

GC3:

The Great Commission

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. Matthew 28:19



This Bible study is the third in the GC Trilogy and focuses on the commission our Lord Jesus gave us to make disciples of all nations. Here, we seek to understand what the Great Commission is, to heat up our love for the Lord and our compassion for others, and to take practical steps to share our faith.

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The GC Trilogy

GC1: The Greatest Commandment
 GC2: The Second Greatest Commandment
 GC3: The Great Commission

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Session One: GC3 Defined

The purpose of this Bible study is for us to understand what GC3 is, stoke our fires of love for the Lord and compassion for others, and take practical steps to increase the degree to which we share our faith with others.

- 1. We learned about GC1 and GC2 in the previous two studies. What are these commands? See Mark 12:30-31.**
- 2. Write out the following Scriptures that tell us what GC3 is.**
 - Matthew 28:19-20
 - Luke 24:46-48
 - Acts 1:8
- 3. GC3 is the Great Commission, which is where we get the letters “GC.” But, just like GC1 and GC2, it is not just a suggestion or a good idea, it is a _____.**
- 4. What does it mean to be commissioned?**
- 5. The Matthew verse above says to make disciples and to teach them. What is a disciple, and what are they to be taught?**
- 6. From the Luke verse, what should be proclaimed, and where is it to be proclaimed?**
- 7. From the Matthew and Acts verses, who is with us in carrying out this commission, and what do we receive to be able to do it?**

In both Luke and Acts, Jesus was telling his disciples to be witnesses. They were there with Jesus and saw all that he did and heard all that he said. We are here, a couple of millennia later. Read the Words of Hope devotional pictured on the next page.

8. Because we did not witness Jesus when he physically walked the earth, are we excluded from GC3? Why or why not?

Mark Mittelberg, in his book *The Unexpected Adventure* that he co-authored with Lee Strobel, writes:

A Christian, by definition, is a follower of Jesus Christ, the one who came “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10) and who then commissioned us to follow his example and “go and make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). We were redeemed, in part, for the purpose of reaching others for Christ. Therefore, we’ll never be complete in our experience with God until we allow him to use us to spread his message to others. ¹

9. What do you think of this excerpt?

Wednesday—October 1

Read: 1 John 1:1-10

Being a Witness

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. (v. 1)

In a simple and basic sense, the word *witness* means to declare the truth to another person—you are telling another person of what you are sure, and that you are sure. It’s the truth you know to be true.

In today’s Bible reading, John gives the best definition of his own witness to who Jesus is (telling what he had heard, seen, and touched) and that the eternal life Jesus gives is real. And he tells why being a witness matters—it brings others into fellowship with the church and with God (v. 3).

As followers of Jesus, we are called to serve as “witnesses” of our faith in Christ too. To be a witness of Christ is to demonstrate by our words, actions, and attitude the special, unique experience that we have seen, heard, and believed in our hearts about the Lord who has forgiven us of our sins and offered us eternal life.

If you are a believer in Jesus, and you have experienced transformation because of your relationship with Christ, you are called to tell another person about it. So, prepare your heart to be a witness of what Christ has done in your life.

—Rev. Titus Baraka

As you pray, ask God to make you a witness to others about what he is doing in your life.

Another term for GC3 is the somewhat intimidating word *evangelism*. Kevin G. Harney, in his book *Organic Outreach For Ordinary People*, states:

We evangelize all the time. When we try a new restaurant that has amazing food, we want others to experience it. Many people are so enthusiastic about a sports team that they wear clothes that bear the team’s name and logo. They memorize players’ stats and talk about “their team.”

The truth is, when we are zealous about something, when we really love it, we talk about it. We invite others to experience it. We want to share the joy. ²

10. What do you think about Kevin’s discussion of evangelism?

11. What things do you evangelize about?

Kevin also talks about the “One-Degree Rule,” which states that we can increase the degree of our outreach incrementally and consistently. By this, we will begin to see God working through us, which not only builds his Kingdom here on earth but also strengthens our faith and confidence. But first, we need to identify our personal evangelistic temperature so we have a starting point. Only you can know your temperature. The importance lies not in where we place ourselves currently (and each day we may feel we are at a different starting point), but in determining where we are starting from. ³

12. Circle where you are on the scale below, where a “One” is that the idea of sharing your faith with others never enters your mind, and a “Ten” is that it is all you think about and are witnessing all the time.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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13. What do you think of the idea of raising your personal evangelistic temperature?

Weekly Challenge Discussion

Every week, we will introduce a challenge at the end of the session for you to complete over the next seven days before meeting for the next session. Challenges generally take about five to fifteen minutes each day. If a day is skipped, please don’t stop! Just pick up where you left off.

Challenge One: Pray for Yourself

Complete this challenge each of the next seven days after meeting for Session One and before meeting for Session Two.

Every Christian can increase their personal evangelistic temperature with prayer.

Do you have trouble believing that your prayers make a difference? Satan certainly wants you to think they do not. Look at what the following Scriptures say about prayer.

- Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. Matthew 7:7
- The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16
- And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. 1 John 5:14-15

For the next seven days, set aside five to ten minutes each day. Put away your phone. Go somewhere you can be alone and not distracted by anything.

