
WON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR?



GROUP STUDY



Won't You Be My Neighbor?

THIS BOOK BELONGS TO:

It is our hope that you use this book, keep it and reference your entries over the course of your spiritual journey.

- Rock Point Adult Ministries Team

Table of Contents

05

Introduction:
Won't You Be My Neighbor?

09

Session 1:
Who is *My Neighbor*?

15

Session 2:
How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

25

Session 3:
St. Paul and Mr. Rogers,
Brothers from Different Mothers

33

Session 4:
Making the Message Clear

40

Resources:
Videos and PDF

Introduction

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

If you were a child, or a parent of a child, in the late sixties, seventies, or eighties, or even the nineties, and heard the term, “Won’t you be my neighbor?” you’d probably think of only one person: Mr. Rogers. And maybe, if your parents invited this soft-spoken man into your living room through the magic of television, you can still remember the lyrics to the show’s famous song:

*It's a beautiful day in this neighborhood,
A beautiful day for a neighbor,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?*

*It's a neighborly day in this beautywood,
A neighborly day for a beauty,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?*

*I have always wanted to have a neighbor just like you,
I've always wanted to live in a neighborhood with you.*

*So let's make the most of this beautiful day,
Since we're together, we might as well say,
Would you be mine?
Could you be mine?
Won't you be my neighbor?*

*Won't you please, won't you please,
Please won't you be my neighbor?*

In 1968, Fred Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister, had a rather inauspicious debut of his children’s show from a local television station, WQED, which broadcasted from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It was very low-budget, had a very

simple set, an unlikely host, a cast made up of mostly hand puppets, and a model trolley who could cheerfully ring his bell right on cue! Yet, as time went on, this show and its creator captured the hearts of kids and grown-ups alike, and ran on public television for 31 seasons.

Because of his tireless work for the dignity of children, Mr. Rogers is considered to be one of the greatest friends of kids

Because of his tireless work for the dignity of children, Mr. Rogers is considered to be one of the greatest friends of kids since Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas). Fred’s show, *Mister*

Won't You Be My Neighbor?

Rogers' Neighborhood, had an approach that was the polar opposite of all the action-packed, goofy kid shows of the late 60s and early 70s. The usual programs were only meant to entertain, rather than inform, and served as a platform for advertisers to market various products aimed at children in this time of war (like replica M16 toy rifles and grenades that were being used in Vietnam).

Now, before you think the popularity of *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* was a fluke, or that every once in a while even the most hair-brained schemes can somehow become successful, Fred Rogers was very deliberate and intentional about the design and direction of the show. After studying music composition in college, Rogers felt God's calling on his life and enrolled in seminary. He was sure that God was leading him to seek a master's degree with an emphasis in Evangelism.

When he went back home between his first and second semesters, Fred watched a children's television program where kids were shoving pies in each other's faces. Mr. Rogers was appalled. In that moment he felt that God was not only calling him to be an evangelist, but an evangelist to children through the medium of television. This narrow focus,

and the unlikely outcome that Fred would ever be able to persuade any television station to sponsor such a show, caused the dean of his seminary much consternation. No other student in the history of the school had ever earned a Master of Arts in Children's Evangelism. And frankly, the dean thought that Rogers' dream was crazy because he had no formal training whatsoever, in the field of broadcasting.

But what Fred Rogers did have was a calling from God and a simple philosophy. He thought that when it came to kids, love was at the root of everything: all learning, all parenting, and all relationships. He was also one of the few in the 1960s who believed that what children saw and heard on television would become a part of who they'd eventually become in adulthood. His vision from God was way ahead of his time! His deep desire and sensitivity for children came from his own traumatic childhood. He was often sick due to a bout with rheumatic fever when he was very young. The doctor feared that any strenuous exercise could cause an enlarged heart. This left him overweight, often isolated, and frequently bullied.

God used these experiences in his early life to develop his emotional sensitivity for children, which would characterize his work as an adult.

Yet, God used these experiences in his early life to develop his emotional sensitivity for children, which would characterize his work as an adult. Although the hallmark of the broadcast was known for its gentleness and compassion, it didn't shy away from tough topics such as: nuclear war, assassinations of world leaders, racial tensions, divorce, death, and disabilities. By starting each episode in the same way, he taught children to develop good habits and routines. The famous sweaters he wore were knitted by his mom, Nancy McFeely Rogers. She made at least one every month until her passing. The sneakers he changed into made less noise than normal dress shoes when moving around the set. That's why he chose to change his shoes every show.

Rogers received 50-100 pieces of fan mail every day, often from children navigating difficult emotional circumstances. He answered every single letter. Child development researchers studied the show for over four years. They concluded that Mr. Rogers and the other characters on the show, actually developed a real

relationship with young children who watched on a regular basis, even as close as the members of their own immediate family!

Over the course of the show's broadcast, Rogers received four Daytime Emmys and a 1997 Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Academy of Television Arts & Sciences. He also received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, 40 honorary degrees and a Peabody Award. In 1999, he was inducted into the Television Hall of Fame. On top of that, Fred Rogers' testimony before Congress, single-handedly saved Public Television from extinction when President Nixon tried to cut all of its funding to support the war in Vietnam!

Mr. Rogers would conclude every episode by telling those watching,

"You've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are."

He felt every child and every adult needed to hear how unique and special they are at least once a day. Fred Rogers took seriously Jesus' command to love your neighbor as yourself. He took it so seriously that he was publicly ridiculed for his kind and gentle personality. The more influence he had in culture, the more backlash he endured. He was the brunt of many jokes of late-night comedians and talk show hosts, from the *Tonight Show* to *Saturday Night Live*. Yet, he always turned the other cheek. He believed very deeply that the American people were better than the stories and the characters that prime-time television was pumping into their homes through their television sets.

"You've made this day a special day, by just your being you. There's no person in the whole world like you, and I like you just the way you are."

Mr. Rogers seemed to exude great strength through his meekness. In the early 70s, Fred was concerned about not having any black people on the show. Francois Scarborough Clemmons won the recurring role of a singing police officer. In the late 80s, he publicly came out of the closet admitting he was gay. The show's largest sponsors, Sears and Johnson & Johnson, demanded that he be fired. Rogers spoke to both companies asking if he could have some time to counsel him. Clemmons chose celibacy, and only struggled with same-sex attraction, never having a same-sex partner. When the news got out that Fred Rogers was counseling an openly gay man, he was accused of being gay himself. Although Clemmons ultimately decided that Mr. Rogers "couldn't pray the gay away," he decided to leave the show to ensure that it received funding. Still, he always loved and admired Mr. Rogers. During a press conference, Clemmons said that Fred Rogers was the only man who truly accepted and



Won't You Be My Neighbor?

loved him, as he was rejected by his own father. He went on to say that Fred Rogers was the “straightest arrow” in all parts of his life, and the kindest human being he had ever met!

