting

“If [you are] going to connect with those outside the church, [you] need to get clear on who Jesus is, and be able to articulate Jesus to those who do not speak the language of church. It is no accident that Jesus used parables and metaphors to describe the kingdom of God.... Practice how you would articulate the gospel in ways that connect with the culture around you and express the core of who you are.” From *Starting New Worshiping Communities*, p. 16

Pray

God, open our minds and hearts to gain new understanding and new perspectives. Lead each of us to see Jesus more clearly each day. Amen.

Being church in a new way

“The question must change from ‘How do we do church better?’ to ‘How can we be church in a new way?’ In order to reconnect with the missional DNA already present in our churches, we must make the ‘proclamation of the gospel for the salvation of humankind’ a priority for each member of our congregations. This proclamation in word and deed must start with disciples who have a vibrant faith going out to share their faith with friends, neighbors, and their communities...” From the missional vision of *1001 Worshiping Communities* project <http://www.onethousandone.org/#!our-story/cq22>

Learn more

For further reading about establishing Christian identity:

The four gospels in the Bible

Bosch, David (1991, 2011). *Transforming Mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*, Orbis Books

Guder, Darrell (ed.) (1998). *Missional Church: A vision for the sending of the church in North America*, Eerdmans

Dally, John Addison (2008). *Choosing the Kingdom: Missional preaching for the household of God*, Alban Institute

Branson, Mark Lau & Warnes, Nick (eds) (2014). *Starting Missional Churches: Life with God in the neighborhood*, InterVarsity Press

Canadian Ministries wants to hear from YOU!

What parts of this resource are most useful? Share your stories of speaking about your faith! Recommend a resource! Make a suggestion or ask a question!

Contact us at canadianministries@presbyterian.ca or call 416-441-1111 or 1-800-619-7301 Ext. 271. Find us on Facebook.