Day One

Date: _____

Look back on the previous page to where you identified your personal evangelistic temperature.

- Ask God to give you a compassionate heart toward others, to open your eyes to the lost and hurting people around you, and see them as he does.
- Pray that God gives you what you need to increase your personal evangelistic temperature one degree today.

Day Two through Four

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to ask God to give you a compassionate heart toward others, to open your eyes to the lost and hurting people around you, and see them as he does.
- Ask the Lord to give you a desire to share who he is to you with others.
- Continue to pray that God gives you what you need to increase your personal evangelistic temperature one degree today.
- Start listing below things about your faith that bring you joy that you would want to evangelize about.

Day Five through Seven

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to ask God to give you a compassionate heart toward others, to open your eyes to the lost and hurting people around you, and see them as he does.
- Continue to ask the Lord to give you a desire to share who he is to you with others.
- Ask God to help you identify excuses you have for not sharing your faith and ask him to help you overcome them.
- Ask God to use you in his mission to bring people to him.
- Continue to pray that God gives you what you need to increase your personal evangelistic temperature one degree today.
- Continue listing below things about your faith that bring you joy that you would want to evangelize about.

List below things about God, Jesus, or your faith that bring you joy that you could evangelize to others about.

God does amazing things when we pray according to his will and trust him to answer. Praying to be used in his mission to bring people to him is undoubtedly in his will. Watch out for unexpected opportunities where he asks you to talk to others about Jesus!

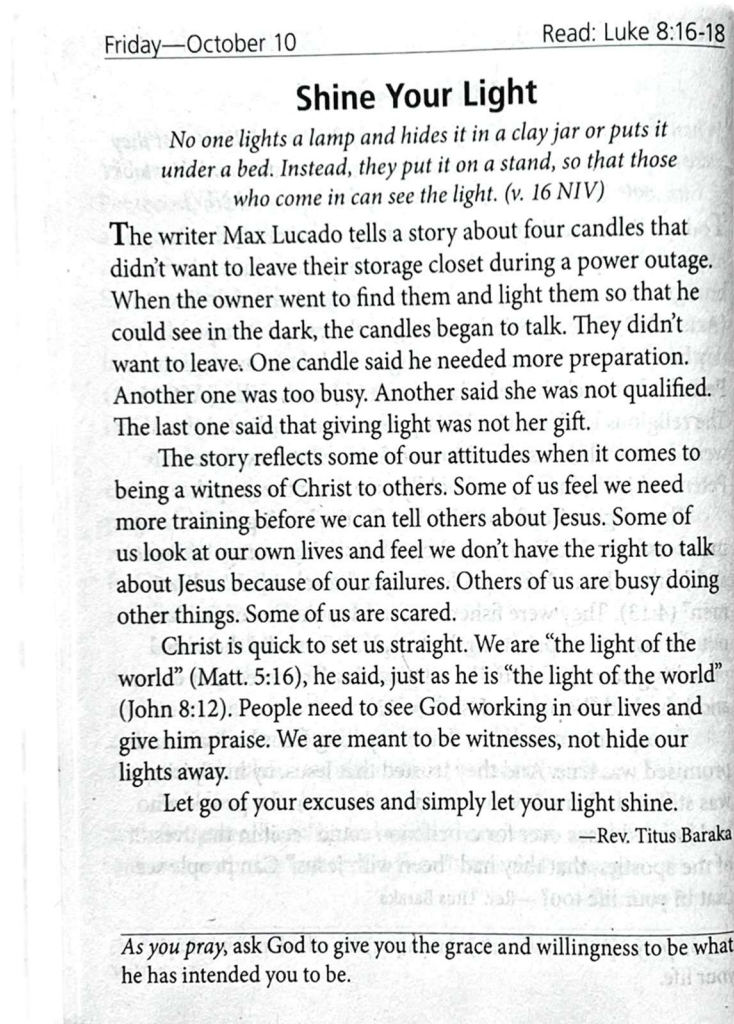
Session Two: Excuses

Report out from Session One challenge.

We ended Session One by commenting on what Kevin G. Harney wrote in his book *Organic Outreach For Ordinary People*: that we all evangelize about things we are enthusiastic about. Kevin goes on to ask why we can be more enthusiastic about a restaurant or sports team than we are about Jesus.⁴

1. Why do you think that we can talk naturally about restaurants and sports teams, but when it comes to sharing the most crucial thing in our lives – our faith – we clam up?

2. Read Luke 8:16-18 and the Words of Hope devotional pictured here. What are some of the points in this devotional that spoke to you?



There are many more excuses we can have for not letting our light shine than there were for those four candles. On the next page is a list with some blank spaces.

3. Check every excuse you can identify with, and if you think of any others, fill in the blanks. Put an asterisk next to your top two to three reasons that stand in the way of you witnessing more than you do.