We can still learn a lesson or two from the “man in the sweater.” He created a neighborhood that valued the uniqueness of everyone. There was always time for a conversation just to get to know someone a little better. Mr. Rogers was never in a hurry because he might miss a chance to meet someone new! There was always a reason to stop and help someone in need because other people were important. And because you knew that other people were important, that’s what made you so very important too. The Bible tells us that the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5). And meekness is power under control. That just might make Mr. Rogers one of the most powerful men in all of history. But shhh. . . don’t tell anyone. He wouldn’t want anyone to know!

**Fred
McFeely
Rogers**

3/20/1928

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2/27/2003

Session 1

Who is My Neighbor?

Fred Rogers' faith was contagious! He was probably one of the best neighbors in the history of the world! He learned how to give his faith away in very practical ways. But Fred would be the first to tell you that he wasn't the first one who wrestled with the idea: "Who's really my neighbor?" In fact, if Mr. Rogers was still with us today, he'd admit that he got this idea of being a good neighbor "straight outta" Luke 10! That's where the Bible relays the story of Jesus when He sent out seventy "good neighbors" into Galilee who were to act like sheep among wolves, to heal the sick, set the captives free, and proclaim that the long-awaited Messiah had come. Just as soon as these "good neighbors" returned, they began sharing their stories with Jesus about all the amazing things God had done through them...

That's when an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking Him this question:

"Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus replied, "What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?"

The man answered, "'You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.' And, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

"Right!" Jesus told him. "Do this and you will live!"

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"
(Luke 10:25-29)

This is an amazing exchange! There are questions, and then there are questions! Have you ever been in a meeting or a classroom where someone asked a question, but it was obvious that the questioner was just trying to show off? This lawyer wasn't really looking to learn from Jesus. He wanted to demonstrate to Him the great knowledge that he already had. He wanted Jesus to put him up on a pedestal because of his massive intellect.

Who is My Neighbor?

The question, “What should I do to inherit eternal life?” is a little bit more complicated than just asking Jesus what I should do to make sure I’m going to heaven when I die. It meant something like this: “Teacher, how can I make sure I will be part of God’s kingdom when the Messiah comes and establishes His reign on earth? How can I make sure that whenever God returns to us, His people, and makes everything right, I will be part of that inheritance?”

Jesus responded, “What is written in the Law? How do you read it?” In other words, “You’re the expert in the law, so tell me what you’ve found there.” Jesus often responded to a question by asking another question. It’s a way to reveal the heart behind the question. And that’s what He did here. Jesus congratulated the expert in the law. The man had answered correctly, then Jesus said, “Do this, and you will live.”

Reading this story today, some people might wonder if Jesus was teaching that fulfilling the law is the way to earn eternal life. Was He really saying that loving God and loving your neighbor is what it takes to be part of His kingdom? The answer, which may surprise you, is yes! Complete obedience to the law of God—summed up in perfect devotion and love toward God and neighbor—brings salvation. “Do that fully,” Jesus said, “without failing, and yes, you will live.” But here’s the catch, no one outside of Jesus could fulfill these two little commands! And deep down, the lawyer knew it! So, in an attempt to let himself off the hook, he posed another question (which was right out of Jesus’ playbook), “Who is my neighbor?” There’s a great chance he had previously rehearsed this dialog with his expert lawyer friends. Certainly, no one could love everyone. So in essence he was saying, “Show me who I need to love, and I’ll make sure I love this person.” His intent was to limit the circle to a manageable group. “Tell me who my neighbors are, and I’ll make sure I love them!”

Jesus responded to his question by telling one of His most famous stories—the parable of the good Samaritan. The narrative is filled with drama from the very beginning. First, you have a man, presumably Jewish, who fell into the hands of robbers on the dangerous road from Jerusalem to Jericho. Next, you have the introduction of two well-respected characters: a priest and a Levite. Both were religious leaders. Both were Jews. Both would have been expected to do something to help the man in distress, but both of them passed by the wounded and dying man on the far side of the road.

Shockingly, it’s the Samaritan man who stops to help the wounded Jew. The Jewish people in Jesus’ day despised the Samaritans for religious and ethnic reasons. For the Samaritan to become the hero of the story, and the fact that he was the only one to cross ethnic and cultural boundaries, was incredibly scandalous. If we were to retell the story today about a wounded Christian being passed by two Christians but helped by a Muslim, it might have more impact! Or, maybe this story might become a little more real if we put ourselves into the parable. For example, would you be willing to go out of your way and be a Good Samaritan to someone who’s suffering with gender dysphoria and is obviously dressing as someone of the opposite sex?

Lastly, this parable raises a number of questions: Why do people, even those who are religious, fail to show compassion to those in need? What does compassion look like? How should we consider the cost of compassion and rightly take upon ourselves the responsibility for other people’s welfare? One thing’s for sure, when we realize the enormous amount of compassion that we’ve received from Jesus, it should always cause us to have more compassion for others. Jesus ended His story by asking the expert in the law one more question.

“Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?” Jesus asked.

The man replied, “The one who showed him mercy.”

Then Jesus said, “Yes, now go and do the same.”
(Luke 10:36-37)

Do you see how Jesus changed the question? The expert in the law asked, “Who is my neighbor?” or to reword it, “Whom do I need to see as my neighbor?” Jesus’ question was different. His focus was on to whom you can be a neighbor. Instead of limiting the circle to a few “neighbors,” He widened it without limit. In response to Jesus’ redirected question, the expert in the law, who was perhaps hesitant to praise the Samaritan in Jesus’ story by name, simply said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus’ answer was for the lawyer to go and do the same. Be the person who shows mercy. It’s not about fulfilling a quota of “compassionate work” for a few neighbors. It’s about being the kind of person who shows mercy to those in

...loving God and loving your neighbor is what it takes to be part of His kingdom?

need. Jesus’ story was going for heartfelt transformation, not just a to-do list of activities one can check off as a way of fulfilling a duty.

Conclusion

Stories help us ask questions. Telling a story opens up windows of our imagination and changes the frame so we can see things differently. Having read the parable Jesus told and having considered the way Jesus changed the question for the expert in the law, we are now in the position to ask new questions about our own hearts and lives. Yet, the question remains: does Jesus’ parable lay the responsibility of the whole world in our laps? Remember, in that time period, the Jews felt

there were many nations who were outside of God’s grace. Now, this side of the cross, we know better!

Over the millennia as time has gone by, our mobile society has become increasingly isolated. So many people move in and out of our neighborhoods these days. And because it’s so hard to keep up with, it’s easier to pull into our garages and occasionally wave to our neighbors who seem just fine to do the same. Yet, the last words that Jesus spoke, right before He ascended to Heaven were these: *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea, and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8-9). Since these were His last words on earth, I guess they’re probably important, maybe even imperative? In fact, that’s the tense Jesus used here. It wasn’t a suggestion but a command, “marching orders,” so to speak. Maybe we should just start by walking across the street?!

