TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY NOTES

Study 8: Living and speaking for Christ

For personal study or groups

Your name

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How to use these notes. Watch each part's video on biblehelp.net, or read the text below. Look up each passage in your own Bible and write the answer on the lines. The verses are printed at the back if you need them. At the end there are questions to think about on your own or to discuss in a group.

PART 1

Lights in the world

How we live (Matthew 5:13–16; 1 Peter 2:9–12)

Most of us will never preach to thousands. We go to work, look after a family, meet the neighbours and buy the shopping. So what does it mean to witness in an ordinary life? This study looks at three things: how we live, how we answer, and how we tell what God has done.

1. Salt (Matthew 5:13). "You are the salt of the earth." It is a statement. Jesus does not say, "Try to become salt." He says it to fishermen and ordinary people from Galilee. It is what grace has made them. Salt kept food from going bad and gave it flavour, and it did its work quietly, by being in contact with what it touched. But salt that has lost its taste is useless. A Christian who becomes just like the world has nothing to give the world. So holiness is not something separate from evangelism. It is part of it.

1 **Read Matthew 5:13**

What does Jesus say His followers are? What is His warning?

2. Light (Matthew 5:14–15). Again, it is a statement. In John's Gospel, Jesus says that He Himself is the light of the world. We have no light of our own. We are like the moon, which shines only because the sun shines on it. A city on a hill cannot be hidden, and a real Christian cannot be completely hidden. When following Christ becomes costly, we would rather not be noticed. But a lamp is lit in order to shine. The baskets are the things that hide our light: fear of what people will think, being too busy, shyness, inconsistency. And notice "everyone in the house". Our light should shine first at home.

2 **Read Matthew 5:14–15**

What two pictures does Jesus use? What does each one teach?

See also: John 8:12; Ephesians 5:8.

3. Let your light shine (Matthew 5:16). The light is "your good deeds": honesty at work, keeping your word, kindness to the difficult neighbour, faithfulness in marriage. These are not the gospel, but they are the light by which people see that the gospel is real. And the goal is that they "glorify your Father in heaven". The aim is not that people should admire us. Do you want them to think, "What a good person", or, "What a God"?

3 **Read Matthew 5:16**

What are people to see? What is the aim?

4. Chosen to proclaim (1 Peter 2:9–10). Peter wrote to a small, misunderstood minority, and he told them who they were. The titles that once belonged to Israel at Mount Sinai now belong to the church. Every believer has access to God through Christ, can pray for others, and can speak of God to them. That is why a witness is not only the work of pastors. And we were chosen "to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light". God has not called us only so that we can be saved and sit still. If we have received mercy, then that is what we have to tell people about, and that keeps us humble.

4 **Read 1 Peter 2:9–10**

What does Peter call these believers? What are they called to do?

5. Good lives among those who slander us (1 Peter 2:11–12). This world is not our home, and there is a war going on inside us. Those early Christians were accused of many things. Peter does not tell them to organise a campaign. He tells them to live so well that the accusations do not stick. It may take a long time, but a good life is watched, and it is remembered.

5 **Read 1 Peter 2:11–12**

What are these believers to avoid, and how are they to live? What may come of it?

Our light is not for us

A lighthouse keeper does not keep the light burning so that people can admire it. He keeps it burning so that ships will not be lost on the rocks. There are people around us in the dark, and they are in danger.

6. Life and words together. A life without words is not enough. You can be the kindest person in the office for thirty years, and your colleagues can admire you and never hear the gospel. The gospel is news, and news must be told. Words without a life are no better, for they discredit the message. We need both: the quiet influence and the open word. And the aim of it all is that people may glorify our Father in heaven.

See also: Romans 10:14, 17.

PART 2

Ready to give an answer

How we answer (1 Peter 3:13–18; Colossians 4:5–6)

Suppose that your life makes someone wonder. A colleague asks why you go to church. A friend asks how you can believe in a God who allows suffering. For many Christians, that is the moment they dread. The Bible's teaching about it is more encouraging than we might think.

