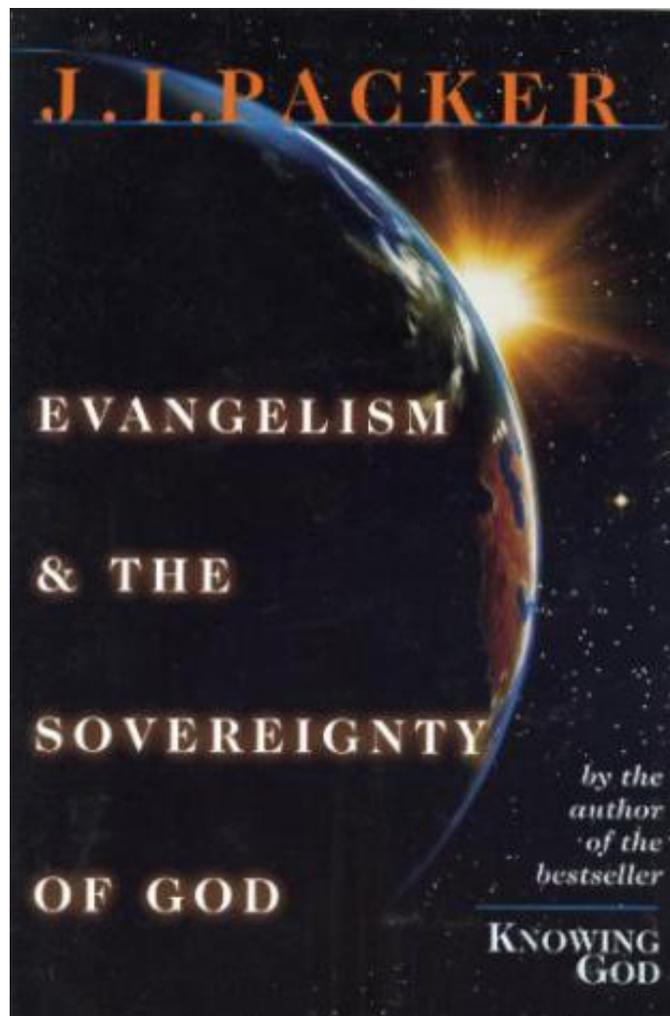


CHRIST  FELLOWSHIP

Growth Group Study Guide

based on J.I. Packer's
Evangelism & the Sovereignty of God



Introduction

As a church, we want to take the initiative in getting good resources into the hands of our people. And as a result, we are regularly recommending books for our Growth Groups to study. We have had a number of Growth Group leaders who have been helped in the past by our providing a discussion guide to help walk through the books that we have recommended. As a result, we have sought to provide more study guides for a few more of the books that we recommend and think would be beneficial for Growth Groups to study.

Why this book? It is our desire at Christ Fellowship Church that our church would grow especially in the area of new converts. That is to say that when we pray for growth at CFC, we pray especially for growth in new believers coming to faith in Jesus Christ through the evangelism of our present members. We want God to advance His kingdom and to save lost souls even through the gospel proclamation of the members of our church. In short, we want our church to be faithful in the work of evangelism. J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* is a Christian classic on the topic of evangelism. It is a thoughtful and balanced work that is forceful on the demand of all Christians to engage in the work of evangelism while at the same time pastorally gracious (that is, not heavy-handed). It is likely that no one in your group is a faithful at evangelism as they should be, or would like to be. And that is likely true for a variety of reasons, whether those reasons are theological, practical, or just plain sinful. Whatever the reason, Packer will press in and speak Biblical truth and show you a better way. We hope that this study motivates your Growth Group members in evangelism, and even helps to build a culture of evangelism within your group.

Now, onto some notes about this discussion guide and your discussion times. The reading assignment for some sessions is longer than others. The reason for that is the hope of grouping the main ideas together for sessions. As a result, some weeks will only involve reading one half of a chapter, while others have you reading one or two whole chapters. Of course, you can augment the schedule how you like. But with the nature of your regular Growth Group rhythm (study-prayer-study-fellowship), we recommend trying not to extend the study too much longer than 7 or 8 sessions, so as to keep you from reading the same book for 6 months.

