

WEEK 5: PROCLAIM BOLDLY

LEADERS RESOURCES

A. COURSE OUTCOMES: OUR OVERALL GOALS

By the end of the course people will be able:

- To articulate the gospel for themselves and communicate it to others, without embarrassment or distortion
- To understand how the above actions help us to interpret and practise the breadth and depth of the gospel
- To recognize how the good news of Jesus Christ is rooted in the book of Acts and in the 4 Gospels

B. AIMS FOR THIS WEEK: WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

1. To understand that God wants us to know him
2. To consider how Jesus and the early church announced the good news
3. To explore how to share the good news by beginning where people are

C. PLAN YOUR SESSION: A CHECKLIST

- Pray for your session and for those who will attend
- Read the passages, perhaps in different translations, to bring out the meaning
- Read the notes summary for the week.
- Note the key words and other passages you can explore if you have time.
- Read through the session plan
- Don't forget to review your session afterwards

D. SUMMARY FOR THE WEEK: TO INFORM YOUR THINKING

From the very beginning, God has been showing himself to those he has made, through creation, through the beauty of music and creativity, through other God moments. He also revealed himself through his word, speaking to them through the prophets and ultimately through his son. Today we have his written word, charting the experiences of women, men and young people down the ages and their engagement with the work of God.

Jesus the living word announced good news when he began his public ministry (Mark 1:15). He did not just speak it, he was good news: it was announced in the way he exercised his whole ministry. In Luke's Gospel we have him linking this announcement with Isaiah 61, explaining how this is good news for his hearers, and how the hand of judgment has been held back until his return. He proclaimed the good news that God was offering a full life, a life with a meaning and purpose, a life where wrongs are righted and change is not just possible but inevitable if we turn back to God.

In our readings today, Philip is sent to draw alongside a royal official who had yet to get his head around this good news. In doing so, Philip is caught up in God's mission – he was joining in where God had already been at work. Zacchaeus has a one to one with Jesus, and as a result his life is changed for good. His life and others are transformed as a result.

Children and young people today often do not know the basics of who Jesus is, why he came, what that means and how they can be involved in his mission of transformation. There is an openness at the start of our lives which allows us to hear the good news more easily. How are we investing in that

opportunity, and enabling children and young people to go through life knowing, loving and serving the God who loves them, and being involved in his mission?

E. WORDS FOR THE WEEK: KEY WORDS FOR THIS SESSION

Revelation: *apokalupsis*. An uncovering, unveiling of who God is including Jesus the Christ, the character of God and the mind of God to the prophets/church.

Gospel: *euangelion*. Good tidings of the Kingdom of God, of salvation through Christ based on his death, burial, resurrection and ascension. Sometimes it denotes the basic facts of what Jesus has done, other times it is the interpretation of those facts.

F. OTHER SCRIPTURES TO REFERENCE

Psalm 19:1 The heavens are telling the glory of God and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

John 10:10 I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel; it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

1 Corinthians 9:16 If I proclaim the gospel, this gives me no ground for boasting, for an obligation is laid on me, and woe betide me if I do not proclaim the gospel!

G. LIVING THE MISSION OF JESUS

Proclaiming boldly incorporates all the other aspects of living the mission of Jesus. We proclaim by teaching people. We proclaim by serving sacrificially. We proclaim by acting justly and by stewarding faithfully. In Luke 4 when Jesus announced the arrival of the Kingdom of God, it was holistic. And so this week's material is about all 4 of the strategic priorities (<http://www.winchester.anglican.org/about-us/strategic-priorities/>) – it's how we live in relation to God, to one another and the world. It's how we disciple others, re-imagine the church, transform society and live together sacrificially and generously. That's why it comes as the last week of this year's course.

H. REVIEWING YOUR SESSION

We would encourage you to spend a little time reviewing your session once you have led it through.

Here are some questions to think about:

- What went well and why – what evidence is there that it did?
- What would you change if you did it again?
- What advice would you pass on to the person who is leading the group next time?

CORE MATERIAL

Use the following structure to guide you through your session. Each part has a suggested time to enable you to be finished in 90 minutes.

1 OPEN WITH PRAYER (3 MINUTES)

Use the following prayer from the scriptures for your time together as a group:

Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be now and always acceptable to you, O Lord my rock and my redeemer.

Or this classic prayer

God be in my head, and in my understanding, God be in my eyes, and in my looking, God be on my lips, and in my speaking, God be in my heart, and in my thinking, God be at my end, and at my departing.

Or

Spend a short time focusing on the word Gospel giving thanks for all that that means to us.

2 INTRODUCTION (2 MINUTES)

Read the following aloud or use your own words to explain what it says:

Today's session is about how we communicate the gospel of Jesus Christ in both deed and word. The answer is by stewarding faithfully, by acting justly, by serving sacrificially, by teaching effectively and by proclaiming boldly. This week's theme therefore includes all the other weeks too!

So this week we are exploring what God has done for us in Christ, and having confidence to share that good news with others in both deed and word. How can we effectively do that in today's context?

3 BIBLE BASE (30 MINUTES)

Read Luke 19:1-10

Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through it. ² A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax-collector and was rich. ³ He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. ⁴ So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. ⁵ When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, 'Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.' ⁶ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. ⁷ All who saw it began to grumble and said, 'He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.' ⁸ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, 'Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.' ⁹ Then Jesus said to him, 'Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.'