1. Do not fear (1 Peter 3:13–14). Peter does not mean that nothing bad will ever happen. He means that no one can do you any final harm. To suffer for doing right is not a sign that God has left you. Fear of people is the great enemy of witness. Peter knew that. He once denied his Lord by a fire, and he writes as someone who has been forgiven and restored.

6 **Read 1 Peter 3:13–14**

What does Peter say about those who suffer for what is right? What are they told not to do?

See also: Matthew 5:10; Isaiah 8:12–13.

2. Christ as Lord in the heart (1 Peter 3:15). The key verse does not begin with arguments. It begins with the heart. In Isaiah, the Lord of Hosts is the One to be regarded as holy. Now Peter puts Christ in that place. To sanctify Him means to give Him first place. The answer to fear of people is fear of the Lord.

3. Always be prepared (1 Peter 3:15). The word translated "defense" means a reasoned answer, as in a court of law. It does not mean saying that you are sorry. Christians are not asked to be clever. They are asked to be prepared, and this is for all of us, not only for the few who have studied. Keep reading the Bible, think about the questions you have been asked, and pray for opportunities. Notice what people ask about: "the hope that is in you". Our hope has a reason: a living hope "through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead".

7 **Read 1 Peter 3:15–16**

What are we to do first, in our hearts? What are we to be ready for, and how are we to answer?

See also: 1 Peter 1:3.

4. Gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15–16). You can win the argument and lose the person. Be gentle with the person who is asking. Show respect for them, and reverence for God. We are beggars telling other beggars where to find bread. Often there is a story behind hostility, and if we listen, we may find out what a person is really saying. And our answer will sound hollow if our life contradicts it.

5. The heart of our hope (1 Peter 3:17–18). When Peter wants to encourage people who are afraid, he takes them to the cross. "Once for all": it never needs to be repeated. "The righteous for the unrighteous": He took our place. "To bring you to God": that is what it was for. If anyone ever asks, you can start from there.

8 **Read 1 Peter 3:17–18**

What did Christ do, and why? How would this help someone who is afraid?

6. Gracious speech (Colossians 4:5–6). Those who do not yet believe are watching. All our speech is to be gracious, not only when we talk about religion. That does not mean weak speech. It is speech full of grace, because it comes from someone who has received grace. Each person needs a different answer, so there is no script, and we must listen.

9 **Read Colossians 4:5–6**

How should we speak? Why does each person need a different answer?

7. Three common questions. You will not have all the answers. Nobody does. But it is good to have thought about these.

- **"Why is there so much suffering?"** First, listen. A person who is asking may need your love more than your reasons. The Bible says that the world is broken because of sin, though not that each person's suffering comes from their own sin. It does not explain everything. But in Jesus, God came and suffered with us and for us, and He promises a day when He will wipe every tear away.
- **"Aren't all religions the same?"** Most religions tell us what we must do to reach God. The gospel tells us what God has done to reach us. Jesus said that no one comes to the Father except through Him.
- **"How can you trust the Bible?"** You need not defend every verse. You can say why you trust it. Jesus trusted it. Its prophecies came true. It has changed lives, and it has changed yours. Invite them to read one of the Gospels for themselves.

Each answer goes back to Jesus. When you do not know, say so: "I do not know, but I will try to find out." Our arguments can clear the way, but only the Spirit can open the eyes.

See also: Revelation 21:4; John 14:6.

How to be ready

Put Christ on the throne of your heart. Know why you hope. Listen first. Speak with gentleness and respect. Say when you do not know. And bring it back to Jesus.

PART 3

Telling what God has done

How we tell it (Mark 5:1–20; John 9:24–38)

Many Christians feel that they do not know enough to speak about Christ. Here are two men with no training at all. One had been possessed by demons, and the other had been a blind beggar. Each of them simply told what Jesus had done.