For each session, there are included some important ideas highlighted from the reading. Sometimes they are simply sentences. Sometimes they are paragraphs. These are some of the main truths that we hope to stick in a reader's mind. As John Piper has said, "Books don't change peoples lives. Sentences do." As a result, the hope is to reinforce these important ideas in your discussion. So feel free to bat those thoughts around before jumping right into the questions. Or, you might choose to jump right into the questions and reference the main ideas as you go.

Of course, your discussion times need not be constrained to the content of these discussion guides. The questions are simply there to help you highlight some of the more important ideas and themes from the book. I always recommend asking the open-ended question at the end of the

session, "Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful that we have not yet discussed?" Your group may bring much better thoughts into the discussion that this guide ever could. That's great, even ideal. So use this as a resource, as a template, but also take your own insights and insights from your group members and run with those. Also, in addition to the questions listed in every session, you may want to make use of the Supplementary Application Questions given on page 5 of this document.

With each session, we have a section of Scripture to Memorize. These are simply three specifically chosen passages that have to do with the nature and motivation of evangelism. We would encourage you to impress upon your group a seriousness to commit to memorizing these passages. As a result, you'll have to commit to devoting a portion of time each week to quizzing each other on these verses. Of course, if the group sees the leader making serious strides to memorize these passages, they will be more motivated to do the same (not to pressure you!).

Finally, we have some suggestions for Prayer Time to wrap up your session. You can take or leave the suggestions as you see fit, but we do recommend that you spend some time after each discussion in concentrated prayer asking the Lord to take the truths discussed and plant them deep in one another's hearts. In addition, we recommend giving your group immediate action steps of praying for unbelievers with the aim of engaging those very people in evangelism. After all, the goal of this study is not just good discussion about evangelism, but more faithful practice in evangelism. We hope the prayer time helps to drive that.

Recommended Schedule

Session 1 - Foreword, Introduction, & Chapter 1

Session 2 - Chapter 2

Session 3 - Chapter 3.1

Session 4 - Chapter 3.2

Session 5 - Chapter 3.3

Session 6 - Chapter 4.1

Session 7 - Chapter 4.2

Outline of the Book¹

The following outline is taken from Andy Naselli and follows the logic and wording of the book. It can serve a resource to you as you read through the book, to help you understand the overall argument that Packer is forming. It may also be useful to you at times when you want to reach back and quickly summarize parts of the book.

I. Divine Sovereignty

- A. You already believe that God is sovereign in salvation because you give God thanks for your conversion.
- B. You already believe that God is sovereign in salvation because you pray for the conversion of others.

II. Divine Sovereignty and Human Responsibility

- A. The antinomy (mystery) of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in evangelism may lead to the temptation to an exclusive concern with human responsibility.
- B. The antinomy (mystery) of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in evangelism may lead to the temptation to an exclusive concern with divine sovereignty.

III. Evangelism

- A. What is evangelism?
 - 1. Illustration: Paul's account of the nature of his own evangelistic ministry is exemplary.
 - a. Paul evangelized as the commissioned representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Paul was Christ's steward.
 - 2) Paul was Christ's herald.
 - 3) Paul was Christ's ambassador.
 - b. Paul's primary task in evangelism was to teach the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - c. Paul's ultimate aim in evangelism was to convert his hearers to faith in Christ.
 - 2. Evangelism is not limited exclusively to special evangelistic meetings.

¹ Andy Naselli, "Summary and Outline of J.I. Packer's *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*", February 17, 2008. <http://andynaselli.com/summary-and-outline-of-j-i-packers-evangelism-and-the-sovereignty-of-god>

- a. There are many others ways of evangelism such as personal evangelism, home meetings, group Bible study, and regular Sunday services.
- b. Some believers are committed to the ways of evangelism above but do not have special evangelistic meetings (e.g., believers in NT times).
- c. A special meeting is evangelistic only if it teaches the truth of the gospel—not whether it appeals for decisions.