So how can you and the members of your small group just become good neighbors and cultivate relationships with people who God has already put directly in your path? How could we encourage each other to get to know the people who God has placed in our Jerusalem? Hopefully, as we get to know them, we’ll see their needs and be able to demonstrate God’s mercy and compassion, so they’ll be drawn to the God we love.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan doesn’t give us answers to all of these questions, but the story Jesus told fires up our hearts and minds, changes our questions, and helps us begin thinking and living as the people we are—people who are loved by God and who are now called to love others. And if we’re still unsure what it truly means to be kind and compassionate to “the least of these,” maybe we should go watch a few episodes of *Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood*. For unless we become like children, we’ll never be able to enter the kingdom of Heaven! (Matt. 18:3)

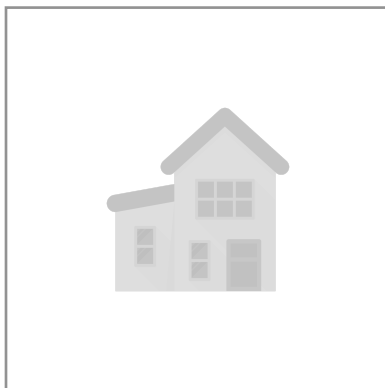
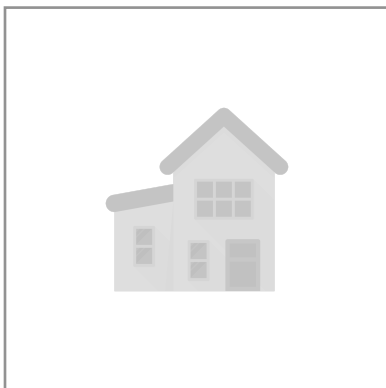
Session 1 Group Questions

1. Put yourself in the story. If Jesus had told you that the way to inherit eternal life is by loving God and loving others, how would you have responded? What questions would you have asked?
2. What do you think these different aspects of loving God (heart, soul, strength, mind) refer to, and why do they matter?
3. Why do you think the two religious leaders passed by the man in distress?
4. What reasons do we give when we want to “pass by on the other side” and not show compassion?
5. What is the difference between doing acts of compassion and being a compassionate person?
6. How can we make sure that our attempts at “loving our neighbor” are not just ways to justify ourselves and show off our righteousness?
7. Please read Acts 1:8. Jesus is giving his followers a “game plan” of how to reach those who are far from Him. What personally might be your “Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth?”
8. Let’s end tonight’s session with an object lesson. On the following page there is a “neighborhood” which has nine squares and houses. Your house is the one in the middle. Write the names of as many neighbors who you know in the other squares that surround your house. If you happen to know their spiritual condition, put a cross by their name. Circle the names of the people who have been inside your home. Place a star if you’ve had a meaningful conversation with them in the last month. (You get one point for every name, cross, circle, and star). How many points did you get?)

If you feel like your neighborhood isn’t your Jerusalem, then where is it? Write down some names of people who God is calling you to share His compassion with so you can cultivate a deeper relationship with them for the sake of the gospel. Just as above, follow the same procedure (name, cross, circle, and star).
9. End the night by praying for those people in your neighborhood or other people who are in close proximity to you. Ask God to give you the courage to cultivate a relationship with them and how you could serve them.



Who is My Neighbor?



Session 2

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Allow me to begin this week's study by asking you a question. What is the greatest gift that you've ever received? When I think of some of the greatest gifts I've been given, it would have to start with my family. First, my wife Carrie (we've been married for 33 years this January), then my daughter Candace, her husband Tim, and especially my granddaughter Caprice. As I look back over the last 58 years, I realize how many wonderful gifts God has given me. I've been truly blessed.

I had a relatively good childhood, a great education, and God has allowed me to serve in ministry for over 30 years. But, the greatest gift I've ever received and will ever receive, is the gift of salvation in Christ. I had the privilege of growing up in the Church. That's where I heard the gospel over and over again. It was my dad who led me to Jesus, and it was my father who led me in Christ. He walked the walk, and talked

the talk, and that's where I repeatedly saw the gospel played out.

Over the years I've thought a lot about how the gospel is so mysterious. It's the greatest treasure to many and folly to many more. It's foolishness to those who don't believe and also the greatest power that's ever been unleashed on humanity. (It's relatively easy to move things from life to death, but it's only the power of God that can bring dead things back to life!) Some Christians are afraid to share it with others because they're not even sure where to start. Some are afraid to share it because their lives don't look much like the One who offers this free gift. Some are afraid they'll mess up the "presentation" and won't be able to seal the deal. The truth is, it's not a transaction but a transformation, and the Holy Spirit is the only One who has the power to seal people anyway. Yet, the sad truth is the biggest obstacle in the

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

way of Christians sharing their faith is that they're afraid of facing ridicule and rejection.

Recently, I read that Christian researchers have found it takes the average person to hear the entire gospel fourteen times before they can truly understand and internalize its message. That blew my mind! I've personally shared Christ with many people who were not ready to trust Him. And now looking back on it, the reason for them rejecting God's free gift wasn't because of the messenger (me). It was probably because they haven't yet grasped it's "good news."

Finding the Approach that Fits You

One of my first jobs after high school was direct sales. I'm talking really direct sales. I went door to door trying to get people to try the "new and improved" Kirby vacuum cleaner. This vacuum had great suction; so great it would suck up large, steel ball bearings! It's only problem was the vacuum weighed over 40 pounds! Dragging this behemoth door to door on hot summer days was a nightmare. Even when I managed to talk someone into giving it a try, they immediately realized they'd have to be a bodybuilder just to drag it up their stairs. It seemed that the direct cold-contact-knock-at-the-door-and-talk-as-fast-as-I-could-before-they-closed-it methodology just didn't fit my style. Suffice it to say, I was quickly fired from that job. And that's what so many Christians think when they hear the dreaded "E" word (E = evangelism), which fills people with fear and guilt. Yet, God custom-designed each of us with our own unique combination of personality, temperament, talents, and background, and He wants to harness and use these in His mission to reach this messed-up world. God never takes a one-size-fits-all approach. So what if I told you, the New Testament reveals several different "sharing styles" when it comes to the good news? Would that ease any of your fears?

So what if I told you, the New Testament reveals several different "sharing styles" when it comes to the good news?

Let's look at the way God equipped six people in the New Testament who were called to reach radically different types of people and personalities in the first century. In this process, we'll discover six biblical styles of evangelism. As we unpack each one, ask yourself which one fits your personality the best.

As you dive deeper into each style, take some time as a group to read the biblical references which are listed below. Then, try to figure out which style fits each member of your group. After that, follow the directions below and take the assessment. Can you identify any potential strengths and weaknesses of each evangelism style? Have fun with it. Hopefully, this assessment will result in taking away some of your fear when it comes to sharing your faith!

Six Styles of Evangelism

1. The Direct Style

Biblical example: Acts 2:29-36

Characteristics: It's no secret that this guy was a "ready, aim, fire" kind of dude. Whatever he did, he did it without any hesitation and with full force! Confidence and assertiveness were his calling cards. He even had the audacity to correct Jesus on one occasion! Which New Testament Bible character fits this description? _____

2. The Intellectual Style

Biblical example: Acts 17:22-33

Characteristics: Though this guy could certainly confront people, he loved the

more rational, analytical approach. If you've ever read any of his other writings, you'd quickly notice that this man was a master at laying out sound explanations of Christianity's central truths.

