

discipleship essentials

Essentials for Christian Living
Study Guide

INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 6: KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

INTRODUCTION

This lesson is part of a Disciple Essentials module titled Introduction to Evangelism. This series of lessons aims to prepare participants to effectively share the Gospel with others. Understanding how God equips us for ministry and how to prepare our Gospel message for various worldviews will help us bring the unchanging message of the hope found in Jesus Christ to a world that does not yet know Him.

The Study Guide is intended for an individual to look deeper into a specific lesson on their own. The lessons can be used in conjunction with other Discipleship Essentials materials, such as the video and audio productions found on www.discipleshipessentials.org.

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INTRODUCTION TO EVANGELISM

LESSON 6: KNOWING YOUR AUDIENCE

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

This lesson will help you think about ways to share the Gospel message with different audiences, and to identify possible barriers to communication.

JUST SO YOU KNOW...

Evangelism needs a strategy, a plan of action. In this lesson we will look at how to create an evangelism strategy, and to vary this strategy as we gather information about those we are witnessing to. The most important thing to remember is that the facts and the message of the Gospel must remain the same. We cannot omit any part of the Gospel (like sin or the resurrection) because we think it might be too difficult to explain. Nor can we omit any of it because we are afraid our audience won't understand. Instead we need to rely on God and the wisdom He gives us to present these facts in a way our audience can understand and relate to.

GETTING STARTED

1. What aspect of the Gospel was most confusing to you when you became a believer? What do you wish had been clarified for you?

2. How has your worldview changed over the course of your life? What factors caused it to change?



STUDY

❖ **WORLDVIEWS:** In the previous lesson, we considered that a worldview is simply the filter through which a person views the world. Things that contribute to a worldview might include our cultural background, religious beliefs, our socio-economic status, ethnicity, education level or traditions. A worldview may also be referred to as a philosophy or a theology. It is a set of beliefs that we hold to.

➤ It Is Important To Understand That:

- Changing your strategy does not mean changing the message.
- You might, however, want to consider changing your starting point. You may choose to start with God's love, God's peace, sin, the Old Testament promises or who Jesus was.
- There are many ways to build a bridge using God's Word to help people understand Christianity.

➤ Things To Consider When Evangelizing Those with Other Worldviews:

- Don't argue your way into the conversation.
- Don't judge their beliefs.
- Ask questions and try to understand their point of view.
- Look for beliefs you have in common.
- Carefully present your view and why you hold it.
- Don't rush the topic.
- Build relationships.

❖ **EXAMPLES:** In this lesson we won't be examining Bible verses, but rather considering different worldviews. For each of the following worldviews, read the example story and fill out the questions that follow. There may not be answers for each question, and it can be difficult. The important thing is to consider how you would try to explain the Gospel to this person.



1. BUDDHIST BELIEF

Chan is a boy living in Southeast Asia. This second son of a fruit vendor is now in the business of selling fruits with his father. As a child, he spent several years in a monastery training to become a monk. The idea behind this was to gain 'merits' for himself and his family for a better life in their next births. Recently, when his grandmother passed away, his father spent a fortune in rituals intended to earn her enough merits for the next life.

Heavily rooted in superstition, this family comes from a country that practised Buddhism religion as part of their national identity, which is mixed with various folk traditions. When you ask Chan if he has ever heard of Jesus, Chan tells you about his cousin who left the village to study in another country. While away, his cousin became a Christian. Since he had left his identity and broken the religious rituals of his family, this cousin is now blamed for every bad thing that happens in his village.

This is Chan's experience of Christianity. He does not have a concept of God, but hopes that someday he will accumulate enough good deeds to attain Nirvana. He does not worry about his sins, or repercussions. He is afraid of evil spirits and frequently participates in rituals to ward them off. Telling Chan he needs Jesus to be saved from his sins is meaningless. Instead, you ask him questions to learn more about the Karmic system. When did it begin? What if someone could pay his Karmic debt for him? You begin to tell Chan the story of salvation written throughout the Bible. What would Chan need to change about his worldview to understand the salvation offered in Jesus?

How does this worldview differ from Christianity?	
What are some of the barriers to sharing the Gospel with them?	
What potential mistakes could we make when we don't understand their worldview properly?	
How could we build bridges to God's Word that would help them understand?	
How would you answer the question posed in this story?	



2. POLYTHEISTIC BELIEF

You have the opportunity to preach the Gospel in a village far away. You share about **John 3:16**, and have explained the idea of God’s love, and how he sent His Son to be our Saviour. The group of villagers listened intently and concentrated on the words spoken. They came from a belief system that worshipped many gods and their gods also had wives. Some of their gods have also appeared in human form or other forms.

