

ADVANCE GROUP TASTER GUIDE



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WELCOME TO ADVANCE

THE GOSPEL. THERE IS NO PLAN B.

THE GOSPEL IS GOOD NEWS TO BE PROCLAIMED AND HAS LOST NONE OF ITS POWER TO SAVE. THROUGH SMALL GROUP MENTORING, ADVANCE EQUIPS, ENCOURAGES AND EMPOWERS THE CHURCH FOR EVANGELISM WHILE ALSO STIRRING AND DEVELOPING EVANGELISTIC GIFTING IN THOSE CALLED AS EVANGELISTS.

Advance grew out of a commitment by evangelists Andy Hawthorne (The Message Trust) and Andrew Palau (Luis Palau Association) to gather up to twelve younger preaching evangelists in small group community to intentionally develop and sharpen them.

Through monthly meetings those in a group receive teaching, sharpen one another through discussion, and share openly about personal and spiritual life. Updates are sent regularly to each other between group sessions (using WhatsApp or something similar) about opportunities and engagements they have to share the gospel, and to encourage each other with the fruit from those opportunities.

After the first year of being in an Advance group, whilst continuing on together in their original group, each group member also considers finding up to twelve more people who they can invite into a new group to mentor in the same way as we seek to grow the number of Christians who will unashamedly and confidently share the gospel – whether preaching from a platform or through daily encounters with family, friends and strangers in personal evangelism.

Since its inception in 2015, Advance has grown from the first group in Manchester, UK, to a global movement of hundreds of groups meeting regularly around the world who are committed to fanning into flame the gift of God in their lives that the world may know him.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF THE MOVEMENT



These are the five core principles that Advance groups are built upon:

1. REGULAR MEETING

Monthly meetings should be made a diary priority by group members. It is essential that when people join a group, they commit to

the meetings. Groups should be encouraged to treat these sessions as sacred – members should do everything they can to avoid other engagements or meetings drawing them away once the date is agreed. A deep commitment to being prepared for the work God has called us to partner with him in is a foundational element of the Advance group journey.

2. SHARPENING

A commitment to studying the Bible for a deeper knowledge of the gospel takes up a significant part of the session time each month, and also includes opportunities for healthy critique of one another's understanding and application of evangelism and the gospel, primarily through discussion times.

3. ACCOUNTABILITY

Honest self-evaluation via feedback questionnaires and open sharing within the group time is designed to ensure that we live accountable and holy lives as we attempt to be faithful to living and sharing the gospel. Vulnerability and honesty in your group can take time to develop but should be encouraged and led by the example of the group leader.

4. COMMUNICATION

Keeping each other up to date with gospel opportunities, prayer requests and stories of salvation via email and/or group text messaging ensures groups support each other as a community. Staying connected between sessions also creates a more familial dynamic in the group.

5. MULTIPLICATION

A commitment to explore the idea of multiplication with a view to group members taking on their own group (while continuing on in the original group) within 12-18 months of joining. Not all who are in your group will start their own, but by using this resource and being intentional about it, many can and will – ensuring that the equipping, empowering and encouraging of Christians committed to evangelism continues to grow and spread around the world.

IS IT FOR ME?

The Bible reveals that the role of the evangelist is a specific gift from God for the building of his church (Eph 4:11-12). The evangelist will be fruitful in winning people to Christ as they share the gospel, but they will also be fruitful in equipping and stirring the whole church to be faithful witnesses of the gospel.

However, Advance groups are not just for those who are gifted and called to the specific role (sometimes called the 'office') of the evangelist, they are for anyone who wants to grow in their understanding of the gospel and their ability to offer its hope in any and every opportunity that God provides. The great commission of Jesus to go into the world and make disciples is a commission for all believers. Evangelism, accordingly, is the business of every Christian. Whether we are 'gifted' evangelists or not, we are all called to 'do the work of the evangelist' in revealing Christ to the world in word and deed (2 Tim 4:1-5). Along the way, some may even excitingly discover gifting and calling for the role of the evangelist on their life. Either way, unless specified, the word *evangelist* is used in the Advance Group Guide as a catch-all term for anyone engaging in evangelism, not just 'gifted' evangelists.

Whether you have opportunities to preach from a platform or are passionate about reaching those you encounter interpersonally day by day, these three simple questions will help you decide whether starting (or joining) an Advance group is for you....

FAITH

Do you have faith that the gospel has lost none of its power, and is the only way by which a person can know true life and salvation?

CLARITY

Do you desire to communicate the gospel with clarity through whatever opportunities you have to share?

INVITATION

Do you long to extend an invitation to the hope of the gospel, and see people move into eternal relationship with Jesus?

If you can answer 'yes' to those questions, then Advance can help. You could start by gathering a small group of others who also say yes to these questions and use this Advance Group Mentoring Guide to begin the journey together.

THE SESSION GUIDE

The complete session guide includes session material for at least three years of running an Advance group once a month. This starter pack includes the first three sessions and a few of the third year resource options for you to explore. If you are an experienced evangelist and/or confident in leading this kind of thing, you may want to use the sessions as a jumping off point, adding and adapting the content to meet the needs of your group and utilising your own experience. If you are new to all this, then feel free to follow the sessions word-for-word and instruction-for-instruction – you'll have all you need to grow together as a group.

YEAR ONE

The first twelve sessions are designed to give an understanding of the gospel, evangelism, and the character of an evangelist. The first session (**Session one**) will provide an introduction. The next sessions are split into sections which cover five characteristics of an evangelist. The last session of the year (**Session twelve**) will be an opportunity to reflect on everything we have learnt.

CORE CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EVANGELIST

SESSIONS TWO - FOUR : BIBLE-TEACHING EVANGELISTS: KNOW THE GOSPEL DEEPLY

We must know the message we proclaim as deeply as possible. To do this we must be committed to the reading and study of God's word, so that our proclamation is not based on our own ideas and assumptions about the gospel, but in what the word of God teaches. The commissioning words of Jesus in Matthew 28 call us to make disciples of all nations, teaching people to obey what Jesus has commanded. We are called not merely to be evangelists, but Bible-teaching evangelists, sharing truth rather than opinion. These three sessions will consider the gospel and evangelism in light of what the Bible teaches us about the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

SESSIONS FIVE - SIX: PRAYERFUL EVANGELISTS: ACT IN THE SPIRIT'S POWER

We are to submit to the power of the Holy Spirit for the task of evangelism, for it is not our power but the power of God which brings salvation. So, we commit to living prayerfully, asking God to provide opportunities to share our faith and see lives transformed as a result. These sessions explore the spiritual life of an evangelist and provide opportunities to explore our devotional lives and the direct impact they have on our evangelism.

SESSIONS SEVEN - EIGHT: ACCOUNTABLE EVANGELISTS: LIVE A HOLY LIFE

Holiness is at the heart of the gospel. Sharing the transforming power of the gospel in an authentic way means living accountable lives, where our 'on-stage' matches our 'off-stage'. Cheering each other on in success and standing with one another in failure is crucial as we seek to grow as holy people sharing a holy message. These sessions focus on the holiness of the evangelist, affirming the need for accountability and the position of humility as a chief characteristic of those who serve Jesus.

SESSIONS NINE - TEN: COMMITTED EVANGELISTS: BE INTENTIONAL IN THE TASK

Intentionality is key to evangelism. We must be aware of – and seize – everyday opportunities to share God’s love, not simply sharing the Jesus story but inviting those who hear it into the new life it offers, and helping to start them on a discipleship journey. These sessions explore two key criteria that can be distinctive in evangelistic gifting: increased opportunity to boldly share the gospel every day, and a willingness to call people into the kingdom at the climax of each gospel opportunity.

SESSION ELEVEN: INSPIRATIONAL EVANGELISTS: STIR THE CHURCH TO WITNESS

As we share the gospel message with a world who needs it, we must also stir the church to do the same. Evangelism is the business of every Christian, and so encouraging and stirring the church to the task must also be a commitment of any evangelist. This session explores the evangelist’s role as an encourager for the church to keep Christian witness central to who we are as followers of Jesus.

SESSION TWELVE: REFLECTION

Each Advance year comes to an end with a retreat of some kind, and session twelve offers a framework and content for giving your group the opportunity to reflect on all they have learnt this year, all that has been done in and through you by God, and to look ahead together at what’s next.

