

1. Introducing Jesus to Your Friends

Evangelistic Bible Studies

Bible studies with seekers vary as widely as seekers vary. Stan became interested in Christianity because he was attracted to a Christian woman. Though outgoing, he was too tongue tied with her to ask questions. So twice a week for a month we met in the parking lot of the engineering firm where he worked. We read and discussed, reflected and discussed passages in Mark's Gospel. He was drawn to the strong, active, common sensible Jesus he observed. By the eighth study he was ready to give his life to Jesus as both Savior *and* Lord. Today he is an elder in his church—and married to someone else.

Hideko became interested in Christianity because a Christian colleague was “cheerfully different”. She worked as a librarian in the young adults department. Her well educated family was Buddhist. I invited her to a group where we were looking at Jesus in John's Gospel. She became fascinated with his thoughtfulness, his uniqueness. She asked questions that provoked the group to think hard about the biblical text. After a while I suggested that we two study together. Her library office after work hours was ideal for that. A year later she committed herself to the Lord—and is still fascinated with the person of Jesus Christ.

Small groups *From these examples what do you see about introducing Jesus to seekers?*

Your keys to effective EBS

1. Your first key is the conviction that Jesus Christ is the only Way to God and that he loves all seekers. So pray that you may communicate this.

2. Your second key is your confidence that God can and wants to speak through his Word when you help to make it clear to seekers. So pray that you will first hear God yourself.

3. Your third key is helping the seekers to identify with the needy people who encountered Jesus. When your friend can say/feel, “I understand the leper's desperation. I sympathize with his feelings of rejection and loneliness. I can see why he approached Jesus the way he did”, the EBS has taken off! So pray for the Holy Spirit's wisdom to do this well.

4. Your fourth key facilitates the above. This key is that, like Hideko and Stan, you keep growing in your fascination with Jesus, the Son of God who became the Son of Man in order to identify totally with sinners. So pray that *II Peter 3:18* will be true of you.

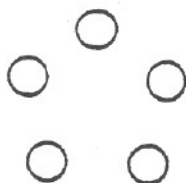
Which friend and/or relative have you been longing to see join God's family? _____

Pray for them. Pray for yourself as you make a fresh commitment to God in the light of what you have been learning here.

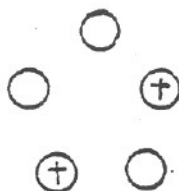
Lord Jesus _____

Marks of an EBS

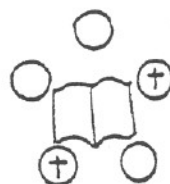
An evangelistic Bible study is a personal introduction of Jesus Christ to seekers through well-selected passages which all study together objectively in a friendly atmosphere.



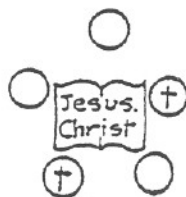
1) comfortable



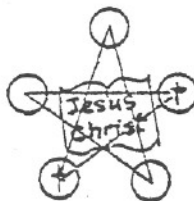
2) seeker-oriented



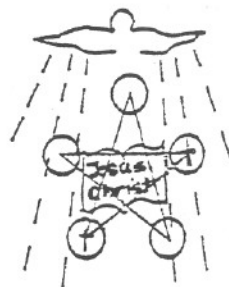
3) Bible-based



4) Jesus-centered



5) interactive



6) Spirit-led

Group A How can EBS help Christians?

Group B How can EBS help seekers?

Looking at the Bible as seekers might

What is familiar and clear in a text to Christians is often gobbledegook to seekers. To check yourself as you prepare the EBS, keep the following questions in mind.

1. *What terms and ideas in the text might be meaningless to seekers? What questions might they raise about the text?*
2. *Consider the life experience and temperament of your seeker friends. In what ways could they identify with the people who come to Jesus with their questions and needs?*
3. *In this particular encounter what about Jesus could attract the seekers? What could stir their desire for a changed life that Jesus offers?*

Try it! Read Mark 4:35-41 from the viewpoint of your seeker friends. Use the check questions suggested above.

