

## session 3 study guide

# sharing the good news

### starter

MOTHER, I'M SICK; MOTHER, I'M DYING: You will need four volunteers to share the skit roles. Give each volunteer a copy of the script (see the end of this file) to review. Perform four versions of the skit as indicated. After completing the four versions of the skit, have the group share ideas about how what we say and how we say it affects the impact of our words.

### message

When it comes to sharing our faith with others, we have to present both the “bad news” and the “good news” to people. In this section, we will take a close look at each.

#### the bad news

First, we need to look at the bad news. The bad news is that sin does exist, and it is a destructive force in the world today that separates us from God. In his first letter, the apostle John gives us the following definition of sin:

*Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. . . . Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know*

*who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love his brother (1 John 3:4,7-10).*

James gives the following instructions on how to identify sin in our lives:

*Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you—who are you to judge your neighbor? . . . Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins (James 4:8-13,17).*

1. According to John, what is sin?

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2. What does John say that we will do if we belong to God? What will we not do?

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3. According to James, what do we need to do when we recognize our sin? How will the Lord respond to this?

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4. What definition of sin does James give in this passage?

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5. Notice that both John and James refer to the “law.” This law was the standard set forth by God in the Old Testament. These laws included the Ten Commandments found in Exodus 20:1-17. The law is the measure by which we can determine if we have sinned, and a quick review of these verses quickly reveals our inability to live up to that standard. What does Paul say about this in Romans 3:20-23?

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6. Sin actually began with Adam and Eve, the first people God created. In order for them to love Him freely and enjoy His love completely, God needed to give them the opportunity to either choose to obey Him or be separated from Him by their disobedience. God gave them the freedom to enjoy all that He created, with one exception. Read Genesis 2:16-17. What was the one thing He stated they could not do? What would happen if they did?

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7. Read Genesis 3:6. Why did Adam and Eve choose to sin?

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8. Adam and Eve's choice to sin had several consequences. First, their sin created a separation between them and God (they were forced to leave the Garden of Eden). Second, their lives became much more difficult. Third, they would now experience death. In what way does our sin create a separation between us and God today? What happens when we do not clean up the sin in our lives (see Isaiah 59:2; Romans 6:23; Titus 3:3)?

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So far, we have painted a very bleak (though accurate) picture of our present condition. Fortunately, there is some good news.

### the good news

The good news is that God loves us and doesn't want to be separated from us, so He provided a solution for our sin problem. We read about this solution in John 3:16-21:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*

It is because of the fact that God sent His only Son into this world to pay the price for our sins that we can be forgiven and experience eternal life with God. This is often described as the "hope" we have in Christ. We read about this in 1 Peter 1:3-7:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.*

1. According to John, why did God send Jesus into the world? What does one need to do in order to not be "condemned"?

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2. What does it mean to “live by the truth”? What effects will that have on our lives?

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3. According to Peter, what has God given to us? In what ways are we “shielded” by God’s power?

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4. Notice that Peter does not say that this means we will necessarily have it easy in this life. However, how does knowing that we will one day experience eternal life with Christ change our perspective on our present difficulties?

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5. How can you use these passages on both the bad news and the good news of our human condition to share the message of Christ to others?

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### **dig**

Throughout history, people have repeated the error that Adam and Eve made in the Garden of Eden and have chosen to disobey God. However, as we have seen, Jesus' death and resurrection have provided a way for those who repent of their sins to come back into a relationship with God. This response from God gives us a picture of His character and what He wants for us.

1. Read Isaiah 64:6 and review Romans 3:23. Why does sin pose such a problem for God?

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2. What impact does the problem of sin have on our world?

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3. Read 1 Peter 3:18 and review Romans 6:23. Why was Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection necessary to remedy the problem of sin?

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4. Look up each of the following verses, and then indicate what action we need to take to apply God's solution to our problem with sin.

Scripture	What Action We Need to Take
John 1:12	
John 5:24	
Rom. 10:9	
Rev. 3:21	

5. Based on these verses above, what does a person need to do to be "saved"?

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6. What makes these Scriptures such good news? How can you use them to share your faith with others?

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### apply

After good news is received, it begs to be shared! In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus used the imagery of salt and light to describe how we need to be sharing the good news about God's plan of salvation:

*You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

1. Before refrigeration, salt was used to keep meat from rotting. With this in mind, how do you think Jesus wants us to be "the salt of the earth"?

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2. What might cause us to lose our saltiness?

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3. Circle the answer that best fits you for this statement: If I am salt, then my impact on the world for Christ is . . .

blah                      tasteless                      seasoned                      spicy                      very tasty!

4. When you flip on a light switch, the light emanates out to eliminate the darkness. How can you “let your light shine before men”?