YEAR TWO



The twelve sessions of Year Two alternate between exploring the challenges and the fruit of evangelism. After an introductory session (**Session one**) that sets up the themes of challenge and fruit, the sessions then flow as follows:

SESSION TWO: THE CHALLENGE FROM GOD

This session explores the challenge from God to us that we would worship him obediently in

spirit and truth and what that means for our evangelism into the world.

SESSION THREE: THE FRUIT IN THE DISCIPLE

In this session we look at what it means to live with self-control, not out of religious duty but a desire to be faithful to the one who is eternally faithful to us.

SESSION FOUR: THE CHALLENGE FROM YOURSELF

This session focuses on the pressures we place on ourselves to ‘perform’ to certain standards and levels of success and the dangers of comparison.

SESSION FIVE: THE FRUIT IN THE MESSAGE

Session five considers the fruit at the heart of the gospel message, the goodness of the king of all creation who offers the world the peace of his perfect kingdom instead of the chaos of our rebellion.

SESSION SIX: THE CHALLENGE FROM THE WORLD

This session looks at the challenge we can face from the world: the fear of man that can make us ineffective and the threat or reality of serious persecution.

SESSION SEVEN: THE FRUIT IN THE MESSENGER

In session seven we unpack what it means to be messengers who go into the world out of God’s own kindness and who reveal the joy of knowing Jesus in all that we say and do.

SESSION EIGHT: THE CHALLENGE FROM THE ENEMY

This session deals with the challenge of spiritual warfare and how to be aware of and fight against the enemy. Satan tempts us with various forms of sin that can blunt and disqualify our ministry and loves to deceive and accuse in an attempt to kill our faith.

SESSION NINE: THE FRUIT IN THE METHOD

Session nine explores how any evangelistic method we employ will be impacted by the Spirit's work in our lives as we go with humility and gentleness into the world, patiently waiting for the Lord to do what only he can do through our efforts.

SESSION TEN: THE CHALLENGE FROM THE FAMILY

The final challenge we explore is that which is found in our church family. We remember that we must commit to fellowship so we don't become isolated, and that we must continually stir the church to remember the gospel and our responsibility (and joy) of being messengers of it whenever distraction or apathy may take hold.

SESSION ELEVEN: THE FRUIT IN THE WORLD

The final session of Year Two before the annual retreat focuses on what it means to see the lasting fruit of love in our lives and in the lives of those we share with.

SESSION TWELVE: REFLECTION

As with Year One, we finish up the second year with a retreat and session twelve will give you the framework and content, as well as further ideas for this time together. Get creative and commit more time to this session than your usual group would allow as you reflect on this second year of Advance and how God has been at work.

YEAR THREE

In Year Three your Advance Group will begin to move away from the prescribed material of Years One and Two and will instead be presented with multiple options and resources for how you can develop your group in ever more bespoke ways.

Year Three provides six further sessions all related to the practice of evangelism, which can be done in any order, or only in part if one or more of these sessions feels less relevant to members of your group. There is also a

reminder of how to run a retreat time at the climax of the third year.

Alongside these sessions there is a guide on how to construct your own session from your own idea, alongside a range of session ideas to consider exploring.

You will also find six 'One Thing' articles written by a variety of people who have significant evangelism experience, all sharing the one thing they wish they had known when they first began. These short reflections can be used as the prompt for a deeper Bible study and conversation around the topic, using the biblical reference and questions provided. (More of these "One Thing" articles can also be found at advancegroups.org, alongside the podcast series of the same name).

Finally in Year Three, we have also provided a guide as to how you can use other Advance resources such as the Proclaimers Series as the basis of your group time together over a series of months.

In short, Year Three is about options as you look to increasingly tailor the group development to your specific needs, whilst continuing to commit to the five core principles of Advance.

RUNNING A GROUP

Encourage a group of up to twelve people (single gender groups often work best for the accountability dynamic of the session but are not essential) to meet once a month for around two hours. During this time the group leader will facilitate the session – including prayer, teaching, discussion and accountability. This guide gives you everything you will need to run a group each month for its first year.

LEADER OR FACILITATOR

You may be questioning whether you are the best person to lead an Advance group. There are two ways to think about running a group, as a leader or as a facilitator.

Leaders are usually people with a little more experience of evangelism in general and

possibly some experience of leading others in teaching and discussion.

Facilitators are people who want an Advance group to launch and as there is no leader who can run the group, they take responsibility for making sure it happens and lead through the session material on behalf of the group (or agree to delegate out along the way).

SESSION BREAKDOWN

Each session guide begins with a very brief introduction and the **Session In A Sentence**.

The **Session Background** section offers some teaching upon which the session is built. You will want to read this *before* leading a session as it will help give you a deeper understanding of the overall shape of the session. Feel free to incorporate any of this material into the session if you have time to do so and think it will be helpful, but it is primarily there to aid you as you prepare to lead the teaching that follows.

From here you can follow each session guide, from the content to the timings (in brackets next to each section of the session), as closely or loosely as you feel helpful so long as the main point of the session is presented clearly and accurately, and there is space made for prayer and accountability. However, it's a good idea to stick as closely to the session guides so as to get the best from the material.

Each session starts with a time to **Catch Up**. In the early sessions this is about getting to know each other and exploring how the group will work. As the sessions progress, more time is given to sharing stories with each other and feedback from the previous session's **Application**.

Then, it's time for **Prayer**. There is no guidance on how long this should take, and no real right or wrong way to do it. You could pray as a whole group or with partners, for a short or extended time.

The main **Teaching** section follows and includes scripture references, quotes and points for discussion. This is where you'll most need to keep an eye on the clock. There is still more discussion time ahead, and crucially, you will need to leave space for the accountability section at the end of the session. Don't let that

time get squeezed by slaving over a teaching point a little too laboriously! (Also note that the timings for this section vary from session to session, so be sure to pay attention to the suggested timings and adjust accordingly).

After the **Teaching** section is the **Discussion** section, which includes a few questions and a quotation relating to the topic of the session. You likely won't have time to discuss everything there, but we've included more content than you'll need so you can pick and choose what would be most helpful. Don't feel like you have to rush through this section to get it all done - instead, just focus on a few elements.

Each session features an **Application** section towards the end, which is something to be done between now and the next session in line with the teaching. Feel free to come up with your own - as long as it supports the teaching and will help your group to grow in that area.

Another **Prayer** time follows, this time with some guidance on what to pray for in light of the session, but how you go about this and for how long is up to you.

Finally, each session ends with an **Accountability** time where a specific reflection relating to the session is offered alongside self-evaluation sheets which are to be completed, shared, and prayed over. You can make photocopies of the sheets from the back of this guide or download a PDF version from **advancegroups.org**.

If you haven't already set a date for the next meeting, be sure to do this before the end. It will be much easier to communicate this in person than over email a few days later, and in parting offer the content of the 'Don't Forget...' section which includes a little reminder of something your group can engage with on the website or a feature of Advance that may help them along the way.

Most Advance groups take two hours to meet together and the sessions in this guide are planned with this time-scale in mind. Each section within the sessions has a suggested time beside it to guide you in how long it will take, but feel free to adapt the timings of these sections, and the length of your group meeting as a whole - be it longer or shorter - to meet the needs of your group.

OPTIONAL SESSION ELEMENTS

The following things can be excellent additions to group times as and where they are useful to aiding the overall journey you are all on together.

SPECIFIC PRAYER FOCUS

Take the time for the whole group to pray for a few individuals within the group each session – praying over their lives, family, ministry and anything else they suggest. If you have a larger group, you could try to get through everyone every three meetings or so, and then start again.

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

You may want to head out onto the streets for an hour and put some of the discussion and prayer to use in personal evangelism, or some other practical expression of evangelism. The groups are designed to help us prepare for evangelism, but time can be given to actually practising evangelism if you desire. Be sure to give time for debriefing and feedback from these experiences also.

GUEST CONTRIBUTORS

If you have access to a speaker or guest who could contribute to the teaching and discussion time and bring different experiences or something fresh to the group, then invite them along to share with your group.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR RUNNING A GROUP

1. Register your group at [advancegroups.org/already-in-a-group](https://www.advancegroups.org/already-in-a-group) so we can pray for you, support you in your journey and keep you up to date with our latest resources and events.
2. Schedule group meetings as far ahead as you can and keep those dates as sacred (six+ months ahead if possible). Use something like [doodle.com](https://www.doodle.com) as a handy tool for this.
3. WhatsApp, Signal, Facebook Messenger, Telegram or any similar messaging app work well for group communications,

prayer requests and salvation stories between group times. Be sure to pick one everyone in the group is comfortable using and as the group leader, attempt to keep engagement going by contributing as much as you can. Share your stories, ask people for their prayer requests, give links to resources, podcasts and YouTube clips. If you lead the charge, others will engage.

