**Sharing our Faith in a Brave New World**

Student Handout

**DESCRIPTION:** When was the last time you shared your faith with someone far from Christ? Are you afraid to share your faith? Or maybe discouraged? Has your love for lost people grown or diminished over time? In this forthcoming class, we will:

* Reignite our love for those who don’t know the love of God.
* Sharpen our ability to skillfully initiate, listen, and dialogue with others.
* Learn how to defend our faith without becoming defensive.
* Develop a winsome approach to starting spiritual conversations.
* Consider how to work with others in reaching people for Christ.
* Discover and develop our own unique evangelistic approach.

Sharing our faith is surely the greatest adventure of all time. Why not take some time to learn how God can use you more effectively in bringing people closer to Christ? We would encourage you to take this class with friends, spouses, and roommates in order to grow in this area together.

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# Lecture #1. Seven Deadly Lies that Keep your Mouth Shut

**EXERCISE: Take 10 minutes. Give *one* refutation of each of the seven lies below. What is one strong response that will help to crush this thought? (Work together)**

**#1. “You’re too scared to share your faith, and everyone knows it. Your face turns red, you start to sweat, you stumble over your words, and your voice cracks. And don’t get me started on your awkward pauses! When are you going to learn to not put yourself in those kinds of situations again?”**

#### Scripture meditation

(Deut. 31:6, 8) Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you… The Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed.

(Josh. 1:5) No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you.

(Ps. 118:6 NLT) The LORD is for me, so I will have no fear. What can mere people do to me?

(2 Tim. 1:7-8) God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline. So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord.

(Acts 18:9-10) One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision and told him, “Don’t be afraid! Speak out! Don’t be silent! For I am with you, and no one will attack and harm you, for many people in this city belong to me.”

**#2. “No one is interested in talking—especially to you. Of course, you should talk about God. But obviously you should wait until someone shows some interest first. You don’t want to be pushy with your beliefs.”**

#### Scripture meditation

(Eccl. 3:11 NLT) God has planted eternity in the human heart.

(Jn. 12:32) I will draw all men to Myself.

(Jn. 16:8 NLT) The Holy Spirit will convict the world of its sin, and of God’s righteousness, and of the coming judgment.

**#3. “You’ve tried to share your faith before, and it didn’t work. You should learn a lot more before you ever try that again.”**

#### Scripture meditation

(2 Cor. 2:14-16 NIV) Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him. For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing. To the one we are the smell of death; to the other, the fragrance of life. And who is equal to such a task?

(2 Cor. 3:4-6 NIV) Such confidence as this is ours through Christ before God. Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

**#4. “You don’t have opportunities to share your faith. So, this is really an impossible expectation to put on yourself.”**

#### Scripture meditation

(2 Cor. 4:3-4 NLT) If the Good News we preach is hidden behind a veil, it is hidden only from people who are perishing. Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

(Col. 4:3-4 NET) Pray for us too, that God may open a door for the message so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may make it known as I should.

(Eph. 6:19-20 NIV) Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

**#5. “Someone is going to ask a question that you can’t answer. Besides, who do you think you are—some kind of intellectual? It’s better just to serve in other ways.”**

#### Scripture Meditation

(1 Pet. 3:14-15 NIV) Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened. But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.

(2 Cor. 5:11 NLT) Because we understand our fearful responsibility to the Lord, we work hard to persuade others.

(2 Cor. 10:4-5 NIV) The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

(Rom. 1:20 NIV) Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.

**#6. “You haven’t shared your faith with your loved one for a long time. Now, he’s on his way to hell, and it’s your fault. And if you initiate a spiritual conversation now, it’s going to show just how much you haven’t cared about him in the past.”**

#### Scripture meditation

(Eph. 3:14-21) I ask you not to lose heart at my tribulations on your behalf, for they are your glory. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

**#7. “Let’s be honest: Your relationship with God isn’t very exciting, and it hasn’t been for a long time. Your friends and family wouldn’t want to hear about God from you, because they can see that you’re not happy anyway. Wait until your time with God is better, and then give it a try.”**

#### Scripture meditation

(Phile. 6 NIV) I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.

