

## Everyday missionaries

Extended training talks to go with videos ([www.theschooloffaith.org/everyday-missionaries/](http://www.theschooloffaith.org/everyday-missionaries/))

Note: there are other videos available on Vimeo which are referenced in these notes at the end of each session but could be used at any point in a session you think appropriate.

### Intro (to be used as part of the step 1 session)

In Luke 16:9 Jesus gives us some investment advice – he says that we should put all the resources we have been given – time, relationships, money, skills and opportunities – to the work of making friends we will enjoy for all eternity. Every day on this earth therefore has eternal significance in the difference it makes for eternity. That work of eternal significance isn't reserved for a few professional evangelists but is the privilege of a whole movement of everyday missionaries. Every Christian can have beautiful feet!

Rom 10 *'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'* **14** *How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?* **15** *And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!'*

There's an recognition of a problem built into these verses – the problem is that although salvation is available to all it is only available if people call and people only call when they hear. Our role therefore in evangelism is to ensure people hear. We are messengers of good news.

In Roman times the victorious generals would send messengers from the battlefield to the cities across the empire with a message, known as a gospel. They would say 'I bring you good news of great joy, a battle has been fought and won – you are therefore free from fear of attack and are able to live your lives in a new era of peace and goodwill. That's the gospel message announced by the angels to the shepherds on Christmas day and that's the message Jesus equips us to go and speak each day.

In its most raw and basic form, evangelism is about one person sharing the water of life with another person dying of thirst in a desert. That definition helps us understand three requisites of evangelism. We need to have:

- a knowledge of the water of life we have to share
- a willingness to cross the room and share the water of life
- the compassion to see people as dying for lack of water in a desert.

Jesus' heart is full of compassion for lost people – for example Matt9:35ff. Jesus doesn't see unbelievers and think 'you silly idlots how dare you diss me' but his heart is broken with compassion – And not only that but also compulsion to do something about it. Compassion is just wishful thinking if it doesn't lead to action. That's the vital lesson from these verses – Jesus' compassion leads him to outline a strategy for evangelism and it's a strategy that involves all of us (v37-38). Jesus teaches that evangelism involves every follower of Jesus going as a worker into their harvest field where they bring good news of great joy about the Saviour.

### Step 1: Knowing we are sent

Intro video: <https://vimeo.com/171064429>

**So the first step in being every day missionaries is to know that we are sent each day by the Lord Jesus into a mission field he has already prepared for us.** When Jesus sends out his disciples on an evangelism intensive in Matthew 10 he tells them to go where he chooses to send them and to find the receptive people by which he means those open to hearing the gospel – the crop in the field ripe for harvest. Paul does that when he's in Philippi in Acts 16. He goes to the place of prayer where receptive people gather and he speaks of Jesus and the Lord opens Lydia's heart to receive the gospel and then Paul goes to her home where he continues to invest in her growth of understanding and the church of Philippi is established. The challenge for us? Start each day not by reaching out to check our mobile but by looking up to check in with our Lord and saying. Good morning Lord, this is a day you've made, please send me today into your mission field and give me

opportunities to speak to the receptive Lydia's. I guarantee it's a prayer the Lord of the Harvest will answer! So do you know your mission fields and go into them as a missionary? Our mission fields are the places where we relate to unbelievers – that will include friends, work colleagues and clients, the networks of contacts we have, people who live in our neighbourhood, people we meet at parties and events – in fact every moment of our waking time when we're in communication with other people is one sort of a harvest field or other. Step 1 is about switching the perspective on our day. For example when Jesus came into Jerusalem he wept because he saw how what would bring them peace was hidden from them – they were going about their lives in ignorance of the source of eternal life and Jesus saw that spiritual reality and wept for them in their lostness. And we also should go into our various mission fields with spiritual reality goggles on – going into the activities of each day with a compassion for lost people and a longing to share the water of life with them.

*Something to try:*

*Start each day with this prayer: "Good morning, Lord. This is a day you have made, and I will rejoice and be glad in it. Please send me into your mission field today and give me opportunities to speak to people about you." It's a prayer that the Lord of the harvest loves to answer!*

A vox-pop interview video could be used during this introductory session as a way of discussing people's attitudes to Christianity. You can find it at: <https://vimeo.com/62340673>

## **Step 2: Investing in our people of peace**

**Intro video:** <https://vimeo.com/171220615>

The parables of the lost coin, lost sheep and lost sons in Luke 15 show the priority of God the Father towards seeing lost people coming to their senses and the joy God knows when the lost are found and restored to his forgiven family.