4. Food can be a great way to bring people together and connect, so you may want to run these sessions around a meal of some kind.
5. Get your group thinking about starting their own groups early on, and when other potential group members are too late to join yours you can connect them with the new groups that launch from your own in due course.
6. Meet in a space where people will be comfortable discussing, praying and sharing during the accountability time. A public space like a coffee shop works great for some, but others need more privacy as they journey, so consider your meeting space carefully. Online meetings via a platform such as Zoom or equivalent can work well, especially where geographical location of group members is a challenge, but where possible meeting in person is always encouraged.

SESSION ONE: WELCOME TO ADVANCE

This first group meeting should be used as an opportunity to get to know each other and establish the framework for what the group will be. Alongside this introduction you will begin a dialogue about what evangelism is and explore the five characteristics needed to do the work of an evangelist.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

Through the first twelve sessions of Advance we will grow together in five evangelistic characteristics, encouraging and equipping each other as we rely on God's empowerment for the task.

SESSION BACKGROUND

A good place to welcome people to the Advance journey and to start a discussion of evangelism is to remember that the call to evangelism is *personal*. Look at how Jesus calls Andrew and Peter to follow him at the start of Mark's gospel (Mark 1:16-18). He calls to the young fishermen from the shore and asks them to lay down their nets (their trade) and follow him, for he will teach them how to fish for people. Does God call you using those exact same words today? Unless you share the same career path as the brothers to whom Jesus called, it is unlikely. Jesus called out to Andrew and Peter personally, using the fishing metaphor as a connection point.

God calls each one of us personally to his mission, by connecting our passions to opportunities to make sense of who God is. Whether you're a musician, artist, scientist, nurse, business owner... whatever your vocation

or gifting, God can use it to create opportunities to proclaim his good news.

The goal of evangelism is to connect people to God's good news. More fully though, the message of evangelism is a call to faith in Jesus Christ – to trust and be obedient to him, that we would turn from our rejection of God to an acceptance of his lordship. When we recognise that we are created for him, we understand what worship is, and experience the transforming power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. People know wholeness when we turn our lives into living expressions of worship through obedience, sacrifice, faith and love (Galatians 5:13-26).

In Exodus 8:1, God instructs Moses to go to Pharaoh and tell him to 'Let my people go...'. Today, God desires to set captives free from sin. Like Moses, we are asked to go into the world and declare a message of freedom – that there is no need to be enslaved any longer for God has made it possible for us to live in freedom through Jesus and by the power of his Spirit (Romans 8:2). The purpose of evangelism is as it was for Moses and the people of Israel – worship.

'Let my people go, so that they may worship me'

We are to be worshippers who witness so that others may come to worship and witness.

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (20-30 MINS)

Take the time to introduce everyone in the group and begin getting to know one another. You might decide to do some kind of ice-breaker activity, or just go round the group and ask people to share some basic information about themselves. After this, present in your own style or read through the Introduction section on

page 5 as a way of explaining what the group will be and how it will run in the coming months.

PRAYER

Take some time to commit the whole Advance experience and journey to the Lord, as well as any specific prayer needs that may have arisen during the introduction/ice breaker.

TEACHING (20-30 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

- “However, I consider my life worth nothing
- to me; my only aim is to finish the race and
- complete the task the Lord Jesus has given
- me – the task of testifying to the good news
- of God’s grace.”

ACTS 20: 24

Put simply, ‘to evangelise’ means to ‘proclaim good news’. The good news in question is the gospel of Jesus Christ: that sinful (rebellious) humanity has been reconciled to God through the saving work of Jesus. We can know eternal life today and forevermore and enjoy restored relationship with God because Jesus took the death we deserved.

Look at the following two definitions of evangelism:

- ‘The **proclamation** of the **historical, biblical**
- **Christ as Saviour and Lord**, with a view
- to **persuading** people to come to him
- **personally** and so be **reconciled** to God.’

THE LAUSANNE COVENANT

- ‘Evangelism is the **Holy Spirit-empowered**
- proclamation of the **Good News of Jesus**
- **Christ** to a **sinful** world in the hope that they
- **might** accept the forgiveness of God and
- **know his Lordship, love and life today and**
- **forevermore**’

Question: What can we learn about the task of evangelism from these short summaries (some words highlighted for specific discussion)?

Evangelism requires a verbalised message, a presentation of the risen Jesus, and an attempt to persuade the listener to receive and accept the good news. But as essential as words undoubtedly are to evangelism, we must endeavor to go beyond verbal communication only.

Evangelism is a spiritual activity, effective only when God moves in power. If evangelism was just about changing people’s minds, we could rely on persuasion alone. But evangelism is about salvation: through our message, the Spirit of God convicts, gives faith, and begins transformation of hearts. Evangelism without the power of the Spirit is merely marketing. Conversely, to paraphrase the evangelist Leonard Ravenhill – we can have confidence that any method of evangelism can work if God is at work in it.

The purpose of evangelism is to form disciples – worshippers who worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:23). So evangelists must too be authentic worshippers. It’s been said that worship and evangelism are two sides of the same coin, and it’s true that our witness to the world is an act of worship – an act of obedience and devotion to the king of whom we give witness to in the world.

These Advance group sessions will help you to mature as an authentic worshipper and grow in five core characteristics of an evangelist.

BIBLE-PROCLAIMING EVANGELISTS

We must know the message we proclaim as deeply as possible. To do this we must be committed to the reading and study of God’s word, so that our proclamation is not based on our own ideas and assumptions about the gospel, but in what the Word of God teaches.

PRAYERFUL EVANGELISTS

We are to submit to the power of the Holy Spirit for the task of evangelism, for it is not our power but the power of God which brings salvation. So, we commit to living prayerfully, asking God to

provide opportunities to share our faith and see lives transformed as a result.

ACCOUNTABLE EVANGELISTS

Holiness is at the heart of the gospel. Sharing the transforming power of the gospel in an authentic way means living accountable lives, where our so called 'on-stage' matches our 'off-stage'. Cheering each other on in success and standing with one another in failure is crucial as we seek to grow as holy people sharing a holy message.

COMMITTED EVANGELISTS

Intentionality is key to evangelism. We must be aware of – and seize – everyday opportunities to share God's love, not simply sharing the Jesus story but inviting those who hear it into the new life it offers, and helping to start them on a discipleship journey.

INSPIRATIONAL EVANGELISTS

As we share the gospel message with a world who needs it, we must also stir the church to do the same. Evangelism is the business of every Christian, and so encouraging and stirring the church to the task must also be a commitment of any gifted evangelist, and the desire of any witness of the gospel who longs to see the church truly be the hope of the world and live out the commission of Christ.

Question: Consider these five core characteristics. Where do you identify your own strengths and weaknesses in each area?

DISCUSSION (15 MINS)

Explore the following questions and/or the discussion quotation:

- What is our role in evangelism and what is God's role in evangelism?
- How do we ensure we are authentic evangelists and authentic worshippers?
- How do you hope to grow in the coming months through this Advance group?

• “If sinners will be damned, at least let them leap to hell over our bodies. And if they will perish, let them perish with our arms about their knees, imploring them to stay. If hell must be filled, at least let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go there unwarned and unprayed for.”

• **CHARLES SPURGEON**

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Come up with your own biblically-sound definition of evangelism (preferably with references to scripture) and send it to the group via your chosen communication method (WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, email etc.). The goal here is not to get a word-perfect definition, but simply to express how you now understand evangelism based on this session and some further thought and reflection. If there is time in the next session you could look at a couple of these definitions in more detail together.

PRAYER

Give thanks to God for his amazing gospel. Thank him that he chooses to make you part of his saving work in the world. Pray he would empower you to be his messengers in word and deed, as you worship him in spirit and truth. Ask him to help you to grow in the five characteristics of an evangelist as you move forward and grow together in this Advance group.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Explain how the accountability forms work, fill them out and share together in pairs or smaller groups. Finish by praying for one another.

