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Sharing
Your Faith

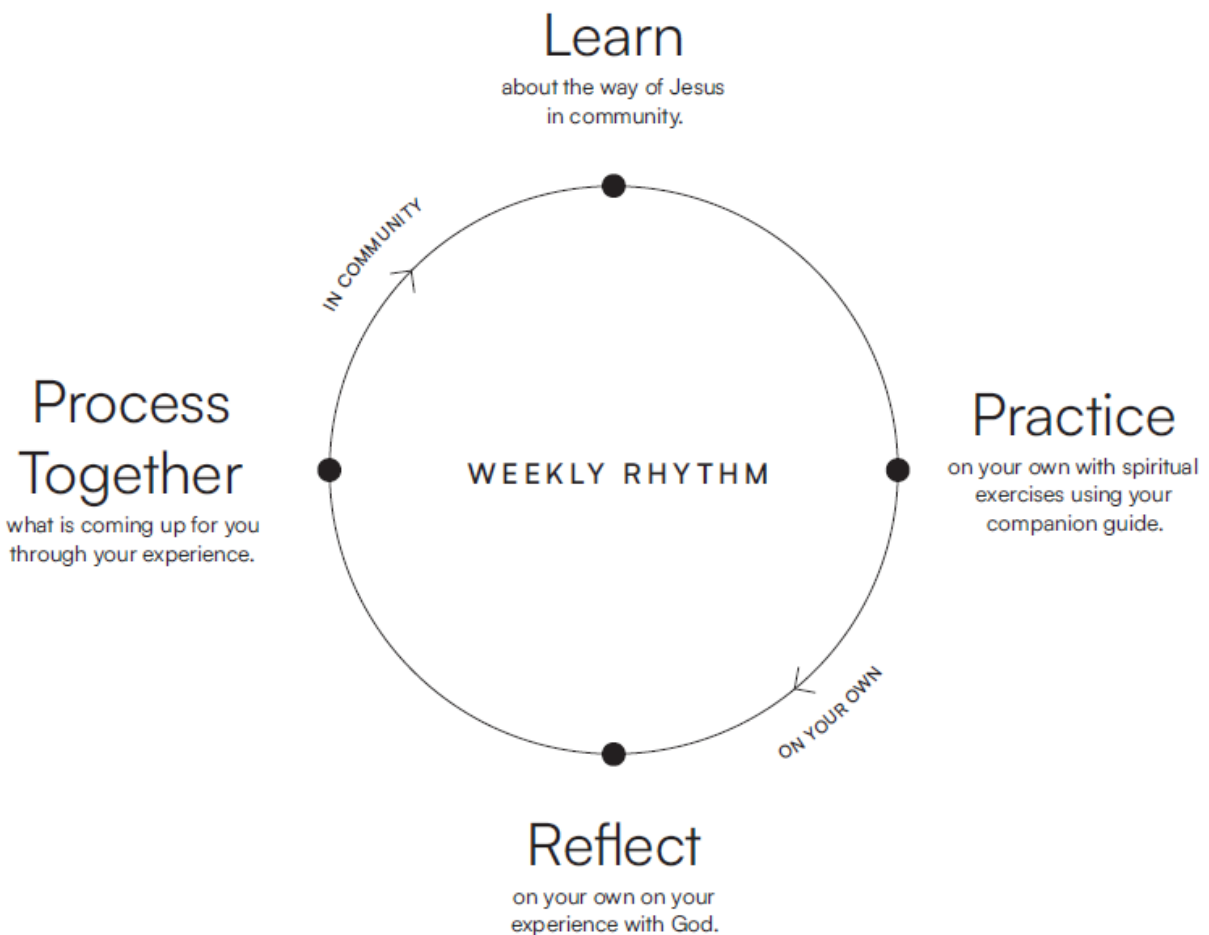
Introduction

Welcome to the “Sharing Your Faith” study. We are excited that you will be going on this four-week journey with your community to grow in our desire and intentionality around sharing the Gospel with those who do not know Jesus yet.

Sharing your faith has become a bit “taboo” in today’s world, and yet, it’s the heart of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:16-20). Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and now He calls us to join him in the work of salvation in this world. Jesus does the saving, but we play a significant role in helping others hear the Good News.

Remember, as is the case with all new practices or habits, we won’t be master’s at it right away, and we are all coming into this study with different experiences, expectations, or even fears related to this ancient discipline. Even so, we believe God is calling each of us to grow in our capacity to speak and demonstrate the Gospel in our individual contexts.