1. A man no one could help (Mark 5:1–5). He lived among the tombs, no chain could hold him, and night and day he cried out and cut himself with stones. Here is a picture of what evil does to a human being. Mark wants us to feel how hopeless it is.

10 **Read Mark 5:1–5**

How does Mark describe this man? What had people tried to do?

2. One word from Jesus (Mark 5:6–13). The demons know exactly who He is, and they are terrified of Him. A Roman legion was several thousand soldiers, and yet there is no struggle. Jesus gives one word, and they must go. We are not told everything about the pigs. But we see what the demons wanted, which was to destroy, and we see something of the value of one human being in the eyes of Jesus.

11 **Read Mark 5:6–13**

What do the demons know about Jesus? What does this passage show about His power?

3. Clothed and in his right mind (Mark 5:14–17). He had been running through the tombs, and now he is sitting. He had been naked, and now he is clothed. He had been out of his mind, and now he is in his right mind. It is a picture of what salvation does for anyone. But the people were afraid, and they begged Jesus to leave. They preferred a quiet life.

12 **Read Mark 5:14–17**

What did the people see? How did they respond, and why do you think they did?

See also: Luke 8:27.

4. "Go home to your own people" (Mark 5:18–20). The man begged to go with Jesus, and Jesus said no, because He had something better for him to do. Notice three things. Where: "Go home to your own people", to those who knew him as he had been. What: "how much the Lord has done for you". He had no theology, and he had been a believer for a few hours, but he could tell what had been done. How it is told: "and what mercy He has shown you". It is a story about mercy, and the hero is the Lord. Jesus said "the Lord", and the man told people what "Jesus" had done. He had worked out who Jesus was.

13 **Read Mark 5:18–20**

Where was the man sent, and what was he to tell? What did he do?

5. "I was blind, but now I see!" (John 9:24–25). Jesus had healed a man born blind, and the Pharisees did not want it to be true. A beggar now stands before the most powerful religious leaders in the land. He does not claim to know what he does not know. But there is something he knows, and no one can take it from him. You can dispute a person's theology. You cannot dispute what has happened to them. Any believer can say the same: you know what Christ has done for you.

14 **Read John 9:24–25**

What does the man say that he does not know? What does he know?

6. It cost him (John 9:26–34). See how this man grows in courage. When people have no argument, they often turn to insults. Yet the beggar teaches the teachers, and God gives him a mouth and wisdom. "And they threw him out." Telling the truth about Jesus may cost us too.

15 **Read John 9:26–34**

How does the man reason with them? What did it cost him?

See also: Luke 21:15.

7. Found by Jesus (John 9:35–38). The religious leaders throw him out, and Jesus goes looking for him. Those who are cast out for Christ's sake will be found by Christ. See how far this man has come: "the man they call Jesus", then "a prophet", then "from God", and now "Lord", and he worships Him. As we speak about Christ, our own faith grows.

16 **Read John 9:35–38**

What does Jesus do when He hears what has happened? How does the man respond?

See also: John 9:11, 17, 33.

8. Telling your story. If you are a Christian, Christ has done something for you, and you can say what it is. It need not be dramatic. If you cannot remember a time when you did not believe, that is a wonderful mercy, and your story is about God's grace too. Here is a simple way to think about it: what I was, how Christ met me, and what He has done since. Keep it short. Keep it true. And make sure that the hero of the story is Jesus. Your story did not save you. Christ did. A story can open a door, and it should lead to the cross.

9. Study 8 in summary. Let your light shine: your life. Be ready to answer: your words. Tell what God has done: your story. And all of it pointing to Christ, so that people may glorify your Father in heaven.

THINK IT THROUGH

Questions for reflection and discussion

1. Where has God put you to be salt? What most often hides your light? Would those who know you best say that your light shines at home?

2. What are you most afraid of being asked? Has anyone ever asked you about your hope? Could you give the reason in two or three sentences?

