

# How can we speak up for Jesus?

**Aim of study:** to realise that we can all be an everyday witness for Christ even though our approaches will vary

Review: Does anyone have any further reflections on last time's study? Or the 'Guidelines for resolving conflict'?

Launching question: Have you recently got into a conversation about your faith with someone who doesn't go to church? How did it happen? How did you get on? How did you feel about it afterwards?

## How did the early believers speak up for Jesus?

The first followers of Jesus were much like us. They did not all have the gift of eloquent speech; neither did they know all the answers. This did not stop them playing their part in helping others hear the story of Jesus. Here are four different people who spoke up for Jesus: Levi, man in the tombs, Philip and the woman at the well.

### Luke 5:29; Mark 5:15-20; Acts 8:26-35; John 4:27-30, 39-42

Divide into 4 groups and assign one passage to each group. Ask groups to read the passage in their group, and record their observations for the first five questions. After 5 minutes or so, get feedback. Then discuss questions 6 and 7 together.

1	How did this opportunity for speaking up come about?	
2	Who took the initiative?	
3	What did they do and say?	
4	For/to whom?	
5	What was the result?	
6	How could this approach work in my community/workplace?	<i>Levi - evangelistic entertaining; man - personal story; Philip - shared the gospel; woman - personal story.</i>
7	What kind of preparation would be helpful?	

## What motivates Christians to speak up for Jesus?

**1. What had happened to these four people that made them want to tell others?**

*They experienced Christ's forgiveness/acceptance; he had given them a new purpose/occupation in life; Jesus had known and said things about them that showed that he was someone special (the Messiah), more than a mere man. In some cases the motivation is not known.*

**2. What are some of the good things God has done in your life?**

You may want to prompt the group with these sorts of suggestions: Was it an experience that demonstrated to you that God was alive / a change in your thinking / a need in your life that made you realise your need to put your trust in Jesus Christ / an experience of God's forgiveness, hope or purpose?

Encourage group members to share some of these experiences, including what helped to bring them to trust in Christ.

This should encourage us to tell others what God has done for us.

**Pray** – encourage several group members to thank God for what he has done in each other's lives

## Are you ready to speak up? 1 Peter 3:15; Colossians 4:2-6

Read both passages then the text that follows.

Not many of us think we are good at speaking or answering people's questions. But we can be prepared. Some questions require homework before they are asked. For example, when a four year old asks, "Where do babies come from?" it's helpful to have an immediate, clear answer. That means deciding before the question comes up what you will say. In a similar way, you will miss opportunities to speak up for God if you are not prepared.

**1.** Jot down the main points mentioned in these two passages, rephrasing them in your own words. Ask group members to make their own notes before group sharing. Half the group concentrate on 1 Peter and the others on Colossians passage.

*Submit your heart to Jesus - make him number 1 / prayer (talking to God) should be like breathing / pray for open doors to talk about Jesus / anticipate another's questions - be ready to answer them / speak clearly about Jesus - who he is and why he came / act wisely towards outsiders - think about what you are going to say to make them think about life and why they do things / stir up interest and curiosity by the comments you make.*

**2.** What does it mean to 'season your conversation with salt'?

This should be a good springboard to a wide-ranging discussion

## Do you have anything to declare?

[You will need to print one worksheet for each group member.]

Peter encourages us, 'always be prepared to give an answer...'

"I cannot by being good, tell men of Jesus' atoning death and resurrection, nor of my faith in his divinity. The emphasis is too much on me, and too little on him. Our lives must be made as consistent as we can make them with our faith; but our faith if we are Christians, is vastly greater than our lives. That is why the word of witness is so important."  
*The Christian Persuader by Leighton Ford.*

Hand out worksheets for this study. Explain the idea -

We live in the world of the sound bite. We need to be ready with some short, pithy statements from our own experience and viewpoint to answer key questions as and when they come up.

Read out some of the examples on the sheet. Give a few minutes for everyone to make a start at writing two or three short sentence answers to the 'Anything to declare?' questions. Each sentence should stand alone and should encourage interest and possible further questions. Your answers should be in ordinary language, no jargon and easy to understand.

[If reference is made to Matt 10:19,20, the context relates to direct persecution, not a day-by-day spoken witness.]

## Pray

Ask God to help us express our answers simply and clearly, and give us an opportunity to share them in a conversation this week. Each person pray for one of your Five in Focus names.

## Before next time...

Continue working on your answers to 'Anything to Declare?' Be ready to share these next time!  
Pray for your Five in Focus names

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Pray

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## Do you have Anything to Declare?

Write 2 or 3 short sentence answers to these questions. See the examples. Your phrases should stand alone, encourage interest and possible further questions. Use ordinary language, no jargon and make it easy to understand!

**What was my attitude before I took Jesus Christ seriously?** (eg. attitude to life, ambition, religion) or, **What were one or two things that used to characterise my view of life/God?**

eg. I got to the age of 21 and thought, is this it? / I never got on well with my mother in law / I wanted to do something significant / I considered myself as having high moral standards

**Why did I say 'Yes' to Christ?** or, **Why do I still want to put Christ first in my life?**

eg. I discovered Christianity was about a friendship, not about do's and don'ts. / I met some people who cared for me in a way I'd never experienced before / My dad's death brought me up short.

**How did I say 'Yes' to Christ?** or, **Were there any particular points in my life when I reinforced my earlier decision to say 'Yes' to Christ?**

eg. I asked God to become number One in my life, above everything else. / I admitted to God that I had been going my own way / I realised that God forgave me even if I couldn't forgive myself

**What difference does Christ make to my day-to-day life?**

eg. I try to believe the best of people, instead of always trying to criticise / I find I worry less about our teenage son / I am less bothered about making money and more interested in people

**What is a Christian?**

eg. someone who realises that trying to live life on our own terms is an insult to God / discovering a friendship with God through admitting that I need his forgiveness and asking him to be number one in my life / being a Christian is not being religious, it's a relationship with God because of what Jesus has done / religion says 'DO', Jesus says 'DONE'