MESSAGES AND DATES (10 MINS)

Close this first session by asking everyone to download and log into a messenger system that works for everyone in the group. WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger are both free and work well. Create a group that you will use to

communicate between sessions, with updates, prayer requests, testimonies and so on.

Finally, set the dates for as many of the upcoming sessions as you can. Six months in advance is ideal so that everyone can commit to the dates early and make them a diary priority.

DON'T FORGET...

Every group member can register themselves as being in an Advance group at **advancegroups.org** and receive a monthly email update with encouraging stories from Advance groups around the world, links to great resources and the latest news from the movement.

SESSION TWO: THE IDENTITY OF THE EVANGELIST

In this second group meeting you will explore the identity of an evangelist as it relates to the identity of God himself and his gospel story.

SESSION IN A SENTENCE:

The identity of an evangelist is rooted in the identity of God the Father: we are his messenger children.

BACKGROUND TO SESSION

At the peak of Billy Graham's ministry, Christian young people were inspired to follow his example and become preachers of the good news. Over the last twenty years there has been a perceptible shift in the aspirations of Christian young people. Where once the role of an evangelist was seen as the pinnacle of Christian service, the more common aspirations for Christian young people today are often to become a worship leader, youth worker or church pastor.

The church has certainly benefitted from talented musicians, film-makers and other creatives using their gifts to facilitate others in personal and corporate worship, and God has been celebrated and glorified through the efforts of these faithful people. However, before somebody can become a true worshipper – a worshipper in spirit and truth (John 4:23) – they must have heard and responded to the gospel (Romans 10:14–17).

Similarly, the role of pastor or teacher is essential to discipleship and is not to be sidelined. But the pastor will have no congregation to look after if the seats become empty due to a lack of missional engagement and evangelism into the world.

Bringing people to a place of true worship requires us to explain the gospel to them, and with that in mind none of us should shirk our responsibility to share the good news with the world, by witnessing to our faith in Christ to all people in the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Bible teaches that all believers are called to do the work of an evangelist (Matt 28:19; 2 Tim 4:5), yet there are those who are specifically called to be evangelists (Eph 4:11). For these people especially, proclaiming the gospel isn't simply day-to-day witness, but a primary focus of their lives.

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (20-30 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, encouragements, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. Ask the group to share their biblical definitions of evangelism (Session One: Application) and discuss them together for a few minutes as a recap from the last session. For smaller groups this can be done as a whole group exercise, for larger groups you may want to split into smaller groups for discussion. It may also be worth covering the basics of how the group works for anyone who missed the first session.

PRAYER

Commit the time to the Lord and pray over any situations, positive or challenging, arising from the catch-up time.

TEACHING (20-30 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

'In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.'

2 TIMOTHY 4:1-5 (NIV)

What does it mean to be called to be an evangelist? Aren't all believers called to share the good news of Jesus Christ with the world? Jesus' great commission in Matthew 28 appears to be a blanket call to all of his followers to go into the world and make disciples. But then we come across a short passage in Ephesians 4 (vv. 11-12) that highlights the specific role of the evangelist alongside that of pastor, teacher, prophet and apostle, which are each to be used to build the body of Christ. We also encounter a man named Philip in Acts who is given the specific title of evangelist (Acts 21:8). So what are we to make of the calling of the evangelist? Is it for everyone or for a specific few?

You may know the words of 2 Corinthians 5:17, where Paul talks about becoming a new creation through Christ. You might have even used this verse when you have shared the gospel previously. However, we don't often go on to quote the rest of the passage:

'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in

Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.'

2 CORINTHIANS 5:17-20

Question: How does this Bible passage confirm or change the definitions of evangelism that were shared at the start of today's session?

God is in the business of reconciling creation back to himself and wants us, his reconciled people, to be ambassadors for his transformational message. This is not just for 'professional' evangelists, this is a call for all believers. However, this ambassadorship can look very different from individual to individual.

Think about it like this: in a football (soccer) team, every player is pursuing the aim of winning the match. However, the strikers are those who are specifically tasked with scoring goals. This doesn't mean that other players can't and won't score from time to time, but the primary function of the striker in the team is to score.

Another illustration that might help would be to think of a wedding day. Any guest with a smart phone could take a great picture to capture memories of this special day, and some of these photos may well even make it into the official photo album of the couple. And yet, the bride and groom will also bring in a professional to capture the day using their skill, equipment and singular focus on the day to get some great images.

As the church we are all pursuing the aim of the restoration of God's perfect kingdom. For this reason we all have a role to play in witness and evangelism. But there are some who are specifically called to prioritise the proclamation of the gospel and the equipping of the church to do likewise – most likely at the cost of other pursuits. These are the evangelists, like Philip who we read about in Acts 21:8.

If some of the following statements ring true with you then the calling of the evangelist could well be upon your life:

- You long to see the lost saved.
- You are compelled to proclaim the gospel in season and out of season.
- You persevere in the task no matter what hardships come upon you.
- You will not compromise the integrity of the message you share no matter what the itching ears of your audience may want you to say.
- You are utterly single-minded in reaching the lost with this powerful, transformational, saving message of the gospel.
- You have had prophetic words spoken over you about being an evangelist.
- You are a clear communicator.
- You find yourself praying for the lost regularly.
- You are willing to go wherever the gospel takes you.
- You desire to help others share their faith.

Question: Spend some time talking through these statements and whether some or even all of these things ring true for you. If there is an evangelist in the group then ask them to share how they came to the realisation of that gifting and role.

The Bible tells us that God desires for no-one to perish (2 Peter 3:9). The evangelist is compelled to go into the world having the same heart as the Father. We do not proclaim because we have to (from a place of duty or fear), we proclaim because our hearts are in line with our heavenly Father's. The evangelist's identity is not found in this role, but in being a child of God, having become his heirs through the very gospel we now proclaim (John 1:12).

Regardless of gifting or calling, no-one has the power to save themselves or anyone else. We can only be the messengers for it is God alone who saves. He invites us to share in his heart for the lost as we grow to know him more fully as our loving heavenly Father and reveal his saving power to the world.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

Explore the following questions:

- Is there a difference between personal witness and evangelism?
- If all are expected to do the work of an evangelist, why are there those who are called to be evangelists?
- Evangelist or not, how do we develop in ourselves the Father's heart for the lost?
- How could you help encourage those who think evangelism is only for the 'professionals' to become 'ministers of reconciliation' themselves

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

We do not share the gospel simply because we are 'evangelists' any more than those who are not called as 'evangelists' are exempt from sharing it. All believers are to share the gospel as a natural response to who God is and what he has done. As we are transformed by the Father's love, so we long for others to know that same transforming love for themselves.

Over the next month, work through the gospel of Mark in your daily devotional time and pay attention to one of Mark's main themes - that Jesus is the Son of God, a servant who has come to do the will of the Father. As you read and re-read the gospel with this perspective, ask God to affirm your identity not in light of a gifting or ministry calling, but in light of who he is and what he has done.

PRAYER

Give thanks to God, our heavenly Father, that he desires for no-one to perish and has made the way by which all can be saved, through trust in Jesus Christ. Spend some time praying for each other that God will bring more clarity to your calling as an evangelist, that he might provide more opportunities to share the gospel, and that you would have more boldness as you do so.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

In pairs or small groups, ask each other if you consider yourself to be an evangelist or as someone who is to do the work of the evangelist. The objective here is not to persuade each other that you are in fact the other, but to provide space to reflect on the call of God in your life, and what that means for being faithful to whatever gospel opportunities God places before you. To finish, fill out the accountability form, feedback in smaller groups and pray for one another.

DON'T FORGET...

There are some great insights from experienced evangelists in our “One Thing” blog series, where an evangelist explains the one thing they wish they knew when they first started preaching the gospel. Read them and be encouraged at advancegroups.org

SESSION THREE: THE MESSAGE OF THE EVANGELIST

In this session we explore the message of the gospel itself. What is the gospel? Do we have a sufficient understanding of the message we preach to communicate it clearly?

SESSION IN A SENTENCE

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The message of the evangelist is Jesus Christ—Christ come, Christ crucified, Christ risen, and Christ returning.

SESSION BACKGROUND

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St Augustine famously declared, 'You have made us for yourself O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.'