(Jn. 13:17 NIV) Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

(Acts 20:35) It is more blessed to give than to receive.

(Mt. 10:8) Freely you received, freely give.

#### What was the common strategy woven throughout each lie?

#### Homework #1. The Great Promises of God

By [**James M. Rochford**](https://www.evidenceunseen.com/aboutjamesrochford/)

No one would try a new endeavor unless they believed that they had at least a chance of succeeding at it. For instance, I wouldn’t think of getting under 500lbs at the bench press, because there’s no way I could even budge that bar off the rack. And even if I did manage to lift the bar, it would quickly crash onto my chest. An activity like that would result in embarrassment at best, and a crushing pain at worst.

Many people approach evangelism in this way, psyching themselves out before they even get started. But where is God in this picture? For some reason, he never seems to enter into the equation. Just as God has given us great promises regarding our salvation, our identity, and our home in heaven, he has also given a plethora of promises about the *certainty* of bearing fruit in our service to him.

#### God will bring results… if we refuse to give up

**(Gal. 6:9) Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.**

Paul himself wrestled with the fact that his work in Galatia may have been “in vain” (Gal. 2:2; 4:11). Paul was no impersonal gospel-preaching machine. It gives me great consolation that he struggled with the same discouragement that we do. Thus when Paul wrote these words, he may have been preaching as much to himself, as to us.[[1]](#footnote-2) Yet, in this moment of discouragement, God impressed upon Paul a profound promise: While we do not always have “observed results,”[[2]](#footnote-3) we can trust that **God will bring results when we choose to labor for him**.

God promises that we will reap a harvest from our efforts, but this promise comes with a condition: **There’s no giving up!** Indeed, this is what Paul means when he uses the term **“grow weary”** (*eklyomenoi*). This word means to “be exhausted… become weary, give out” (BDAG), and it can even be translated as “fainting” (Mt. 15:32; Mk. 8:3; Heb. 12:5) or “giving up” (NIV). If you’ve fallen into a slump and aren’t even trying, don’t expect to make any sort of impact on others for the cause of Christ. God has used me in such a condition, and he might use you too. But don’t miss the point: God never promises to use us when we have given up on serving him. On the other hand, if you refuse to quit and keep persevering forward, you can take this promise in Galatians 6 to the bank: In time, you *will* reap a harvest!

When some people give up, you can see it a mile away. But you might not be one of those easy-to-spot people. You might be continuing to function at a high capacity, and might even have a lot of people fooled—maybe even yourself. But certainly, God knows if you’ve kept your hands in the work, while pulling your heart out of it. He knows the difference between a fruitful faith and lifeless works. God promises you a harvest if you long for it deep in your heart, and live it out in your life.

Maybe you’ve given up on God, but God hasn’t given up on you! Don’t wait another moment. Open your heart to God right now. With honest words, tell him what you’re thinking and how you’re feeling.

#### God will bring results, if we remain in his word

**(Jn. 15:5, 7) He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing… If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.**

The promises of the Bible are so good that they are often hard to believe. Indeed, this is truly the hardest part of following God—namely, believing how good he really is. This is why we need to abide in Jesus and his teachings. This means that you actively pursue Jesus’ teaching to the point where it becomes your home or your “abode”—your place of shelter, rest, and happiness. When we develop a relationship like this with Jesus, it’s no wonder we would **“bear much fruit,”** because we are becoming like him.