Which New Testament Bible character fits this description? _____

3. The Testimonial Style

Biblical example: John 9:8-11, 24-33

Characteristics: This man was healed by Jesus and couldn't keep quiet about what he had experienced. Almost immediately, he was thrust into the midst of some doubters who tried to engage him into a theological debate, but he refused and steered away from confrontation. In a very clear and compelling way, he just stuck to his story of the miraculous things that Jesus had done for him. Which New Testament Bible character do you think fits this description? _____

4. The Interpersonal Style

Biblical example: Luke 5:29-32

Characteristics: This guy may have been one of Jesus' most unlikely followers. Yet, one of his greatest strengths was building relationships. He decided to throw a big party for all of his friends to introduce his buddies to Jesus. He provided a warm and conversational environment where people could let their guards down and consider the claims of Jesus. What New Testament Bible character fits this description?

5. The Invitational Style

Biblical example: John 4:19-30

Characteristics: This poor woman already had three strikes against her when she met Jesus. She was a woman, from a country which the Jews hated, and she was living an immoral lifestyle. Yet, Jesus ignored all conventional wisdom and political correctness of the day and started a conversation with her. It didn't take long until He convinced her that He was the Messiah. In response, she immediately went and brought a bunch of people to see the Messiah for themselves. This simple invitation resulted in Jesus staying in their town for two extra days! Who is this woman? _____

6. The Serving Style

Biblical example: Acts 9:36-43

Characteristics: This woman was always doing good and helping the poor. She was well known for her loving acts of service, which she performed in the name of Jesus. Specifically, she made clothing for widows and orphans. When she died prematurely, God sent Peter to raise her from the dead and put her back into service. Who was this woman of kindness and good deeds?

Being Yourself and Impacting Others

Group Activity: Styles Assessment

Directions:

Read each of the 36 statements and record a number by each that reflects the degree to which you think that statement fits you. Your choices are from 1 to 5, with 1 being the farthest match to who you are, and 5 the closest.

- 5 _____ That's totally me
- 4 _____ Pretty much like me
- 3 _____ Somewhat like me
- 2 _____ A little like me
- 1 _____ That's not me at all

Then, transfer your scores to the grid that's provided on page 20.

- ___ 1. In conversations, I like to approach topics directly without much small talk or "beating around the bush."
- ___ 2. I have a hard time getting out of a bookstore without buying a bunch of new books that will help me understand what people are thinking.
- ___ 3. I often speak out of my personal background or experience in order to illustrate a point I am trying to make.
- ___ 4. I am a "people-person" who places a high value on friendship.
- ___ 5. I enjoy adding or including new people in activities I'm involved in.
- ___ 6. I see needs in people's lives that others often overlook.
- ___ 7. I don't shy away from challenging someone when it seems necessary.
- ___ 8. I tend to be analytical and logical.
- ___ 9. I often identify with others by using phrases like, "I used to think that too," or "I once felt the way you do."
- ___ 10. People have commented about my ability for developing deep friendships.
- ___ 11. To be honest, I often watch for situations in which someone "better qualified" can explain concepts to my friends.
- ___ 12. I find fulfillment in helping others, often in behind-the-scenes ways.
- ___ 13. I do not have a problem confronting my friends with the truth even if it strains the relationship.
- ___ 14. In conversations, I naturally key in on questions that are holding up a person's understanding or progress.
- ___ 15. When I talk around the locker room or the drinking fountain, people really listen.

- ___ 16. I would rather delve into personal life issues than abstract theoretical ideas.
- ___ 17. It is not unusual for me to attend special events or concerts and bring along a car full of friends.
- ___ 18. I would rather show love through actions than through words.
- ___ 19. I think the world would be a lot better place if people would stop being so sensitive about everything and just speak the truth!
- ___ 20. I enjoy discussions and debates on difficult questions.
- ___ 21. I intentionally share my mistakes and struggles with others when it will help them consider solutions that could help them.
- ___ 22. I prefer discussing a person's life before getting into the details of their beliefs and opinions.
- ___ 23. I tend to watch for worthwhile events to bring people to (such as enriching seminars, retreats, classes, or church services).
- ___ 24. I have found that my quiet demonstrations of love and care sometimes help people open up and become more receptive to what I think.
- ___ 25. A motto that would fit me is: "Make a difference or a mess, but *do* something."
- ___ 26. Often when listening to teachers or TV commentators, I mentally (or even verbally) argue with their positions and logic.
- ___ 27. People seem interested in hearing stories about things that have happened in my life.
- ___ 28. I enjoy long talks with friends, and it doesn't matter much where we are or where we're going.
- ___ 29. I am always looking for a match between the needs and interests of my friends and various books, classes, and programs that they would enjoy or benefit from.
- ___ 30. I think the world would be a better place if people would talk less and take more action on behalf of their friends and neighbors.
- ___ 31. I sometimes get in trouble for lacking gentleness and sensitivity in the way I interact with others.
- ___ 32. I like to get at the deeper reasons for opinions that people hold.
- ___ 33. I am still amazed at how God has worked in my life, and I would like others to know about it.
- ___ 34. People generally consider me to be an interactive, sensitive, and caring kind of person.
- ___ 35. A highlight of my week is when I can take a guest with me to a helpful learning event, including church.
- ___ 36. I tend to be more practical and action-oriented than philosophical and idea-oriented.

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

	Direct	Intellectual	Testimonial	Interpersonal	Invitational	Serving
	#1 ___	#2 ___	#3 ___	#4 ___	#5 ___	#6 ___
	#7 ___	#8 ___	#9 ___	#10 ___	#11 ___	#12 ___
	#13 ___	#14 ___	#15 ___	#16 ___	#17 ___	#18 ___
	#19 ___	#20 ___	#21 ___	#22 ___	#23 ___	#24 ___
	#25 ___	#26 ___	#27 ___	#28 ___	#29 ___	#30 ___
	#31 ___	#32 ___	#33 ___	#34 ___	#35 ___	#36 ___
TOTALS						

Direct Style

Biblical Example: Peter in Acts 2

Theme Verse: 2 Timothy 4:2

Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage - with great patience and careful instruction.

Traits

- Confident
- Bold
- Assertive
- Skips small talk, gets right to the point
- Has strong opinions and convictions

Cautions

- Be sure to seek God’s wisdom so you will be appropriately sensitive and tactful.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to restrain your desire to come on strong.
- Avoid judging or laying guilt trips on others who approach evangelism with a different style.