	They attend church, they are good people, I'm sure they're Christians.		I don't want to jeopardize fitting in with the group.
	I am not trained.		Evangelism is not my gift.
	I am not perfect, I'm messed up, I'm a sinner.		I've tried this before, and it doesn't have any effect.
	I won't be able to answer questions.		I don't like confrontation, and I'm not good at it.
	This person does not want to hear this.		They will mock me or somehow put me down.
	I don't want to appear as though I'm judging them or as "holier than thou."		This person has brushed me off before.
	I'm unable to share my faith at the workplace. It is against company policy.		This person is my family (or friend, neighbor, etc.). I don't want to hurt our relationship.
	My faith is too personal to share.		I will be rejected.
	I don't have time to witness.		I don't like this person.
	I won't make a difference.		I should be respectful of their beliefs and not force mine on them.
	I might say something wrong.		There is no hope for this person.
	I am waiting for the right opportunity to talk to this person.		If God has called this person, they will come to him somehow. He doesn't need me.

Read Matthew 9:35-38.

4. What did Jesus feel for the people, why did he have that emotion, and what did he do for the people because of it?

5. What does Jesus say to his disciples and ask them to do?

GC3 must be approached with the right motives, or better said, a singular motive – compassion. So much compassion that we devalue our excuses and communicate to the lost that not only do we want them to avoid hell, but also to enter into the loving, rewarding, and eternal relationship with God that we were created for. Genuine love for others will testify to them of God’s love for them. But our will cannot fabricate that love or compassion. This must spring forth from our love for the Lord – for everything about him, who he is, what he has done, what he is doing, and will do. We will then naturally want to share that with others. And we can’t truly love God without continually realizing his love for us. He loved us first with all our sins, and for nothing good we have done. He loves us because he created us and wants to love, care for, and relate to us, just as he walked daily in the garden with Adam and Eve. So, we must start with GC0: Great Creator. If we take this perspective forward, then GC1, GC2, and GC3 all fall in place. If we see ourselves holding back on GC3, we need to backtrack – likely all the way to GC0 to realize again God’s amazing love for us. You can’t share what you don’t have.

6. What are your thoughts on the paragraph above?

Personal Reflection

Do you realize and truly appreciate God’s love for you? When you think about who God is, what he has done for you, how he wants to have an actual, intimate relationship with you, and who you would be without him, do you grab a tissue, take a deep breath, or feel anything? If the fact that God loves you so much that he gave his only son, who willingly let himself be mercilessly tortured, nailed to a cross, and then gave up his life so you could be forgiven of all your sins is *just* a fact, then, please, bow your head and pray right now that God reveals himself to you in a way that touches the deepest crevices of your heart to make his love known to you.

Weekly Challenge Discussion

Remember to complete this challenge over the next seven days before meeting for the next session. If a day is skipped, please don’t stop! Just pick up where you left off.

Challenge Two: Pray for a Loved One

Complete this challenge each of the next seven days after meeting for Session Two and before meeting for Session Three.

Last week, we focused on praying for ourselves to heat up our compassion for others. This week, we will focus on praying for someone we love. For the next seven days, set aside five to ten minutes each day. Put away your phone. Go somewhere you can be alone and not distracted by anything.

Day One

Date: _____

Identify someone you care about and regularly interact with who is spiritually disconnected, or whose salvation you're unsure about. This could be a family member, co-worker, friend, neighbor, or someone else.

- Person's Name: _____
- List this person's needs, challenges, or joys that you know of currently:

- Pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys that you know of currently.
- Pray that God fires up the compassion you have for the future of this person's eternal soul.

Day Two through Four

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys.
- Continue to pray that God fires up the compassion you have for the future of this person's eternal soul.
- Ask the Lord to reveal himself to this person in a way that is specific to them.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus.

Day Five through Seven

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys.
- Continue to pray that God fires up the compassion you have for the future of this person's eternal soul.
- Continue to ask the Lord to reveal himself to this person in a way that is specific to them.
- Continue to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus.
- Ask God to do whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.

Session Three: Of Cats and Souls

Report out from Session Two challenge.

From Session Two, we learned that our base motivation for carrying out GC3 is compassion for others, so that lost souls are found, and that we disciple each other.

But that list of excuses is daunting. Below is a true story that we can learn from. Names of people have been changed to respect their privacy.

Will and Shannon were heading to the supermarket on a Sunday afternoon. The store would likely be filled with all the other busy people with demanding careers. If they were lucky, they might get a decent parking space. Hoping to make the green light, they hurried toward the entrance to their neighborhood, where they would exit onto the crowded six-lane road.

“Will! Stop!” Shannon exclaimed as she pointed toward the median, just before the entrance. Flanking this area is a condominium community on one side and an apartment complex on the other. There, in the center of the thoroughfare, was a black and white kitten crouched next to a McDonald’s bag.

With vehicles behind and in front, Will pulled his car over as best he could. Before he put the car in park, Shannon had bounded out and was dodging cars to get to the tiny animal. The kitten, however, only saw danger approaching, and, running away across the entrance road, disappeared into the bushes that lined the six-lane road. Will and Shannon searched through the dense bushes to no avail. Noticing that the guard was in the gatehouse, they asked him about the little cat and discovered that she had been around for a few weeks.

The couple returned to their car and headed back home, where they borrowed a live catch animal trap from a neighbor. They drove back to the area where they last saw the kitten, set the cage beneath the bushes, and left some cat food at the back of the trap. With nothing left to do for the kitten, they headed to the grocery store.