Construct From *Practicing the Way*

How to use the Companion Guide:

Learn: Gather together as a community for an interactive experience of learning about the Way of Jesus through teaching, storytelling, and discussion. Bring your Guide to the Session and follow along.

Practice: On your own, before the next session, go and “put it into practice,” as Jesus himself said. We will provide weekly spiritual disciplines and spiritual exercises, as well as recommended resources to go deeper.

Reflect:

Reflection is key to spiritual formation. After your practice and before the next session, set aside 10-15 minutes to reflect on your experience. Reflection questions are included in this Guide at the end of each session.

Process together: When you come back together, begin by sharing your reflections with your group. This moment is crucial, because we need each other to process our life before God and make sense of our stories. If you are meeting in a larger group, you will need to break into smaller sub-groups for this conversation so everything has a chance to share.

Week 1: Knowing My Story

In our first video, we talked about the importance of knowing our own story in order to share the Good News of what God has done in our lives.

The word testimony (martyria in the Greek) is used 37 times in the New Testament, and simply means to testify or bear witness to something. While apologetics (the art of defending religious doctrine) is important and necessary, more often than not, it's the personal testimony of a believer that God uses to speak to another person's life.

Start from where you are...

1. Take a moment to identify your relationship to sharing your faith and share that with the rest of the group. Have everyone place themselves on this scale after they have shared their experience.

Very uncomfortable

Very comfortable

2. What are some challenges or fears you've had regarding sharing your faith? What are some things that excite you about sharing your faith or positive experiences you've had?

Remember, this exercise, and this study as a whole, is meant to help us all grow and take steps forward in sharing our faith. Identifying where we are at individually coming into this experience, learning as a community, putting this into practice, and then reflecting on our experiences is how we will grow into a people who share the Good News of Jesus for his glory.

Discuss

What are you hoping God will do from this four-week experience together?

Before we dive into our own stories, let's look at an example from the life of Jesus...

Scripture: Read Mark 5:1-20 together

1. What stood out to you the most from Jesus' interaction with the demon possessed man? Did anything encourage, challenge, or surprise you?
2. Why did Jesus decline the man's request to be with Him? What was your initial reaction when you read that?
3. Everyone who heard the man's testimony marveled. Do you think their reaction goes beyond just hearing about a miracle? Does the man sharing his own story carry any significance?

In John 4, Jesus meets a Samaritan woman the well, and after telling her things he knew about her and unveiling himself as the Messiah, she ran into town and told everyone about the man she had met, and in verse 42, we are told that many in the town believed in Jesus because of her testimony.

Now it's your turn...

Testimonies carry power because of **God's work** that he's done in **your life**. Remember, it's **His work**. Jesus did the saving here. It's his Good News of life in His name. But he met you in your unique experience, and you get the honor of sharing how God changed your life.

The first step we need to take in becoming people who share the Good News of Jesus is by first identifying our experiences with Jesus. Go around and answer the following two questions...

1. Who is Jesus to me?
2. What has God done in my life? *

*Note, try and be specific. Describe who Jesus is to you like you would to someone who does not know him yet. Share the healing, restoration, and life change that God has begun in your life since you came to know Him.

*Remember – Your testimony is powerful, regardless of if you feel like it's "made for TV" or not!

Practice this week...

Any time we try to integrate a new practice into our lives (or seek growth in our capacity with it), it's important to be diligent and define goals for ourselves. Repetition, time, and the work of the Holy Spirit will press this practice deeper into us, and we'll begin to do many of these things naturally (see "How to use the Companion Guide section").

During this four-week study, we don't just want to talk about sharing our faith with each other, we want to take steps toward living out that practice in our daily lives.

Before your next group meeting, take time on your own to continue to reflect on who Jesus is to you and what God has done in your life by ***developing an elevator pitch, hallway chat, and coffee conversation version of your story.***

This is a practice that forces you to be intentional about having a reason for the hope you have in any situation (1 Peter 3:14-15).

Elevator Pitch – Think through a 30 second – 1-minute answer to those two questions. Sometimes God is going to give us a brief opening with a stranger at the grocery store or literal elevator conversation for us to share about what God has done in our lives that may prompt more conversations down the road or plant a seed in that person's heart. Write down your elevator pitch this week.

Hallway Chat – This is your 5-minute response to those two questions. Imagine you're at your workplace, sitting in a waiting room, or in a setting where you have 5-10 minutes to chat with someone. How would you articulate who Jesus is to you and what God has done in your life if you had 5 minutes?