#### God will bring results, if we view our role as a privilege

**(2 Cor. 4:1 NIV) Since through God’s mercy we have this ministry, we do not lose heart.**

From God’s point of view, it is an esteemed privilege—indeed, the highest human honor—to be included in the cause of Christ. This is why Paul calls our ministry a **“mercy”** of God. The kingdom of God is the greatest cause that the world has ever known or ever will know—a cause that will have eternal and ultimate effects and consequences. In my better moments, I know that I’d rather be mopping the floors in the kingdom of God, than calling the shots as the CEO of any other human venture. In your better moments, I’m sure you feel the same way. Once you experience what it’s like to serve in the kingdom of God, nothing else can take its place. It’s no wonder that Paul calls Christian service an act of **“God’s mercy.”**

#### God will bring results… if we do our work for Him and no one else

**(1 Cor. 15:58 NLT) Be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.**

Let’s face it. We’ve all done a lot of useless things in our lives. But think about what this is saying: Every act of sacrificial love, every challenging conversation, every moment of prayer, every time you chose faith over fear—God promises to use *all* of it. He looks at your efforts to serve him, and he calls none of it useless.

#### God will bring results… if we take guidance and power from him

**(2 Cor. 2:14) Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.**

God will **“always”** leads us in triumph? Really? How can we know this?

We know this because it is written in God’s word… and God doesn’t stutter! The same Bible that speaks inerrantly about heaven, hell, and everything in between also infallibly promises to **“always lead us in triumph.”** You might feel like God isn’t leading you in any sort of triumph. But these feelings only arise from the idea that your thoughts are more inerrant than the Scriptures. After all, if God says that he is leading you in triumph, but you don’t feel that way, who is right?

**(2 Cor. 2:16; 3:5) Who is adequate for these things? ...Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, 6 who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant.**

Whether they admit it or not, some Christians think that God is quite fortunate to have someone like them around. I’m ashamed to admit it, but I’ve had long stretches of time where I’ve held such an attitude. Consequently, this passage has continued to bother me (in a good way). Earlier in my walk with Christ, I never understood what Paul meant by being inadequate. God placed mature Christians around me who shared about their need to depend on God for adequacy, but frankly, I just couldn’t relate.

Thankfully, it didn’t take God very long to begin the process of breaking me of holding such a high view of myself (Rom. 12:3). God has been so good to me in my life, and it turns out that he’s *really* good at opposing the proud (1 Pet. 5:5; Jas. 4:6). In my case, God gave me a couple healthy portions of failure, served with a side of public embarrassment, and smothered with a thick layer of confusion. After choking down that medicine, the word **“inadequate”** started making a lot more appearances in my vocabulary!

At some point, all serious servants of Christ begin to learn to depend on him for their adequacy. They realize that they cannot accomplish a supernatural work from the shallow reservoir of natural effort. In a paradoxical way, we gain more and more equipping, experience, wisdom, and skill at serving God, even as we depend less and less on our own abilities to do anything apart from him.

**(2 Thess. 3:13 NLT) Never get tired of doing good.**

How would your close friends describe your spiritual drive and vigor? Some Christians act like God tightly fastened their ministry to their shoulders—almost like a farmer might tie a heavy load to a horse or a jackass. They feel perpetually worn-down and weary from their sacred role as a “ministry martyr.” Like the Pharisees of old, they “put on a gloomy face” as they serve (Mt. 6:16), telling everyone in earshot about their Herculean efforts to serve Christ…

God surely doesn’t need or want anything that looks like this! But what’s the solution? Stay home until my attitude changes? Wait to serve until God gives me a fresh revelation? Quit serving until I feel better? To anyone with a biblically trained mind, such answers are fundamentally absurd. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Mt. 11:28-30). Many read this passage as a promise that Jesus will give us “rest” when we kick off our shoes to sit back and relax. But look again. Jesus tells us that we actually find “rest” when we take on his “yoke.” This is a farming illustration, where a farmer places a “yoke” or harness over an animal to pull a plow. To a modern reader, this means that Jesus wants us in the work with him, taking his “yoke” onto ourselves. It’s only when we work alongside Jesus—believing his promises and trusting in his power—that we paradoxically find the “soul rest” that he promises.

#### Questions for Reflection

Why are you taking this class? What do you hope to get out of it?