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- Ask friends for feedback on whether or not you have the right balance of boldness and gentleness. Keep in mind Paul’s phrase in Ephesians 4, “speaking the truth in love.” Both truth and love are essential.
- Prepare yourself for situations where you will stand alone. (Read about Peter in Acts 2 and other Scripture). The non-believer you confront with the truth will sometimes feel uncomfortable. Even non-confrontational Christians who are with you will sometimes feel that discomfort. That’s okay. Under God’s guidance, challenge people to trust and follow Christ, and He will use it.
- It is critical that you listen and value what others say before telling them what you think they need to hear.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
 - Other: _____

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Intellectual Style

Biblical Example: Paul in Acts 17

Theme Verse: 2 Corinthians 10:5

We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

Traits

- Analytical
- Logical
- Inquisitive
- Likes to debate
- More concerned with what people think than how they feel

Cautions

- Avoid getting stuck on academic points, arguments, and hair-splitting points of evidence. These are mainly to clear the path back to the central gospel message.
- Remember that attitude is as important as information. First Peter 3:15 says to have “gentleness and respect.”
- Avoid becoming argumentative.

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- Set time aside to study. This style, more than the others, relies on preparation. Take serious action on what it says in 1 Peter 3:15:
But in your hearts set apart 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.
- Avoid doing all your preparation in an academic vacuum. Get out and talk to others. Try out your arguments and answers on real people and make refinements as needed.

- Develop your relational side. Talk to people about everyday events and what is happening in their life and yours.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

Testimonial Style

Biblical Example: The blind man in John 9

Theme Verse: 1 John 1:3a

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us.

Traits

- Clear communicator
- Good listener
- Vulnerable about your personal life, ups and downs
- Overwhelmed by the account of how God reached you
- See links between your experience and that of other people

Cautions

- Be sure to relate your experience to the life of your friend. You need to first listen to them to be able to connect your story to their situation.
- Do not stop with merely telling your story. Challenge them to consider how what you learned might apply to their life.
- Don't downplay the value of your story because it seems too ordinary. Ordinary stories relate best to ordinary people!

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- Practice so you will be able to tell your story without hesitation.
- Keep Christ and the gospel message as the centerpiece of your story. This is an account of how He changed your life.
- Keep your story fresh by adding new and current illustrations from your ongoing walk with Christ.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

Interpersonal Style

Biblical Example: Matthew in Luke 5:29

Theme Verse: 1 Corinthians 9:22b

I try to find common ground with everyone so that I might bring them to Christ.

Traits

- Relationally warm
- Conversational
- Compassionate
- Friendship-oriented
- Focuses on people and their needs

Cautions

- Beware of valuing friendship over truth. Telling people they are sinners in need of a savior will test relationships.
- Do not get so involved in the process of building friendships that you forget the ultimate goal: bringing people to know Christ as forgiver and leader.
- Don't get overwhelmed with the amount of needs your friends might have - do what you can and leave the rest to God.

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- Be patient. This style tends to work more gradually than others. Look and pray for opportunities to turn conversations toward spiritual matters.
- Continually create and plan opportunities to interact with friends and new people through social events, sports, etc. This will put you in a place where your style can flourish.
- Practice telling the gospel message so you will be prepared when the opportunity arises.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

Invitational Style

Biblical Example: The woman at the well in John 4

Theme Verse: Luke 14:23

Then the master told his servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full."

Traits

- Hospitable
- Persuasive
- Enjoys meeting new people
- Enthusiastic
- Spiritually opportunistic

Cautions

- Don't let others do all the talking for you. Your friends and acquaintances need to hear how Christ influenced your life. In addition, they have questions you could answer concerning the implications of the gospel.

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

- Carefully and prayerfully consider which events or church services you take people to. Look for ones that are clear with truth but sensitive to the needs of spiritual seekers.
- Do not get discouraged if people refuse your invitation. Their refusal could be an opportunity for a spiritual conversation. Also, their “no” today may become a “yes” tomorrow.

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- When inviting people, try to get written details about the event into their hands (either preprinted or handwritten). Whenever appropriate, offer to pick them up and do something together before or after the event.
- At events, mentally put yourself in the place of the other person. Ask yourself if you were that person whether the event would relate to your concerns and mind-set. Reinforce the positive aspects to the person you invited.
- Offer constructive feedback to the event sponsors consisting of specific and realistic ways you think they could improve the event and make it more compelling to the people you bring.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

Serving Style

Biblical Example: Tabitha (Dorcas) in Acts 9

Theme Verse: Matthew 5:16

In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Traits

- Patient
- Others-centered
- Sees needs and finds joy in meeting them
- Shows love through action more than words
- Attaches value to even menial tasks

Cautions

- Remember that although “words are no substitute for actions,” “actions are no substitute for words” either! In Romans 10:14 Paul says that we must verbally tell people about Christ. You can do this in many ways as you point to Him as the central motivation for your acts of service.
- Don’t underestimate the value of your service. It is your style that will reach the hardest-to-reach people. Acts of loving service are hard to resist and difficult to argue with.
- Be discerning as to how much you can do realistically without depriving yourself or your family of needed care and attention.

Suggestions for Using & Developing This Style

- Find creative ways to communicate the spiritual motivation behind the service you offer. It could be through a word, a card, or an invitation.
- Seek God daily for opportunities to serve others for eternal purposes. He will open your eyes to areas you might have missed.

How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself

Be ready to follow His leadings, even if they seem a bit out of the ordinary.

- Be careful not to impose your service on others. Pray for wisdom so you will know where to invest your efforts in ways that will be strategic for the kingdom of God.
- Team up with friends who have other styles that may be better matched to the personality of the person you hope to reach.
- Other: _____

Session 3

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

Catchy title huh? I've thought about this for a long time, and this is officially the first time in my entire life that I've mentioned these two men in the same sentence! So you might be thinking, "What do these two men have in common?" But then you're probably supposing I'm going to tell you, right? Ah shucks, you know me so well. But think about it. These two giants (Paul would love me calling him a giant since he often referred to himself as "small Paul") had a lot in common.

First, they were both men of action and had very specific callings from God. Both were given ministries that nobody else really cared about in their culture (Paul to the Gentiles, Mr. Rogers to children), and both men really believed they could change the world! Also, these men weren't afraid of sharing and living out the gospel, but in very different ways. Paul was outspoken and sometimes brash. Fred Rogers was soft-spoken and had a servant's heart. Paul was the consummate intellectual,

and Fred was very well educated while maintaining meekness.

Neither of these two men were ashamed of the gospel and both enjoyed incredible triumphs in their ministries, but they also suffered ridicule and rejection. In the introduction to this series, I documented many of Mr. Rogers' personal setbacks. So let's focus on the apostle Paul. During the apostles' second missionary journey, Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth in a mood of dejection. 1 Corinthians 2:3 tells us that Paul arrived in Corinth in weakness and fear, even to the point of trembling!

This begs the question: What happened in Athens that caused this "lionhearted apostle" to fear to the point of trembling? Prior to this, during his first two missionary journeys, Paul had faced riots, beatings, death threats, and stonings. He had suffered danger from exposure, wild animals, and even so-called friends. Yet, Paul in all of his writings doesn't

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

express fear like he does when he arrived in Corinth. In fact, God appears to the apostle in a dream to reassure him. *Do not be afraid to speak, and do not be silent. I am with you, and no one will harm or attack you, for I have many people in this city* (Acts 18:9).