Shannon awoke at 3 a.m. the next morning to the sound of rain beating on the windows. “Will,” she nudged her husband awake, “let’s go check the trap.”

Bleary-eyed, they drove up to the entrance area and parked in the “Future Tenant” space at the apartment complex. As they walked toward the cage, the headlights from a car entering the neighborhood illuminated a soggy black and white kitten crouched in the back of the trap. Kneeling to inspect the bedraggled animal, Shannon was met with piercing eyes filled with fright. As Will attempted to pick up the cage, the kitten panicked, slamming herself against the sides of the trap, trying to find a way out. Surprised by the creature's strength, he held the cage secure to prevent it from dropping.

Once home, they brought the trap into a bathroom and set up food and water bowls, as well as a litter box. Dublin, their cat, was curious but kept his distance. Here is a picture of the kitten when she had ventured out of the cage and was crouched on the counter. Her composure speaks of her fear and apprehension, as she wasn’t sure what fate held for her.



Will and Shannon had no intention of keeping the kitten. They planned to foster her until she was old enough to be spayed, and, once she had recovered, find a good home for her. But as the weeks went by, they fell in love with the small black and white cat who had also become a playmate and companion to Dublin. The day came to decide what to do. It was an easy choice. They named her Liffey after the river that runs through Dublin in Ireland. As you might guess, Liffey is an Irish word meaning “life” in English. Please take a look at the picture now of Liffey, who not only had her life saved but was given a loving new life.



- 1. What are all the excuses Will and Shannon could have had for not doing what they did? Look at the list of excuses from Session Two and add those to any you think of.**

- 2. What do you think was their motivation for overcoming these excuses?**

- 3. When have you overcome fears and/or excuses to do something that you would not have typically done, and what motivated you to do that?**

- 4. Did the cat think it was in danger? Did it want to be “saved”? Did it appreciate Will and Shannon when they first brought it home?**

God loves cats and all animals, but he loves each human being immensely more. God sees every lost human soul running around in danger that it often doesn’t recognize it is in, and therefore does not see a need to be saved. Our heavenly Father wants everyone to experience a bountiful and loving life with him. He uses us to seize opportunities to do his rescue work. Our compassion for them will overcome our excuses.

- 5. Similar to Liffey, the people we witness to may not realize the danger their souls are in. They may not recognize their need for salvation, nor appreciate your witnessing to them. Is this a reason not to witness when you sense the Holy Spirit telling you to do so? Read Jude 1:22-23. What does this verse mean?**

In his book, Kevin Harney tells of a testimony from Penn, a well-known illusionist, who, at the end of one of his shows, was given a Bible and was being witnessed to by a businessman. Penn is an atheist, but he respected the man’s genuine care and concern for Penn. Below is an excerpt of Penn’s response to this encounter. You can listen to Penn’s complete response on YouTube (see reference page).

But he [the man who was witnessing to Penn] was not defensive, and he looked me right in the eyes, and he was truly complimentary. It did not seem like empty flattery. He was really kind, and nice, and sane, and looked me in the eyes and talked to me. Then he gave me this Bible.

I've always said I don't respect people who don't proselytize. I don't respect that at all. If you believe that there's a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it's not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward, how much do you have to hate somebody to not proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?

I mean, if I believed, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn't believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is more important than that. ⁵

6. What are some things we can learn and take to heart from what the witness did?

7. What are some things we can learn and take to heart from Penn's response?

Penn did not become a Christian as a result of this encounter, but a seed was planted, or one already there was watered. And God is using Penn's YouTube recording to stir Christians, like us, to be compassionately bold in witnessing to others.

Weekly Challenge Discussion

Remember to complete this challenge over the next seven days before meeting for the next session. If a day is skipped, please don't stop! Just pick up where you left off.

Challenge Three: Reach Out I

Complete this challenge each of the next seven days after meeting for Session Three and before meeting for Session Four.

Last week, you identified someone you care about who is spiritually disconnected or whose salvation you're unsure about, and you began praying for them. For the next seven days, you will continue praying for them and will also reach out to them.

Day One through Three

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
- Ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to reach out to this person.
- Pray also for the opportunity to show this person the gospel, truth plus kindness is a winsome combination.

Sometime During Day One through Three

Contact this person to see how they are doing. List any new prayer needs. Tell them that you are praying for them.

Date: _____ Method of Contact: _____

Additional Prayer Needs: _____

What was the person's reaction when you asked about their prayer needs and told them you were praying for them?

Day Four through Seven

Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____ Date: _____

- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
- Ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to reach out again to this person.
- Continue to pray for the opportunity to show this person the gospel.
- Below are some ideas to enter into a spiritual conversation with someone. Considering your person's current situation, their unique temperament, how open you think they are to discussing spiritual matters, and your experience with them, add to this list ways you could start a spiritual conversation with them.
 - When talking to them about the joys or struggles they are experiencing, ask if you can pray with them right now.
 - Tell them about how God is currently helping you through a struggle or blessing you.
 - Share a Scripture or devotional that spoke to you, or reminds you of them.
 - Ask if they would be interested in attending church, a church-sponsored event, or Bible study with you.
 - If they are going through something that God has helped you with in the past, share your experience and how God helped you.
 - Giving God the credit, comment on the beauty of his creation. See Psalm 8.