Can you remember a time when you were actively engaged in evangelism? What sort of things were you doing back then?

What is the Holy Spirit bringing to your mind right now? Who is he bringing to mind? Do you have a sense that He is leading you to take a specific step forward? Is He leading you to share your faith with a specific person?

# Lecture #2. Becoming a People Person

#### Become an INITIATIVE Person

**EXERCISE: Take 2 minutes for each. Make THREE observations of each person. What’s ONE question or comment that could spark a conversation?**

#1.

#2.

#3.

#4.

#### Become an INQUISITIVE Person

Transform “small talk” into “big talk.”

**Stimulating second question?**

1. “What are you studying for school?”
2. “Where do you work?”
3. “Are you married?”
4. “Do you have kids?”
5. “What do you do for fun?”
6. “How was your week?”
7. “Do you have any vacation plans?”

#### Become an INTERESTING Person

#### Homework: Creating Values and Goals

Secular researchers have found that writing about our values is one of the most powerful psychological interventions ever studied.[[3]](#footnote-4) Simply writing out our values has been shown to “boost GPAs, reduce doctor visits, improve mental health,” and it helps us “persevere in the face of discrimination and reduces self-handicapping.” People who “write about their values once, for ten minutes, show benefits months or even years later.”[[4]](#footnote-5) Dr. Dominque Morisano (of McGill University) found that setting intensive goals for college students over a four-month period increased their academic performance by **30%** on average.[[5]](#footnote-6)

**What are the highest values that you have in the area of the sharing your faith?** If all else failed, what do you value and desire the most? For instance, you might write, “I can’t wait for the day to stand before Jesus, looking him in the eye, and hearing him say, ‘Well done! Come and enjoy everything that I’ve been preparing for you!’”

(1)

(2)

(3)

**Based on your values, create a list of what you’d like your life to look like five weeks from now. What would your life look like in the area of evangelism if you knew for a fact that you couldn’t fail?** (Think BIG!)

(1)

(2)

(3)

**What are FIVE GOALS can you set for the next FIVE WEEKS to move toward your overall vision in the area of evangelism?**

**PRO TIP:** Create **numerical goals** (e.g. “I want to initiate a conversation *ten times* over the next five weeks”), rather than **“every day” goals** (e.g. “I want to initiate a conversation *every day*”). The problem with “every day” goals is that if you miss even *once*, you automatically fail and you’ll give up. By contrast, numerical goals can be reached even at the “eleventh hour,” or right before the end of the five weeks.

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

**Are your goals specific enough that you’ll know if you met them or not?**

(e.g. “I want pray every week for an open door” versus “I want to pray more”)

**Are you stretching yourself and aiming high? Are you aiming so high that you are setting yourself up for failure?**

(e.g. “I want to share how important my faith is to ten people over the next five weeks” versus “I want to share my testimony with someone”).

(e.g. “I want to initiate ten spiritual conversations this week” versus “I want to make an invitation to ten people to get coffee or grab lunch”)

**Are any of these goals out of your control?**

(e.g. “I want to lead someone to Christ in the next five weeks” versus “I want to initiate three spiritual conversations in the next five weeks”)

**Do you need to invest in any resources to achieve your goals?**

(e.g. a new prayer journal, a book on apologetics that will build up my confidence, food and drinks to host a cookout, etc.)

**How will you react if you fail in ANY or ALL of these goals?**

# Lecture #3. Learning to Listen

#### Benefits of being a skilled listener

#### Observing questions

Share what you’re noticing. Ask them to interpret your observations.

(1) The person has given several excuses in a row whenever you invite them to visit your Bible study.

(2) The person stops talking and looks away when you engage in a spiritual conversation.

(3) The person makes sarcastic comments about your involvement with Christ.

#### Clarifying questions

Try and summarize their view. Don’t disagree. Simply aim for understanding.

(1) “I don’t believe that we need God to explain the origin of the universe and the Big Bang. I think the universe came from a singularity.”