So what really happened at Athens? Please, allow me to answer your question with a question. Do you remember last week's group lesson about evangelism styles? What was Paul's style? If you said intellectual, you earn a gold star! When Paul entered Athens (Acts: 17:16-34), his spirit was provoked at the city's many idols. As he was preaching in the synagogue and in the marketplace, some Epicurean and Stoic philosophers overheard him. They took him to the Areopagus (a-rē-'ä-pä-gäs) where he could present to some of the other "wise men" so they could try to figure out the nature of this new deity (Jesus) who was supposedly resurrected from the dead. On top of Mars Hill, Paul addressed the best and brightest minds of the city. And since they had an idol that covered "all the unknown gods," Paul took this opportunity to explain that Jesus was this "unknown god" and that He was above all the other gods represented there. Let's just say it didn't sit well with the inteligencia of Athens. They basically called him a babblers (idiot) and laughed him out of town. His time in Athens only produced five or six converts. Yet, this experience served as a turning point in the apostle's ministry. The next stop on Paul's ministry itinerary was the city of Corinth - a place that became so fruitful because of the gospel that Paul actually stayed for eighteen months.

So what was so different about Paul's approach in Corinth? I'll let him tell you. It's found in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5:
Christian brothers, when I came to you, I did not preach the secrets of God with big sounding words or make it sound as if I were so wise. I

made up my mind that while I was with you I would speak of nothing except Jesus Christ and of His death on the cross. When I was with you, I was weak. I was afraid and I shook. What I had to say when I preached was not in big sounding words of man's wisdom. But it was given in the power of the Holy Spirit. In this way, you do not have faith in Christ because of the wisdom of men. You have faith in Christ because of the power of God.

Paul goes on to say...

Preaching about the cross sounds foolish to those who are dying in sin. But it is the power of God to those of us who are being saved from the punishment of sin. The Holy Writings say, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise people. I will put aside the learning of those who think they know a lot." Where is the man who is wise? Where is the man who thinks he knows a lot? Where is the man who thinks he has all the answers?

God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. In His wisdom, He did not allow man to come to know Him through the wisdom of this world. It pleased God to save men from the punishment of their sins through preaching the Good News. This preaching sounds foolish. The Jews are looking for something special to see. The Greek people are looking for the answer in wisdom. But we preach that Christ died on a cross to save them from their sins. These words are hard for the Jews to listen to. The Greek people think it is foolish. Christ is the power and wisdom of God to those who are chosen to be saved from the punishment of sin for both Jews and Greeks. God's plan looked foolish to men, but it is wiser than the best plans of men. God's plan which may look weak is stronger than the strongest plans of men.

(1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

So what does all this mean? It means we can't be unprepared and expect to be used to share the greatest news that the world has ever known. Also, if we're going to be obedient to Jesus' Great Commission, we'll have to prepare ourselves ahead of time. We can't just wing it. And the best way to get started on this journey is to start with something you already know. What's that? Your own story. Why? Because your story matters. Your friends will be interested, and they'll be able to relate to it. **And lastly, your personal story is hard to refute. Someone may deny your doctrine, or attack our church, but no one can honestly ignore the fact that your life has been changed!**

How to Organize Your Story

Paul's Story: Three Handles		
HANDLE 1	HANDLE 2	HANDLE 3
BC Christ	† Christ	AD Christ
Acts 26:4-11 "I [did] all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus. . ." (v. 9)	Acts 26:12-28 "As I was on the road, I saw a light from heaven. . . and I heard a voice. . ." (vv. 13,14)	Acts 26:19-23 "So then. . . I was not disobedient to the vision from heaven. . ." (v. 19)
Concluding Question: "Do you believe the prophets?" (v. 27)		
Unifying Theme: Paul's intense passion for serving God (first without Christ, then as His follower)		

Develop Your Story

Six Questions

FIRST HANDLE: BC - BEFORE CHRIST

1. What was your early spiritual background, and how did it affect you as you grew up - your feelings, attitudes, actions, and relationships?

Examples:

- Our family was superstitious. We based our beliefs on things like horoscopes, so I lacked any solid foundation for what to believe.
- My parents taught me that there was no God - so we thought we were on our own to figure out what our lives were all about and to decide right from wrong.
- I was from a religion that taught positive things about Jesus, but denied His claims to be God and the Savior of the world.
- We were a religious family, but all I remember were the rituals and rules - so when I got away to school, I rejected the whole thing and went my own way.

If you became a Christian as a young child, you may not have any real BC background to talk about. So you might say something like this:

- I grew up in a family where the Bible was taught and can't remember ever not believing in God. So I grew up with sort of a simple belief in Him.

My Story (Question 1):

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

2. What caused you to begin to consider following Christ?

Examples:

- A friend at school was a Christian, and she challenged me to look into the evidence for Christianity.
- I reached the point where I'd hit bottom. I knew the only hope for me was God - so I cried out to Him for help.
- I got to know this guy who was different - in a positive way - and I finally asked him why. He told me about his relationship with Jesus.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might write something like:

- Most of what I saw in my parents, teachers, and friends at church reinforced my confidence that what I was hearing about God was true.

My Story (Question 2):

MIDDLE HANDLE: ✝ MET CHRIST

3. What realization did you come to that finally motivated you to receive Christ?

Examples:

- After a long time of looking for help in the wrong places, I finally reached out to the God I sensed was there and asked Him to come and rescue me.
- My reading and interaction with Christians convinced me that the teachings of the Bible were true, and I just quit resisting.
- After years of spiritual ups and downs, I realized how foolish it was to keep trying to run my own life.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might say something like:

- I don't know exactly when it happened, but along the way I understood that Jesus died to pay for my sins. Even though I hadn't led a wildly rebellious life, I certainly knew I'd done things that needed forgiving.

My Story (Question 3):

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

4. Specifically, how did you receive Christ?

Examples:

- I was at a concert where a guy explained that it wasn't enough to believe Jesus died for my sins - we need to ask Him to apply that payment to our lives. So I went and prayed with someone afterward asking Jesus to forgive my sins and lead my life.
- After years of loneliness, I learned that God wants to walk with me throughout my life. So, I asked Him to remove my sins and to become my very best friend.
- It was hard to admit it, but I concluded that Jesus really is the way, the life, and the truth - and I asked Him to forgive my sins and to begin leading me.

If you came to Christ as a child, you might say something like:

- Even though I was quite young, I gradually realized I had done things that needed God's forgiveness. I began trusting in Him and have been experiencing His forgiveness and leadership now for many years.

My Story (Question 4):

THIRD HANDLE: AD - AFTER CHRIST

These answers should address the problem or situation mentioned in your answer to the first question.

5. How did your life begin to change after you trusted Christ?

Examples:

- It's hard to describe the difference God made in my life. It wasn't just external; it's like my heart was transformed. Overnight my desires began to change.
- I can hardly put into words the release I felt. I knew my sins had been forgiven, and it was a huge weight off my shoulders. For the first time, I felt true joy.
- My life isn't perfect. I still do things I regret. But my overall course has turned from being self-centered to really caring about God and the people in my life.