B. What is the evangelistic message?

- 1. The gospel is a message about God.
 - a. Conviction of sin is essentially an awareness of a wrong relationship with God.
 - b. Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sins: a sense of guilt for particular wrongs in the sight of God from which one needs to turn.
 - c. Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sinfulness: a sense of one's complete corruption and perversity in God's sight and one's consequent need of a new heart and new birth (i.e., a moral re-creation).
- 2. The gospel is a message about sin.
 - a. Conviction of sin is essentially an awareness of a wrong relationship with God.
 - b. Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sins: a sense of guilt for particular wrongs in the sight of God from which one needs to turn.
 - c. Conviction of sin always includes conviction of sinfulness: a sense of one's complete corruption and perversity in God's sight and one's consequent need of a new heart and new birth (i.e., a moral re-creation).
- 3. The gospel is a message about Christ.
 - a. We must not present the person of Christ apart from His saving work.
 - b. We must not present the saving work of Christ apart from His person.
- 4. The gospel is a summons to faith and repentance.
 - a. The demand is for faith as well as repentance.
 - b. The demand is for repentance as well as for faith.

C. What is the motive for evangelizing?

- 1. The primary motive for evangelizing is love to God and concern for His glory.
- 2. The secondary motive for evangelizing is love to man and concern for his welfare.

D. By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?

- 1. The last analysis of evangelism reveals that it has only one means, agent, and method.
 - a. Evangelism has only one means: the gospel of Christ explained and applied.
 - b. Evangelism has only one agent: Christ through His Holy Spirit.

- c. Evangelism has only one method: the faithful explanation and application of the gospel message.
- 2. Test all your evangelistic plans and practices with five questions.
 - a. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to impress on people that the gospel is a word from God?
 - b. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to promote, or impede, the work of the word in men's minds?
 - c. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey the whole doctrine of the gospel?
 - d. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey the whole application of the gospel?
 - e. Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey gospel truth in a manner that is appropriately serious?

IV. Divine Sovereignty and Evangelism

- A. The sovereignty of God in grace does not affect anything that we have said about the nature and duty of evangelism.
 - 1. The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the necessity of evangelism.
 - 2. The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the urgency of evangelism.
 - a. It is always wrong to abstain from doing good for fear that it might not be appreciated.
 - b. The non-elect in this world are faceless men as far as we are concerned.
 - c. Our calling as Christians is not to love God's elect and them only, but to love our neighbor irrespective of whether he is elect or not.
 - 3. The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the genuineness of gospel invitations or the truth of gospel promises.
 - 4. The belief that God is sovereign in grace does not affect the responsibility of the sinner for his reaction to the gospel.
- B. The sovereignty of God in grace gives us our only hope of success in evangelism.
 - 1. Successful evangelism without God's sovereign grace is impossible.
 - a. Man naturally and irresistibly opposes God.

- b. Satan actively keeps man in his natural state.
- 2. God's effectual calling makes successful evangelism possible and certain.
- 3. This confidence and certainty should have effects on our attitude when evangelizing.
 - a. This confidence should make us bold.
 - b. This confidence should make us patient.
 - c. This confidence should make us prayerful.

Supplementary Application Questions²

In addition to the questions listed in each session, these broad questions may be of use to you. Particularly if a person brings up a truth from the book that is not highlighted in the discussion guide, you might use these questions to further drive discussion into application.

- How can I apply this?
- Why have I not applied this better in the past?
- If I were to apply this, what changes would it require in my attitude or behavior?
- What aspect of God's character requires that I apply this truth to my life?
- What would be the long-term and far-reaching effects of applying this truth to my life?
- Can you think of an example from Jesus' life of how He applied this truth?
- Who do you know that applies this truth consistently?

² These questions are taken from Bob McNabb's book *Spiritual Multiplication in the Real World*. See Appendix 2, "Questions to Aid in Meditation" on page 225 of that book.

Session 1 - Foreword, Introduction, & Chapter 1

Important Idea: "The supposition seems to be that you cannot evangelize effectively unless you are prepared to pretend while you are doing it that the doctrine of divine sovereignty is not true. I shall try to make it evident that this is nonsense." (10)

Important Idea: "All Christians believe in divine sovereignty, but some are not aware that they do, and mistakenly imagine and insist that they reject it." (16)

Important Idea: "On our feet we may have arguments about [divine sovereignty], but on our knees we are all agreed." (17)

Questions for Discussion

- In your own words, what is the main point of contention that Packer is trying to address in the Introduction?