Coffee Conversation – This is your 10–20-minute version of your story. This is always the preferred method if we get the opportunity. Think about how you would answer those two questions if you got to sit down and have coffee with someone.

Week 2: Knowing My Context

Process Together...

Before you begin: Go around and discuss how the practice went for you this past week!

Last week, we talked about the importance of knowing your own story when sharing your faith. The Good News of what Jesus has done for someone is vital to transformation, but often times people are first drawn toward the life change they see in someone else.

One of the beautiful things about how God uses us to further the Kingdom is by placing us in different contexts and in relationships with different people. There is power in bringing the Gospel somewhere together (and we should leverage those opportunities when they are there), but it's also a good thing that we all know different people who don't know Jesus.

Here at Eastview, when we talk about knowing our context for mission, one way we refer to that as our "People and Places".

People – Who are the people that God has placed in your life that don't know Jesus?

Places – Which places do you frequent where you can be salt and light?

Start by assessing your situation...

1. Take some time to identify 2-3 "people" and 2-3 "places" in your life. You can longlist them if you'd like, but most people find it helpful to narrow down to 2-3 in order to know be overwhelmed by all of the possibilities.

2. Share these with the group...
 - a. For your people, share what your relationship is (friend, co-worker, neighbor, etc.).
 - b. For your places, share what that space is to you and how often you spend time there.

Scripture: Read Ephesians 4:11-16 together

1. According to Paul, what is the responsibility of church staff/leadership? What does that look like?
2. Who are the saints? What is the work of ministry they are called to?
3. Why do you think God designed his church to function like this? What comes out of a community that is thriving in these areas?

Reorient....

There's this quote from Theodore Roosevelt that has a lot of truth to it...

"People don't care about how much you know until they know how much you care."

He's right. Most of the time, people listen to who they trust and have relationship with. Very few people's minds are changed by the paint on a sign or something someone yelled real loud one time (*bonus points if you know where that line came from*). The Church (as an organization) is able to reach people who do not have a relationship with Jesus through different programs, but the majority of evangelism happens in the margins, in our real and organic relationships we have in our workplaces, neighborhoods, etc.

Studies actually show that as many as 75% of people would welcome a conversation about faith with someone they have a relationship with, and as many as 50%-60% of those people would join someone at their church service, event, or other function if they were invited to come. While it may feel intimidating to ask someone about their faith or discuss your own, it's usually received better than we would think!

Even so, it's still critical to do so in a way that honors both Christ and the other person. When thinking about how to engage our people and places with Gospel conversations, we should ask ourselves this question:

How can I be respectful and courteous to others' journeys while sharing the Good News I have?

Let's discuss...

Two postures...

When considering how to be respectful and courteous to someone else when engaging in Gospel conversations, there are two postures we should lead with.

1. **Curiosity** – Remember, “They want to know how much you care before they want to know how much you know”. Consider the following when thinking about your people or the people you'd come across in the places you frequent...
 - a. What does their life look like right now?
 - b. What things do they care about?
 - c. What gives them meaning and purpose?
 - d. Why would they specifically want to hear about Jesus?
 - e. What has their experience with Jesus or the Church been like in the past if they've had any experiences before?

All of these things can play a role in your conversation. Be curious about their life circumstances, upbringing, worldviews, experiences with religion, and questions they may have! If you lead with curiosity rather than answers, you'll not only grow in your relationship with one another, but you'll get a glimpse into how God is already at work in their life.

2. **Empathy** – While Jesus was not afraid of the truth while being open and honest with those who wanted to follow Him and the cost of discipleship, He also did this full of grace and love toward those He came in contact with. Instead of entering the conversation looking to “fix” what is going on, consider the following...

- a. Ask God to give you eyes to see them as He does, having compassion for the things they are going through and seeking to understand their perspectives.
- b. Major on the gift of grace that God has for them. While sin is a part of this conversation, the Fear of the Lord comes from a deep and abiding love for Him, and Jesus wanted those who were far from Him to understand he was the answer to their brokenness.

Reflect...

As we close out this week's discussion, process the following questions together.

1. What unique contexts do I need to be aware of around my people and places?
2. How can I enter into Gospel conversations with curiosity and empathy with my people and in my places?
3. Pray for your people and places together as a group.

Practice...

To put these concepts into practice this week, let's work on keeping the names of the people and places on our minds each day, and intentionally pray for God's work in their lives.