It's a compassion for the lost and an urgency of seeking the lost that shaped Jesus' plans each day and controlled his ambitions – the Bible tells us in Philippians 2 that Jesus empties himself and becomes obedient even to death on a cross – and why? As Hebrews 12:2 makes clear he endured the cross because of the joy set before him. What was the joy Jesus had after the cross that he didn't have as God before? Just us! Jesus endured the cross because our reconciliation to God compelled him to love the lost with his whole life.

Bookshops, newspapers and the internet are all packed with advice about how to invest our money but Jesus spends his time advising us on how to invest our time. In Mark 1 he gets up early in the morning to pray through the priorities of the day and when the disciples find him they say 'why are you wasting time praying, we've got jobs to do, people to heal, T shirts to print here' and Jesus replies 'no, we're going to invest our time going and teaching about the kingdom of God in other towns and villages because that is why I have come and that's my priority.' He knew each day that he had a limited amount of time and he wanted to make it count. **The second step in being everyday missionaries is to understand that we are called to invest our time in the people of peace** Jesus gives to each of us. Those people, who we have ongoing relationship with and have a receptiveness to questions of faith, are the people we are called to pray for daily, do life with regularly, and share our gospel shaped thoughts with honestly. The challenge for us? To ensure we're investing our time and focussing our prayers on friends that are yet to accept the gospel and therefore as yet are not going to spend eternity with us.

Issue is that they may well put up defences to spiritual conversations. From an early age people are taught to be self reliant and to accept that we are need to take responsibility to protect ourselves and fight for our individual rights. This breeds a society of very defended people who are suspicious of others and their motives – always assuming others have an agenda that could threaten us in some way. The classic demonstration of our suspicion – particularly of free offers – was an experiment conducted by the London Evening Standard Newspaper. They employed a man to hand out leaflets outside a busy station in London which said the recipient of the leaflet would be given £5 cash for free

if they simply returned the leaflet to the man handing them out. In 3 hours hoards of people went past but only 11 people claimed their free cash.

These natural suspicions mean that when we start introducing the topic of our faith into a conversation people immediately think defensive thoughts. Some people act like a rhino and attack / are hostile while some people act like hedgehogs and curl up in a ball, put out their prickles and shut out of the threatening conversation. Why? 3 reasons:

- **I'm out of my comfort zone**

this topic isn't something I'm familiar with and might be rather threatening and a bit weird so I think I'd be best shutting down the conversation before I'm asked something that puts me on the spot / challenges the status quo / might involve change of thinking or behaviour / I don't have an answer to.

- **I want to meet half way**

People are quick to switch off if they think they are just being talked at and that the agenda is not related to them personally but is the speaker's agenda which they are trying to impose without the love or courtesy to find out what I already think about the topic and what I care about the topic.

- **I've been hurt in the past and don't want more**

One reason people can be hostile to talking about Christianity is that they've had a bad encounter in the past or there's something past down from family or friends which has caused damage and is still a 'live' issue – a bit like an unexploded bomb under the surface of the conversation likely to go off if we move the conversation in its direction.

Answer? Spend time listening to your people of peace, invest time in them – as Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 2:8 'Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.'

Discussion Exercise 1: Watch this vox pop interview about people's attitude to the cross and discuss what is beneath their responses. Video at: <https://vimeo.com/62341670>

Discussion Exercise 2: Look at the songs in the charts and look up the lyrics on the web. What are the messages, attitudes and longings expressed?

*Something to consider:*

*Think through the "people of peace" in your life – that is, the ones who are open to talking about faith and life. God has given you these specific people as part of your mission field! Are you investing time in sharing your life with them and praying for opportunities to share your faith with them?*

### **Step 3: Understanding our culture and responding with an alternative**

Intro video: <https://vimeo.com/171220857>

In offices I was at recently there were white noise machines strategically placed outside the rooms where counselling and confidential meetings take place. The purpose of the machine is to pump out a noise that prevents people from hearing the voices in the room. It strikes me that our culture is pumped full of white noise – from the billboard adverts to the songs on the radio and the shows on TV we are saturated with messages about what we should look like, think like and act like. **The third step in being everyday missionaries is to listen and understand what are those messages people are hearing** that block out the fullness of grace and truth that is found in Jesus.

James Sire describes a worldview as 'a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of presuppositions which we hold about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being.'

