Evangelism in Home Groups

Is there a place for evangelism in the Bible Study Group setting?

A Theological Perspective


  I [Paul] have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness—the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints. To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ.

- Chapter 4:2-6

  Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us [Paul and Timothy c.f. Col 1:1] too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.
What three ways does Paul encourage the Church in to be involved in Gospel work?

1) 

2) 

3) 

What is ‘Evangelism’?

- The *nature* of evangelism is ...

- The *purpose* of evangelism is ...

- The *goal* then of evangelism should be to (by the Spirit) ...

- Programs and events?
  
i) Evangelism is a __________ word before it is a __________ word (Matt 5:13-16; 1 Peter 2:9). The actual activity of evangelism flows out of ________________________________.

ii) Evangelism needs to be understood as primarily proceeding out of ________________________________, not ________________________________.

   A ________________ tends to remove evangelism from each person’s responsibility.
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Home Group Evangelism

- There can be many opportunities for a Home Groups to do evangelism. Some by bringing people _______ and some by going ____________ to people.

Bringing IN

- Small before Large

When a stranger to the gospel comes what they should see is a group of people who:

a) __________________________ – Bible Study groups should actually demonstrate the gospel. The way relationships are conducted, our regard of God, and the attractive way that we care for the outsider should all speak of the gospel. The biblical description of the Christian life is in contrast with the world – it shows Christians who enjoy relationships more because we seek to forgive rather than seek revenge. We should not be racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or elitist. We should work hard and honestly and be more concerned with people than organizations or bureaucracy. How can the Christian life not be attractive to the outsider?!

Exposing the non-believer to Christian relationships can be very helpful to open them up to the gospel.

b) __________________________ – Bible Study groups should be groups where the Bible is central. Having a stranger to the gospel should not change that. They should see in the members of the group, people who are eager to look and listen to the Word of God and people would be eager to talk honestly about how it applies to their lives and the world around. The fact that Christians base their lives on the Word of God can be a very attractive quality – we know why we believe and we have defendable reasons for living as we do.

Exposing the non-believer to the Bible gives them an opportunity to consider it for themselves and it may lead them to question why they think the way that they do.
And in the times when a stranger to the gospel is not present, groups are the place where together you provide:

a) _______________________________ – Reaching into the world with the gospel is problematic – first in communication when others who don’t know the gospel are confronted by the gospel, and second when we cop the consequences of their reaction. Working together in evangelism helps to overcome these problems. We fight side by side and keep each other going when and if the going gets tough.

b) _______________________________ – Bible Study groups can be great place to train one another in evangelism. Everything from creating and taking opportunities, practicing and communicating the gospel, and answering objections can be discussed in your small group context.

c) _______________________________ – if you want to talk to people about God, then talk to God about people. Our commission is not to make people Christian, that is the role of the spirit. Our role is to be witnesses and so it is helpful to pray for one another and for opportunities and for those we are seeing to bear witness too. The Home group is a great place to do that.
Going OUT

As wonderful as our Home Group locations might be, it is always good to get out!

a) _______________________________ – When engaged in some time of evangelism a Home Study group is faced with the practical reality of what they are theologically called to do!
Christian truth and the eternal implications of that truth are brought into sharp focus when they see the reality of it working in people’s lives. The big issues surface, doubts emerge, confusion is exposed and misunderstandings are brought out - but they can also be dealt with in a way that the comfortable inward-looking Bible Study group may never be able to do.

b) _______________________________ – nothing bonds a group together like working together toward a common goal. Doing evangelism together is a great goal.

c) _______________________________ – Just about everyone finds evangelism intimating, so doing it as a Home Groups or with other members of your Home Group can be a terrific encouragement (and helps in holding you too account).

Ideas for evangelism in our Home Group settings

How have you seen evangelism work in your current or past Home Groups?

Some ideas to try:

- Have a ‘Mission Focus’. There are lots of things that could be done - pick an obvious area (which connects with the members of the group) and try and work out ways to engage. (e.g. The medical fraternity, our global Partners, a uni faculty, neighbors, homeless, work/business community, Anglicare etc.)

- Do the face to face stuff together
  - ‘cold-contact’ evangelism as a group at a local park or mall or uni
  - ‘door-knocking’ and letterboxing.
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- Visitation (possibly with contacts made recently at church)
- Take newcomers to church for a drink (in the week that you meet them).
- Dialogue Meetings – where you invite non-believers to dinner and discuss ‘Christian’ things.
- Invitations – inviting friends, family and colleagues to your Home Group.
- Chronic Care – for those who need longer term support.

- Make the most of evangelistic events that are on offer (e.g. Easter, Christmas, CBF, ES, Church Missions etc.). Gear for them as a group.

Leadership Tips:
- Ensure your Bible Studies discuss how you would teach the passage to a non-believer.
- Use the Bible Studies to raise apologetic issues and so the group learns how to address objections using the Bible.
- Take your group to cemetery – and try and find the tombstones that offer hope.
- Debrief and ensure the group can encourage and support those that are very active in evangelistic enterprises.
- Invite skilled and gifted evangelists to speak to your group.

