

mpc study guide – week of march 29

# A Fresh Start?

How to play your part in changing the world



## Christians too silent?

According to Michael Bennett, author of “Christianity Explained”, the biggest crisis facing Christianity today is that ordinary Christians are not sharing their faith. “It’s almost a universal problem,” says Bennett. “It’s all being left to the professionals. The vast majority of ordinary Christians simply never speak about Jesus.”

1. Do you think this is true? If so, why?

## Christians too noisy?

The “*Modern Guru*” column in the Good Weekend magazine “answers readers’ questions about 21<sup>st</sup> century ethics, etiquette and dilemmas. A recent enquiry highlights the other side of the issue...

**“Any time I receive an email or card from my ultra-religious daughter-in-law, I’m bombarded with Bible quotes, references to Christ, the importance of prayer, salvation and so on... How do I let her know that enough is enough?”  
K.A.G. Karalee, Qld**

2. How would you advise K.A.G from Karalee to handle the situation?
3. How would you advise his daughter-in-law to modify her approach?

## **Your Friends, The Gospel and You**

Nobody wants Christians to be as inappropriate as poor KAG's daughter in law. And yet if Christians had never spoken about the claims of Jesus, the world would be a very different place.

If Michael Bennett is right, maybe our fear of being inappropriate has driven us to silence. Or, maybe, we simply think we don't have the skills needed to share the gospel, and we should leave it to the professionals.

## **Gourmet Gospel?**

Michael Bennet gives a useful analogy. He says, "Clearly, some people are Gourmet Chefs. They are incredibly gifted in the kitchen; so much so that people will flock to their restaurants. But the fact that most people are not particularly skilled in this area doesn't stop them cooking! In fact, he says, most of us cook almost every day – even if it's just steak and potatoes. In fact, the vast majority of people eat those home cooked meals every day – and are quite adequately nourished."

In other words, you don't have to be an expert to be involved in spreading the message of Jesus. In this study, we're going to think about *appropriate* ways of doing it.

### **4. Take a look at Romans 1:16-17.**

- a. What is Paul's attitude to "the gospel" and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- b. Have you seen evidence of the "power of the gospel" to save someone? (Or yourself?) Share the details with your group.

If the answer to the previous question was "no", then start doing some research! There's a number of new Christians at mpc... or even some quite old ones who remember the change that came when they put their faith in Jesus. Seeing that change happen in people's lives is a great encouragement to be "unashamed of the gospel"!

The first step in being a balanced and effective faith-sharing Christian is to be *unashamed* of speaking about Jesus. If you're not feeling awkward, then you'll know when to speak and when not to speak. Your words won't be stumbling or forced or over-the-top. Relax!

**Read Colossians 4:2-6.**

5. From verse 2, what three things do we need to be doing?
  
6. What in particular does Paul, a professional “evangelist,” ask the Colossians to pray for in verse 3?

Could it be that lots of ineffective efforts at evangelism come from trying to barge through doors that aren’t open? Maybe we should spend more time praying that God will open doors for our message... and then being watchful for those small gaps that show a door is opening!

7. What else does Paul ask them to pray for in verse 4? How can open doors be wasted if we don’t get this bit right?
  
8. Are you doing what Paul says we should in verse 5? Opportunity for what?
  
9. What sort of conversations should we aim for with the people we spend time with? What will this look like in practice?

How much time and effort have you put in to “*knowing how to answer everyone*”?

Paul’s approach is straightforward. As a professional “evangelist,” he wants Christians in churches praying for him – that doors will be open, and that he’ll be clear in explaining the good news of Jesus. That’s all he wants! Meanwhile, ordinary Christians should work at having quality relationships where the tough realities of life can be talked about openly and honestly... and, when questions naturally arise, have an answer ready! What’s offensive about that?

## **A Gospel Gourmet**

As we prepare for John Chapman's visit next weekend, it's interesting to think about the part we can play in the same sort of strategy. Chappo is a gifted full-time evangelist – a gospel Gourmet - who has seen many lives changed as people come to faith in Christ. So what part can we play?

We can pray that God will open doors for his message  
We can pray that Chappo will “proclaim it clearly, as he should”  
We can pray and look for opportunities to answer our friends  
We can “take them out to dinner” to sample Chappo's cooking!

Spend some time praying with your group about these things.  
Is there someone you should be inviting along? Are you able to do that in a way that's natural and appropriate? Ask your group to pray specifically.



**One final note...** please make **every effort** to be at church on Sunday, whether you're bringing a friend or not. Usually (for some mysterious reason) we have less people in church on Open Church Sundays like this.

Can you think of any reasons for this?  
Are regulars nervous about coming along?  
Do regulars think it's going to be too pushy, or awkward? It's not! And Chappo is always worth hearing!