The gospel moves people from despair, darkness, brokenness and hopelessness, into joy, light, love and hope. The gospel moves restless hearts to fulfilment in their creator. But tragically, it seems that many followers of Jesus have lost confidence in the power of the gospel today. There are many reasons why believers don't share the gospel with others – fear, feelings of inadequacy, and hoping someone else will do it all play a part. In essence though, these reasons all find their root in the same place – a lack of understanding about what the gospel actually is and a lack of trust in its power.

In Romans 1 Paul boldly declares, 'I'm not ashamed of the gospel' and then immediately goes on to qualify why this is so: 'because it is the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes' (Romans 1:16). Understanding that the gospel as the power of God to bring salvation is to understand something of who God is, what he has done, and what that means for the world. It's all wrapped up in the reality of

who Jesus Christ is. But this is not detached or abstract philosophy with no significance beyond the lecture hall or debate room. For one thing, understanding the gospel helps us to approach foundational questions about our existence and the identity of the God who created us. Questions such as:

WHO AM I?

Everyone asks this question in some way. What is the meaning of life? Is there purpose? What is my identity? The answer is that you are a child of God, created and loved by him. In many contexts around the world today, the primary concern of a person is no longer what will happen when I die, but, who am I while I am alive?

WHO IS GOD?

There are so many religions in the world. Even if God exists, how can we possibly know who he is and that we are worshipping the right one? God has made himself known through creation, through the Bible, through the experiences of Christians all over the world, and through the person of Jesus Christ. He is the creator and sustainer of life, the king of the universe, a perfect and loving heavenly Father who longs to bring a broken and rebellious humanity back into relationship with himself.

WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

The most compelling figure in all of human history. Few historical scholars doubt that Jesus existed, but who was he? A wise teacher? A con man? A mad man? Actually, Jesus is who he says he is: the Saviour of the world who, through his life, death and resurrection, has made it possible for a person to become a child of God and know the eternal King eternally.

While these types of question can serve as a starting point for a conversation about the gospel, they don't necessarily lead us to a fully sufficient understanding of what the gospel

means. Rather, they are connection points on which we can begin to build a relationship. And so we must dig deeply into scripture to ensure that through these question we can point to the full and powerful gospel of Jesus Christ.

SESSION GUIDE

CATCH UP (15-25 MINS)

Take time to catch up with one another, sharing stories, encouragements, feedback on opportunities and anything else that would encourage the group. Ask the group to share about their journey through the Gospel of Mark over the last month (Session Two: Application). Use this time to explore and affirm true identity as children of God because of the saving work of God's eternal Son, rather than a ministry calling, and our response to that identity is to become ministers of reconciliation on behalf of the family. To seek out the lost so that they too may know that they can come home.

PRAYER

Commit the time to the Lord and pray over any situations, positive or challenging, highlighted in the catch-up time.

TEACHING (25-35 MINS)

Work through the following teaching material in your own way, either by reading it word for word, or by reworking it into your own presentation.

● "And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-2

Paul shows his commitment to the truth and power of the Jesus story by declaring, 'I decided while I was with you to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.' This is the heart of

the gospel: that God himself stepped into the mess of our world in the person of Jesus Christ, lived a perfect life, died upon a cross to take the death we deserved, and rose again three days later, breaking the curse of death once and for all. Salvation and true life is found through faith in him alone. We share this truth not merely to bring about changed minds, but to bring about new life – a transformation that can only be achieved by faith in Jesus Christ.

Question: Much of this session will explore what the gospel is. Use the following sections (found at the back of this guide) to spark discussion about what we believe the gospel to be.

GOSPEL DOCTRINE (PAGE 30)

The systematic layout of the gospel.

GOSPEL NARRATIVE (PAGE 31)

Broadly speaking, the same gospel is presented here as in the more systematic approach, but here there is more emphasis on a narrative explanation that reads more like a story.

GOSPEL METHOD (PAGES 33)

There are various explanations of the gospel in the gospel methods listed, each with its own focus on a particular part of the gospel narrative and a way of packaging it for someone to receive with clarity.

Ensuring we are proclaiming the truth of the gospel is imperative. Remember, we can't save anyone, the gospel is the power of God to bring salvation (Romans 1:16). If our gospel messages are watered-down, one-dimensional attempts to appeal to the heart of the listener, we might see lots of hands up 'responding' to the message, but to what have they really responded?

The gospel message brings with it some incredibly challenging ideas. It describes us all as 'sinners' and claims we are broken beings who deserve death. The good news of the gospel is so good because it is the saving response to a human condition that is so bad.

Our concept of how loving and gracious God is will hinge on how much of a problem we think

our sin is. People struggle with the idea of a God who judges us for our sin and the thought of a loving God who would allow people to go to hell. It's easy to be tempted to play down these aspects of the gospel, or to ignore them completely, but this won't do. Our evangelism has a responsibility to unpack the problem of sin so that the power of the cross and the hope of the resurrection is understood for what it really is – the undeserved grace of God given lovingly to his children and the only hope for humanity.

Sin is a great problem solved by a greater God. To water down one is to weaken our perception of the other, and so we must commit to the truth no matter how challenging it seems.

Another area that can easily be missed is the idea that we are to die to our self-centredness, to take up our cross and follow Jesus with everything we have (Matthew 16:24). The call to a life defined by sacrifice is often minimised in favour of a 'God will make you happy' message. But again, any attempt to add, subtract or rely on our own communication skills to win people over will only end up turning the true and powerful gospel of salvation into no gospel at all.

Younger generations today are often more concerned with questions of 'now' such as purpose, identity, and justice, rather than the 'not yet' idea of what happens when we die. This highlights the need for us to be always aware of presenting the gospel in ways that miss the questions people are actually asking. The packaging of our message will change with the times, but its essential truth remains the same. For us to present the good news accurately in a way which connects with people today, we must know the gospel deeply as we attempt to present it clearly. The preaching of a deficient gospel will lead to deficient Christians and so we are not seeking to win people to or with good ideas or advice, but the authentic gospel of Jesus Christ presented clearly to a specific person or people in the power of the Spirit.

Prioritising daily Bible study is essential for every believer, but especially for those who are communicating its truth on a regular basis. How can we claim to have revelation from scripture if we are not allowing it to feed our lives on a daily basis? We are called not only to be evangelists, but Bible-proclaiming evangelists.

DISCUSSION (20 MINS)

Explore the following questions:

- How well do you think you understand the gospel?
- What are the challenges of explaining the gospel well today?
- How can we create connection points with contemporary listeners?
- What does it actually mean to be a 'Bible-preaching' evangelist?

APPLICATION (5 MINS)

Encourage every member of the group to start or continue a daily reading plan using the YouVersion phone app or other Bible reading notes. Our engagement with scripture is essential if we are to grow as followers of Jesus and understand the gospel deeply so that we can share it simply.

Using the material about the gospel in this booklet and your Bible, produce a concise explanation (3-5 points) of the gospel with supporting Bible verses that you can share with the group next time. This task is not a test, it is a devotional activity, a way for you personally to make sense of the truth of the gospel, from which you could potentially share it with someone else. The gospel doctrine page at the back of this book may be of help to you in this task.

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, thank you that you came and lived a perfect life, that you took our place upon the cross, and that through your resurrection we can share in new life. Help us to trust in you and to grow in your love. Help us to understand your Word more fully, to know your gospel more deeply and to be able to share it simply and truthfully with those around us. Thank you for the opportunities you give us, and please equip us to be faithful to those opportunities as we spend time in your Word and in your presence.

ACCOUNTABILITY (15 MINS)

Today we are going to be honest with each other about our Bible reading habits. In small groups or pairs, discuss your daily reading habits – good or bad – and some of the things you love about reading the Word and some of what you find difficult. Think carefully about what a new season of Bible engagement looks like for you, set a target – stretch yourself a bit, but don't feel the need to bite off more than you can chew and set yourself up for failure – and ask your accountability group to check in with you next month to see how you've been getting on. Remember, it's not just about a Bible reading target, it's about the joy of knowing God and his gospel more fully day by day.

To finish, complete accountability forms, share in pairs or smaller groups and pray for one another.

DON'T FORGET...

Advance has Bible study material available on YouVersion. Why not give the seven day devotional "Guardians of the Gospel" a go this week alongside your other daily reading plan?