The danger is that people's fundamental view of life is based on false presuppositions or is derived from a very limited field of beliefs that's had the width of God's life giving realities removed. As John Lennon sang 'Imagine there's no heaven above or hell below' – but what he's asking us to do is narrow the fundamental foundations of reality till what we're left can't actually take the weight of our questions or longings any more and eventually crashes in on itself.

C.S. Lewis describes the devil's tactics in *The Screwtape Letters* from a senior devil to a junior devil: *My Dear Wormwood, By the very act of arguing, you awake the patient's reason; and once it is awake, who can foresee the result? Even if a particular train of thought can be twisted so as to end in our favour, you will find that you have been strengthening in your patient the fatal habit of attending to universal issues and withdrawing his attention from the stream of immediate sense experiences. Your business is to fix his attention on the stream. Teach him to call it "real life" and don't let him ask what he means by "real"....*

*He tells the junior devil to make the man thinking about God think about his lunch instead so he puts his book down and with it the dangerous thoughts about life being more than the immediate physical needs. Some of the presupposition limiters are to see that the material world is the only reality.*

*Another limiter is to think only about now and live just for this moment rather than see we are part of an eternal redemption story. And the third limiter is to dismiss truths of unconditional love, happy ever after, atonement and the powerful personal God as just a story.*

Show Polly Toynbee video (video is in 2 parts):

<https://vimeo.com/62340553>

<https://vimeo.com/62340626>

Discuss: what are her objections to Christianity based on?

Polly Toynbee in an article on the Narnia Chronicles (The Guardian 5 Dec 05):

*"Of all the elements of Christianity, the most repugnant is the notion of the Christ who took our sins upon himself and sacrificed his body in agony to save our souls. Did we ask him to? Poor child Edmund, to blame for everything, must bear the full weight of a guilt only Christians know how to inflict, with a twisted knife to the heart. Every one of those thorns, the nuns used to tell my mother, is hammered into Jesus's holy head every day that you don't eat your greens or say your prayers when you are told. So the resurrected Aslan gives Edmund a long, life-changing talking-to high up on the rocks out of our earshot. When the poor boy comes back down with the sacred lion's breath upon him he is transformed unrecognisably into a Stepford brother, well and truly purged."*

The challenge for us? To understand our culture in order to respond with an alternative view of reality. The apostle Paul demonstrates the importance of listening to culture – for example before talking to the philosophers of Athens he describes how he's walked round the city and the starting point of his address is what he observed and what that says about their presuppositions and beliefs.

In the Disney film *Enchanted*, the character from fairy tale land challenges the views she hears from the so called 'real world' with the simple phrase 'but it doesn't have to be that way.' When we hear white noise projected into people our role is to say 'it doesn't have to be that way' and then to give an alternative shaped by the gospel. How do we do that? By taking what we learn from Scripture and comparing the reality it speaks of to the white noise our culture speaks of. It's when we do that comparison that we can apply Scripture not only to our own lives but also to the lives of our friends who are not yet Christians. As we see the struggles, hope and fears they express we can respond with an alternative that is good news of great joy to all who believe and receive.

Some questions to consider:

- How could what you're currently learning in Scripture speak into the lives of your "people of peace"?
- What are these people's struggles, hopes, and fears? What presuppositions do they view the world with?
- How can you respond with an alternative view that is good news of great joy to all who believe and receive?

**Step 4: Learn the art of asking questions**

Intro video: <https://vimeo.com/171221136>

Kids are brilliant at asking why and when we answer with a trite response they just ask why again. Why do I need to eat my greens? Because I say so. Why do you say so. Because greens are good for you. Why? And so on. But the trouble is, we begin to lose that childlike inquisitiveness and even as our powers of intellect grows the power of why can lessen. We can become closed to new ideas, cynical about the world or as Jesus puts it, our hearts can become hardened.

In Mark 8 Jesus warns his followers to watch out for the 'yeast of the Pharisees' (v15) which had hardened their hearts so they had eyes and yet could not see the truth (v17).

The issue is one of defeaters. Tim Keller defines a defeater belief like this: *'Every culture hostile to Christianity holds to a set of "common-sense" consensus beliefs that automatically make Christianity seem implausible to people. These are what philosophers call "defeater beliefs". A defeater belief is Belief-A that, if true, means Belief-B can't be true.'*

So when someone claims, 'The Bible says . . .' they think, 'But the Bible's rubbish.' Or they hear 'God loves you', and they think, 'He's got a funny way of showing it' and, from that thought onwards, they switch off.