Your personal study of the text

About 90% of the history of Jesus is told in stories of personal encounters that people experienced with him. Each encounter follows *a natural evangelistic outline in textual order*. You don't have to create one!

1. Setting/Background of the encounter
2. People who encounter Jesus -
3. Jesus and his personal responses in that encounter
4. Results of the encounter

1. Setting/Background *Where and when* does the encounter take place? What has just happened before this encounter? Context affects one's interpretation of the text.

2. People and their needs *Who* are these people meeting Jesus? What are their needs--outward and inward? Anything unusual about their approach and interaction with Jesus? How are their needs like ours? How are their responses like ours?

3. Jesus and his response Help seekers discover how *interesting, appealing, provoking--and ultimately how unique and relevant Jesus is*.

- * What is unusual in the way he responds to individuals ? Why this way?
- * How does he apparently understand them and their problems?
- * What else is interesting or curious in his words, acts, attitude?

4. Results How are various people affected? Why have they changed (or not changed) by meeting Jesus? What has the writer emphasized about Jesus in this event?

Reflection on practical implications What realities about human nature does this Jesus encounter show us? What hope for a better life does Jesus Christ offer to people today?

Try it! In small groups check the four evangelistic points in the guide to Mark 4:35-41 on the following page. Then try all possible answers to the questions. Think creatively!

Bridge You have worked hard all day under pressure. You're looking forward to an evening of rest. How do you feel when you arrive home--and find that it has been burglarized?

Crossing over The people in our study probably felt like you. Jesus and his disciples have had a long work day (vv. 1-34). By evening all are naturally tired. Let's see what happens.

Read *Mark 4:35-41*, sensing the disciples' change of emotions in each verse.

A. Jesus' initiative, vv. 35-36 (*Background*)

Jesus must have had some reason(s) for going to the other side. What might that be?

B. A Sudden Storm, vv. 37-38 (*People and their needs*)

1. At least five of the disciples were fishermen familiar with this lake's sudden storms. This one is beyond their control. *What feelings may be behind their wake-up call to Jesus?*

2. Share an experience when you felt God did not care while you struggled with a problem. *What were your thoughts and feelings?*

3. It isn't easy to trust God in a sudden crisis. *As you struggle with your present problem, what do you want God to do?*

C. A Sudden Calm, vs 39-40 (*Jesus and his response*)

1. Look at Jesus' actions and his words. *How do they reveal his possible feelings?*

2. Jesus commanded the winds and the waves. But he questioned the disciples. *What do you think he wanted them to do with his questions? What questions is he asking you?*

D. A Sudden Realization, v 41 (*Results*)

1. The physical crisis ends, but another kind of crisis arises. They have previously seen Jesus as teacher, healer, victor over evil spirits. *What is the cause of their new fear/awe? (What is new about him?) What do you think they were discussing—apart from him?*

2. The disciples do not yet know that Jesus is God. What they have suddenly realized is that they don't really know him after all. *Why is this a significant step for them or for any new follower?*

Reflection and Possible Action Be alert to what is appropriate for people at this stage.

1. *What do you find attractive about Jesus here? What puzzles you about him?*
2. *In what ways can you see that Jesus does care about you and wants to help you with your problems?*
3. *Perhaps like the disciples you have had an incomplete view of Jesus. Is there any reason now that you cannot put your trust in him now as your Lord and Savior?*

Example 2 A Prostitute and a Pharisee Meet Jesus, *Luke 7:36-50*

This example is more detailed, moving from your personal preparation to the group study.

A. Your Personal Preparation

1. **Setting/background** (Keep the story from sounding like a myth or a moralistic tale. Introduce it as part of God's Big Story that deals with who Jesus is and why he came.)