If you came to faith as a child, the emphasis in these final questions should be on the difference Christ makes in your life compared to what it might have been like without Him. This can be determined, more or less, by reflecting on times when you were not close to Him, by considering areas of weakness, or perhaps by observing the lifestyles of old friends and classmates who didn't follow Christ. You might say something like:

- Knowing Christ makes a difference every day of my life. I know myself well enough to realize the mess I'd be in if it weren't for God's guidance. And even with that I sometimes mess up. That's when I'm most thankful for His forgiveness and grace.

My Story (Question 5):

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

6. What other benefits have you experienced since becoming a Christian? Especially think of ones who would best relate to the people that are in your Jerusalem.

Examples:

- Following God has given me purpose - knowing I'm here for greater reasons than just working, eating, sleeping, and doing it all over again. God wants to use me.
- I used to live with fear and insecurity. While I still worry occasionally, that sense of despair has been replaced with a calm confidence that my life is in God's hands.
- God has replaced what I used to think of as fun in my life with a kind of joy and happiness that really lasts.
- I've always had good friendships, but never with the depth I've found in some of our church family. Those people are closer to me than any friend ever was before.

My Story (Question 6):

Concluding Question

It's best to end your story with a concluding question or statement that requires a response from the other person.

Circle the following statement or question that seems most natural for you, or write your own.

- So, that's what happened to me. Can you relate to any of it?
- How about you - what's your spiritual background?
- Were you taught any of this growing up, or maybe I can ask, what do you believe?
- That's my spiritual story. I'd like to hear yours.
- Does it make any sense to you?

My Concluding Question:

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

Unifying Theme

This is the central issue in each of our stories that illustrates the difference it's made to know and follow Christ.

My Unifying Theme:

Individual Activity:

Outline Your Story

Directions

1. Referring back to your responses to the six questions (pages 27-30), circle a few key words in each of your answers that will help you quickly see the big picture of your story.
2. Write the most important of those key words in the spaces provided under each question in the next column.
3. Then copy your Concluding Question and your Unifying Theme in the places marked for those at the bottom of chart. That way you'll have the full outline all in one place.

My Story: Three Handles		
HANDLE 1	HANDLE 2	HANDLE 3
BC Before Christ	✝ Met Christ	AD After Christ
<u>KEY WORDS</u> Question 1:	<u>KEY WORDS</u> Question 3:	<u>KEY WORDS</u> Question 5:
Question 2:	Question 4:	Question 6:
Concluding Question: (Paul's was "Do you believe the prophets?")		
Unifying Theme: (Paul's was his intense passion for serving God.)		

St. Paul and Mr. Rogers, Brothers from Different Mothers

Groups:

Telling Your Story

Directions

1. Get with a partner.
2. One of you tell your story, while the other listens and makes mental notes of anything that was unclear or perhaps could be worded more clearly. For the one telling the story, feel free to look at your "My Story" chart on page 31 with the key words written on it - although you may find you won't even need it. *Note: The listener needs to cooperate with the person telling his or her story.*
3. After the first person has told his or her story, the listener should provide some feedback on what worked well and what areas might be made clearer.
4. Then, trade places - the listener becomes the speaker, and the speaker becomes the listener. Repeat the process.

Session 4

Making the Message Clear

It was an incredibly awkward moment. Carrie and I were on our dream vacation. A three-week trip to Australia that my wife won through her job. After spending our first week in and around Sydney, we found ourselves in the northeastern coastal city of Cairns. (The Aussies call it “Caans”.) We had this amazing bungalow on the beach, and the place looked almost identical to Hawaii. We decided to take a mini day cruise out to the Great Barrier Reef. There, we could snorkel around the surface of the reef and at least get some idea of its grandeur. The ticket agent told us to be on Pier #1 at 7:30am sharp. He warned us that we shouldn’t be late because the ship had another stop to make, and if we weren’t there, they’d leave without us.

The next day we arrived early, a little after 7am. As we approached the pier we noticed there were two sailors wearing their dress whites, saluting as people boarded the ship, which by the way, was much larger than I anticipated. With tickets in hand, I tried to show one of the sailors our boarding passes, but he just smiled and waved us on board. We departed promptly

at 7:40am and I took note that the pier was already empty. I thought to myself, “This is the first time that anything ran on time since we left the States.” (We had quickly learned that Australians have a “no worries mate” attitude for just about everything!) Roughly an hour and a half into the voyage, I started to wonder why we hadn’t stopped to pick anyone else up. Also, I found it strange that a lot of the people seemed to know one another. So I turned to Carrie and told her that I was sure that somehow we got on the wrong ship! At first, she thought that I was just being paranoid, but after I laid out my case, she agreed.

We decided to go to the bridge to let someone know about the mix-up. We spoke to the first mate, who told the captain, who promptly announced on the intercom and informed everyone that it had come to his attention that there were two stowaway “Yanks” (short for Yankee) on board. And then he encouraged all passengers to come to the main deck to watch them “walk the plank.” His facial expression looked like a mixture of abject disdain and

bloodthirstiness at the same time. Then the captain asked, “Do you know who the people are you’re sailing with today?” I managed to stammer out a weak, “No?” The captain informed us that this was a charter for the Premiers and Chief Ministers of the Australian states and territories. Can you say a-w-k-w-a-r-d!? That’s when he busted out laughing and said, “In all of my years, I’ve never seen anything like this before!”

He escorted us to the main deck and many people were already there. One man spoke up (later we found out he was the Premier of New South Wales where Sydney is the capital) and asked what did we have to say for ourselves. I tried to explain that it was the ticket agent’s fault, but then everyone started laughing, and the Premier made us the honorary representative of New Castle of South Wales, because the mayor of the town couldn’t attend the cruise. Despite all the embarrassment, it was worth it. For this ship was fully equipped with mini submarines that took us down into the depths of the reef.

And the seafood was the best I’ve ever seen. Mountains upon mountains of the largest lobster tails, prawns, scallops, and oysters on the half shell all for the taking. And the desserts were out of this world! And it was all free! We were just overwhelmed by the goodness of God. That’s when I heard it. It sounded like someone who was trying to shout into the wind. It was faint, but I’m sure I heard something like, “I have someone for you to talk to.”

On the voyage back from the reef, my wife and I struck up a conversation with a high school-aged girl. She was incredibly bright and well spoken. She was very interested in the U.S. and told us she wanted to holiday there before she started college in England. She wanted to know what were some of the biggest differences

between our two countries. We told her how she should be very proud of her country and about the things we loved about Australia. But then I mentioned that it was so sad that so many beautiful churches were abandoned and boarded up, or had been converted into restaurants or pubs. She responded by explaining she understood that America was founded upon religious freedom, but she thought that religion and Christianity were something straight out of the history books. That’s when she dropped the bomb and asked, “How does someone actually become a Christian, anyway?”

That’s when I realized it. From where we were sitting (the tip of the bow), with the wind at our backs, the 50-75 people sitting behind us would hear our answer to this young lady’s question: “How does someone actually become a Christian, anyway?” Whether you’re a brand-new follower of Christ, or a longtime veteran, a situation like this puts anyone to the test. Yet, the Bible warns us to “always be ready to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give a reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). Elsewhere we’re told, we should “be prepared in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2). Frankly, I think it’s about time that a lot more of us take these commands more seriously. They’re divine imperatives, not suggestions.