Session Four: Of Salsa Dancing and Preparation

Report out from Session Three challenge.

In Session Three, we learned that we can overcome excuses that prevent us from witnessing when we realize the danger lost souls are in and earnestly desire for them to have an eternal, saving relationship with the God of the universe.

But even when we want to join God in his rescue operation, we may hold back with excuses such as, “I don’t know what to say,” “I’m not trained,” “I might say something wrong,” or “I won’t be able to answer their questions.” We cringe at the thought of losing respectability and, maybe even worse, pushing the person further away by appearing weak in our faith. The tale below is based on a true story that we can learn from. Names of people have been changed to respect their privacy.

Mick and Tina were on the phone with their daughter, Vera. Her wedding date was only six months away. The major details had been decided, and now they were discussing some remaining items.

“Dad, I’ve finally decided on the father-daughter dance!” Vera’s voice overflowed with excitement. Mick was so proud of his daughter and shared her joy as she anticipated her marriage. He was looking forward to cradling her in his arms while they slow-danced to maybe *Sunrise*, *Sunset*, *Isn’t She Lovely*, or perhaps a contemporary song like *Dad*, by Tyler Wood.

“Dad, I want us to do the Salsa together!”

The Salsa? Mick gulped as he began to feel drops of sweat forming on his forehead and others running down his back. Mick considered himself a good dancer, but his knowledge of salsa was limited to dipping a tortilla chip in it. Vera’s fiancé, Juan, grew up dancing the Salsa. Attending the wedding would be Juan’s large extended family, who danced the Salsa at their frequent celebrations. Vera herself had gained skill in the complex moves over the years she had been dating Juan.

“Sure, honey.” Mick hoped Vera had not picked up on his hesitation and that he sounded enthusiastic instead of stricken with anxiety. As Vera and Tina talked about wedding favors, Mick could only think about how he was going to pull this off without embarrassing himself, or worse, Vera. By the time the phone call ended, Mick had come to a solution. Salsa lessons.

Within a few weeks, Mick found a Salsa dance program and made room for it in his busy schedule by giving up activities scheduled on the same nights. As he started lessons, it was daunting to watch the experienced dancers who made the dance look easy and fluid, but when Mick and the other beginners tried to imitate their moves, it came across as disjointed and stiff. Mick discovered that the dance had several levels of expertise. When it came time to graduate to the next level, the instructor kept him back to perfect some of the basic moves. Discouraged but committed, Mick kept at it.

As the wedding approached, Mick honed his skills and gained the confidence he needed to dance the Salsa with his daughter, Vera, on her wedding day, in front of a roomful of guests.



- 1. What are all the excuses Mick could have had for not agreeing to Vera's request? Look at the list of excuses from Session Two and add those to any you think of.**
- 2. What did Mick realize was the biggest obstacle in honoring Vera's wishes, and what steps did he take to overcome this?**
- 3. What do you think was his motivation for overcoming excuses and dealing with the obstacles?**
- 4. When have you overcome fears and/or excuses to do something through vigorous preparation, and what motivated you to do that?**

We may not feel confident that we can have conversations about our faith with those who have no concept of Christianity, have misconceptions, or are opposed to Christianity. But when we are willing, God will use us in his kingdom work right where we are, and at whatever "skill" level we think we are at in witnessing. To build confidence, we can deepen our understanding so we can articulate the foundational truths of our faith.

- 5. Romans 6:23 is a good scripture to memorize because it tells what Christianity is about. Write out this verse below.**
- 6. What is the definition of wages? What do you have to do to get them?**
- 7. What is the death this verse is talking about? Does this apply to everyone (even "good" people)?**
- 8. Read Romans 3:23. What does it mean to "fall short of the Glory of God"?**
- 9. What is the definition of a gift? What do you have to do to get a true gift?**
- 10. Who is giving this gift in Romans 6:23, and what is it?**

11. How does Jesus give us eternal life? See John 3:16.

Pretend you are on an airplane and are using the time to prepare for next week’s Bible study. The stranger next to you asks what book you are reading. You say, “My Bible.” The stranger asks what religion you are, and you answer that you are a Christian. The stranger comments that he is not religious. He says he is confused about what Christianity is.

12. Based on your answers to questions 5 – 11 and your own understanding, write below what you could say and do.

Weekly Challenge Discussion

Remember to complete this challenge over the next seven days before meeting for the next session. If a day is skipped, please don’t stop! Just pick up where you left off.

Challenge Four: Reach Out II and Read Your Bible

Complete this challenge each of the next seven days after meeting for Session Four and before meeting for Session Five.

There are many things we can do to prepare ourselves to share our faith, but the most vital is to know what God’s Word says about it. Read the Words of Hope devotional pictured here about the power of God’s Word.

The objective of this challenge is to increase your exposure to God’s Word, reach out to the person you identified earlier to begin a spiritual conversation, and keep praying for them.

Day One

Date: _____

From the table on the next page, identify your current Bible reading practice and choose your corresponding challenge.

