

How to Share Jesus with Others

Lesson 1: Preparing our hearts

If you've ever been a part of a Christian community that reaches out to share their faith, then you've probably been introduced to many Gospel tools to help you! This class explores not only how to share Jesus with others, but how to build lifelong relationships with those who are genuinely seeking God and sharing with them what it means to make Jesus the Lord of their lives. With over thirty-five years of sharing our faith and helping people to follow Jesus, we're going to discuss passages, experiences, and practical tips on what to do – and what not to do! We hope you enjoy the journey and are able to develop lasting, genuine friendships where Jesus is the common thread that binds you together.

Our personal testimony

When Jesus resurrected from the dead, he appeared to his first twelve followers or apostles at least three times for over forty days (John 21:14, Acts 1:3). He then appeared to over 500 people, to his own brother James, to all the other apostles,¹ and to Paul (I Corinthians 15:5-8). Each of these people were eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus with amazing stories to tell! While “apostle” is a spiritual title and gift in the New Testament, the word literally means “messenger” or one who is “sent,”² and the book of Acts records many stories about the lives of these “sent” ones. After being put in prison and released, the first apostles shared the good news of Jesus to crowds in the temple courts (Acts 5:25). Even after being flogged, they continued fearlessly to teach about Jesus in the temple courts and share his message from house to house so that everyone would have a chance to hear about Jesus (Acts 5:40-42). There were at least twenty to twenty-seven people with this special title “apostle” [see footnote 1], and we can read some of their stories, including the story of Stephen boldly preaching the Word (Acts 7). Sadly, Stephen was stoned to death by Jewish leaders after preaching a powerful message to the Jewish people. Shortly after, all of Jesus's followers in Jerusalem, except for the Twelve, were scattered throughout Israel because their lives were being threatened. They were so afraid and felt so sorry for themselves that they stopped sharing their faith and hid inside their homes, waiting for Jesus's return.... Wait, what? That's *not* what happened! The followers fearlessly shared the Word of God “wherever they went” throughout the regions where they had been scattered (Acts 8:1-4)!

Why do you think the followers of Jesus continued to share their faith in spite of severe persecution?

¹ Epaphroditus was an apostle (Philippians 2:25), as was Matthias (Acts 1:16), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Andronicus and Junius, possibly a female name (Romans 16:7), likely Silas and Timothy (I Thessalonians 1:1), and finally Paul Galatians 1:1), who received his anointing from Ananias (Acts 8:17). While many scholars interpret Acts 6:1-6 as the appointing of the first deacons, in close contextual reading, the responsibility given to these seven men, considering verse 7 and the passages that follow (the stories of Stephen and Philip, Acts 6-8), was the ministry of prayer and the Word, not the waiting of tables; the antecedent for the reference can be one or the other. Clearly waiting tables was not the focus of Stephen and Philip, as immediately these men were sent out to preach the Word. Stephen is busy performing miracles (6:8) and dies from boldly sharing his faith, not waiting tables. Likewise, we see Philip traveling and preaching away from the city, not staying in Jerusalem for a new appointment as waiter. The Twelve also choose men filled with the Holy Spirit, not a requirement for feeding widows. The role of taking care of widows was likely left to the other disciples that the Twelve had gathered in verse 2 so that preaching the Word could remain the unhindered, undistracted priority.

² “652. Apostolos,” *Thayer's Greek Lexicon*, <https://biblehub.com/greek/652.htm>.

From the stories throughout the book of Acts, Jesus's followers never stopped sharing their faith because they were filled with the Holy Spirit, inspired by all the miracles of God among them, some emboldened by seeing the risen Jesus, and others greatly inspired by the testimonies of those witnesses. Until the time of Stephen's death and the scattering of the Christians, these early followers practiced gathering daily in the temple courts to witness miracles, praise God for all that he was doing, and bring new believers into their gatherings (Acts 2:42-47). The Lord was working so powerfully among them that they literally had no fear anymore of persecution, rejection, loss of property, or even death. They each had a testimony of the power and goodness of the Lord Jesus.