People sometimes hold on so tightly to a consensus view of their culture that they reject the truths of Jesus without a seconds thought. **That's why we need the fourth step in being everyday missionaries which is to learn the art of asking questions.**

As Os Guinness has put it, "recovering the art of Christian persuasion,"

Socrates pioneered a method of learning based questions – his teaching was based on the principle that we understand something if we've discovered it for ourselves.

We can help people discover truth and see their false and limited presuppositions by asking questions like

- What do you mean by that?
- Where do you get your information?
- How do you know that to be true?
- What if you're wrong?

Using questions and gracious debate a skeptic's presuppositions can be challenged. A lot of debate starts from the outside of a worldview and works its way in to the core but deconstructing presuppositions starts from the inside and works out. In effect our role is to step into their shoes and provide an internal critique. Our aim is to show that their views are not based on as strong a foundation as they thought. Like the parable on the house on the rock and house on the sand, we can build our life on all sorts of teachings but only when we build our life on practicing the teaching of Jesus will our lives prevail when the storms lit – especially the ultimate storm of death and judgment. As Jesus' parable clarifies, it's not just about the teaching – both houses build their life on the same teaching – the prevailing strength comes from practicing the teaching. The lesson for evangelism is to put our focus onto demonstrating why their views may sound solid but in the practice of life's storm are sinking sand.

One way to question presuppositions is to point out holes in the logic

In the movie The Matrix delusions are pumped into the minds of people which prevent them knowing the truth. The delusions look very real but as Neo starts to realise, there are inconsistencies – it doesn't add up 'like a splinter in your mind.'

Inconsistencies are things an atheist says they believe which don't make sense. This is because their worldview is based on the world being totally random without morality but they use ordered reasoning and moral categories to make their arguments. In other words they try to proclaim a godless worldview using the language of a God-filled worldview! But the inconsistencies are glaringly obvious when pointed out.

Never assume but ask why they think and assert the things they say – ask what their basis is. Go down a level of why they believe the statement they've made is true or beneficial.

For example the journalist John Humphries wrote:

*Personally, I do not accept the divinity of Jesus. I do not believe that his mother was made pregnant by the Holy Ghost, that he was resurrected after his death on the cross, or that he physically ascended to heaven. But that belief enriches the lives of many. It does not make them stupid, let alone deluded.*

*It makes them human. Their faith gives them a context into which they can fit their lives and a hope of better things to come – if not in this world, then the next. And if the next world turns out not to exist . . . well, they'll never know, will they? (John Humphries. In God We Doubt.)*  
Discuss: how would you challenge that statement with questions?

A second way to question presuppositions is to focus on preconditions. There are preconditions to all our thinking – preconditions of logic and order and expectation that the sun will rise tomorrow as it did today etc.

Eg Paul Davies' book 'The Mind of God' looks in Penguin paperback form at all sorts of scientific theories but his conclusion is that although he doesn't believe in the Christian God he believes in the fixed laws of nature as his 'god': *"the existence of mind in some organism on some planet in the universe is surely a fact of fundamental significance. Through conscious beings the universe has generated self-awareness. This can be no trivial detail, no minor byproduct of mindless, purposeless forces. We are truly meant to be here."*

*Alvin Plantinga: Could there really be any such thing as horrifying wickedness [if there were no God and we just evolved]? I don't see how. There can be such a thing only if there is a way that rational creatures are supposed to live, obliged to live... A [secular] way of looking at the world has no place for genuine moral obligation of any sort... and thus no way to say there is such a thing as genuine and appalling wickedness. Accordingly, if you think there really is such a thing as horrifying wickedness (... and not just an illusion of some sort), then you have a powerful... argument [for the reality of God].*  
*Quoted by Timothy Keller, The Reason For God, p26.*

One way to show up inconsistencies is to talk through the logical consequences of the position. A classic example would be Darwinism which has taken the theory of natural selection and been used by people such as Hitler to justify exterminating 'weaker' races.

A third good question to ask people is 'says who'? Who made us arbiter of what is right and wrong? It's the very first sin to want to take that right out of God's hands which of course begs the question 'if we are the arbiters then where did we get that role and right from in the first place if we're just random bits of matter?'

The challenge for us? Resist the temptation just to download a truck load of information on people. Instead use a series of questions to allow people to unpack bite sized pieces of gospel truth in the order and shape that suits their way of learning, levels of understanding and points of misunderstanding. Using questions is an effective way of pointing out the inconsistencies, presuppositions and false assumptions in people's arguments that have hardened their hearts from seeing the truth of the gospel. It's not about manipulating truth to fit their ideas of truth but shaping the way we communicate truth to fit the way they receive truth. After all, we're not in the business of selling people a religious formula but introducing them to a living relationship with the living Lord. Why wouldn't questions of life be what we want to be raising with our friends? Now that's a good question!