Thursday—October 23Read: Hebrews 1:1-3

Power of the Word

Sustaining all things by his powerful word. (v. 3 NIV)

Emile Cailliet was an agnostic during World War I who had a strange longing for “a book that would understand me.” He attempted to fulfill this longing by compiling an anthology of quotations meaningful to him, but when he read it he was gravely disappointed. Though Cailliet had forbidden it, his wife obtained a Bible. He grabbed it and opened to the Beatitudes. “I read and read and read—now aloud with an indescribable warmth surging within,” he recounted. “I could not find words to express my awe and wonder . . . This was the Book that would understand me! . . . As I looked through [the Gospels], the one of whom they spoke, the one who spoke and acted in them, became alive in me.”

God’s mighty Word transforms human lives, from the Ethiopian eunuch reading Isaiah 53:7-8, to Augustine “taking and reading” Romans 13:13-14, to Martin Luther finding Christ’s righteousness for him in Romans 1:17. For the Reformers, the “peculiar power” of Scripture (see John Calvin, *Institutes*, 1.8.1), was the potent agent of reform.

God creates, covenants, and judges by his Word. When God the Son dwells on earth, he is called the “Word” (John 1:1). Scripture is a *lamp* (Ps. 119:105), a *sword* (Eph. 6:17), and a *seed* (1 Peter 1:23). Make it a driving passion to read God’s Word, to saturate your life with Scripture, and you will find power, direction, protection, and new life. —Michael Andres

As you pray, ask God to transform you by his powerful Word.

Current Bible Reading Practice	Bible Reading Challenge
Consistently read zero to one chapter per day.	<u>Add one more chapter per day.</u> Use your current Bible reading plan or read the Gospel of John or the book of Romans.
Consistently read two chapters per day.	<u>Add one more chapter per day, or add reading a psalm each day.</u> Use your current Bible reading plan or read the Gospel of John or the book of Romans.
Consistently read three or more chapters per day.	<u>Continue at your current level and add reading a psalm each day, reading a devotional each day, or journaling your thoughts on what you have read each day.</u> Use your Bible reading plan or read the Gospel of John or the book of Romans.

- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
- Continue to ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to reach out to this person.
- Continue to pray for the opportunity to show this person the gospel.

Sometime During Day One through Three

From the list on page 13 of ways you could start a spiritual conversation, pick one and reach out to this person. When they respond, be sure to listen, hear their hearts, and get a sense of where they are in their spiritual journey.

Date: _____ Method of Contact: _____

How you opened up the spiritual discussion: _____

What was their response? _____

Day Two through Seven

Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____ Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____

Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____ Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____

Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____ Date: _____ Scripture Read: _____

- Complete your Bible reading challenge each day and record it above.
- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
- Ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to keep reaching out to this person to share your faith.
- Continue to pray for the opportunity to show this person the gospel.

Session Five: I Love to Tell the Story

Report out on Session Four challenge.

- 1. Look back on page three of Session One at the October 1 Words of Hope devotion. What does the word witness mean?**

In the last session, we learned the importance of knowing God's Word, which enables us to witness to others about the truth we are sure of, because it is God's Word. The gospel is a universal truth applicable to everyone and does not change based on our personal experiences.

Like a witness who truthfully testifies to a judge and jury about what they personally experienced, we can truthfully testify to others about our personal experience of the gospel. Sharing our stories, or testimonies, is a powerful, authentic, and non-intrusive way to share our faith in Jesus Christ with others. Our stories help illustrate the tangible impact of the gospel, making abstract concepts more relatable through our experiences. It is easier to tell others what Jesus Christ can do for them when we share what he has done for us.

We each have our own "Salvation Testimony." This is our personal story of how we came to be a Christian, and tells of our life before and after following Christ. It highlights what changed in our beliefs, desires, motivations, and behaviors as a result of our relationship with him, showcasing the saving power of knowing Jesus.

- 2. Probably the most well-known salvation testimony in the Bible is that of Paul. Read Acts 9:1-6 and write below how Paul came into a saving relationship with Jesus.**

The very first evangelistic crusade took place in Jerusalem, where people from all over the world had gathered to celebrate Pentecost. The disciples were together, and the Holy Spirit came with a sound like a rushing wind and filled each one of them. They began speaking in different languages, and crowds gathered, able to hear them in their own language. Peter gave his first sermon explaining the scriptures and attesting that Jesus was the Messiah who had risen from the dead.

- 3. Read Acts 2:36-37. How did Peter end his sermon, and what was the effect on the people?**

- 4. Read Acts 2:38-41. What did Peter answer, and what then happened in verse 41?**

Likely, none of us experienced what Paul did to bring us to Christ, or witnessed an event like the people did at Pentecost. Still, because "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), if you are a Christian, there was a point in your life (even if you were brought up in a Christian household) when you recognized your sinfulness, understood that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone, repented, and believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

- 5. The following exercise will help you express your salvation testimony so you can share it with others. Your story is uniquely you, so there is no wrong way to record it. Use concrete examples.**

<p>Life Before Surrendering to Christ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What were your inner needs? (e.g., affirmation, acceptance, loneliness, emptiness, fear of death, insecurity, etc.) • How did you try to satisfy them? (e.g., work, drugs, money, excelling, relationships, sports, sex. Etc.) • What was the chief problem, emotion, situation, or attitude you were dealing with? • What motivated you to seek a change? 	
<p>Steps Leading You to Christ</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What people influenced your decision? • How did you come to understand that salvation is by grace alone through faith in Christ alone? • What Scripture or biblical truths convicted you and led you to trust in Christ? • What was the turning point when you repented and believed in Jesus as your Lord and Savior? 	
<p>Life Now as a Christian</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is Christ meeting your inner needs? • How has your life in Christ made a difference in the issues or emotions you were/are facing? • How have your thoughts, attitudes, and behavior changed? • Share how his forgiveness has impacted you and what your relationship with him means to you. 	