Questions:

Reflect on the actions and words of Jesus in this passage.

How did Jesus proclaim good news?

Zacchaeus was a chief tax collector and rich, an exemplary sinner!

The people did not think he was worth the attention of Jesus (v7).

But just as Zacchaeus was seeking Jesus (v2), Jesus is seeking sinners like him (v10).

How was Zacchaeus' life changed by hearing the good news of salvation?

How can the Church (God's people) be more inclusive than exclusive, to enable people to hear the good news we are proclaiming?



Now read Acts 8:26-35

²⁶ Then an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Get up and go towards the south[a] to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a wilderness road.) ²⁷ So he got up and went. Now there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of the Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, in charge of her entire treasury. He had come to Jerusalem to worship ²⁸ and was returning home; seated in his chariot, he was reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ Then the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over to this chariot and join it.' ³⁰ So Philip ran up to it and heard him reading the prophet Isaiah. He asked, 'Do you understand what you are reading?' ³¹ He replied, 'How can I, unless someone guides me?' And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him. ³² Now the passage of the scripture that he was reading was this:

'Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter, and like a lamb silent before its shearer, so he does not open his mouth.

³³ In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.'

³⁴ The eunuch asked Philip, 'About whom, may I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?' ³⁵ Then Philip began to speak, and starting with this scripture, he proclaimed to him the good news about Jesus.

Questions:

Describe how Philip enabled the Ethiopian official to hear the good news.

What struck you?

How was the Holy Spirit at work in this situation?

The official had a question – that was his block to understanding the gospel. Philip began with that question and was able to proclaim the good news to him.

How can we as God's people begin where people are rather than tell them where they should be?

4 WORKING IT OUT (10 MINUTES)

Either watch the 5th film on the USB stick about how people are offering loving service to those in need.

Or

Read one or two of the following examples out loud as examples of what people are doing about this in the Diocese of Winchester.

Fitness, Food and Faith

On the Nightingale Estate in Eastleigh we are sharing life as a small but growing community that is encouraging people to pursue a healthy lifestyle through fitness, food and faith. God designed our bodies to be healthy and equipped for life to the full and as we take steps towards health and vitality together we are starting to see God's kingdom come in small ways in our everyday lives (Nightingale Estate, Southampton)

Living it Out

Some International Students come to the UK as Christians and others come to faith whilst here. Hosted at Highfield Church, Southampton, Friends International brings together volunteers from several local churches to run "The Philip Project" course, training faithful Bible teachers, and an International Discipleship course, encouraging growth in Bible knowledge and faith (Friends International, Southampton)

<http://www.fisuk.org/>

5 COFFEE BREAK (15 MINUTES)

During this time of coffee encourage people to talk about what they have heard and seen. Make sure everyone gets a chance to contribute if they want to.

To open up discussion:

What is the good news? When did you last proclaim it and how?

6 PROCLAIMING BOLDLY

Zacchaeus had a life-changing encounter with the risen Jesus. How might he have summarized the good news? How did it affect him?

Together as a group:

List reasons why we might share our stories and God's story with others.

List as many reasons as you can.

For personal reflection:

Take a moment to write down what you believe (or if it's easier, what Christians believe) in a simple, jargon-free way.

Together as a group:

Now as a group, take it in turns to speak out your statements in turn, ideally without looking at your notes!

7 COMMUNICATING MY STORY

Holy Week and Easter are at the heart of our faith. Think about what they mean to you.

Now get together in 2s or 3s. Decide who will speak first, who will listen first (and who will observe first, if you are in a 3). Take it in turns to share what Easter and Holy Week mean to you. You will have 6 minutes each if you are in a pair (4 minutes each if you are in a 3). Refer to the listening skills handout if that's helpful. If you are listening, you might use a carefully chosen response to encourage the speaker.

In the same groups, debrief one another on how well you listened. This is not about the content!

God wants all of us to find 'life in all its fullness', and to be able to help others to do the same.

He calls us all to be his witnesses, ready to tell both our stories and God's story. But we are all different and will therefore go about it in different ways.

Remember: God is more interested in our availability than our ability: he wants to use us now, exactly as we are even though we are a work in progress. We can only learn to be good witnesses by practising telling people, by being led by the Spirit and by looking to Jesus.

For personal reflection

Before God in silence, ask 'what does a mission-shaped me look like?'

Choose one word to describe yourself, and ask God to show you how he wants to use that aspect of who you are to witness to who he is.

8 THIS WEEK'S TASK

During the week:

- Work out your individual mission action plan ie your iMAP.
- Consult the individual book for more help with this

9 PRAYER

Spend some time giving thanks to God for what he has been doing in you as an individual and as a group through Lent this year. Pray for one another as you continue to live the mission of Jesus and tell his and your stories.

10 RESOURCES

There are a list of books and websites which can help you with this on the website or on the USB stick.

There is also a sheet explaining how to create an individual mission action plan (iMAP).

There are also tracts available at the resourcing events.

11 NEXT WEEK'S THEME

This is the last of this year's Lent Course sessions – we hope you have enjoyed the journey.

