

Presentation

Exploring evangelism – a taster session

AIM

To provide an interactive session for synods and church meetings to encourage engagement with the evangelism year.

INTRODUCTION

The Vision For Life materials have been a resource offered to URC churches over a three year period so that they could focus on three of the building blocks of faith and life.

The assumption was that the needs and aspirations of every church would be different and that the material would be used selectively to support existing programmes as well as refresh and re-establish the Bible, Prayer and Evangelism as essential components of spiritual life.

The aim was...

- to help transform the life of the local church.
- to help transform the mission agenda of the local church and, therefore, transform the world.

We started in 2007 with taster booklets.

663 churches and 10 synods have signed up to the process and each is promoting and using the materials in their own way and at their own pace.

Materials for Bible year and Prayer year followed and the base resource, the Evangelism year booklet, has just been printed and sent to participating churches.

There are two themes that run through the booklet – God’s story and our story.

Today we start with God’s story. At least, a bit of it....

SOME TASTERS

Do Bible study on Matthew 13:1-23, p.45/46.

If you are looking for a flat pack to build the soap box to end all soap boxes and meet all evangelistic needs then please don’t use this material.

If you want to understand better how faith works, what God’s purposes are and how he works in the world and – most importantly – the part you can play in this, then you can participate in an exciting journey.

The booklet doesn’t start with an answer – it starts with a question!

Some of us believe that stereotypes have been one of the stumbling blocks for both individuals and churches when it comes to having the confidence to tell their faith stories. We would like people to face the stereotypes and to evaluate what is good and bad practice.

The booklet, therefore, begins with a question. “What is evangelism?”

Do the exercise on p.6 and discuss the definition on p.47.

The booklet is, principally, about people - and their stories.

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There are actually 5 major sections: "getting started", "making relationships", "following Jesus", "making a commitment" and "getting on with it" but, in fact, - the pictures give the clue – it is all about people. It is about Marion, Sally, Linda and David (that's only page 10/11). Its about Jonathan & Matthew, Robert & Betty and Mark & Fiona (pages 16-21) and so on. I think all of these stories are "faction" – a mixture of fact and fiction. The names may not be real but the stories are.

We will have a quick look at Mollie's and St.Paul's story to give you a flavour.

Read relevant sections and discuss.

It is also about how people come to faith. And that includes you and me. On p.11/12 you are asked to consider and share your faith story with others. We believe that your story is important and is a significant tool for God to use. We also believe that each of us needs both ability and confidence in sharing it.

Review Peter's story & the Ethiopian's story – read Derek's story – back to your story.

In the final analysis, all this is about taking risks. The cunning plan is that you do that with friends and family before trying to do it with people outside the churches' life. There are sections throughout the booklet called "next steps" or "things to do". We could spend a year (or more) happily talking about faith and how to share it without ever doing anything about it. That's not our plan. Throughout the book you will be challenged to get out of your comfort zone and do something. For example...

Next steps p.15 – an in church activity; something to do p.23 as an out-of-church activity.

Evangelism is about Experience, about confidence and about God, the Holy Spirit.

This booklet is not the only resource available. There are plans to post a lot more materials on the website. These will vary considerably. Some will be theological reflections. Others will be very practical illustrations of what can be done. There will be more Bible study material and there will some more stories. There will also be a challenge for each church to prepare some way of engaging with their community. Most likely, this will be for Easter 2011. Materials are being prepared and trialled at the moment.

Our plea is that the questions, "What does this mean in practice?" and "What are we going to do about all this?" will be on peoples' lips from the very earliest days of the journey.

The evangelism year is not a "stand alone" affair. There is much associated Bible material in any case. There are also appropriate prayers offered in booklet. Again can I urge you to use the skills learned in the Bible and Prayer years when coming to the Evangelism year.

Say the prayers printed

Two last things.

- Its never too late to start.
- Have fun.

John Hall 10-10-10

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EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now?

THE NEXT STEP

Take a look at the website for new materials appearing

Acknowledgements

We are grateful to John Hall for contributing this material

HOW TO FEEDBACK TO VISION4LIFE?

If you wish to offer any feedback – brickbats and bouquets are equally welcome! – you can do so in various ways.

You can email the Vision4Life steering group and the coordinator about general issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

Website issues can be dealt with through web@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the evangelism year, you can email the V4L evangelism year coordinator via evangelism@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 1 – Transformed by the Bible: bible@vision4life.org.uk

Year 2 – Transformed through Prayer: prayer@vision4life.org.uk