"There is abroad today a widespread suspicion that a robust faith in the absolute sovereignty of God is bound to undermine any adequate sense of human responsibility. Such a faith is thought to be dangerous to spiritual health, *because it breeds a habit of complacent inertia*. In particular, it is thought to paralyze evangelism by robbing one both of the motive to evangelize and of the message to evangelize with." (10)

- If you are honest with yourself, have you ever let a belief in God's sovereignty justify a habit of complacency when it comes to evangelism?

- Packer's first two points in Chapter 1 are about the certainty of God's sovereignty, which is proven in the topics of Christian prayer and the Christian's response to his/her salvation.

-Did any of the insights offered on those points strike you as significant?

-Did they challenge your thinking in any way?

-Which one was the most compelling to you?

- Turn in your Bibles to Luke 18:9-14, and read that parable as a group. How do the attitudes of the Pharisee and the tax collector compare to the attitudes described on page 13?

“As you look back [on your salvation]...you do not pat yourself on the back for having been at length mastered by the insistent Christ. You would never dream of dividing the credit for your salvation between God and yourself. You have never for one moment supposed that the decisive contribution to your salvation was yours and not God’s. You have never told God that, while you are grateful for the means and opportunities of grace that He gave you, you realize that you have to thank, not Him, but yourself for the fact that you have responded to His call. Your heart revolts at the very thought of talking to God in such terms.”

- Were you convicted by the way that Packer talked about how Christians ought to pray for the conversion of the lost on page 15?

-While you agree that this is how you should pray, do you?

-And how might praying in this earnest way actually propel you into evangelism?

- The interchange between Charles Simeon and John Wesley is a helpful dialogue on two supposedly opposing viewpoints on the sovereignty of God. In your own life, have you ever found yourself more excited to debate God’s sovereignty with other Christians that you are to share the gospel with non-Christians? What is the danger in this?

- “The aim of [this book] is to dispel the suspicion (current, it seems, in some quarters) that faith in the absolute sovereignty of God hinders a full recognition and acceptance of evangelistic responsibility, and to show that, on the contrary, only this faith can give Christians the strength that they need to fulfill their evangelistic task.” (8)

-While you may agree with this proposition in your “official theology” (what you say you believe), do you find that your “unexamined theology” (the way you live your life) disagrees with this?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Over the next couple of weeks, commit as a group to memorize Romans 10:13-15. Over the next couple of Growth Group meetings, intentionally make time to quiz each other on memorization (even on prayer or fellowship nights). Set a goal to have the whole passage memorized by the next *study* night (which would be two weeks away).

Romans 10:13-15 - [13] For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (ESV)

Prayer Time

In light of Packer’s emphasis on praying for the conversion of the lost, take some time to do that. Lead your group through an intentional way to do that, knowing that this prayer time will come at the end of each study time in this book. The first night might involve praying broadly for the lost. But challenge everyone in the group to come to the next study time with a specific name of a lost person that they and the group can pray for. Ideally, this lost person would be someone that the person who names him/her would actually have opportunities to share with (in other words, come with the name of a neighbor or co-worker or family member, not some distant figure).

Session 2 - Chapter 2

Important Idea: "We ought not in any case to be surprised when we find mysteries of this sort in God's Word. For the Creator is incomprehensible to His creatures. A God whom we could understand exhaustively, and whose revelation of Himself confronted us with no mysteries whatsoever, would be a God in man's image, and therefore an imaginary God, not the God of the Bible at all." (24)

Important Idea: "Evangelism is the inalienable responsibility of every Christian community, and every Christian." (26)

Important Idea: "This is the point that we have to grasp. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies. They are not uneasy neighbors; they are not in an endless state of cold war with each other. They are *friends*, and they work together. (36)

Questions for Discussion

- Before reading this chapter, had you ever really wrestled with the coherence of these two truths? Or did you instead stumble across a problem that you didn't know you had?

- In your own words, what is the difference between an antinomy and a paradox? And how is that different from a contradiction? (Also, if it is easier to use the word mystery in place of antinomy, go with that.)

-Did you find that distinction helpful? Why or why not?

- When we think about the two realities of God's sovereignty and human responsibility, how does framing those realities as what God does as King and what God does as Judge help you better grasp this?

-Or, put this way: Do you find it hard to accept God as King? (Probably not.)

- And do you find it hard to accept God as Judge? (Again, probably not. Most Christians sign off on these quite easily.)