3. Who are your own people? Could you tell your story in three minutes? Is Jesus the hero of your story?

HIDE IT IN YOUR HEART

Memory verse for study 8

Learn this verse by heart this week. Cut out the card and keep it where you will see it.

TELLING THE GOOD NEWS · STUDY 8 · MEMORY VERSE

“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

Berean Standard Bible · biblehelp.net

“I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11, BSB)

AT THE BACK

The Bible passages (BSB)

1 **Matthew 5:13** *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savor, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.*

2 **Matthew 5:14–15** *14You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they set it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

3 **Matthew 5:16** *In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

4 **1 Peter 2:9–10** *9But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. 10Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

5 **1 Peter 2:11–12** *11Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. 12Conduct yourselves with such honor among the Gentiles that, though they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.*

6 **1 Peter 3:13–14** *13Who can harm you if you are zealous for what is good? 14But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be shaken."*

7 **1 Peter 3:15–16** *15But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect, 16keeping a clear conscience, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ.*

8 **1 Peter 3:17–18** *17For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. 18For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit,*

9 **Colossians 4:5–6** *5Act wisely toward outsiders, redeeming the time. 6Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

10 **Mark 5:1–5** *1On the other side of the sea, they arrived in the region of the Gerasenes. 2As soon as Jesus got out of the boat, He was met by a man with an unclean spirit, who was coming from the tombs. 3This man had been living in the tombs and could no longer be restrained, even with chains. 4Though he was often bound with chains and shackles, he had broken the chains and shattered the shackles. Now there was no one with the strength to subdue him. 5Night and day in the tombs and in the mountains he kept crying out and cutting himself with stones.*

11 **Mark 5:6–13** *6When the man saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees before Him. 7And he shouted in a loud voice, "What do You want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You before God not to torture me!" 8For Jesus had already declared, "Come out of this man, you unclean spirit!" 9"What is your name?" Jesus asked. "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many." 10And he begged Jesus repeatedly not to send them out of that region. 11There on the nearby hillside a large herd of pigs was feeding. 12So the demons begged Jesus, "Send us to the pigs, so that we may enter them." 13He gave them permission, and the unclean spirits came out and went into the pigs, and the herd of about two thousand rushed down the steep bank into the sea and drowned in the water.*

12 **Mark 5:14–17** *14Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. 15When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons sitting there, clothed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. 16Those who had seen it described what had happened to the demon-possessed man and also to the pigs. 17And the people began to beg Jesus to leave their region.*

13 **Mark 5:18–20** *18As He was getting into the boat, the man who had been possessed by the demons begged to go with Him. 19But Jesus would not allow him. "Go home to your own people," He said, "and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and what mercy He has shown you." 20So the man went away and began to proclaim throughout the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And everyone was amazed.*

14 **John 9:24–25** *24So a second time they called for the man who had been blind and said, "Give glory to God! We know that this man is a sinner." 25He answered, "Whether He is a sinner I do not know. There is one thing I do know: I was blind, but now I see!"*

15 **John 9:26–34** *26"What did He do to you?" they asked. "How did He open your eyes?" 27He replied, "I already told you, and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become His disciples?" 28Then they heaped insults on him and said, "You are His disciple; we are disciples of Moses. 29We know that God spoke to Moses, but we do not know where this man is from." 30"That is remarkable indeed!" the man said. "You do not know where He is from, and yet He opened my eyes. 31We know that God does not listen to sinners, but He does listen to the one who worships Him and does His will. 32Never before has anyone heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind. 33If this man were not from God, He could do no such thing." 34They replied, "You were born in utter sin, and you are instructing us?" And they threw him out.*

16 **John 9:35–38** *35When Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, He found the man and said, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" 36"Who is He, Sir?" he replied. "Tell me so that I may believe in Him." 37"You have already seen Him," Jesus answered. "He is the One speaking with you." 38"Lord, I believe," he said. And he worshiped Jesus.*

Scripture: Berean Standard Bible (BSB), public domain. Quotations keep its American spelling. Like many English Bibles, it often says 'man', 'he' or 'brothers' where it means people in general, men and women alike.

