

Helping people become Christians

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”

Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

Outline of talk by Lizzy Smallwood

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Below is an outline of what the talk covers. Please see the corresponding session guide for more guidance on structuring the rest of the training session.

Saying Jesus is my Lord

- Acknowledging Jesus as Saviour and Lord
- Modelling the Lordship of Jesus in our lives
- Jesus’ rightful claim on our life
- Repentance - turning around

The Holy Spirit’s role

- The Holy Spirit assures us
- The Holy Spirit transforms us.
- The Holy Spirit give us Gods good gifts

Trusting in Jesus

The Teaspoon Prayer

- Thank you
- Sorry
- Please

Transcript of talk by Lizzy Smallwood

You are free to use and adapt the content of this talk to suit your context.

So, we've shared the gospel with our friends. Maybe we finished The Word One to One with them, or we've taken them to an evangelistic event or we've lent them an evangelistic book, maybe all of the above. And blow me down, they're standing in front of us saying, what do I do to be saved? Don't we all long for that day? Well, we sort of long for it, but if you're anything like me, the prospect fills you with anxiety. What if I get this wrong? And don't explain it properly. Will I jeopardize their eternal salvation? Maybe that's just me. Thankfully, the answer to this question is no, we won't jeopardise their eternal salvation because we aren't God, but it is good to have an idea

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of what we would say to them, isn't it? Where we would point them to in the next step, in their journey to new life in Christ.

So in this session, we'll briefly think about three things that we would need to explain to our friend as they make their decision to follow Christ in response to his call, through the gospel. And the 3 questions we should want to answer for our friends are, what will it mean to say, Jesus is my Lord? What will be the role of the Holy Spirit in my new life as a believer? And what is the next step I need to take to put my trust in Jesus? So, number 1, what will it mean to say that Jesus is my Lord? It is such a privilege to help someone become a Christian and to help them understand what it means that Jesus is their Saviour and their Lord. And it's good to be clear with our friends that to put their trust in Jesus involves a demand as well as an offer.

Jesus offers us full and free salvation, but demands from us full and free submission. I suppose one danger in our evangelism is that we do sort of good news, bad news thing. You know, that thing where we tell people the good news about salvation first, and then we tell them about Christ being the Lord of their lives later, as if it's the bad news, like the small print on a dodgy contract. But if we only talk in terms of Jesus as our Saviour, we're in danger of perpetuating what's called syncretism. That's where people sort of just bolt Jesus onto their idolatrous, self-centred lives. Jesus, the precious Saviour, becomes just like a bonus, a nice life insurance policy for beyond the grave. But you and I know Jesus never hid from the crowd the cost of following him. He never lowered the standard or modified his claims of Lordship to get more bottoms on seats or, more accurately, grassy hillsides. In the book of Mark, Jesus, couldn't be clearer.

Then he called the crowd to him, along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it." That's Mark, chapter 8, verses 34 to 38. Now that isn't a small print statement, is it? That is as clear as the sky is blue. And whilst it's costly, the call to live with Jesus as your Lord is not really bad news at all, because it's the best way to live. And hopefully our friend will have seen that in our own lives. That we've been attractive models of what living with Christ as Lord looks like, as we've shared our lives with them, as we've been witnesses to them. The good news is that Jesus is both Lord and Saviour.

If you think about it, Jesus can't be our Saviour and bear our sin upon himself unless he is the perfect Lord God. He can't be gracious to us unless he is our Lord and judge. He can't bring us into his kingdom unless he's the King. It is so important in helping our friends across the line of faith that we check that they've understood Christ's rightful claim on their life. Not just what Christ has done for us, but what we owe him in terms of worship and obedience. And actually the beauty of giving our whole lives to him. Once we realise and acknowledge that without Christ, we're all slaves, but to sin and death, then we can see the wonderful truth that is submitting to Christ, we are actually set free. There was, in my humble opinion, a not famous enough Manchester Christian indie band back in the 90s called, The Dive and they sang this very handsome lyric, "Be a slave to God, on that day you'll see, the perfect paradox, Jesus sets you free."

Jesus calls us to follow him. And that, by definition, means not following our own path or the path the world would have us travel- the one that leads to death. He calls us to the fullness of life. So in coming to Jesus, we turn away from every thought, word, deed, and habit that is opposed to Christ. It's an inward change of mind, an attitude towards sin, that leads to a change of behavior. The

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biblical word, as you know, is repentance and you can decide the best way to illustrate that turning around to your friend and what it will mean for them in their circumstances. But we can reassure them that any perceived losses in this life are more than compensated for by the new eternal life Christ gives to those who follow him.