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5. Circle the answer that best fits you for this statement: When it comes to shining for Christ, I . . .

need a spark                      flicker                      shine brightly                      burn hot!

6. What are your God-given responsibilities to share Christ?

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7. Why does your generation need to hear good news?

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8. What would the world be like if everyone in your generation had the opportunity to be saved?

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## reflect

When Jesus gave His disciples the Great Commission, He told them to go and make other disciples of *all* nations (see Matthew 28:19). In Acts 1:8, He gave them even further instructions: “Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Before you can bring the lost into the kingdom of God, you first have to go to where the people are and find them! The importance of this is illustrated by the following story:

For months, the Fisher’s Society had been wracked with dissension. They had built a new meeting hall which they called their Aquarium and had even called a world renowned Fisherman’s Manual scholar to lecture them on the art of fishing. But still no fish were caught.

Several times each week they would gather in their ornate Aquarium Hall, recite portions of the Fisherman’s Manual and then listen to their scholar exposit the intricacies and mysteries of the manual. The meeting would usually end with the scholar dramatically casting his net into the large tank in the center of the hall and the members rushing excitedly to its edges to see if any fish would bite. None ever did, of course, since there were no fish in the tank. Which brings up the reason for the controversy.

The temperature of the tank was carefully regulated to be just right for ocean perch. Indeed, oceanography experts had been consulted to make the environment of the tank nearly indistinguishable from the ocean. But still no fish. Some blamed it on poor attendance at the society’s meetings. Others were convinced specialization was the answer. Perhaps several smaller tanks geared especially for different fish age groups would work. There was even division over which was more important: casting or providing optimum tank conditions. Eventually, a solution was reached.

A few members of the Society were commissioned to become professional fishermen and were sent to live a few blocks away on the edge of the sea and do nothing but catch fish. It was a lonely existence, because most other members of the society were terrified of the ocean. So the professionals would send back pictures of themselves holding some of their catches and letters describing the joys and tribulations of real live fishing. And, periodically, they would return to Aquarium Hall to show their slides. After such meetings, the people of the society would return to their homes, thankful that their hall had not been built in vain.<sup>1</sup>

1. What were the members of the society doing wrong?

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2. What could they have done to be more effective in catching fish?

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3. How does this story relate to sharing the good news?

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4. What can you do to be more effective in sharing Christ with your generation? What problems do you need to avoid?

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5. Are you willing to go to where the lost are? Why or why not?

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6. If you decided to live your life totally sold-out for Jesus, how would your life and relationships change? Would it be worth it?

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7. Imagine if Jesus came to you today and said, "I want you to be the light to your family, friends, school and work. Will you shine for Me?" What would you say and do?

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## meditation



This is the plan determined for the whole world; this is the hand stretched out over all nations. For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?

ISAIAH 14:26-27

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### Note

1. This story was originally given as a sermon by Ben Patterson at Irvine Presbyterian Church in Irvine, California.

mother, i'm sick  
mother, i'm dying

characters

Doctor

Mother

Son

Director

props (optional)

Feather duster and phone for Mother

Chair for Son

Lab coat, stethoscope and/or bag for Doctor

script

Mother: (Enters the room.) Son, what's wrong?

Son: (Enters.) Mother, I feel sick.

Mother: Son, you look sick.

Son: Mother, I think I will die.

Mother: Oh, Son, you must not do that. I will call the doctor. (Picks up the phone.) Doctor,  
Doctor, come quickly. My son is dying.

Doctor: (Enters immediately as Mother finishes.) Here I am! I'm the doctor.

Mother: Doctor, where have you been?

Doctor: I had an emergency appendectomy after you called.

Son: (After a slight pause.) I feel sick.

Mother: You look sick.

Son: I am sick. (Slight pause.) I think I will die.

Mother: You must not die.

Doctor: You are dying.

Son: I am dying.

Director stops the skit.

variations

First try: Have the actors perform it as dry as possible—as if they were reading it the first time. They should use no expression at all. When the Director stops the skit, have him or her claim that this is an emotional scene and that the actors should sound emotional.



Second try: Have the group members perform the skit with wild emotion—as if it were the saddest thing they had ever seen. When the Director stops the skit, he or she should say that the actors have now overdone it a bit. They should make it a little lighter.

Third try: The actors should now read their lines as if the situation was the funniest thing that could have happened. Have them really play up the laughter. When the Director stops the skit, he should tell the actors that now they are treating the material too lightly—they should mix it up and add a little variety.

Fourth try: This time, the Son should perform the skit as in the first try—as deadpan as possible. The Mother should repeat the second try, in complete hysteria. The Doctor should repeat the third try, again laughing through his lines. When the Director stops the skit this time, he or she should say, “I think *I’m* dying.”