Group discussion: Watch this interview with humanist philosopher, Peter Cave, and discuss what questions would you respond to him with? Video found at: <https://vimeo.com/62340850>

*Something to try:*

*Try asking questions of people you talk to today. Use questions to help you understand some of their objections to faith and to point out the inconsistencies, presuppositions and false assumptions in their arguments.*

## **Step 5: Replacing idols with the grace of Christ**

**Intro video:** <https://vimeo.com/171221141>

Imagine you go rock climbing and you get stuck on a cliff face. Your feet and hands are gripping the rock and you seem safe but realise you can't go any further up nor back down. The issue is that the

rock may feel like a security but in reality it isn't holding you – it's just a piece of rock. You're doing all the work holding it and therefore however solid the rock seems, it's not going to save you. That's the problem of idols. An idol is a good thing made by God that we rely on as the ultimate thing in place of God.

**Luke 11:52** 'Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering.'

The issue is that an idol is a replacement for God that we look to and trust in to save us. It's about turning a good thing created by God into the ultimate thing which replaces God as the object of devotion.

An idol is a thing or a person or an idea that we treasure with our heart – the object of our devotions which we invest in and sacrifice everything else for. Tim Keller puts it like this: *'Idolatry is anything I look at and say, "If I have that, my life has value." Anything that is so central to your life that you feel you can't live without it is an idol. Idolatry is making a good thing an ultimate thing.'*

When we cease to trust in God as Saviour we don't trust in nothing but in anything.

As Exodus 32 shows, an idol is something we follow as the thing that will save us. That is unlikely to be a golden calf in modern life but it may well be a relationship or work or image or fame or success which is the thing we follow and look to giving us security and a sense of self esteem and well being.

Eg In Bridget Jones, the Hugh Grant character says to Bridget:

*"You know me, I'm a terrible disaster with a posh voice and a bad character. You're the only one who can save me Bridget, I need you. Without you twenty years from now I'll be in some seedy bar with some seedy blonde."* But it's an illusion – the idol can't deliver, a created thing can't replace the Creator which is which the 10 commandments emphasise having no other gods but the true God.

And that's **why the fifth step in being everyday missionaries is to challenge people who are holding onto created things** such as career or possessions or image for their source of security, identity and purpose rather than the creator who made us to know those things through him. Jonah in chapter 2 v8 is in the belly of the big fish and admits 'those who cling to worthless idols forfeit the grace that could be theirs.' The challenge for us? Not only pointing out that the idols people hold onto cannot provide what they're looking for, but also holding out an alternative from God's grace that far exceeds any identity, security and purpose than they could ever imagine possible. We don't persuade people to let go of idols just by telling them they're stupid. We do so by helping them see something so much better if they'd only let go of their grip on an idol and let the living lord be their saviour. To go back to our mountaineer, stuck on the cliff: image if a rescue helicopter came and a navy officer was winched down and said 'take my hand and I will carry you to safety.' In that situation all we need to do is hear those words and then release our grip so we can turn round and know rescue.

*A.W. Tozer: 'The labour of self-love is a heavy one indeed. Think for yourself whether much of your sorrow has not arisen from someone speaking slightly of you. As long as you set yourself up as a little god to which you must be loyal there will be those who will delight to offer affront to your idol. How then can you hope to have inward peace? The heart's fierce effort to protect itself from every slight, to shield its touchy honour from the bad opinion of friend and enemy, will never let the mind have rest. Continue this fight through the years and the burden will become intolerable. Yet the sons of earth are carrying this burden continually, challenging every word spoken against them, cringing under every criticism, smarting under each fancied slight, tossing sleeplessly if another is preferred before them. Such a burden as this is not necessary to bear. Jesus calls us to His rest, and meekness is His method.'*

The challenge for Christians is to know the unsurpassing greatness of Christ so we can show and tell that to others. A bit like if I was to open a restaurant, I'd ensure I was in a place where customers come past but then would need to ensure my deserts were displayed in the window (did I not say – I'd only sell rice pudding and other dietary staples containing the basic elements of salted caramel and chocolate) and that the restaurant is inviting – dirty tablecloths and no sign of life isn't going to present the promise of sweet desserts to anyone. The issue can be that people know the basic details of the Christian message, but not the significance that message has on their lives. So Christians settle for simply regurgitating these basic details and think they've done their job. But evangelism is sharing a delight in Christ that's real rather than just a theory you've learnt by rote.