1. Once you have identified your people and places, write them down somewhere you'll see them often. It could be your screensaver, a note on your mirror, a reminder on your phone, a card in your pocket, a key chain or whatever else would remind you frequently.
2. Pick a time each day to pray for your people and places. Even if it's just two minutes, God can do powerful things in and through us when we are lifting our people and places up to Him, and it helps us continue to be aware of how God may be working in their lives right now!
3. We'll practice actually engaging in these gospel conversations later in the study, but if the Holy Spirit gives you an opportunity to share your faith in the next week, jump on that opportunity!

Week 3: Knowing the Gospel

Process Together...

Before you begin: Take some time to go around the group and process how the practice went for you this past week!

Knowing your story and your context help set us up for Gospel conversations, but it's ultimately the Gospel of Jesus that has the most power here. In Mark 1, the very first words we hear in Jesus' ministry is Him preaching the Gospel. His commissioning to His disciples in Matthew 28 centers around them sharing the Good News. Once your life has been changed by the Gospel, the Gospel is then meant to flow out of you so that others can experience the life you have found.

Start from where you are at...

Let's take some time as a group to reflect on our perception of preaching the Gospel as well as the "gospels" we preach.

1. When you think about someone "preaching the Gospel", what comes to mind? When you think about being asked to go out and preach or share the Gospel, what kinds of feelings and thoughts do you have about that?
2. All of preach gospels, or share "good news" with others. What gospels do you find yourself preaching?
3. After your group has discussed what gospels you preach, discuss what kinds of gospels you hear from your friends, workplaces, or the culture preaching?

While the Jesus' Gospel is often met with disdain on a broad level, polls and metrics show that people we have relationship with are open to conversations about Jesus – we just need to be ready to give a reason for the hope we have...

Scripture: Read 1 Peter 3:14-15

1. What sticks out to you the most from this passage?
2. What are the commands that Peter gives us here?
3. Now, take some time as a group to reflect on how each of those “commands” from Peter (Honor Jesus in your hearts, always be prepared to give a reason, share with gentleness and respect, let your life be the primary message of hope) play out in today’s day and age. How can we live these out in our contexts?

Looking back...

The Gospel is in many ways the simplest yet most complex part of our faith. While each of us will likely define it in pretty similar ways, we all tend to have different “flavors” we subscribe to. Depending on how you were raised, what church tradition you grew up in, your interpretations of Scripture and theology, what Bible teachers you listen to or authors you read, or even your life experiences can influence how you view the Gospel.

1. Discuss what you believed about the Gospel growing up. How did your faith tradition and life experiences influence how you viewed the Good News?

In our definitions of the Gospel, it is important to remember that the Good News is not limited to the promise of eternal life beyond our years on earth. Jesus came preaching the Good News of the Kingdom of God – that His life, death, and resurrection were ushering in the Kingdom of God on earth. While we await the fullness of the Kingdom when Jesus returns, he is calling us to live today as citizens of the Kingdom, experiencing aspects of eternal life here and now. We too often think about eternal life as just the **quantity** of time we have with God after we die, but it actually has far more to do with the **quality** of life that we have as citizens of heaven.

The Good News is not just that we live with God forever when we die, but that we actually can experience that relationship with Him today, and He can begin to transform us on this side of eternity through apprenticeship to Jesus.

Let's look again at this description of the Gospel from John Mark Comer in his book "Practicing the Way".

"The gospel is that Jesus is the ultimate power in the universe and that life with him is now available to all. Through his birth, life, teachings, miracles, death, resurrection, ascension, and gift of the Spirit, Jesus has saved, is saving, and will save all creation. And through apprenticeship to Jesus, we can enter into this kingdom and into the inner life of God himself. We can receive and give and share in Love Loving. We can be part of a community that Jesus is, ever so slowly, forming into a radiant new society of peace and justice that one day will co-govern all creation with the Creator, in an eternity of ever unfolding creativity and growth and joy. And anyone can be a part of this journey." (John Mark Comer, Practicing the Way, pg. 137).

When we preach the Gospel, we are following Jesus' example by inviting people to follow the Savior, to disciple under Him, and to allow Jesus to teach us what it means to live while his Holy Spirit does the work of transformation.

1. Take some time as a group to discuss what the Gospel is In light of our conversation tonight. Have someone write down the different aspects that encompass the Gospel.

Aspects of the Gospel:

Practice...

To put this conversation into practice this week and to prepare for upcoming opportunities to share the Gospel with someone, take time this week to write down the Gospel message in your own words! Using the aspects of the Gospel that you and your group defined during your meeting, how would you explain the Gospel to someone who does not know Jesus already?