Our personal desire to share our faith with people must be rooted first in the personal experience we've had with Jesus. People will gladly testify about Jesus's miracles, transformational power, love, and salvation if they've had a genuine encounter with Jesus that has transformed their hearts and lives. If that's never happened to you, then sharing about Jesus may feel like a mechanical exercise, like an assignment to complete, rather than a declaration of God's power and love in your life. But don't worry! During this course, we'll discuss our testimonies and help you to develop a testimony if you don't have one! In the book of Revelation, Jesus's best friend John shares how important testimonies are in God's plan of salvation:

¹⁰ Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say: "Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God, and the authority of his Messiah. For the accuser of our brothers and sisters, who accuses them before our God day and night, has been hurled down. ¹¹ They triumphed over him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death. (Revelation 12, NIV)

Who is the one who has been "hurled down," which in the Greek means "thrown out of his position" or "thrown down"?³ When and how did this happen? (v. 10)

Who triumphed over him and how? What was the cost of this role?

From this passage, we can see that Jesus is going to have full reign over our world one day. And when he does, Satan is going to be thrown down into hell (Revelation 20:10) and will no longer have any power over the earth. So, how is he defeated? He's defeated by Jesus's blood that not only paid the price for the forgiveness of our sins but empowers us to overcome sin and Satan in our lives (1 John 2:13)! When we truly experience this power and share with others our story of how Jesus has impacted our lives, then they too can have victory over Satan! Until we share this Gospel message *and* our testimony, Satan is deceiving the people we meet and trying to devour them. But we have a role to open the eyes of the people around us, see the truth of God's love, inspire them to turn to Jesus for help and salvation, and drive Satan out of their lives. Wow, what a purpose in life and a power we have to change this world for eternity!

The spiritual condition of our world

To have this kind of faith and passion, we must understand deeply and confidently that the world is lost without Jesus. The Bible teaches that when a person dies apart from Jesus, hell awaits them, and they have no way to enter heaven without his truth and grace. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6). Again he said, "You are from below; I am from

³ "906. balló," Thayer's, <https://biblehub.com/greek/906.htm>.

above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sin; if you do not believe that I am he [the Savior], you will indeed die in your sins" (John 8:23-24). If we doubt that people are lost or believe that there is another way to be right with God, then sharing Jesus with others won't be a priority in our lives. But let's think of it this way: If Jesus knew that there was another way to be saved, wouldn't he have told us? Why then would he surrender to torture and death on a cross if there was some other way? And why would followers like Stephen, Peter, John, Paul, and so many others severely suffer for their faith and even face death for their message if there were other options? Even after the death of the first followers, many Christians suffered under Nero and were even burned as torches. Yet according to historical records, this suffering was like fuel for the message of Jesus. The more people died, the more the churches grew! (Tacitus, *Annals* 15.44). There was no way that this could have happened without people sharing their faith stories and miracles, convincing people that Jesus is truly the only God and way to be saved.

Making followers of all nations becomes the lifestyle of a Christ follower because we understand that people's eternities are at stake – the lives of our family, our neighbors, our friends, our city, our country, and the nations. When we really understand this, a fire burns inside us to help people know Jesus and receive him into their lives. Today, 3.56 billion people are considered "unreached."⁴ That means that there are not enough followers or Bible resources in their community to help them know and follow Jesus. That's 42% of people around the world! Before you get too discouraged, that's 1 billion less than where we were 14 years ago; however, the population is growing as fast as we're sharing our faith!⁵ So, how can you help the spiritual condition of our world? Well, you can contribute in many ways – translate Bibles, create Bible-based videos in multiple languages, send Bibles into countries where there is limited access to resources, and more! But let's look at what Jesus asks us to do:

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. ¹⁹So, go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach them to obey everything that I have told you. You can be sure that I will be with you always. I will continue with you until the end of the world." (Matthew 28, ERV)

Lists all the tasks that Jesus commands us to do in this passage.

What's the difference between a "believer" and a "follower," also known as a "disciple." According to verse 20, how do we help people become Jesus's followers?

The truth is, many Christians feel like they've accomplished the mission of Jesus if they share their testimony, briefly share the message of Jesus, pass out Bibles or Gospel handouts, or even help someone get miraculously healed. Those are all wonderful and *very* important things to do! But Jesus isn't asking us to do just those things. He's commanding us to help people to learn how to *follow Jesus according to his teachings*. How do we do this? First, we need to know and understand Jesus's teachings. Second, we need to take time with people and develop a deep friendship with them, demonstrating from our own lives what it means to follow Jesus. Today, the most effective churches around the world are those whose members are also actively participating in the process of helping their friends to become genuine Jesus

⁴ Joshua Project, <https://joshuaproject.net/>, 2025.