'ONE THING' AND ONLINE RESOURCES

The Advance Groups website features a range of regularly updated content for you to engage with personally, but that can also be used in your group time. Apart from new entirely new group sessions which are released periodically throughout the year, the 'One Thing' series in particular is a great resource that can be used as the main content for your group. Each 'One Thing' article features an evangelist sharing the one thing they wish they had known when they started proclaiming the gospel, alongside a key verse to study and some discussion questions.

As well as the written articles, there is also a podcast which features some of these same evangelists discussing their 'One Thing'. These podcasts are relatively short and you may want to listen to one in the group time instead of or even alongside reading the written version (although if you listen you will still want to refer to the written version for the discussion questions).

Here is an example of a 'One Thing' article that can be used in your group time, and there are many more currently available and regularly added to online.

Find more at advancegroups.org/category/one-thing

ONE THING



WALK BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

By Andrew Palau

One thing I wish I knew when I started sharing my faith was that, "We walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7).

I can hear my dad, evangelist Luis Palau, repeating those words over and over again. His inflection. His passion. His deep conviction. Obedience to Jesus Christ is a faith journey from start to finish.

My dad has certainly modeled to me the joy that comes from being submitted to Jesus, not just in ministry but in his entire life. It's the journey of being a follower of Jesus – to be obedient to Christ no matter what our calling. I wish I had learned that reality earlier in life. It took me 27 long years to get there.

Dad truly lived this truth. From his early days as a street evangelist in Argentina to his last days as he fought against stage IV lung cancer, he took each day as a unique opportunity to learn to trust God and listen to him all over again.

One of Dad's favorite poems from C.T. Studd says, "Only one life, twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." Always after my dad would share this with me, he would remind me of the questions God will ask us after our life on earth is done:

"What did you do with what I gave you and who did you bring with you?"

It's a hard lesson – learning to focus on that which has eternal significance. Keeping the gospel priority in all. It can lead to a sometimes difficult path. But as I know now, it's always the best we can do with our life.

2 Corinthians 5 goes on to tell us, "Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to persuade others. For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again."

What a great privilege to be a part of sharing the good news with as many people as we can. We are dedicated to the proclamation of the gospel, winning as many souls as possible for Jesus Christ, drawing the church together in unity, and impacting cities worldwide.

It's a great day to be alive. It's a great day to be preaching. It's a great day to be in service together in the Great Commission - though it certainly isn't easy. Only when we learn to listen to God and trust him every day do we experience the best life.

Questions:

1. Where do I get my joy and purpose from?
2. Is there anything in my life that is distracting me from being obedient to Jesus?
3. What is one change I could make to help me stay focused in walking by faith as a follower of Jesus?

ADVANCE BLOG: WHAT IS EVANGELISM?

There's a special level of frustration in life reserved for playing a game of charades with your family, wherein, despite you acting circles around Daniel Day-Lewis himself, they still end up guessing everything except what you are trying to communicate.

The communication of the gospel to those around you can at times feel as frustrating as trying to get your family to shout out "Jurassic Park" while you prowls around the lounge like a velociraptor. But Christian evangelism is not meant to be a lucky dip exercise in who can correctly discern our 'Jesus actions' in the world as being good news for them. Evangelism is more than the communication of subjective 'good' news; more than the offering of good advice; more than the marketing of the Christian faith.

One way to help us overcome some of the frustrations we may experience in evangelism is to remind ourselves what evangelism actually is. To help us do that, let's explore the concept, uniqueness and practice of evangelism.

THE CONCEPT OF EVANGELISM

The word 'evangelism' basically means to announce good news. Historically the idea was often rooted in the 'good news' of a royal announcement:

- A new prince has been born.
- A victory has been accomplished on the battlefield.
- A new day of national celebration will be observed in honour of our great king.

These days we don't need to wait for a royal announcement to get our good news on, we evangelise every day by being proclaimers

of 'good news' on our social media platforms about anything and everything.

Good News...

- I've just eaten an amazing cheeseburger at the new place in the mall!
- My sports team won against our rivals!
- This lipstick shade looks great on me!
- I just got the new iPhone!

But these declarations (good as they may be) are less than the good news of Jesus Christ. When it comes to the gospel it turns out that we aren't done with royal announcements just yet. The gospel is a royal announcement from the perfect kingdom of heaven that is to be proclaimed to all of creation.

- A prince of peace has been born and his name is Jesus.
- A victory has been accomplished on the cross over sin and death.
- A new and eternal day of celebration is possible through the resurrected Lord.

THE UNIQUENESS OF EVANGELISM

Christian evangelism is unique among all other forms of good news proclamation in at least these three ways:

ITS UNIVERSALITY

The overwhelming majority of what we announce as being 'good' is actually subjective. To take two of the earlier examples: the cheeseburger is not good news for a vegetarian

(or the cow), and the rival team who lost won't share your enthusiasm for the sports result.

But the gospel is good news for *all people in all places at all times* (Psalm 96). It is the truth that restores humanity to relationship with the God we ran away from. In response to the gospel all can turn back to God, know his forgiveness and be set free to worship him.

ITS CONSEQUENCE

Not only is the gospel good news for everyone, it is also the *most important* news for everyone. There might be something other than the gospel that you could claim as universal 'good news', for example, reducing the plastic in our oceans could be good news for all people, ensuring our planet is a healthier space to live and thrive in. And yet, many people won't notice this good news at work in their lives day by day (except for the effect of having to use a paper straw clearly not fit for purpose in a McDonalds milkshake).

But the gospel is the most important news for any human to receive and know at any moment of their lives because it is the *exclusive* way by which a person can move from death to life (1 Corinthians 15:1-3; 20-22). There is no other way to the Father than through trust in the Son as Lord (John 14:6; Romans 10:9).

ITS POWER

Marketing can be powerful (and coercive). Your diet might be going gangbusters until that Doritos advert appears on TV to push your willpower beyond breaking point. The truth is that marketing is specifically designed to appeal to our emotions, wants and needs as it offers us something attractive to satisfy those things.

But Christian evangelism is not an attempt to coerce people into choosing our product. Evangelism is a presentation of the about Jesus with our lips and our lives in the power of the Spirit. Rather than exploit people's emotions, wants and needs, we seek to exalt the one who can fulfil them. The gospel has the power – both in its essential truth and in how God works through it – to revive our dead hearts and transform us into the people we were created to be (Ephesians 4:22-24).

THE PRACTICE OF EVANGELISM



If conceptually Christian evangelism is a royal announcement of good news, and uniquely it is the proclamation of the powerful, life-saving and changing news about Jesus Christ, what might it look like in practice?

Our evangelism can be outworked in numerous ways. Relationally over time with friends and family; offering prayer to a stranger; preaching to multitudes from a platform; through the giving of a Bible; conversation that flows alongside meeting practical need; the practice of hospitality... the list goes on and on. But in any expression, evangelism always requires the Holy Spirit to be at work, not least because salvation power belongs to God alone (Romans 1:16). One simple definition of evangelism I've heard is to understand evangelism as *joining in the conversation the Holy Spirit is already having with a person*. Alongside this, evangelism is to be motivated by love – our response to the love of God who first loved us, and who offers that same love to the world through us (1 John 4:10-12). Beyond these two vital realities, evangelism in practice will centre to some degree on the following three things:

WORDS

Whilst works and wonders are *desirable* in evangelism, words are *essential* (Romans 10:14). Many Christians never progress beyond 'charades evangelism' with the world, hoping that by their actions alone people will be able to put it all together for themselves and come up with Jesus as the answer. But without words we will struggle to give people the information they need to know that Jesus is Lord, that repentance is required, and that God is knowable not just as an abstract feeling but in his character as revealed in the Bible. The gospel must be known by us and then communicated clearly with words to those around us so that they may know for themselves and respond accordingly.

WORKS

We might think of works as being something we do in the world to 'show' Jesus before preaching the message. But the primary way that works are of use to us in evangelism are in the works of God himself. Historically (the gospel), presently (testimony of his work in our lives), and yet to come (the assured hope of the coming kingdom).

That being said, works in the world are also an important part of our witness as they reveal God at work in and *through us* today. In this way we become representatives for God's character and heart in our own behaviour and interactions with the world - *being and doing the gospel* - meeting practical need and showing God's love in action, all of which confirms the integrity of the message we share (2 Corinthians 5:20).