Jonathan Edwards puts it like this:

*'There is a difference between having an opinion, that God is holy and gracious, and having a sense of the loveliness and beauty of that holiness and grace. There is a difference between having a rational judgment that honey is sweet, and having a sense of its sweetness. A man may have the former, that knows not how honey tastes; but a man cannot have the latter unless he has an idea of the taste of honey in his mind. So there is a difference between believing that a person is beautiful, and having a sense of his beauty. The former may be obtained by hearsay, but the latter only by seeing the countenance. There is a wide difference between mere speculative, rational judging any thing to be excellent, and having a sense of its sweetness and beauty.'* –Jonathan Edwards

So question is, how significant is Jesus to you? It's easy for Jesus to be some sort of aloof superhero from the movies who swoops down when we're in trouble or just gives us an example to work towards. But Jesus is the Lord - the Saviour who gives the joy of new life - the Lord who knows us by name, who relates to us as dearly loved children of God. Salvation is a reality that transforms us. I love the example of how the Lord comes to Daniel when the future seems too much to cope with and picks him up, reminds him he is loved and gives him assurance of God's strength and high esteem.

Everyday missionaries are walking talking living adverts to God's goodness. We can also learn from the expulsive method that rejects an idol by taking hold of something far better. As Tim Keller puts it: *'Idolatry is not just a failure to obey God, it is a setting of the whole heart on something besides God. This cannot be remedied only by repenting that you have an idol, or using willpower to try to live differently. Turning from idols is not less than those two things, but it is also far more. "Setting the mind and heart on things above" where "your life is hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:1-3) means appreciation, rejoicing, and resting in what Jesus has done for you. It entails worship, a sense of God's reality in prayer. Jesus must become more beautiful to your imagination, more attractive to your heart, than your idol. That is what will replace your counterfeit gods. If you uproot the idol and fail to "plant" the love of Christ in its place, the idol will grow back.'*

*Counterfeit Gods, Timothy Keller, Hodder and Stoughton Ltd, 2009.*

.As everyday missionaries we're not the rescuer, Christ is! But he does call us to be speaking out his invitation of salvation on his behalf. Let's ensure our friends and colleagues know that they are forfeiting amazing grace, how sweet the sound to those who reach out and receive.

Discussion exercise: Watch this interview with Tim Keller on contemporary spirituality. Which of the views mentioned do your friends share? See video at: <https://vimeo.com/62340967>

*Some questions to consider:*

*Think about your "people of peace" — that is, the people in your life who are open to talking about faith.*

- *What are the some of the idols that they are holding on to?*
- *What identity, security, or sense of purpose do these idols seem to offer?*
- *How do you see that these idols will ultimately fail your friends?*
- *How does God's grace in the gospel far exceed what these idols seem to promise?*

## **Step 6: Explaining your Soundtrack**

**Intro video:** <https://vimeo.com/171221140>

As you make your way around a city, you can't help but hear everyone's favorite music. Maybe a quiet and soothing tune wafting out of an apartment, or a loud and aggressive track booming out of a car, or something with heavy bass blasting out of a club. Music can shape our temperament and mood, but it can also influence our thinking with messages like "A Hero Lies in You," or "Listen to your heart," or "All You Need Is Love."

In effect we all have soundtracks that shape our decisions – soundtracks of beliefs, priorities, hopes and dreams that determine how we respond to situations both in thought and deed. **So the sixth step**



**in being everyday missionaries is to learn how to explain your gospel-driven soundtrack. 1**

*Peter 3:15* reminds us that we should always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks about the reason for the hope we have. Peter's assumption is that people will see our different kind of hope, and that we'll know how to explain that different hope.

So what's the challenge for us? To be prepared to explain your hope – help people understand your distinct soundtrack which is driven by distinct gospel values. It's a bit like when answering a question in an exam where you don't just give the answer but show your workings of how you reached that answer. Our role is to show the workings of Christ and His gospel of grace in us so people can see why that work of Christ in us leads to our unique hope, outlook and lifestyle.

The key is to be able to answer the question, "Why are you glad to be a Christian right now?" Think about how you'd answer that in terms that show how your relationship with God changes your relationship with others. In particular, know why you're glad to be a Christian in terms of three things: 1. Know who you are as a dearly loved child of God. 2. Know that you're here to live for God's eternal purposes each day. And 3. I know where you're going, as someone heading for the new creation with God forever.