- Are you more tempted toward an exclusive concern with human responsibility or divine sovereignty in your thinking, and especially in your thinking about evangelism?

"For where we are not consciously relying on God, there we shall inevitably be found relying on ourselves. And the spirit of self-reliance is a blight on evangelism. Such, however, is the inevitable consequence of forgetting God's sovereignty in the conversation of souls." (29)

"Unconcern and inaction with regard to evangelism are always, therefore, inexcusable. And the doctrine of divine sovereignty would be grossly misapplied if we should invoke it in such a way as to lessen the urgency, and immediacy, and priority, and binding constraint, of the evangelistic imperative. No revealed truth may be invoked to extenuate sin. God did not teach us the reality of His rule in order to give us an excuse for neglecting his orders." (33-34)

-Are you more tempted to rely on yourself in evangelism, or more tempted to hide behind God's sovereignty? Can you see how both lead to shying away from evangelism (you either fear making mistakes so much that you avoid evangelism, or you take a theological truth as a free pass on evangelism)?

- How does Packer suggest we keep from reacting against one extreme of error into the other?

-“By making it our business to believe both these doctrines with all our might, and to keep both constantly before us for the guidance and government of our lives.” (35)

-What practical steps can we take to keep both of these truths before us?

- “This is something that we must not forget. Christ’s command means that we all should be devoting all our resources of ingenuity and enterprise to the task of making the gospel known in every possible way to every possible person.” (33)

-What did you think about this statement?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

Take some time as a group to compile a list of the names of lost friends, co-workers, neighbors that the group members came up with. Again, ideally, this lost person would be someone that the person who names him/her would actually have opportunities to share with.

A suggestion would be to write every name on a poster board, and pull out that poster board each week as you pray for the people on it. The poster board helps keep the names before everyone from week to week.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Set aside some time to review the Scripture memory passage discussed last time. Have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on Romans 10:13-15. Use this as an opportunity to show gracious accountability in this discipline of memorizing Scripture.

Romans 10:13-15 - [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (ESV)

Session 3 - Chapter 3.1

I. "What is evangelism?" (pages 37-57)

Important Idea: "[It is incorrect] to define evangelism in terms of an effect achieved in the lives of others; which amounts to saying that the essence of evangelism is producing converts. But this cannot be right....Evangelism is man's work, but the giving of faith is God's." (40)

Important Idea: "The commission to publish the gospel and make disciples was never confined to the apostles. Nor is it now confined to the Church's ministers. It is a commission that rests upon the whole Church collectively, and therefore upon each Christian....Every Christian, therefore, has a God-given obligation to make known the gospel of Christ. And every Christian who declares the gospel message to any fellow-man does so as Christ's ambassador and representative, according to the terms of his God-given commission. Such is the authority, and such the responsibility, of the Church and of the Christian in evangelism." (46)

Important Idea: "Evangelizing, therefore, is not simply a matter of teaching, and instructing, and imparting information to the mind. There is more to it than that. Evangelizing includes the endeavor to elicit a response to the truth taught. It is a communication with a view to conversion. It is a matter, not merely of informing, but also inviting." (50)

Questions for Discussion

- How was your thinking about a definition of evangelism challenged by pages 38-39?
 - In what ways has your thinking about what constitutes evangelism fallen short of the full message necessary for evangelism? (i.e., are you guilty of assuming you've evangelized when you have mentioned truths about God or Jesus, but have not declared the fullness of the specific message of his substitutionary death on the cross and resurrection?)
- Packer states that Evangelism is a specific message with a specific application.
 - The Specific Message = The Gospel: God - Man - Christ
 - The Specific Application = Response: Trust in Christ - Turn from Sins - Follow Christ
 - Why is it not true evangelism if we leave off either the message or the application?

- “[It is incorrect] to define evangelism in terms of an effect achieved in the lives of others; which amounts to saying that the essence of evangelism is producing converts. But this cannot be right....Evangelism is man’s work, but the giving of faith is God’s.” (40)

-How is this freeing? How does this freedom spur you on in evangelism? How does it keep you humble and prayerful?

-But why must we also keep our aim on the conversion of those whom we share the gospel with, even if the results are not dependent on us?