⁵ According to Larry Stockstill in *The Surge: A Global Church-Planting Initiative*, Larry Stockstill, USA, 2012.

followers. Honestly, it's quite rare to see a person become and remain a faithful follower of Jesus and his teachings outside of these relationships.

Loving people

While we will be providing some tools to help you to share Jesus and your own story with others, there is one ingredient that is absolutely necessary for making lasting Christ followers: Love. Without genuine love for people and a desire to make lasting friendships, tools can only take you so far. Let's look at why:

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. ² If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³ If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing. (1 Corinthians 13, NIV)

³⁴ "I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other just as I loved you. ³⁵ All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other." (John 13, ERV)

What do these verses say about love? Why is love the key to sharing our faith?

People come with many different reasons and motives for sharing their faith with others. Take a look at these motives, and put a check mark beside any that you yourself have felt:

☐ I know I'm supposed to. I feel guilty if I don't.	☐ I know that what I believe is right.
☐ I see others doing it, and so I want to.	☐ The thrill of the kill! To win another soul!
☐ I like others to agree with me.	☐ People from other religions are all around me!
☐ I don't like it when people disagree with me.	☐ I'll make Jesus proud of me.
☐ I want to learn how to defend my beliefs.	☐ I'll make my pastor, my leader, my parents, or someone else proud of me.
☐ I want to make an impact during my life!	☐ My pastor told me I had to.
☐ I want to be a missionary, leader, or pastor!	☐ People are going to hell, and we need to win as many as possible! (which is fear)
☐ We need to grow our church.	☐ I want reward in heaven.
☐ The church next door is growing faster than we are!	☐ I'm lonely, and I need friends.

Take a minute and quietly examine your heart. Can you relate to any of these motives? Don't worry, we're not going to ask you to share! 😊

If we're honest with ourselves, we've all had these motives for reaching out to others. They're not all wrong, and they're not all bad. But if you look at each one of these motives, the reason for sharing Jesus is more about ourselves than about others, or even Jesus. They're also void of love – love for others and love for Jesus. And if we try to share our faith with these motives, we can do more damage than good. We'll end up pushing people away from Jesus, rather than drawing people to him.

Pick one of the motives above. Maybe you or someone you know has shared their faith with these motives. What did that look like? How can it push the person we're trying to share with away from Jesus, rather than toward him?

Describe any other negative experiences you've seen or had yourself with someone who was trying to share Jesus. What did that look like?

While some of the motives above are not completely wrong, the purest motive for sharing Jesus with people is that we love Jesus and we love people. When we speak about love, we may have different views about what love looks like. Let's start with what the Bible says love is and discuss this topic more:

⁴ Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (I Corinthians 13, NIV)

What do you think it looks like to speak to people with love? What does speaking to people without love look like?

When we love people in the way that God wants us to love them, then we're following Jesus by imitating how he taught others and how he shared the good news of his salvation with those he met. John said this about Jesus: "Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end" (I John 13:1).

What do you notice in this verse about Jesus's relationships with the followers he made? What could this look like in our lives?

What you might have noticed about Jesus is that when he made a follower, he made a lifelong friend. If we look at his ministry, he had a very close relationship with his first twelve followers. They walked through life together: they ate at each other's homes; shared their faith and did miracles together; taught, healed, and prayed together; and even traveled to do ministry together. Wow, that's close! We know that others, besides these twelve men, did many of the same things with Jesus. And this is how we want to encourage you to think about your ministry. You're not only helping someone to be a follower of Jesus but also becoming a lifelong friend. For some of us, that's difficult to imagine in our society today. Next week, we'll talk about how to be a genuine friend to the people around you and people you'll meet!

This Week:

1. Take time each day to pray for your love for people and for God. Spend time praying for the lost – people you know, your neighborhood, your city, your nation, and beyond!
2. To learn Jesus's teachings, start reading the book of Matthew or John.
3. Get familiar with the Joshua Project site: <https://joshuaproject.net/>.