



THE HEIGHTS

CHURCH

LIFE GROUP TEACHING PLANS
THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD
LESSON 9

THE SIMPLEST WAY TO CHANGE THE WORLD

FROM AWKWARD TO AWESOME

LESSON 9

TEACHING PLAN

PREPARATION

- > Spend the week reading through and studying Romans 10:14 and Matthew 5:14-16. Consult the commentary provided and any additional study tools (such as a concordance or Bible dictionary) to enhance your preparation.
- > Determine which discussion points and questions will work best with your group.
- > Pray for the upcoming group meeting, your teaching, your group members, and their receptivity to the study.

HIGHLIGHTS

- > **Series Theme Aim:** Loving our neighbors means choosing to engage rather than unplug, open rather than close, and initiate rather than sit idly.
- > **Biblical Emphasis:** God calls each of us to glorify Him by taking the gospel to all people.
- > **Teaching Aim:** When we love our neighbors, the awkwardness we feel in sharing the gospel will be overcome by our trust in God's awesome plan.
- > **Memorize:** Romans 10:14

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

DO NOT SKIP THIS

1 What steps did you take this week to move a neighbor from acquaintance to friend? How did it go?

2 Name something you talk about easily and are always ready to discuss when the subject comes up (i.e. your favorite hobby, team, show, etc.).

3 Does it feel natural or awkward for you to talk about spiritual matters with other people? Explain. Why is talking about Jesus often harder for us than talking about other things?

Most believers understand they are supposed to tell people about Jesus. It's also true, however, that most believers struggle to do so. It's much easier to talk with a neighbor about last night's game or vacation plans than it is to share with them the gospel message. Yet, nothing is more important to talk about with others.

4 In the context of your neighborhood, which way of witnessing would you say is most important: witnessing with words — “Go into all the world and preach the Good News to everyone” (Mark 16:15, NLT), or witnessing with actions — “Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:16, NLT)?

5 Why are words necessary? Why can't you just witness to people through your lifestyle?

Notes:

Being a good person with morals is not the same thing as sharing the gospel. The people in your neighborhood won't avoid hell because you're a likeable neighbor. Asking your neighbor, "Do you go to church?" is a good starting point, but it's not enough. They won't enjoy a relationship with our awesome God because they go to church somewhere or make mostly good choices. The only way to become a Christ follower is to hear and believe the gospel. So as we move from stranger to acquaintance to friend, we must also tell people about Jesus. In today's session, we are going to practice telling two stories—our story and God's story.

Notes:

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> Ask a volunteer to read Matthew 5:14-16.

- For what purpose are we to let our "light shine" before our neighbors? Considering this, what would it look like to let your light shine before your neighbors?
- How do you define your "testimony"? Is this largely about the circumstances surrounding your initial salvation experience, or does it also include what is happening in your life right now? Why does it matter?
- Glance at the verses that precede these in Matthew 5:3-12. What is the relationship between your neighbors seeing in you the qualities Jesus named in these verses (i.e. peacemaking, mercy, purity of heart) and sharing your faith story?

- When you think about letting your light shine by sharing your story and telling neighbors about the impact Jesus has on your life, does it strike you as awkward or awesome? Explain.

Notes:

Matthew 5:14-16 teaches us that we can live in such a way that our neighbors will look to God because of how we are living, but they will not infer their need to do so unless we communicate it. Your faith story tells the story of how you became a follower of Jesus Christ and what God is doing in your life now. Disciples are people who are following Jesus, being changed by Jesus, and living on mission for Jesus. When we live this way, our story continually has chapters added to it. Each chapter can be used by God to shine the light of Christ and bless our neighbors.

Here are some guidelines to assist you in preparing and sharing your faith story with your neighbors:

1. Be authentic—be you!
2. What was your story before you met Jesus? Consider questions like: What motivated you? What did you worry about? What were you living for? Who were your influences? What were you feeling? What did you believe?
3. How did you meet Jesus? Consider questions like: Was it a moment? Was it a season of life? Were you introduced by a friend? Family member? Stranger? Event? What was it like to experience forgiveness, healing, hope, and so on?
4. How is your life different now because of Jesus? How have your priorities changed? Do you treat people differently? Have you experienced a new type of hope? Be real. Where do you still struggle? How has God made you new?
5. Remember this is your faith story, not your life story! The shorter, the better! Let them ask questions.
6. Remember that you are not teaching a lesson. You are telling your story.