Jesus' popularity has aroused the jealousy of the religious leaders. They reject him as a playboy, a party animal, a lush. He responds by giving a public evaluation of their religion (*Luke 7:29-34*). In this hostile climate one Pharisee invites Jesus to dinner in his home.

2. **People who encounter Jesus** (Help the group to identify with these needy people.)

- a. Simon: His apparent need was to find out more about Jesus (*vv. 36, 39-47*).

Negative Identified with the religion that Jesus has just evaluated/condemned
Did not show Jesus either common courtesy, affection or respect
Probably did not want to take a chance on being too open to Jesus
Judgmental of both the woman and Jesus

Positive Well off economically and socially; highly respected in the community
Somewhat open to Jesus.
Very alert and intelligent
Interacts fairly if reluctantly with Jesus.

- b. The Woman: Her obvious need is to have her sins forgiven (*vv. 37-38*).

Negative Social outcast; party crasher
Social boor; seemingly no self-control

Positive Knew she was a sinner; wanted Jesus to forgive her sins
Sensed his acceptance of her despite the awkward situation
Totally focused on Jesus; understood him better than Simon
Loved Jesus, first man to treat her with dignity

3. **Jesus and his personal response to individuals (*vv. 36-50*)**

(Let him be as attractive, appealing, interesting, unique as the text shows.)

- a. Communicates with two very different people in two very different ways
- b. Shows sensitivity and wisdom; is personal, focused, doesn't embarrass the woman
- c. Is straightforward with Simon, appealing to his intellect, using a brief parable
- d. Involves Simon step by step in a logical manner
- e. Knows when to come to the personal, practical issue and applies the lesson
- f. Wants Simon to be like the despised woman—to be deeply aware of his sin and need of God's forgiveness and love
- g. Is a radical guest criticizing his host

4. Results of the Encounter (The Gospel writers intentionally show how people were affected by the encounter.)

- a. Jesus publicly affirms the woman's forgiveness (vv. 47-48).
- b. The curious guests discuss the identity of the one who claims to forgive sins (v. 49).
- c. Jesus clarifies her faith in him, not in her gifts or emotions (v. 50).

(Simon's response is unrecorded, though the text could be suggesting what could have happened.)

Reflection (Topics that arise from the text. Add other possibilities.)

- My/our church's attitude to social outcasts
- Understanding hard seekers like Simon
- *Becoming a sensitive people helper like Jesus*
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Try it! Make an outline of *Luke 19:1-10*. Following these four evangelistic points, bring out major ideas the writer emphasizes. Include verse references.

A. Setting/background

B. People who encounter Jesus

C. Jesus and his personal response to individuals

D. Results

Reflection

B. Preparing Study Discussion Questions

"Two Kinds of Seekers", Luke 7:36-50

Bridge What do you enjoy most about going to dinner parties? Why?

Crossing over Jesus never turned down a dinner invitation. At today's dinner event all kinds of surprises took place, and he encouraged them.

Read Luke 7:36-50 (Ask an experienced reader to be the narrator, and two others to read the parts of Simon and Jesus. Omit "he said", "he replied" and such.)

Context Jesus has just publicly evaluated the Pharisees' rejection of him. He knows they call him a party animal, a playboy, a lush (Luke 7:29-35). Simon belongs to the religious party most hostile to the popular Jesus. Yet he invites Jesus to his home for a meal.

Study Discussion (Note that different answers are suggested. This is to encourage you to keep looking at the text from the possible viewpoints of different seekers—a challenge!)

1. Obviously the woman was not invited. She apparently is a prostitute (vv. 37, 39). What are possible reasons for her presence in Simon's home (vv. 37-38)?

- *to wreck an upper class dinner party* *
- *to upset Simon, the Pharisee the host* *
- *to look for more customers* *
- *to show her love for Jesus* *

2. She's not stupid. She knew she was taking risks in going to the Pharisee's house. (a) What might these risks be? (b) What does her risk-taking tell you about her state of mind?