When you finish speaking to the village, you ask if any of them would like to receive Jesus as their Saviour, for the forgiveness of sins. Many of them raise their hands and come forward. One of the women who came forward was named Esma. She looked as though she understood your message and was moved by it. As you spend some days in the village to follow up with those who made decisions, you travel to Esma’s home.

Esma and her husband are farmers, and show you that they have a picture of Jesus next to many other images of gods whom they worship. You ask if they have questions about the Gospel presentation. Esma asks you, “Who is Jesus’ wife?” You realize that Esma and her husband have misunderstood the Gospel message and mixed Christianity with their previous religion. They have accepted Jesus as one among many gods. As you sit with Esma in her home, what can you explain to help her see the truth? What information has she misunderstood and how, knowing her worldview, can you correct it?

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3. ISLAMIC BELIEF

Asha is a young Muslim you often interact with. She is a student living away from home, but she maintains the practices and religious beliefs of her family. You begin to talk to her about Jesus, and she agrees with many aspects of what you say, because she learned about Jesus when she was very young.

Jesus is revered as one of many prophets by Muslims, but to her He is not God. Muslims believe there is only one God, and to say that Jesus is also God is blasphemous. You ask Asha how a person can receive forgiveness of sins apart from Jesus; she explains that she must obey all the commands of the prophet, the Quran, and believe that God will be merciful and save her. There is no assurance of salvation; there is no concept of original sin or the fall. Salvation is found in the five pillars of Islam (belief that God is one, daily prayers, charity, fasting, and pilgrimage).

When you tell her that Jesus said that He is the way, the truth, and the life, she is interested because she has never heard that about Jesus before. She wants to know more, however she is taught to distrust the Christian Bible because it is full of errors and human tradition, while their Holy Book (the Quran) is the living and perfect word of God. To a Muslim, Moses and the prophets were holy men selected to do God’s work because of their goodness. Muslims deny the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

You want Asha to know God’s love, compassion, and grace, and that He desires her to know Him. These are things she doesn’t understand. When you invite her to a Bible Study you are holding, she is reluctant. Christianity is viewed as a religion of the West, and to join it would mean leaving her culture, her community, and everything she has been taught. She is very devout and does not believe Christians hold a living faith. She sees Christians as worldly, without true belief, and denying the very nature of God. What can you share with Asha to help her understand the truth?

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4. SECULAR WORLDVIEW

Sam is an educated professional from a formerly communist country that promotes an Atheist worldview. When talking one day, he tells you he doesn't understand how people could believe in a God they cannot see without scientific proof that God exists. His parents were Atheists as well, and he has grown up without feeling a need for God or religion in his life. He has been taught that religion creates only strife between people and causes more problems than it solves.

Sam values logic and proof. His understanding of the origins of the world is explained by science, and he does not believe in a spiritual realm or an afterlife. Sam is not concerned with a need for forgiveness, since there is no standard to be judged by. For the secular person, there is no concept of sin, although Sam would like to think he is a good person. Sam and his secular peers often engage in acts of charity, and his profession enables him to help people on a daily basis. He believes that people ought to be kind to one another, and living a good life includes striving to acquire wealth, but also helping humanity.

You ask Sam if he feels as though he is a good person, to which he responds with a list of good things he has done. You ask Sam where morality comes from, and he admits it depends on the situation. Being good has more to do with how it makes you feel, or what a society agrees on, than some sort of external judgement. When you try to present the reality of sin and the need for forgiveness from the Bible, he dismisses the book as one full of errors that cannot be proven by science or history. When you ask Sam about his life and work you begin to discover that in his heart he has questions about the purpose of suffering and the meaning of life. You talk to him about your personal experience knowing Jesus Christ. How would you share your story and the basics of the Gospel with someone who does not believe there is a God?

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IN SUMMARY

- ❖ Everyone has a worldview, and it is important to know a person's view in order to effectively communicate the Gospel with them.
- ❖ Changing our strategy for different worldviews does not mean changing the message.
- ❖ We can build a bridge between our worldview and theirs by noticing beliefs that are held in common.
- ❖ We should be careful, and instead of arguing or judging others, ask questions and try to understand their point of view. Then we can carefully present our view.
- ❖ Each worldview will require a different and careful approach. Even two people who hold the same general worldview may have some different beliefs.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How often do you encounter people with a worldview that is different from yours? What is their worldview, and how can you learn more about it?

2. How do you respond to people with a different world view (curiosity, caution, etc.)? How has this lesson helped you be better prepared?