The Gospel is...

Week 4: Making the Invitation

Process Together...

Before you begin: Take some time to go around the group and process how the practice went for you this past week!

As we begin the last week of our study on sharing our faith, let's get back to the "why" behind all of this...

1. Why is it important that each of us become people who share the Gospel with others? What happens if we remain on the sidelines?
2. Why does God use us to spread the Gospel?

Read Matthew 4:12-22 and Matthew 28:16-20

Did you know? – The Jewish idiom "fishers of men" was actually a phrase Rabbis would use to describe their process of discipleship. To become a fisher of men meant for a disciple to become like their Rabbi.

1. What is the invitation that Jesus is giving here in Matthew 4? What is He inviting His disciples into?
2. In light of that, what do you think Jesus is inviting His disciples (and us!) into with the great commission? What does it mean to "go and make disciples"?

An invitation...

Jesus never forced someone into discipleship, nor did He assume they would follow Him. Jesus gave those who listened to Him a choice as He invited them into relationship with him – and now we get the opportunity to make that same invitation as well. All of our lives were changed by someone having the boldness to share their faith with us, and now we get to partner with God in his greatest work of all, transforming the lives of those around us.

During this study, we have spent time getting to know our own stories, knowing our own context, and knowing the Gospel. ***Now it's time to make an invitation.***

Make a plan...

Now, it's totally true that God can and will put organic opportunities in our path for us to share our faith with others, and the ultimate goal is to get to a place where we are regularly doing that without "planning" on it. But like with most practices or habits, it takes intentionality in the beginning for it to become a part of our regular rhythms.

The other unique opportunity we have in this study is to do this together as a community. The people you are sitting next to right now get to help equip you, encourage you, pray for you, and cheer you on as you engage in these Gospel conversations, and they are also people you can come back to and share your experiences with.

Sharing your faith is not a formulaic process, but we can set benchmarks to prepare ourselves to live out the Great Commission.

In our final week together, instead of giving you some five-step process for how to actually go out and share your faith, my encouragement is to spend time as a group discussing how you plan on putting this into practice.

- 1. Who do you think God is calling you to share your faith with?**
- 2. How do you plan on doing that?**
- 3. How can your community support you as you prepare for this?**

If we can answer these three questions together as a group tonight, we'll be well on our way toward integrating the Great Commission into our everyday life.

As a group, spend this week discussing how you plan on sharing your faith with someone who does not know Jesus, but also plan on following up with one another during this process. Share your anxieties and questions with one another. Invite your group for you and your conversation. Share your experiences with one another. And then see what God does with your faithful obedience.

Practice...

It's time to share your faith! After you have discussed your next steps with your community, write down how you plan on putting this into motion...

1. Who do you think God is calling you to share your faith with?

Refer back to your "people and places", or maybe God has put another person on your heart!

2. How do you plan on doing that?

Given your relationship with that person and the unique context they are in, what would be the best way to begin a gospel conversation? Grabbing coffee? Inviting them to church or a Young Adult Gathering/Event? What do you believe the best step to take is? *If you feel nervous or hesitant, ask God to bring you peace as you try this, and remember that most people are not going to be offended or damage your relationship if they do not want to entertain a conversation!*

3. How can your community support you as you prepare for this?

Let your group know how they can best support you. Would you like them to follow up with you? Pray for you? Join you so you're not alone? Whatever you decide individually, plan as a group to follow up each week on how things are going with your people and places!

Conclusion...

Thank you for journeying as a group through this study on sharing your faith! It is our prayer that sharing your faith becomes a common practice in your walk with Jesus. This spiritual discipline helps us grow closer to Jesus through dependence on Him, closer with our faith community as we support one another, and it has the power to transform lives as we join God in his redemptive work!

Remember, none of us become experts at any of the Spiritual Disciplines. Continue to practice this and work through the ups and downs of sharing your faith. The more and more we become people who share the hope we have, the more and more we will see the Kingdom of God advance and lives be saved in Jesus' name.

If you and your small group would like to continue growing in how you follow Jesus every day, consider one of these other four-week studies on different spiritual disciplines by Practicing the Way (practictheway.org).

[Sabbath](#)

[Prayer](#)

[Fasting](#)

[Solitude](#)

If your group is looking for a deeper dive into what it means to follow Jesus, consider their eight-week "Practicing the Way" course that serves as an in-depth introduction to Spiritual Formation and discipleship.

[The Practicing the Way Course](#)