“The results of preaching depend, not on the wishes and intentions of men, but on the will of God Almighty. This consideration does not mean that we should be indifferent as to whether we see fruit from our witness to Christ or not; if fruit is not appearing, we should seek God’s face about it to find out why. But this consideration does mean that we ought not to define evangelism in terms of achieved results.” (41)

“If you are not seeking to bring about conversions, you are not evangelizing.” (41)

- Packer uses Paul as an example of evangelism for us. He breaks it down like this:

-Paul’s Role (as an evangelist): A commissioned representative of the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Paul’s Task (as an evangelist): To teach the truth about the Lord Jesus Christ.

-Paul’s Aim (as an evangelist): To convert his hearers to faith in Christ.

- Do you see you calling as one and the same? (It is easy to think of the Apostle Paul as superhuman when it comes to ministry and evangelism. But Paul was a man, just like us.)

- Have everyone turn to 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Read it aloud.

-Look especially at Verse 20. Does Paul separate his responsibility to evangelize from ours? In other words, does he call himself to a higher standard than other followers of Christ when it comes to evangelism? What pronoun does he use when talking about God’s ambassadors? (the first person *plural* – WE).

- How is evangelism directly related to the second greatest commandment (to love your neighbor as yourself)?

-And how is it also related to the first greatest commandment (to love God with your whole heart/soul/mind/strength)?

- When Packer talked about Paul being considerate and adaptable in his gospel presentations, were there any people who came to mind who you might need to work on how you present the gospel to them? (This is not to say we edit the gospel and make it more palatable; it is to say that we can appropriately and wisely contextualize the gospel).

“Paul sought to save men; and because he sought to save them, he was not content merely to throw truth at them; but he went out of his way to get alongside them, and to start thinking with them from where they were, and to speak to them in terms that they could understand, and above all to avoid everything that would prejudice them against the gospel, and so put stumbling-blocks in their path.” (53)

-If there were any people that came to mind, take time to share ideas of how you might help each other do what Paul does in contextualizing a gospel presentation to them.

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

Pull out the group’s list of unbelieving friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Ask if anyone has any updates regarding any of the people on the list. Ideal updates would be things like details from a spiritual or even gospel conversation had with that person.

Devote some time to praying for those people, as well as to praying for your group members to have opportunities and boldness to share the gospel with these people.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Spend one more week reviewing the Scripture memory passage. Have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on Romans 10:13-15. However, challenge everyone to begin working on another passage this week. The new passage will be 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Our next goal will be to have this passage memorized by the next study night (2 weeks away).

Romans 10:13-15 - [13] For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to

preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 - [16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

Session 4 - Chapter 3.2

II. "What is the evangelistic message?" (pages 57-73)

The **Important Ideas** of this session will be included in the enumerated section under the first question.

Questions for Discussion

• Packer sums up the evangelistic message under the headings of 1) God, 2) Sin, 3) Christ, and 4) Response (Repentance+Faith). Take time to talk about what are important truths that need to be covered in our gospel presentations under each of those headings. Spend several minutes on each of these. Ask for Biblical truths and Scriptures that fit under each heading. Once discussion on each section has started to diminish, share the important idea from Packer and prepare to move to the next one.

1) Ask: As we share the gospel, what must we say about God?

An **Important Idea** from Packer under this heading: "We must know what it means to call God Creator before we can grasp what it means to speak of Him as Redeemer. Nothing can be achieved by talking about sin and salvation where this preliminary lesson has not in some measure been learned." (59)

2) Ask: As we share the gospel, what must we say about Sin?

An **Important Idea** from Packer under this heading: "Unless we see our shortcomings in the light of the law and holiness of God, we do not see them as *sin* at all. For sin is not a social concept [i.e. the things in our lives that we are simply uncomfortable or ashamed of]; it is a theological concept....We never know what sin really is till we have learned to think of it in terms of God, and to measure it, not by human standards, but by the yardstick of His total demands on our lives." (60)

3) Ask: As we share the gospel, what must we say about Christ?

An **Important Idea** from Packer under this heading: "We must not in presenting the gospel isolate the cross and its benefits from the Christ whose cross it was. For the persons to whom the benefits of Christ's death belong are just those who trust His Person, and believe, not upon His saving death simply, but upon *Him*, the living Savior." (66)

4) Ask: As we share the gospel, what sort of Response must we call for?