- (a) *The servants would throw her out.* *
- She would make a fool of herself.* *
- Jesus could disappoint her.* *

- (b) *She's desperate.* *
- She's focused.* *

3. Think of how a typical man would respond to what the woman was doing to Jesus--crying, wetting his feet with her tears, wiping them with her hair, then kissing his feet and pouring perfume on them. From the context how do you think Jesus felt?

- * *shocked* *
- * *flattered* *
- * *upset* *

4. The woman expresses her repentance and devotion totally by actions. Jesus responds to her also non-verbally. *What message is he sending her (vv. 37-38)?*

- *Another one of these uncontrollable women. But I can control myself.*
- *I'll give you two more minutes to straighten out.*
-
-

5. Simon's first words, though unspoken, are critical of Jesus (v. 39). *But what clues can you find that he is somewhat open to Jesus (vv. 36, 39, 40b, 43ff)?*

- *He has invited Jesus to his home despite public hostility from his Pharisaic party.*
-
-
-

6. In contrast to his non-verbal communication with the woman, Jesus is quite verbal with Simon, an educated Pharisee. *What methods of communication does he use?*

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------------|
| * <i>arousing curiosity (v. 40)</i> | * | <i>(v. 42b)</i> |
| * <i>direct dialogue (vv. 40-43)</i> | * | <i>(v. 43b))</i> |
| * <i>parable (vv. 41-42a)</i> | * | <i>(v. 44-47)</i> |

7. *What an effective communicator Jesus is! What message is he giving to Simon?*

- *I understand you, too.*
-
-

8. Whom do you identify with most in this encounter?

- *the woman because I _____*
- *Simon because I _____*
- *Jesus because I _____*

Reflection and Action Be alert to use any question, depending on where people are.

1. Simon and the woman were different kinds of seekers. But before God they were the same. Both had debts they could not pay. Both needed God's gift of forgiveness. All of us do. If you haven't yet received Jesus' forgiveness, you can now. We're here to help you take that step.

1. Perhaps God has spoken to you in another way. You have to deal with Simon's kind of religious pride, self-righteousness. Or perhaps Jesus' acceptance of the woman shows up your indifference to needy people around you. *What will you do with either of these attitudes?*

3. "It's a sin to bore people with the Gospel." We have learned from this study that Jesus was anything but a bore. Not only did the woman and the Pharisee have in-depth encounters with Jesus. The guests at the end express their amazement and curiosity about this most interesting Jesus. They want to know more. *How can you and I arouse people's curiosity about Jesus?*

C. Guiding the EBS

The EBS should be a friendly dialogue arising from the passage. Your friends have come to learn, so they are ready for reasonable explanations. But don't preach!



- 1. Consider practical factors** like comfortable seating, socializing, extra Bibles, Bible versions. Avoid religious jargon. If seekers feel uncomfortable with praying, omit public praying. Your cheerful friendliness should set the tone and help others feel at ease.
- 2. Keep in mind the seekers' viewpoint.** Maintain a free atmosphere with spontaneous, sensitive give-and-take. But keep the discussion generally based on the text. Many questions in our examples ask for opinions. These are less threatening to newcomers, and they help stir the study pot. *"How do you think.... What might be...?"*
- 3. Help all members to identify with people in the passage.** They were real people with real problems—just like us. They also had their struggles and hopes, their doubts and faith. This is a key to seeker-friendly EBS. Once in a while it helps to ask a subjective question; e.g., *"If you were the leper, how would you have felt when Jesus touched you?"* (But too many such questions can turn the study into a therapy session.)
- 4. Arouse curiosity about the text, especially about Jesus.** Encourage questions, and let the group respond. Or better yet, like Jesus, you ask questions that can help the seeker find their own answers if possible.
- 5. Lift up Jesus, not merely correct facts and theology.** Tactfully challenge stereotyped ideas about him. Your clear attitude to Jesus will be more contagious than words.
- 6. Be ready to invite a seeker to come to God directly at anytime.** It could be at the end of a study or of a series of EBS. (Five or six studies can bring a good understanding of who Jesus is and why came.) It can happen in a private conversation. See page 12-14.

