



# STUDY GUIDE

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### [setting it up]

With your group, brainstorm a list of basic human needs.

Who do you know who is especially hungry – especially desperate – to have a real need met?

Describe a time in your life when Jesus met one of your deepest needs. How did He meet that need in your life?

### [digging deeper]

Read Luke 9:10-17 and John 6:1-14. (You can also find this story in Mark 6:30-44 and Matthew 14:13-21.)

As you combine the Luke and John accounts, summarize the main details of this story.

If you have the technology available, watch the following video:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pMs8N6Wzwg4>

What are the main lessons we learn about Jesus in this story?

What are the main lessons we learn about the crowd in this story?

What are the main lessons we learn about the disciples in this story?

How are you like the crowd?

How are you like the disciples?

Why do you think Jesus said to His disciples, “You give them something to eat”?

(over)

## **[living it out]**

In order for the disciples to continue to get food for the multitudes, they had to keep going back to Jesus over and over. What does that look like for you?

Again, think about someone you know who is especially hungry – especially desperate – to have a real need met. How will you “give them something to eat”?

Ask everyone to create an “I will” statement. (Remember to check up on one another in an encouraging way the next time you meet.)

Close your time in prayer for those who are especially hungry and desperate to have a real need met. Also, please remember to pray for your “Who’s Your One?” friends and family members.

# **7 Reasons Evangelism Has Declined in the Church**

By Ed Stetzer

## **1. There’s Been a Bit of a Backlash to Past Models That Seemed Reductionistic and Mechanistic.**

Os Guinness in *Fool’s Talk* observed how “recent forms of evangelism are modeled not on classical rhetorical or even on good communication theory, but on handbooks for effective sales technique.” Some are bothered by the idea that evangelism is boiled down to asking people to answer two questions: “If you were to die today, do you know for sure you’d go to heaven?” And, “Do you know for sure you are going to be with God in heaven?”

Over time, people increasingly felt these were reductionist and mechanical, so (for good or for bad) they moved away from them.

You're more likely now to find Christians make jokes about the way they used to do evangelism than actually do evangelism. Instead of starting with our questions, we should start where people are and walk them to the gospel.

## **2. Many Believers Don't Have Confidence in the Gospel.**

A LifeWay Research study found about half the people who regularly attend an evangelical church give a pluralistic or a universalistic answer to questions about the need for people to know Christ. A higher percentage would likely be functionally universalistic or pluralistic. Showing how the gospel and Scripture connect to and help make sense of all of life — not just our spiritual life — can grow confidence in it. One study found millennials are four times as likely to stay in church when shown how the Bible applies to all of life, including their career.

## **3. It's Getting Harder to Share the Gospel in a Context Where People Are Further Away From What Their Parents or Grandparents Believed.**

You're starting with people who are far more secular than before. This means there's a greater gap between what you believe and what they believe, so the starting point for sharing Christ is different. You can't assume they believe things like you. Like Paul at Mars Hill, we can start where they are and show them Christ.

## **4. Replacing Evangelism With Another Spiritual Emphasis.**

Today, we talk more about social justice or societal transformation, seeing that they are clearly important and part of the mission. However, we'd be naive not to think that some will lose their evangelistic focus as they gain a passion for other aspects of the mission.

"We still believe in evangelism," we say. But saying, "We still believe in evangelism," means you're about a decade from not believing in evangelism, because what we neglect in one generation is often rejected in the next. You can (and should) add important issues without subtracting a focus on evangelism.

## **5. Our Lack of Compassion for the Lost Around Us.**

Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Pray to the Lord of the harvest" (Matt. 9:37). Just before these verses Matthew describes Jesus' emotional state, observing Jesus had compassion for them. The term "compassion" means the visceral organs—a deep, gut-wrenching affection.

It's strange that Matthew would describe the emotional state of Jesus, but this reveals Jesus' heart was and is for people who do not know him.

One of the reasons people don't share the gospel is they don't share the deep compassion of Jesus. Do we care for people? If not, do we care about the fact that we don't care?

I pray that people might weep with Jesus, might look over their city and weep because they are like sheep without a shepherd. People don't care how much we know about God unless they know how much we care about them.

## **6. There's a Fear of Not Having the Answers to Questions People Raise.**

Sharing the gospel in the 1950's was simpler for many: even people who didn't go to church thought that the church was good. If someone shared the gospel with you, you knew the general framework of the gospel. You knew that God wrote a book called the Bible; you knew he sent a son, but you didn't really understand how you might know him personally.

Evangelism in a Christendom age was largely driven by telling people the details of what they already had an idea about, more or less connecting the dots for them.

Now, if somebody says, "Why is Jesus the only way?" what would we say? Or if someone says, "What do you believe about creation?" how do you respond? There are a hundred things people could say, so believers get nervous that they won't know what to say.

For people who are afraid, I would say, "You can say 'I don't know.'" Nowhere in Scripture are we told to answer every question a person has. We are told to give them the hope found in Christ (1 Peter 3:15). What a great opportunity to show humility, and to learn and listen together so that you can share with your friend who doesn't know Christ.

## **7. Some People Think Their Lives Aren't Good Enough for Them to Be Witnesses.**

"If I were only more godly, I'd witness," they think. The gospel means good news. Here's some good news for the Christian: God uses broken, messed up people, just like you.

One of the things I love about witnessing is I can be open and share that I too am imperfect and broken but Jesus saved me, and he's making me whole. That authenticity and vulnerability is effective in sharing Christ today.

I left LifeWay Research three and a half years ago—a job I loved—to spend the rest of my ministry helping to bring us back to a greater conviction that women and men without Christ are dead in their trespasses and sins, and need to hear and respond to the good news of the gospel.