- Divide into smaller groups of 2-3 and share brief testimonies about how you came to faith or about a situation where God is growing your faith in Him currently.

Notes:

After God gives us the opportunity to share our faith stories, it's important to ask our friends if they would like to know how they can have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

> Ask a volunteer to read Romans 10:14-15.

- How does verse 14 help you better understand the importance of having conversations about Jesus?
- From verse 15, what is the core message God desires the church to preach?

The quote, "Preach the gospel at all times; if necessary, use words," gets thrown around a lot by believers, but the fact is words are necessary. The good news we are to share is the gospel message, and the gospel message is inherently verbal. Your actions show the effect of Christ's work in your life; your words explain what He did on your behalf. People need to hear the good news that though sin caused a brokenness in the world that separates us from God, Jesus' death and resurrection have made a way to restore our relationship to God forever.

- Invite a class member to share the Three Circles gospel presentation or show the video at theheights.org/3circles/.
- Split into groups of 2-3 people again. Invite members to take turns sharing the Three Circles gospel presentation using the printed cards provided.
- Three Circles is just one way of sharing the gospel. What are some other ways that you have heard the gospel presented?

NEXT STEPS

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

Notes:

DO NOT SKIP THIS

- 1 Our study on “The Simplest Way to Change the World” would be incomplete were we not to apply this step. This week’s challenge is for you to share your faith with one of your neighbors. Let’s pray for one another and look forward to hearing from each other about that next week!
- 2 What hangups keep you from believing that being yourself is the best method of sharing Jesus with those who are lost? What other factors might keep you from sharing your testimony and/or the gospel message with your neighbors?
- 3 How can we support each other so that sharing our testimonies and the gospel message with our neighbors becomes a regular part of our lives?
- 4 What are some ordinary moments you experience in daily life that God might be wanting to use as a springboard for drawing others to Him? What is your responsibility in that process?each other about that next week!

PRAY

Thank God for His Spirit, which reminds you of the resurrection hope you have in relationship with Jesus. Ask Him to help you set apart Jesus as Lord above all else in your daily life, and to make you ready at all times to tell people about Him.

FOR NEXT WEEK

> **REMIND:** Before you dismiss, remind group members to read Romans 12:14-21.

Notes:

> **EMAIL:** Midway through the week, send a reminder email with the following information:

- Read Romans 12:14-21.
- Think through these questions before we get together again: 1) What in my life right now is God wanting me to see as my testimony, a way to shine His light in my neighborhood? 2) Am I growing in a sense of urgency to shine the light of Christ through verbal witness with my neighbors? 3) Who is a neighbor with whom I can share my faith story of how Jesus has changed my life?

MATTHEW 5:14-16

The picture of light (vv. 14-16) is similar to salt, in that both describe the influence the believer is to have in the world. However, it reveals a different facet of the believer's influence. The function of light is to make reality or truth visible, thereby giving direction and guidance by what is seen. Jesus again used the emphatic "you," and again clearly stated that this is already what a believer is, not something he might become. It is the nature of a kingdom servant to be light in the world. Any believer who fails to function as light is going against his nature as God's new creation. The believer has no light inherent in himself. The believer's light is a reflected light. Believers are to make certain that nothing comes between them and their source of light (2 Cor. 3:18; Phil. 2:13-16).

Notes:

Both a city on a hill (v. 14) and the lamp on its stand (v. 15) fulfill their function by being elevated, so their light can be seen by many people over a broad area. Jesus Himself explained the application of this principle in 5:16. The light represents our good works, which must be done with such integrity that all who see have no choice but to credit our Father in heaven. The Christian's life and influence is to be visible and obvious, not secret or hidden. We must not camouflage our devotion to Christ, but humbly do all we can to allow its truest colors to be seen where we live. The term translated give glory to means "to make manifest or visible." When we shine our light before others by living righteously, we are making visible the character of the Father. It is the Christian's commission to live in such a way as to make God visible in a world that is blind to Him.

ROMANS 10:14-15

Calling requires faith. In the Old Testament, calling on the name of the Lord was a metaphor for worship and prayer (Gen. 4:26; 12:8; Ps. 116:4). No one can call out to God who has not believed in Him. Faith requires hearing. More than anything else, this question is the crux of all missiological activity since the first century. God has ordained that people have to hear (or read, or otherwise understand the content of) the word of God in order to be saved. One who knows the gospel must communicate it to one who does not know it.