WONDERS

Regardless of where you sit on the charismatic spectrum, we must not ignore that God is still working the greatest miracle of all today - salvation. The healing and resurrection of dead human hearts is both the content *and* the outcome of our message and is a miracle we should proclaim with wonder. Alongside this, we should wisely be open to God moving in miraculous ways - healing, words of knowledge, deliverance etc - through us as he sees fit for the purposes of revealing himself to those we reach out to (Acts 14:3).

As we put the pieces of the evangelism puzzle together - while keeping in mind the desired outcome of seeing disciples made and matured in the church - we can offer an answer to the question *what is evangelism* as follows:

Evangelism is the Holy Spirit-empowered proclamation (words essential; works & wonders desirable) of the good news about Jesus Christ in the hope that people might trust in him as Lord, turn from their rebellion against God the Father and know true life in restored relationship with him today (brought to maturity by his Spirit and in his church) and forevermore in his eternal kingdom.

Questions:

1. How would you explain evangelism to someone unfamiliar with the concept?
2. What other elements of the good news are unique to Christian evangelism?
3. Words are essential, but how do works and wonders play a role in your evangelism?
4. How might clarity about what evangelism actually is help with some challenges and frustrations we face as we attempt to announce the good news to the world?

Find more blog content at:
advancegroups.org/blog

PODCAST & VIDEO RESOURCES

Another helpful resource for your group time are the Exploring Evangelism Myths and Advance Passion podcasts. These podcasts are slightly longer (30+ mins) than the One Thing podcast and so you might not want to sit and listen to them in the group time but do so beforehand and discuss together.

EXPLORING EVANGELISM MYTHS

This podcast series – a collaboration with City Gospel Movements – explores five common myths around evangelism that often hold people back from sharing their faith:

EPISODE ONE: EVANGELISM IS UNETHICAL

How do we share the gospel in a polarised society (can we agree to disagree?!)? And what does ethical evangelism look like in scripture?

No doubt these are big questions! But this is where we need to start the series: Is evangelism ethical? Because if it's not, should we even be evangelising?

EPISODE TWO: EVANGELISM IS BEST DONE BY PASTORS AND EXTROVERTS

We can all struggle with sizing ourselves up against others, even when it comes to our faith. We asked believers to describe the people who are best at evangelism. Two responses came up over and over again: pastors and extroverts.

In this episode we explore this idea and why, in actual fact, it's not true.

EPISODE THREE: EVANGELISM SHOULD BE EASY

Anything worthwhile takes dedication and practice, even when we have some false starts and it doesn't feel natural at first. Sharing the gospel is the same way. Many of us feel like evangelism should be easy and yet it can end up looking easy only for a special few and impossibly hard for the rest! Will evangelism always be hard for some or are there ways it can become easier?

This episode considers these questions and offers listeners a fresh perspective through a courage building conversation.

EPISODE FOUR: EVANGELISM IS ABOUT A SINGLE MOMENT

Have you experienced that moment during a church service or evangelistic event when silence falls over the crowd and the speaker asks everyone to bow their heads, close their eyes, and repeat a salvation prayer line by line? Moments like this stick with you, but does all evangelism need to lead to a single, powerful moment of decision? What are the strengths of this mindset? And what are we missing here?

This episode unpacks the idea of evangelism as a journey rather than just a moment.

EPISODE FIVE: EVANGELISM IS REGULARLY CELEBRATED IN CHURCHES

Sometimes in our churches we get so caught up in the rhythm of welcome, worship songs, announcements, sermons, communion, and goodbyes that we forget to stop and reflect on all the amazing things God did in our lives during the week.

The final episode of the series explores the need to share with each other more regularly of how God has been at work in ordinary peoples lives for his extraordinary purpose.

You can find all the episodes as well as discussion questions for each at: evangelismmyths.com

ADVANCE FAQ

IS ADVANCE ONLY FOR EVANGELISTS?

No, definitely not, Advance is for everyone! We believe that all Christians are called to share the good news of Jesus with those they meet. So, we all need to have the opportunity to be sharpened and shaped to be better carriers of this message, not just those specifically gifted as an evangelist.

DO YOU NEED TO BE A CHURCH LEADER TO LEAD A GROUP?

No, in fact the Advance Group Guide is designed so that anyone can easily start and lead a group or session.

DO I NEED TO PAY ANYTHING TO JOIN OR LEAD AN ADVANCE GROUP?

There's nothing to pay – Advance is totally free to all members.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THERE AREN'T ANY ADVANCE GROUPS IN MY AREA?

Advance is continually growing across the globe. If you can't see a group close to you don't worry, we can connect you with someone. For example, in some countries groups run online via Zoom or Skype. If you want to know more about this get in touch with us via email: info@advancegroups.org

DOES MY ADVANCE GROUP NEED TO BE MADE OF PEOPLE WHO ALL KNOW EACH OTHER?

There are many great things about Advance Groups, but one of them is that you can get to know new people in your local area with the same passion for sharing the gospel – what's not to love! However, if you've got friends you'd like to join a group with, you're welcome to do that too.

WHAT CAN I DO IF THERE ISN'T AN ADVANCE GROUP GUIDE IN MY PREFERRED LANGUAGE?

We're constantly translating guides into new languages, so if you can't find the language you're looking for please do get in touch with the Advance team to chat about this.

DOES MY ADVANCE GROUP NEED BE MADE UP OF PEOPLE OF THE SAME GENDER?

Where possible, we would encourage Advance Groups to be made up of members of the same sex but this is not a requirement. We would however strongly encourage mixed groups to split into smaller groups of men and women when working through the accountability sections of each session.

HOW CAN I START AN ADVANCE GROUP?

Please fill out the start a group form at advancegroups.org/start-a-group and we will be in touch.

IF I'M ALREADY IN AN ADVANCE GROUP, HOW CAN I LET YOU KNOW?

Please fill out the form at advancegroups.org/already-in-a-group

GOSPEL DOCTRINE

You are not an accident. You are created by and in the image of the perfect and loving God (Father, Spirit, Son) who is the source and sustainer of life (Genesis 1).

All have rejected God (sinned) by going our own way, instead of living in obedience to our creator. This is why the world is broken and full of suffering. This injustice aggrieves God, who does not trivialise sin by ignoring or excusing it, but who justly punishes those who offend (Romans 3:23).

We are powerless to put things right once we have rebelled against God, having committed an act of treason against the king of the universe. Rejection of God is rejection of life itself. We are left with eternal death, the natural product of our rejection of life and of God's punishment (divine justice) for breaking his standard for right living (Romans 6:23).

But God desires for none to know death, for He is love itself and wants to be in eternal relationship with us, his dearly loved children. God graciously set in motion a rescue mission to save us (1 Timothy 2:4-6).

God sent his Son, Jesus Christ, into the world as a human being, to live the perfect human life that never rejected the Father. Jesus was killed upon a cross, acting as our substitute and taking upon himself the death we deserved for our rejection of God (John 3:16; Romans 3:23-25).

Three days later, Jesus rose from the dead, showing that the curse of death is broken. New life is possible only through trust in Jesus Christ and the seeking of forgiveness for sin (Proverbs 28:13; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 John 1:7-9).

Jesus' death and resurrection achieved reconciliation, redemption, propitiation (appeasement), and the defeat of evil. Our sin was credited to Jesus, and his righteousness is credited to us (imputed righteousness). The only requirement on our part for this transaction to take effect is that we trust in Jesus as Lord (faith), and believe that God raised him from the

dead. We are saved by faith alone. (Matthew 20:28; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; John 12:31; Colossians 2:15).

We can now access a restored relationship with our heavenly Father. We have peace and are adopted into his family. We die to our old life and are born again into a new life. (Luke 9:23; Colossians 1:20, 2:13-14; Romans 5:1-2; Galatians 4:4-7).

Jesus ascended to heaven, where he reigns at the right hand of the Father, but he has sent believers the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower us to live obediently in the fullness of life, and to help us share his good news with the world. We become new creations - disciples - transformed by the work of the Spirit in our lives, which leads to fruitfulness. We work as God's ambassadors in the world, representing the kingdom of peace, serving as witnesses to the truth of the Jesus story in word and deed (Micah 6:8; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Galatians 5:22-23).

One day, Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead. God's perfect kingdom will be restored and eternal life with our loving Father awaits those who trust in Jesus as Lord. Eternal death (hell) awaits those who do not. The good news is that no one needs to perish eternally, all can know eternal life and joy in relationship with God, through faith in Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-5).