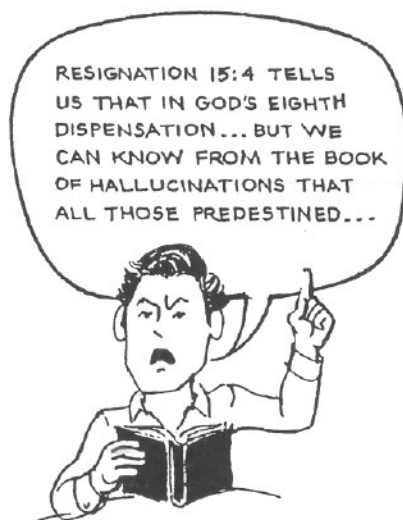
7. Deal creatively with group tensions. Some situations or individuals can raise tensions that stifle a learning atmosphere. Wise leaders turn tensions into opportunities to express understanding and care. Other members should also be alert to do the same.

Silence Maybe your question was too simple--or too complex. Reword it. Maybe your lead-up to the question did not adequately prepare the group to discuss the subject. Or suggest, "Let's take a minute to think before any speak."



Churchy language Religious terminology, in-group references, clichés are barriers to seekers. Ask people who use them to rephrase their ideas in a more meaningful way. Set an example by using using fresh language that communicates biblical truth vividly yet accurately.

A distractor Is he one who confuses with cross-references? Or one who keeps referring to other topics? Try, "That's interesting, but let's dig deeper into this text first." If someone has many experiences or problems to air, suggest that they can be handled later. And do it!



A dominating talker Don't look his way. Call on others by name. Suggest, "Let's hear another viewpoint." Talk to him privately. Ask him to aid in getting others to participate, e.g., by asking helpful questions. Jonathan, who knew he talked too much, cured himself by counting up to 10. That was enough time for others to jump in!

A shy one Include her with a smile or casual comment directed her way. Be sensitive to what may be threatening to her. Perhaps she is thinking more carefully than some others! Ask her opinion on something she can handle. But never embarrass anyone by forced participation.



A dogmatic attitude, faulty understanding or a superficial view Let the group work out these tensions as much as possible. "What do others think about this view?" Or better yet, refer to parts of the text that give light. A correction made casually or with good humor can be disarming. Spend time with these persons.

Comparing religions or churches Avoid it. This is usually fruitless and moves the discussion away from the text. Worse, it can lead to arguments and/or bad feelings. If the group wants a discussion on that topic, suggest another time with preparation.



Strong difference of opinions This is not always bad. They can be stepping stones to better understanding of people themselves as well as the text. Let the group try to resolve it, keeping to the text as authority. Be aware of people's feelings, not just factual correctness.

Questions you can't answer You are not expected to have answers to all questions that people raise spontaneously. If no one can answer be honest. "I haven't thought about that before" can do wonders for the atmosphere. It can make others try harder. Ask someone to research important questions and report back.



2 Inviting Seekers to Trust Jesus Christ

A confrontation with the real Jesus of the Gospels should lead seekers to an inescapable truth. They must respond to God in one of two ways. Either they acknowledge and accept him as their Lord and Savior from their old life. Or they knowingly continue that old way of life. And not to decide is to decide.

Follow the Spirit's guidance. One day I was having a Bible study with two young men who were coming out of a drug abuse life. Don and Andy were interested in what Jesus could do for them. Andy was calm, but Don was physically uneasy. I thought, the Holy Spirit was really convicting him. Then he burst out, "Could I use your bathroom?" His uneasiness was the call of nature, not the call of the Holy Spirit. I had been too eager for a new convert.