(2) “The Bible can’t be without errors because it was written by humans, and all humans make errors.”

(3) “I think that Jesus was trained in India in eastern thinking. That’s why he believed in reincarnation.”

#### Echoing questions

Repeat back what you’re hearing. This isn’t patronizing if done right. It helps the person know that you’re engaged and listening to them.

(1) “I can’t believe that a loving God would send people to hell.”

(2) “I’ve met so many Christians who are homophobic and bigoted.”

(3) “My mom forced me to go to church when I was a kid. I think it’s child abuse to force your beliefs on your kids.”

#### Wondering questions

This is a way of openly exploring what someone is thinking by sharing your curiosity out loud.

(1) “I didn’t like what that girl said in the teaching about forgiveness. She made it seem so easy, when it’s not!”

(2) “Christians are so political.”

(3) “I don’t like the way that people treat me around here.”

#### Reminding questions

You can reopen a conversation by sharing that you were thinking of something they said and asking about it.

(1) “Do you think anybody can really know if God is real?”

(2) “I don’t think I will ever be able to forgive myself for doing that.”

(3) “There’s got to be more in life than just working this job.”

#### Homework: Conversation Contest

Last week, you shared your reflections, values, and goals with a friend, roommate, or spouse. This week, you will have a friendly competition with this person: **Which of you can initiate a warm and friendly conversation with more strangers?**

**WARNING!** You will not need to share your faith with these strangers. However, this competition will require you to pull out your earbuds, put down your phone, and even make eye contact with other human beings…

By 7pm next Wednesday, record in a single paragraph how this exercise impacted you. Share your observations with your friend, roommate, or spouse.

# Lecture #4. Clearly Communicating Jesus’ Message of Love and Forgiveness

#### Appeal to Scripture

#### Antithesis

#### Illustrations and Analogies

#### Don’t ask bad questions

#### Ask good questions

#### The goal

#### Homework: Getting around People

This week, brainstorm and research **ten ways** that you can get around people who don’t share your convictions.

(1)

(2)

(3)

(4)

(5)

(6)

(7)

(8)

(9)

(10)

Which would you enjoy the most? Which would you like to start with?

# Lecture #5. Discovering your Evangelism Style

#### Confrontational Style: Peter

(Acts 2:22ff; 4:12-20; 5:29-32)

#### Blind spots

#### Intellectual Style: Paul

(Acts 17:2-4, 22-31; Rom. 12:8; 1 Cor. 12:8; Phil. 1:16)

#### Blind spots

#### Service Style: Dorcas

(Acts 9:36; Rom. 12:7; 1 Cor. 12:28)

#### Blind spots

#### Testimonial Style: Woman at the Well

(John 4; Jn. 9:11, 23-24; Phil. 3:3-11; Gal. 1:11-24; Acts 22:1ff; 26:1ff)

#### Blind spots

#### Invitational Style: Philip

(Jn. 1:45-46; 12:20-22; Acts 8:4, 29-38)

#### Blind spots

#### Hospitable Style: Matthew

(Luke 5:29; 1 Cor. 12:28; Rom. 12:8)

#### Blind spots

#### Homework: Working Together

(1) Which style(s) do you see in others around you?

(2) How could you see them using this style to reach others?

(3) How might you team up in order to reach others? (i.e. complementing each other)

1. R. Alan Cole, *Galatians: Tyndale Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p.233. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. R. Alan Cole, *Galatians: Tyndale Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), p.232. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Geoffrey L. Cohen and David K. Sherman, “The Psychology of Change: Self-Affirmation and Social Psychological Intervention.” *Annual Review of Psychology* 65 (2014): 333-71. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Kelly McGonigal, *The Upside of Stress* (New York, NY: Avery Publishers, 2015), p.71. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Dominque Morisano (et al.) “Setting, Elaborating, and Reflecting on Personal Goals Improves Academic Performance” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2010 March, 95(2):255-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)