GOSPEL NARRATIVE

Before all things, God existed in perfect relationship with himself, Father, Spirit, Son. God created the world and it was very good, and He shared a unique relationship with humankind. We were created for perfect life with him, the king of the universe, and life itself! But God did not force humanity to love him, he let us choose for ourselves. With this free will humanity chose to go their own way, rejecting God.

Rejecting the king of the universe is treason without equal, rebellion against life itself. Death, suffering and pain entered the world. Humanity doomed itself to separation from their perfect heavenly Father with no way back. God couldn't

excuse the rebellion, for there would be no justice in that action. A just and righteous God must demand a penalty be paid for the crimes committed. The punishment for rebellion against life is death.

But God so loved the world that he initiated a plan to save humanity from death - to make it possible for us to know the fullness of his life and love forever. God sent his son Jesus into the world to live the perfect human life, a life that never rebelled and became guilty of any crime against God.

Jesus willingly died upon a cross to take the punishment of death that humanity deserved for its rebellion and in doing so he became our substitute. Three days later he came back to life, because he is God and death cannot hold him. In this moment it became possible for humanity to not only receive forgiveness for rebellion against God, but to share in the new and eternal life that Jesus has made possible. The curse of death was broken.

All we need to do is believe that Jesus is who he says he is - the crucified and resurrected savior of the world, the king of the universe - and choose to make him Lord of our lives. There is salvation and life for all who trust in him, and the empowering of his Holy Spirit enables us to live the kind of lives we were created for: lives that reveal the image of God so that all may know true life. By placing our trust in Jesus, we die to our old life and are born again into new life. One day Jesus will return and his perfect kingdom will be restored. All who trust in him will live forever within his kingdom, and so we are called and compelled to share God's love with the world so that all may know this eternal hope.

GOSPEL METHODS

WHO AM I?
(ADVANCEGROUPS.ORG)

JESUS AT THE DOOR
(JESUSATTHEDOOR.COM)

THE THREE CIRCLES
([VARIOUS YOUTUBE EXAMPLES](#))

THE 4 POINTS
(THE4POINTS.COM)

TWO WAYS TO LIVE
(TWOWAYSTOLIVE.COM)

3, 2, 1: THE STORY OF GOD, THE WORLD AND YOU
(THREE-TWO-ONE.ORG)

WORDLESS BOOK
(LETTHELITTLECHILDRENCOME.COM)

ACCOUNTABILITY QUESTIONS

'Search me O God and know my heart' (Psalm 139:23)

Accept one another (Romans 15:7) · **Confess** your faults to one another (James 5:16)

Encourage one another and build each other up (1 Thessalonians 5:11)

KEY

- ✓ Good
- Okay
- ✗ Bad

'Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously towards others the way God lives towards you.' (Matthew 5:48, MSG)

How clear is my vision for my life?	Are my relationships with those I serve healthy? (Peers, leaders, the opposite sex)
How clear is my vision for the work I'm involved in?	How healthy is my response to being hungry, angry, lonely, or tired?
Am I enjoying what I do?	Am I engaging in inappropriate lustful thoughts?
Do I feel God's pleasure in what I'm doing?	Am I getting enough rest?
How passionate am I?	Am I managing my time well?
Am I pursuing intimacy with Jesus?	Am I spending my spare time in a healthy way?
Am I making enough space for prayer?	Am I keeping a healthy balance between church, work and home life?
Am I spending time in personal Bible study?	Am I forming and maintaining relationships with non-Christians?
Did the Bible come alive for me today?	Am I exposing myself to sexually alluring material?
Am I seeking evidence of God's power in my life and ministry?	Am I defeated in any part of my life: jealous, impure, critical, irritable, touchy or distrustful?
Is Jesus real to me?	Am I managing my money well?
Am I teachable and accountable?	Am I giving generously?
Am I available and approachable?	Am I choosing not to envy other people?
Am I listening well?	Am I choosing to not grumble or complain?
Am I making myself vulnerable to others?	Am I walking with integrity?
Am I leading with a servant heart?	Am I decisive and confident?
Am I trustworthy?	Am I willing to take risks?
Am I keeping my promises?	Am I making goals and reaching them?
Am I holding on to healthy perspective?	Am I willing to make sacrifices?
Am I handling pressure well? (from people, work, circumstances)	Am I keeping my cutting edge?
How is my health?	Am I moving in the power of the Spirit?
Am I eating healthily?	Am I withholding forgiveness from anyone?
Am I sleeping well?	Am I pursuing freedom from destructive patterns and strongholds?
Am I allowing my mind to dwell on inappropriate thoughts?	
Am I remembering the sick, hurting and needy?	
Are my family happy?	
How are my friendships?	

'Trust God from the bottom of your heart. Don't try to figure out everything on your own. Listen for God's voice in everything you do, everywhere you go. He's the one who will keep you on track. Don't assume that you know it all. Run to God! Run from evil.' (Proverbs 3:5-7, MSG)



GLOBAL NETWORK
OF EVANGELISTS

SO ALL MAY HEAR

One evangelist can reach only so far. One organisation can do only so much. Yet by working together, we multiply our efforts for the expansion of the gospel and see many more people reached with the Good News. This is the vision of the Luis Palau Association's Global Network of Evangelists.

Dedicating our efforts to accelerate evangelism worldwide, the Palau Association is working to build networks of evangelists in 150 countries over the next 10 years.

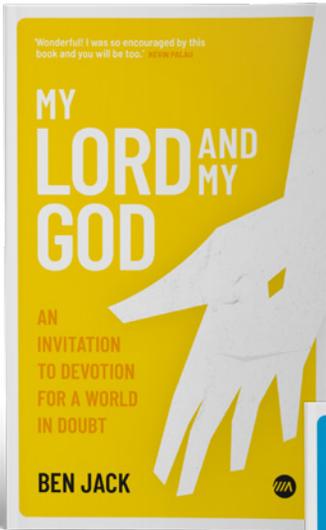
Whether just starting out, or well-seasoned as an evangelist, there's always more to learn. GNE recognises the importance of sharing experiences and knowledge with one another to be more effective in proclaiming the Good News. This is the heart of GNE.

Join hands with us to share the Good News with others. Visit evangelist.global for more information or to apply to become a member of GNE.

evangelist.global

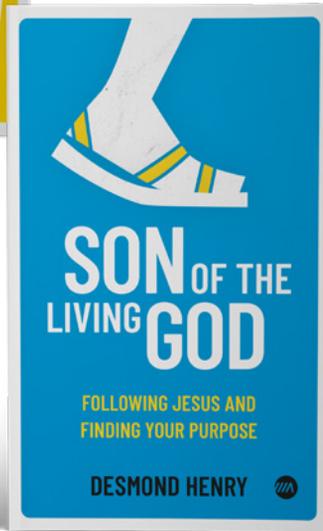
'The Global Network of Evangelists is an exciting endeavour, gathering like-minded evangelists from around the globe to encourage, inspire, and spur one another on in kingdom work. What God is doing through this network is truly awe-inspiring.'

ANDREW PALAU



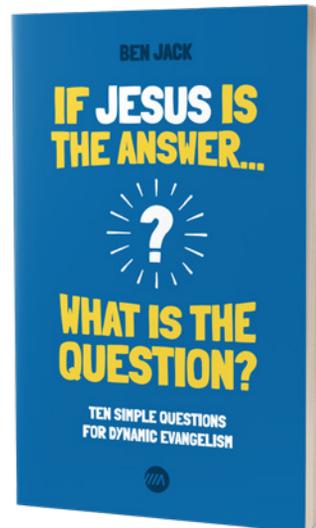
DISCOVER THE ADVANCE PROCLAIMERS SERIES

A growing collection of books which helps readers engage with specific moments of proclamation in the Bible, so that we may grow in our understanding of the truth being declared, grow in our knowledge of how to apply it to our own lives, and grow in our confidence to proclaim its truth to our world.



DISCOVER THE ADVANCE ESSENTIALS SERIES

These short practical guides seek to help you effectively proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ with your lips and your life to the world around you.





ADVANCE GROUP MENTORING GUIDE

Your full guide featuring everything you need to start an Advance Group plus session discussion materials for the first 3 years.

ADVANCEGROUPS.ORG



**THE GOSPEL.
THERE IS NO PLAN B.**



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