Give an example by preparing your soundtrack (see example below). Then get people to practice.

**Christian difference 1. I know who I am: 'God's dearly loved child'**

The hope I have to share as a Christian is that my identity is as a dearly loved child of God. Yes, people may ignore me and reject me, but my heavenly Father cherishes me. I know that nothing can separate me from his love because it is in and through the Lord Jesus. I am able to love because he first loved me and because I know his love in my inner being. As a result I don't crave others' attention of me to prove my worth but can stand tall and secure knowing I'm loved. God's love for me isn't at all based on my performance. He values me and a relationship with me based solely on his promise.

Unconditional love is the most powerful gift a human being can know. It's a love that gives unmerited favour that isn't liable to be withdrawn through our underperformance or when our mask slips – the mask is off and still God says, 'I love you so much that I sent my son as an atoning sacrifice for your sin so I could be with you in eternity.' That's an amazing love that we are compelled to tell others about so they also can know God's love that surpasses knowledge in their inner being.

**Christian difference 2. I know what I'm here for: 'God's creation transformer'**

We were created on purpose for purpose – but we'll never see that or know the fulfillment of fulfilling our potential unless we find that purpose in relationship with God. Christians have the amazing privilege of knowing each day that they've been put on the planet on purpose for a purpose. Everything I do on this earth has significance when I see that it contributes to God's redemption purpose of building a people ready to live with him in paradise. I know that each day God has a great purpose for me to do his good, pleasing and perfect will.

**Christian difference 3. I know where I'm going: 'God's happy ending home with him'**

The hope I have to share as a Christian is that I know there is a happy ever after. There is a world to come where all the suffering and mess of this world will be answered with resurrection life on the new restored earth. As a result I can know now the first-fruits of that new creation as God gives me his peace that passes understanding and a joy by his Holy Spirit in me. My God lives in me and assures me of his truth and grace which guard my heart.

Knowing my identity, purpose and destiny in Christ has truly made me glad as a Christian, and I long to help others enjoy that soundtrack with me.

*Something to consider:*

*How would you answer the question, "Why am I glad to be a Christian right now?" Practice and be ready to explain your hope in these three ways:*

- I know who I am — a dearly loved child of God.*
- I know what I'm here for — to live for God's eternal purposes each day.*
- I know where I'm going — toward the new creation with God forever.*

Video examples: <https://vimeo.com/62341247>

## Step 7: Letting the Gospel Shine in the Darkness of the World

Intro video: <https://vimeo.com/171221142>

Imagine you're on a hike, and in order to get to the end, you have to go through a deep, dark cave. Halfway through, you discover that you're completely in the dark and can't tell which way is left or right, backward or forward. You're stuck. But then, you remember that you have a flashlight in your backpack. Once you click on the flashlight, the light does the rest, doesn't it? Now you can clearly see where you are and which way you need to go to get out of the cave and on to the end of the hike. The gospel is that kind of light in our dark world. People are walking through a pitch black cave, stumbling about with confused worldviews and false doctrines, not to mention all manners of brokenness caused by our sinful nature. But as the light of the gospel dawns, it reveals God's tremendous love and truth to people's hearts so they may see, and no longer walk in darkness, but rather in light.

- 2 Cor 5:11 *Since, then, we know what it is to fear the Lord, we try to **persuade** others. What we are is plain to God, and I hope it is also plain to your conscience. 14 For Christ's love **compels** us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. 16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:[a] the old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And **he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.***

Being everyday messengers of reconciliation involves demolishing strongholds of false doctrines before establishing gospel foundations and lives.

False doctrine 1 is I'm not a sinner and the problems of the world are not my fault.

This is a false doctrine of the fall which claims that we're not the cause of the problem. Many people would agree they're not perfect but would be much less willing to take all the blame and would be horrified to be described as a sinner. But, again, this idea is based on a faulty view of the reality of humanity and an ignorance to the offence sin is to God – how God is against it because it is a rebellion of the heart and a failure to trust the goodness and righteousness of God.

False doctrine 2 is that I'm good enough for God already.

This is the false doctrine of salvation which leads people to think they can find what they're looking for in money, relationships and status. But, again, this idea is based on a false view of standards – in comparison to others I may be doing OK, but what about compared to glorious perfection?

False doctrine 3 is that all "good" people go to heaven.

This is the false doctrine of life after death – believing that God will let us into heaven just as we are right now and thinking of heaven in vague terms as a 'room next door' or a place full of white clouds and angels playing harps. But the challenge to people is whether this view has any evidential basis which gives confidence or whether it's just wishful thinking.