FOR GROUP LEADERS

Study 8: Living and speaking for Christ

> **Memory verse:** “In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16). Say it together at the end, and ask who can say it without looking.

Aims

- See from Matthew 5 and 1 Peter 2 that believers are salt and light, and that life and words belong together.
- See from 1 Peter 3 and Colossians 4 how to be ready to answer, with Christ as Lord in the heart, and with gentleness and respect.
- See from Mark 5 and John 9 that anyone who knows Christ can tell what He has done, and help each person think about their own story.

Suggested timing (about 100 minutes)

- **5 min** Welcome and short prayer.
- **25 min** Part 1 video (13 min); Matthew 5:13, 14–15, 16; 1 Peter 2:9–10, 11–12.
- **30 min** Part 2 video (13 min); 1 Peter 3:13–14, 15–16, 17–18; Colossians 4:5–6.
- **35 min** Part 3 video (17 min); Mark 5:1–5, 6–13, 14–17, 18–20; John 9:24–25, 26–34, 35–38.
- **5 min** Reflection questions. Close in prayer.

For most groups, take one part each week.

Tips

- Some in the group may feel guilty after this study. The aim is not to load people with duties. Jesus says "You are" salt and light: it is what grace has made them.
- Some may say that we should only live the gospel, and not speak. Bring them back to the point of part 1: the gospel is news, and news must be told. Others may speak much and live little. We need both.
- On the three common questions, keep to the point of the study. Do not let the group turn into a debate. Be especially tender if someone in the group is suffering, and do not suggest that a person's suffering comes from their own sin.
- If someone does not know the answer to a question, that is a good moment to practise saying so.
- On Mark 5, the study does not say everything about demons or the pigs. Keep the attention on Jesus' power, and on the man. If someone in the group is struggling with self-harm or with their mental health, speak with them privately and kindly, and encourage them to find help from a pastor and a doctor.
- Encourage the group to write down their own story and try it with another Christian. Be gentle with those brought up in a Christian home, who may think they have no story. Some may have painful things in their past, and they need not share them in the group.
- Remind the group that the hero of the story is Jesus.

Answers to watch for

- **Matthew 5:13:** the salt of the earth; salt that loses its savor is good for nothing.
- **Matthew 5:14–15:** a city on a hill and a lamp on a stand; a real Christian cannot be hidden, and a light is meant to shine.

- **Matthew 5:16:** your good deeds; that they may glorify your Father in heaven.
- **1 Peter 2:9–10:** a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own possession; to proclaim His virtues.
- **1 Peter 2:11–12:** the desires of the flesh; with honour, so that they may see their good deeds and glorify God.
- **1 Peter 3:13–14:** they are blessed; they are not to fear or be shaken.
- **1 Peter 3:15–16:** sanctify Christ as Lord in your heart; to give a reason for our hope, with gentleness and respect.
- **1 Peter 3:17–18:** He suffered once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring us to God; He has gone through death to life before us.
- **Colossians 4:5–6:** graciously, seasoned with salt; because people are different, and we must listen to them.
- **Mark 5:1–5:** he lived among the tombs, cried out and cut himself; they tried to restrain him with chains.
- **Mark 5:6–13:** He is the Son of the Most High God; one word from Him is enough.
- **Mark 5:14–17:** the man sitting, clothed and in his right mind; they were afraid and begged Jesus to leave.
- **Mark 5:18–20:** home to his own people, to tell how much the Lord had done and what mercy He had shown; he proclaimed it throughout the Decapolis.
- **John 9:24–25:** whether Jesus is a sinner; "I was blind, but now I see!"
- **John 9:26–34:** God does not listen to sinners, so Jesus must be from God; they insulted him and threw him out.
- **John 9:35–38:** He found the man; "Lord, I believe", and he worshipped Jesus.