The missionary, Jim Elliot, had a wonderful summary of Jesus' words back in Mark's gospel when he said, "He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose." These words are made all the more poignant by the fact that he was murdered at the hands of the tribe that he was sharing the gospel with.

So it's good news that Jesus is Lord and Saviour who calls us to follow him. And it's also good news that Jesus doesn't just leave us to it, which is the second thing we need to explain to our friend. The work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. Jesus called him the helper and that's such a reassuring image as you start out on the Christian life. That Christ promises to be with his followers always by his Holy Spirit is one of the greatest promises of the Bible. And when someone becomes a Christian, the Spirit of Jesus, the Holy Spirit, comes to live with them.

And the work of the Holy Spirit is to give us the assurance that we are children of God. The apostle Paul writes, "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry 'Abba Father'. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God." Romans chapter 8, verses 15 and 16. So through his work in us, the Holy Spirit assures us deep in our hearts that we belong to Jesus. Despite how we may feel. He helps us trust Christ's promise of salvation. Paul also writes, "And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession- to the praise of his glory." That's Ephesians chapter 1, verses 13 and 14.

So anyone who hears and believes in Jesus is given the Holy Spirit to mark them out as belonging to Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee of their salvation. Another part of the Holy Spirit's work is that of inner transformation. As the believer reads God's word, the spirit teaches us, rebukes us, corrects us and trains us in righteousness. He produces the character of Jesus in our lives. And we can explain to our friend that this is called the fruit of the Spirit and consists of those beautiful qualities like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. And when the Spirit comes to live with us, as we cooperate with him, these qualities start to grow and show themselves in the way we react, the way we speak, the way we treat others. Of course, it's very rarely an overnight experience, but some people do see immediate change in their lives.

I heard a lovely story of a man who had recently put his trust in Christ and a cynical friend said, "Well, have you seen Jesus change water into wine yet?" To which the man replied, "No, but I've seen him turn beer into furniture and betting slips into food receipts." And then there's the Holy Spirit's work to give Jesus's followers gifts, which they use to tell others about Jesus and to build up Jesus's body, the church. We can reassure our friends that the Holy Spirit will equip them to talk about Jesus to others. And he will empower them for all the things that God has prepared for them to uniquely contribute to the life of their local church, perhaps in his good time, they may even serve him further afield.

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So, we've explained about the work of the Holy Spirit. Now we need to just answer that question of what our friend is to do to take that step of faith and to put their trust in Jesus as their Saviour and to submit to him. This verse in Romans sums it up beautifully that, "If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." That's Romans 10 verses 9 to 10.

There are countless prayers in the back of evangelistic booklets that help people to cross that line of faith. What we must remember is that this is the starting point in the beginning of a lifelong journey.

I like the simplicity of what is often called the teaspoon prayer, TSP. So your 'T' is thank you. Dear Lord, Jesus. Thank you for coming to earth. I believe you are the Son of God who died on the cross for my sin and rose from the dead on the third day. Thank you for bearing the guilt and punishment for my sin and giving me the gift of eternal life. Then you've got 'S' which is for sorry. I know that I'm a sinner. I know that I've lived my life ignoring and offending you. I know that I cannot save myself. I'm sorry and ask for your forgiveness. I turn from my old life and ask you to cleanse me of all my sin and give me your new life. And then we've got 'P' for please. Come into my heart and life by your Holy Spirit. I want to trust and follow you as my Lord and Saviour from this day on. By faith, I gratefully receive your gift of salvation. Amen.

Wow. It is such a privilege to see somebody come to that point where they cross the line of faith. But of course, it is a first step. And it's important that as time goes on, you journey with your friend. That's going to mean talking to them about things like getting baptised, joining a local church, beginning to read the Bible for themselves, learning to pray, and, at an appropriate time, sharing their faith with others.

But that moment, when someone crosses the line of faith, is something that we should all be earnestly praying for. And we should be praying for ourselves that if God should give us the opportunity, the privilege, to help someone when they turn to Christ and to help them grow in their faith, that we would be ready.

The training video is available for anyone to watch at apassionforlife.org.uk/fw6-view