We each also have our own “Providential Testimonies.” These testimonies are specific instances in which God has demonstrated his love and care for us, such as overcoming illness, delivering us from danger, providing during financial hardship, and finding direction in challenging times. There are several examples of providential testimonies in the Bible.

John chapter four tells about Jesus talking with a Samaritan woman at a well. Jesus tells her about the living water he can give and tells her things about herself. Just as the disciples come back, the woman leaves.

Read John 4:28-42.

- 6. What was the woman’s providential testimony, and who did she tell it to?**

- 7. Was Jesus talking to his disciples about farming? If not, what was he referring to?**

8. What did the townspeople do because of the woman's testimony?

In John chapter nine, we find the story of Jesus healing on the Sabbath a man born blind. The man was brought to the Pharisees to be questioned about his healing, and he told them what Jesus did. Some Pharisees said that Jesus was not from God because he did not keep the Sabbath, while others argued that a sinner could not do such signs. After questioning the man's parents, they questioned the man again.

Read John 9:24-34.

9. What was the man's providential testimony?

10. What was the Pharisees' reaction?

11. What was the man confident about to even stand up to the Pharisees' rebukes? See verses 30-33.

We see from these two examples that reactions may be mixed when we tell our stories about how God has intervened in our lives. As believers, we are called to scatter the seed of the Gospel liberally. The results aren't our responsibility—God causes the seed to germinate and grow. Even those Pharisees who demonstrated unbelief in who Jesus was could not deny the miracle that happened to the man. And a seed had been planted.

We each have times in our lives when we have seen God demonstrate his love and care. The following exercise will help you record one of your providential testimonies to share with others.

Tips for Testimonies

When Preparing:

- Use everyday language (not Christianese).
- Keep it short and to the point.
- Highlight the before and after contrast.
- Give God and Jesus center stage and credit for making the change.

When Sharing:

- Ask permission to share your story.
- Convey joy and humility at God's involvement in your life.
- Be attentive to the person's reaction and respond accordingly.

12. Think about a time when you experienced God's unique work in your life. It could be a specific prayer being answered, protection in a dangerous situation, healing, provision, an emotional breakthrough, a mended relationship, or any number of things.

What was the situation, issue, or status quo before God intervened?	
How did God intervene, and what was the outcome?	
How did this divine intervention strengthen your faith?	

13. Do you think that sharing your personal testimonies is a powerful way to witness? Why or why not?

Weekly Challenge Discussion

Remember to complete this challenge over the next seven days before meeting for the next session. If a day is skipped, please don't stop! Just pick up where you left off.

Challenge Five: Reach Out III and Memorize Scripture

Complete this challenge each of the next seven days after meeting for Session Five and before meeting for Session Six.

Another thing we can do to prepare for a spiritual conversation is memorize a few Scriptures to use. The objective of this challenge is to memorize a Scripture, reach out to the person you identified earlier to share one of your testimonies, and keep praying for them.

Day One

Date: _____

Pick one of the following Scriptures to memorize. Write out the verse(s) on the next page.

- John 3:16-18
 - John 14:6
- Romans 3:23-24
 - Romans 6:23
- 1 John 4:10

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- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
 - Continue to ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to keep reaching out to this person to share your faith.
 - Continue to pray for the opportunity to show this person the gospel.

Sometime During Day One through Three

Reach out to this person and share one of your testimonies.

Date:_____ Method of Contact:_____

Ask if you can share a story of how God has worked in your life (i.e., a testimony).

Testimony that you shared: _____

Person's reaction: _____

Day Two through Seven

Date:_____ Date:_____ Date:_____

Date:_____ Date:_____ Date:_____

- Each day, write out your Scripture again and recite it. Practice it (along with the Book and verse notation) until you commit it to memory.
- Continue to pray for this person's needs, challenges, and/or joys, to ask the Lord to reveal himself in a way that is specific to them, to ask the Holy Spirit to speak to them, soften their hearts, and draw them to Jesus, and that God does whatever must be done that they might see their need for Jesus, their Savior.
- Continue to ask God to give you a compassionate boldness to keep reaching out to this person to share your faith.
- Continue to pray for the opportunity to show this person the gospel.

Session Six: Some Final Thoughts

Report out on Session Five challenge.

In this final session, we will explore additional thoughts to help us play our part in the Great Commission.