**Therefore, the seventh step in being everyday missionaries is simply to let the light of the gospel shine among our friends, neighbors, and coworkers.** To tell the story of God breaking into our world, identifying with us, bearing the penalty for our sin, adopting us into His family, and redeeming us along with the rest of creation. As you share, God will be the one to work in people's hearts and change them. Of course results do vary, but God is ultimately the one who saves. The pressure is off you.

So what's the challenge for us? As you walk through this dark world with the light of Christ, walk alongside others who don't have that light yet. And as you do, show the four great truths of Scripture:

1. the foundations of God and creation. 2. how sin causes separation. 3. The story of redemption through grace not deeds and 4. the future dawn of new creation and being home at last. As Tolkien puts it, this ultimate story *gives a fleeting glimpse of joy beyond the walls of the world, striking the human heart with a poignancy as sharp as grief itself.*

So what? Everyday missionaries know and tell the story of redemption.

There's a line in the movie Ant Man when the Professor says: I believe everybody deserves a shot at redemption... are you ready to redeem yourself? That's the problem – we want salvation but think we've got to achieve it ourselves.

We tell the story of redemption by explaining how sin is a heart disease that needs heart surgery. Sin is putting something before God. – it's a condition of the human heart which desires to protect itself and is willing to accept the harm it does to others. David Bisgrove: *'Sin is building your identity and finding your greatest meaning, significance and security in something besides God.'*

The complication is that we can't solve the problem of sin and guilt ourselves. As Scarlett Johansen's Black Widow character in Avengers Movie says, I want to pay the debt for all the wrong I've caused. But as Loki points out to her: you can never repay, the river of red is too great. This desire to make a new start is also illustrated in The Dark Knight Rises movie when Catwoman wants to wipe her record of wrong clean. But the claims to be able to do that are illusory. Or are they? Only Jesus's claim to of Saviour is actually followed through in real life action. He is the only Redeemer who gives atonement as a free gift by taking our record of wrong and dealing with it personally. Lots of products claim to be a game changer – but the redemption story is an eternal life changer!

Everyday missionaries know and tell the story of redemption. Second they know and tell the story of new creation.

In the film About Schmidt Jack Nicholson plays a recently widowed and retired insurance salesman who starts to wake up to the pointlessness of the life he's led. At the end of the film he writes a letter in his mind to a child he sponsors in Africa:

*'I am weak and I am a failure. There's just no getting around it. Relatively soon I will die, maybe in twenty years, maybe tomorrow. It doesn't matter. Once I am dead and everyone who knew me dies too it will be as if I never even existed. What difference has my life made to anyone? None that I can think of. None at all. Hope things are fine with you. Yours truly, Warren Schmidt.'*

When I saw that film I just wanted to shout No! The tragedy is that so many people go through life without hope when the hope of resurrection is in the Lord who says I am the resurrection and the life!

Tom Wright in 'Surprised by Hope' (SPCK 2007) says: *'Mostly, Jesus himself got a hearing from his contemporaries because of what he was doing. They saw him 'saving' people from sickness and death, and they heard him talking about a "salvation", the message for which they had longed, which would go beyond the immediate into the ultimate future. But the two were not unrelated, the present one a mere "visual aid" of the future one, or a trick to gain people's attention. The whole point of what Jesus was up to was that he was doing, close up, in the present, what he was promising long-term, in the future. And what he was promising for that future, and doing in that present, was not about saving souls for a disembodied eternity, but rescuing people from the corruption and decay of the way the world presently is so that they could enjoy, already in the present, that renewal of creation which is God's ultimate purpose.'*

Telling the story of salvation as everyday missionaries has the power to transform people's eternal destiny – our role is to explain salvation in terms people can identify with by explaining what it looks like to be reconciled to God and what it feels like to be brought holy and blameless into his presence and know his love in our inner being. Let's seek to be faithful in sharing the light of life with others, praying continually for God's strength and infusing all our words with Christ's truth and grace.

Discussion exercise: Watch this interview with Tim Keller on Christian distinctives. How does the gospel give hope like no other worldview? See video at: <https://vimeo.com/62341134>

*Something to consider after watching the video:*

*As you talk with your "people of peace," which of the four great truths of Scripture do they seem to misunderstand?*

- The foundations of God and creation*
- How sin causes separation*
- The story of redemption through grace, not good deeds*
- The future dawn of the new creation and being home at last*

*How can you help shed light on truths that your friends are misunderstanding?*