What people actually do with the message is between them and God, but it’s our responsibility to make it as clear to them as possible. So let me commend you for your effort not only to read this content but to apply it to your lives. That day, as I spoke with the bright, young lady, I chose what I believe is the most simple and succinct tool I know for telling others about Jesus. It’s called “Do vs. Done,” and it gets to the heart of the issue that so many people are often confused about. It addresses the question of what part our efforts

play in attaining salvation, and since this illustration is verbal, it doesn't need any props or visual aids. It's also great for the times you have to say it clearly and quickly. So here's how it goes:

First, you have to understand that there's a difference between religion and Christianity. Religion is spelled D-O because it consists of things people do to try to somehow gain God's forgiveness and favor, but the problem is you never know when you've done enough. It's like being a salesman who must meet a quota, but never told how much the quota is. You can never be sure that you've done enough. Worse yet, the Bible tells us in the book of Romans (3:23) that we can never do enough because we'll always fall short of God's standard. But thankfully, Christianity is spelled differently. It's spelled D-O-N-E, which means that what we couldn't do for ourselves Christ has already done for us. He lived a perfect life that we could never live, and He willingly died on the cross to pay the penalty we owed for the wrong things we've done. To become a Christian is to humbly receive God's gift of forgiveness and committing to follow His leadership. When we do that, He adopts us into His family and begins to change us from the inside out.

This explanation of the gospel is simple, succinct, and goes against most everyone's thinking that our good works just has to outweigh our sins.

So, would you like to know what happened with the young lady? After hearing the gospel, she paused for what seemed like a long time. There was a tear in her eye. She talked about the pressure that she was under, being the daughter of the Premier of New South Wales (we had no idea who she was when we began our conversation). She asked me if it was really

that easy to become a Christian. I told her it was that easy, but it's harder to live out our faith, but also that she would never do it alone. I asked if I could lead her in a prayer. She looked directly at all the people who were overhearing our talk. She told us she wasn't ready, but she would think deeply about our time together. She said it so sincerely that to this day I believe her. Although Carrie gave her our contact information, we never heard from her again. . . But we believe that God's Word is sharper than any sword, and He performed surgery on her heart that day. I hope to see her again. I know that God was pleased, and Carrie and I felt His pleasure!

Communicating God's Message

Before I sign off, can I ask you a question? How are your personal testimonies coming along? We're praying that not only will you be able to share your story with others, but that you'd also be able to articulate your testimony in a clear and succinct way. This effort will build up your faith, and in times of doubt and spiritual attack you can recite it out loud for the enemy's little minions to hear!

This week your group will begin the journey of learning two gospel presentations: "Do vs. Done" which is the one I just used in my story, and "The Bridge" which is the best known and most frequently used illustration around the world. It's great because it's visual and easy to work into a conversation, just by asking, "Have you ever wondered what the Bible is about? I can explain it to you in just a few minutes!"

Now, we're not expecting you to learn all of these presentations over the course of our "Won't You Be My Neighbor" series, but if your group continues to work on these presentations, you'll be surprised how quickly you all will master them. And then you'll be equipped to complete Jesus' Great Commission!

Making the Message Clear

Do vs. Done

This illustration is helpful for people who think they need to do good works to try to earn their way into God's forgiveness and favor.

Outline	
<p>Religion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is spelled D-O - trying to do enough to please God 	<p>A lot of people don't realize that there's a big difference between religion and Christianity - it's in how they're spelled! Religion is spelled "D-O" [it's helpful to actually write down the word, "DO"]. It consists of trying to do enough good things to earn our way back to God.</p>
<p>The Problem:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - never know if we've done enough - the Bible says we never can do enough 	<p>The problem is we never know when we have done enough. More than that, the Bible makes it clear that we never can do enough. (Romans 3:23 says: "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.")</p>
<p>Christianity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - is spelled D-O-N-E - Jesus did what we couldn't do. He lived a perfect life and died to pay for our sins. 	<p>Christianity, on the other hand, is spelled "D-O-N-E" [if you're writing, add the letters "NE" to the end of "DO" - spelling DONE].</p> <p>That's because Jesus has done for us what we could never do for ourselves. He lived the perfect life that we could never live. Then, He died on the cross to pay for all of the sins we could never pay for, and He rose from the dead to offer us new life.</p>
<p>Our Reponse:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must receive what He has done - by asking for His forgiveness and leadership 	<p>But it is not enough to just know this. We have to receive Him and what He has DONE for us. We do that by asking Him for His forgiveness and leadership in our lives.</p> <p>Does this make sense to you? Have you ever received what Jesus has done for you?</p>

The Bridge Illustration

The Bridge Illustration		
KEY CHARACTERS	NARRATIVE	PICTURE
GOD	God loves us , and He wants to have a relationship with us. [Write "God" on one side and "us" on the other side.]	Us God
US	However, we blew it by rebelling against Him, and this broke off that relationship. [Draw lines by both words to form walls on each side of a large chasm.]	Us God
	Most of us are aware of this and do things to try to get back to God, but our efforts fail. [Draw arrows going over the "us" cliff; these represent our failing attempts to get back to God.]	Us God
	Our sins have to be punished, and the penalty is spiritual death - which means separation from God for eternity in a place called hell. That's the predicament we're all in - and there's nothing we can do in our own strength to change it. [Write the word "Death" at the bottom of the chasm.]	Us God Death
CHRIST	But there's good news: God did for us what we couldn't do for ourselves by building a bridge back to Himself. [Draw a cross so it touches both sides of the chasm.]	Us God Death
	How? Christ paid for it by dying for us on the cross as our substitute. He paid the spiritual death penalty that we owed, and He rose from the dead to give us His life. [Cross out the word "Death" at the bottom of the chasm.]	Us God Death
YOU	It's not enough to just know this. We must receive Him by admitting that we have sinned against Him and by asking for His forgiveness and leadership. [Draw a person on the left side of the chasm; then an arrow to the right side of the chasm; then a person on the right side of the chasm.]	Us God Death
	Conclude by asking your friend where they think they are on the diagram.	

Making the Message Clear

Practice drawing The Bridge illustration here:



Do vs. Done and The Bridge practice directions:

1. Choose a person to whom you want to evangelize.
2. Pair up with one other person in your group and briefly tell your partner the first name and the nature of your relationship with that person you have in mind. Are they a (neighbor, coworker, relative, or friend etc.)?
3. Present the illustration like you're actually talking to that person.
4. After the first person has presented the presentation, the listener should provide feedback on what worked well and what might be improved.
5. Then, trade places and repeat the three steps.

Video Access

GROUP VIDEOS

youtube.com

- Search “Rock Point Church”
- Click on logo to go to Rock Point Church YouTube channel
- Click PLAYLISTS tab and find “Won’t You Be My Neighbor”

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- Click WATCH at the top of the page (or dropdown menu on mobile).
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