Kevin Harney writes: Many people run from the idea of outreach because they feel it requires them to be abrasive and confrontational. But there are as many ways to do evangelism as there are different kinds of people. Your unique way of doing outreach grows organically out of who you are. The key is to invite the Spirit of God to direct you as you look for approaches that match your wiring and personality. ⁶

1. What do you think of Kevin's statement? What does he say is the key to finding your approach to outreach?

2. List below some of your everyday activities or situations where you can interact with other people.

God desires to use our unique personalities and the gifts he's given us — right where we're at in our everyday lives — to fulfill GC3. God may also orchestrate unusual situations and place specific people in our path whom he wants us to witness to.

3. Have you ever been in a situation where you felt God orchestrated it so you could witness to someone? What was the situation, and what happened?

Pray that the Holy Spirit leads you in any outreach opportunities. Each person is motivated by different things, just like you are motivated differently from even the very closest people around you. Listen to what your ears hear from that person, what your eyes see, and what your spirit, inspired by the Holy Spirit, reveals to you. Don't formulate your words or your actions without doing this. The apostle Paul was great at appealing to people on levels they could relate to.

Read Acts 17:16-21.

4. What did Paul react to, and what did he do about it?

5. How did the philosophers get involved, and what did they want Paul to do?

Read Acts 17:22-34.

6. How did Paul incorporate what he knew about the Athenians to tell them the Gospel?

7. How did the Athenians react?

There is no set formula for outreach because each situation to witness or disciple is unique. We need to be creative, flexible, and open to God's leading.

Every time we seek to do outreach, we enter enemy territory. Be aware and don't be surprised by feelings of inadequacy or defeat.

8. Read Matthew 28:18. This is the verse preceding the Great Commission that is in verses 19 and 20. Who and what are backing us as we go and make disciples?

Keep in mind that as you witness with respect and humility, you are not cramming the Gospel down someone's throat or trying to come off as better than them. You are sharing who you are and the most essential part of your life. It should be natural for our faith to be a topic of conversation.

9. What does 2 Timothy 1:7-8 say?

We may be apprehensive about discussing spiritual topics with people because we fear they will ask questions we do not know how to answer. It is actually a very good thing when someone has questions; it shows they are interested. We discussed ways to prepare in sessions four and five, yet there will likely be questions that you cannot answer readily.

First, it is best not to guess or make up an answer. Affirm what you do know and admit what you do not know. People who are searching for spiritual things want the truth; they will respect our admission that we don't have everything figured out.

10. If someone asked a question about Christianity or the Bible and you don't have an answer, what are some ways you could respond or things that you could do besides admitting you do not know?

There are some questions we will not have satisfying answers to in this lifetime. Why is there so much pain in the world? Why do bad things happen to innocent people? Why do hurricanes, floods, fires, and earthquakes devastate entire communities? And these types of questions have no end.

11. These questions can only be comforted by our faith. How do the following scriptures relate to these questions?

- Isaiah 55:9
- Romans 8:28

Read Romans 10:13-15.

12. What is the chain of events for someone to call on the name of the Lord and be saved?

13. Are all Christians “sent” to preach the good news?

Never give up. Keep seeking ways to share your faith with people. Take small steps, do something. You are not the only person God will use, but you are one of those people. If they rebuff you, pray for them. Show them God’s love and concern for their eternal soul by blessing them in some way; practice GC2.

Sources:

1. Lee Strobel and Mark Mittelberg, *The Unexpected Adventure* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 22.
2. Kevin G. Harney, *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 13.
3. Ibid., 62.
4. Ibid., 13.
5. Penn Jillette, "Penn Says: A Gift of a Bible," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6md638smQd8>, accessed October 2025.
6. Kevin G. Harney, *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 83.

Recommendations to Help in Your Christian Walk:

- Bible reading plans: Having a Bible reading plan helps keep you on track to read the Bible in a specified period of time and/or in a set way (chronological, topical, etc.). Just Google "Bible Reading Plans" and you will find many free plans. Some are printable, others send an email or message each day for what to read.
- Study Bible: A study Bible has notes and commentary to help understand the Scriptures. I highly recommend the ESV Study Bible as its commentary does not introduce thoughts outside the Scriptures. Where there are several interpretations, it does a good job of outlining what theologians have proposed.
- Bible reading app: If you like to look up verses or read the Bible on your phone, tablet, or computer, a great reading app is YouVersion. It is easy to use, includes an audio feature, and offers reading plans. The icon to look for in the App Store is pictured here.
- Daily Devotional: Reading a daily devotional is a great way to gain insight into the Bible. There are many great devotionals available. I recommend Words of Hope, which is available online or in print.
- Books: Below are a few recommended authors and titles of books on witnessing and the basics of the Christian faith.
 - Harney, Kevin G., *Organic Outreach for Ordinary People*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
 - Keller, Timothy. *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*. New York: Dutton, 2008.
 - Lewis, C. S. *Mere Christianity*. New York: HarperOne, 2001.
 - Strobel, Lee, and Mittelberg, Mark, *The Unexpected Adventure*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009.
 - Strobel, Lee, *The Case for Christ*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998.



Ongoing Challenge: Pick one or two of these that you do not currently do and move forward with them.

- Daily raise your degree of witnessing
- Daily prayer
- Daily Bible reading
- Daily devotional reading
- Commit to read the whole Bible over 12 – 18 months
- Scripture memorization
- Keep a faith journal
- Continue witnessing to this person
- Pick another person to start praying for and start outreach efforts