Evangelism Resources/Courses

Following are simple notes on various evangelism resources, ideas or courses that your group may want to consider.

- JesusWORKS

JesusWORKS can be helpful for churched and unchurched people. It consists of four short discussions from the Gospel of Mark. It can be used one-on-one as well as in small group settings (like a Home Group).

Advantages:
- It is so simple to use and to lead – you do not have to be a theological scholar to run this course.
- It gets the participants to look at the text of the Bible and make up their own minds.
- It doesn’t put the participants on the spot – they are not asked to read, pray or answer questions – but they are welcome to ask whatever questions that they would like.
- It is short and contained – you can easily do each study in under 50 minutes.
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- **Three-Two-One**

321 is all about: hospitality. Treat 321 like an invitation to dinner. It’s a chance to come on over and look around the Christian faith. A chance to enter into a story that claims to be the *ultimate* story. Enter into the world that the Bible describes and understand it from the inside. Ask questions and make up your own mind.

The way of doing evangelism shows God to be three two one. Three: God is three Persons united in love. Two: The world is shaped by two representatives – Adam and Jesus. One: You are one with Adam. Be one with Jesus.

[http://three-two-one.org/](http://three-two-one.org/)

**Advantages:**

- Fresh and interactive.
- Great video resources – both for training the evangelist and for giving the seeker.
- Easy to remember
- Great for the ‘Y’ generation.

- **Two Ways to Live (2W2L)**


**Advantages:**

- It adapts to individual learning styles because it teaches a diagram, a verse and an explanation of the gospel so that as it is given the participant can easily grasp it.
- It is easy to remember and after giving it a few times the evangelist can produce it at will.
- It is well recognized and so it reinforces what might have been done for someone in the past.
- It is easy to then refer to when questions are asked because of the visual framework that it presents.
- There are many different resources using this format – CD Rom, Handouts, Workbooks etc.
- It can be used easily with just about any age group from year 6 to the elderly.

- **Everyday Evangelism**
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This is an excellent four-week course that focuses on training people to evangelize through personal relationships and natural contact. It is best trained at the Bible Study group level and equips members to be faithful witnesses of the gospel of Jesus in their everyday lives.

Advantages:

- It gives a clear theological explanation of the imperative Christians have for evangelism.
- It concentrates on the witnessing relationship rather than the act of evangelism so that the Christian moves away from the idea of evangelism only being an event.
- It works well for training in a Home Group because it recognizes that everyone is different and draws out what those differences will mean for individual styles of evangelism.
- It helps the Christian to think and express their own testimony – making their evangelism personal and relational.
- The appendixes are great – presenting a series of guidelines that can be used for quick reference later.
- It encourages members to think about what contacts they do have around them.

Simply Christianity

This is a five-week course based on the gospel of Luke. It starts with looking at the authority of scripture before moving the participant into the text of the Bible. Like JesusWorks it is easily taught and run in a Bible Study setting and suggests ways to do it over a meal.

Advantages:

- It is based around a single book of the Bible and can be used alongside the ‘Jesus’ video which also uses the Gospel of Luke.
- It is clear and updated in its style from it predecessor (Christianity Explained) – catering better for those in our post-modern context.
- It is comfortable for the participants because it doesn’t ask them to read, pray or answer questions until the very end. Questions from the participant are welcome however.
- John Dickson (the author) has written a companion book that explains Christianity that can be easily given and read.
- It can be done with individuals or in a group setting.

Dialogue Meetings

A Dialogue meeting is not as much a course as it is an opportunity that a Home Group can work together on to bring friends and family in contact with the gospel.
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In short it involves inviting a small group of non-believers to a dinner in someone’s home – upfront they are told that it will be a normal dinner but with opportunity to talk about Christian stuff. A speaker or key leader then gives a short introductory brief (which explains the Gospel) and then opens the evening up to discussion. Usually discussion flows freely.

Advantages:

- ‘Shy’ people generally feel more comfortable in a friend’s home and over a meal – something that most are quite accustomed to. When people are relaxed they tend to listen better.
- It is easier to gauge whether the participant is hearing what is said.
- Non-believers can contribute more (and more on their own terms).
- The hosts are identified with the gospel and so follow-up discussions are usually much easier.
- They are very easy to organize and run.

Intimidating at first – but once run you may be pleasantly surprised!


- **Other**

Now of course there are loads of other ways that evangelism can be done in Bible Study groups – *how* is not as important as *whether* it is actually being done. Be creative and invent your own. A good church should be running several different evangelistic initiatives throughout the year – as a Home Group leader you play an incredibly important role in mobilizing your group to join in and support those initiatives.

These books are available at all Christian Bookshops:


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1 Another version is to hold a ‘Politically Incorrect Dinner’ – come and talk about Politics, Sex or Religion! Since most people don’t know heaps about Politics and it is boring, and most people get fairly embarrassed talking about sex, then it ends up being Religion and the Gospel that the group spends the night talking about!!


**Disclaimer:**

Some of the material for this Seminar has been adapted from C. Marshall’s *Growth Groups* (Kingsford: Matthias Media, 1995), Ch 9.

**Further reading:**