On the other hand, in my first EBS at the University of Jakarta the top student in her class was present. Farisar had no Christian background. This was her first Bible study and she asked hard questions. At the end she leaned forward and said, "I'd like to become a Christian." My reaction was, No, you don't know enough. You need a few more sessions. But she persisted, and I knew the Spirit was indeed calling her to repent and receive God's new life.

A. Be ready during the study to help seekers take their first steps to God. If there are six people in your group, there can be six responses to the truth about Jesus. But you can know during the study who wants to get more personal with God.

Try it! Let's use Mark 4:35-41. (See page 4) *How will you proceed with each response?*

1. *Discussion question* It isn't always easy to trust God with our problems. As you struggle with your present problem, what do you want God to do?

Seeker's Response I wish he would stop my mother's nagging me about getting married.

Your response _____

2. *Discussion question* What do you find attractive about Jesus here? What puzzles you about him?

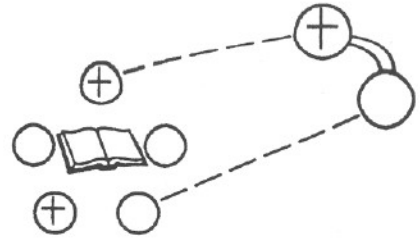
Seeker's response He did care about the disciples' problem and did something about it. But that was 2000 years ago. He's not here to help us. Besides he doesn't understand our modern problems in a high-tech culture.

Your response _____

B. Give opportunity to express themselves more personally.

This could be right after the study, or another unhurried appointed time.

Find a link from the study. Example after *Luke 19:1-10*: "That was a good question you asked (*How can someone as rich as Zaccheus change so radically after only one talk with Jesus?*) You seemed dissatisfied with the reasons offered." Let your friend express himself so you may learn what needs clarification or reinforcement.



Or consider a leading question that can open up a dialogue, especially after you have had several studies. For example, consider one of these openers.

We have been looking at Jesus as a unique person who made great claims. What might be the implications for you?

Have you considered the meaning of Jesus' life and death for yourself?

Is there any reason why you cannot trust Jesus Christ to save you now?

When they are ready to take their first step directly to God, explain what they must do and what they can expect. (Condensed from *Becoming a Christian* by John Stott)

1. I must **ACKNOWLEDGE** myself to be in God's sight a helpless sinner. Romans 3:22 says, *There is no distinction, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. I need a Savior to bring me back to God.*
2. I must **BELIEVE** that Jesus Christ died on the cross to be the very Savior I have just admitted I need. *The Son of God loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us back to God. (1 Peter 3:18)*
3. I must **COME** to Christ and claim my personal share in what he did for everybody. Jesus says, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. (Rev. 3:20)*

But this is not all 

We must make clear to the seeker that though there is everything to be gained in Christ Jesus, there is also a price to be paid. People can go through the above three steps and not realize that they must commit themselves to Jesus Christ as Lord. Show them that a Christian is a disciple of Jesus. There are practical choices that Jesus, their new Lord and Savior, asks them to make. (Otherwise, what kind of God is that?!)

1. I must REPENT of my sin. *Repent and believe*, Jesus said. (Mark 1:15) This must be genuine and thorough, including restitution if necessary.
2. I must SURRENDER to Christ. He wants to be my Lord as well as my Savior. *If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.* (Mark 8:34)
3. I must CONFESS Christ before others. I cannot be a secret disciple, but must show by my life and words I am a Christian. *So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father.* (Matt 10:32-33)

Help the seeker in a practical way to commit himself to Jesus Christ by speaking directly to him. He may be ready at that moment, or he may feel he wants to do it privately. This prayer can help.

Lord Jesus, I admit I have sinned in my thoughts, my words and my actions. I admit I haven't done the good things I could have done. I am sorry for my many sins. I now turn from my old way of life and ask for your new way of life. I thank you for giving your life on the cross to make all of this possible.

I now ask you to come into my life. Come in as my Savior to cleanse me. Come in as my Lord to control me. Come in as my Friend to stay with me. With your help I will serve you for the rest of my life. Amen.