An **Important Idea** from Packer under this heading: "It needs to be said that faith is not a mere optimistic feeling, any more than repentance is a mere regretful or remorseful feeling. Faith and repentance are both acts, and acts of the whole man. Faith is more than just credence; faith is essentially the casting and resting of oneself and one's confidence on the promises of mercy which Christ has given to sinners, and on the Christ who gave those promises. Equally, repentance is more than just sorrow for the past; repentance is a change of mind and heart, a new life of denying self and serving the Savior as king in self's place. Mere credence without trusting, and mere remorse without turning, do not save." (71)

- What in the section on conviction of sin did you find helpful or clarifying? (see pages 62-63)

-How might we even use some of those categories to determine whether or not a so-called nominal Christian is actually a Christian?

- There are a few pages on the topic of the extent of the atonement. If you are not careful, and if you have a particularly theological member of your group who wants to debate this issue, try to get it back on track. I recommend simply using Packer's own words: "The extent of the atonement... has no particular bearing on the content of the evangelistic message at this particular point." (66). In other words, it won't help anyone to have that debate right now. So bring it back tactfully if it goes that way. (And you yourself resist the urge to steer it that way!) Packer does a good job of showing what we really ought to care about in this discussion:

"The basis on which the New Testament invites sinners to put faith in Christ is simply that they need Him, and that He offers Himself to them, and that those who receive Him are promised all the benefits that His death secured for His people. What is universal and all-inclusive in the New Testament is the invitation to faith, and the promise of salvation to all who believe. Our task in evangelism is to reproduce as faithfully as possible the New Testament emphasis." (68)

- "Repentance and faith are rendered matters of duty by God's direct command, and hence impenitence and unbelief are singled out in the New Testament as most grievous sins." (70)

-If this is true for non-Christians, then it must also be true for those who are Christians. And so, what must continually mark every Christian's life? (It should be obvious, but repent and trust Christ. Our whole lives must be marked by repentance and faith in Jesus.)

-Packer quotes the first of Martin Luther's 95 Theses, saying, "When our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, said, 'Repent,' He called for the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

-Packer also states poignantly: "The repentance that Christ requires of His people consists in a settled refusal to set any limit to the claims which He may make on their lives." (72)

- How did that statement strike you?

- "In our own presentation of Christ's gospel, therefore, we need to lay a similar stress on the cost of following Christ, and make sinners face it soberly before we urge them to respond to the message of free forgiveness." (73)

-Is this a normal part of your evangelism?

- Good and thorough theology will never keep us from evangelizing. Instead, good and thorough theology will always keep us evangelizing.

-In light of what we've covered in book so far, what precisely does that mean?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

Pull out the group's list of unbelieving friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Ask if anyone has any updates regarding any of the people on the list. Ideal updates would be things like details from a spiritual or even gospel conversation had with that person.

Devote some time to praying for those people, as well as to praying for your group members to have opportunities and boldness to share the gospel with these people.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Set aside some time to review the Scripture memory passage discussed last time. Have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on 2 Corinthians 5:16-21. Use this as an opportunity to show gracious accountability in this discipline of memorizing Scripture.

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 - [16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

Session 5 - Chapter 3.3

III. "What is the motive for evangelism?" & IV. "By what means and methods should evangelism be practiced?" (pages 73-91)

Important Idea: "There are, in fact, two motives that should spur us constantly to evangelize. The first is love to God and concern for His glory; the second is love to man and concern for his welfare." (73)

Important Idea: "It is a tragic and ugly thing when Christians lack desire, and are actually reluctant, to share the precious knowledge that they have with others whose need of it is just as great as their own." (77)

Important Idea: "The principle is that the best method of evangelism is the one which serves the gospel most completely. It is the one which bears the clearest witness to the divine origin of the message, and the life-and-death character of the issues which it raises. It is the one which makes possible the most full and thorough explanation of the good news of Christ and His cross, and the most exacting and searching application of it. It is the one which most effectively engages the minds of those to whom witness is borne, and makes them most vividly aware that the gospel is God's word, addressed personally to them in their own situation." (90-91)

Questions for Discussion

- Packer combines both the Great Commandment and the Great Commission in an important way. Have you ever thought about the connection between the Great Commandment and the Commission? Essentially, have you ever understood that in order to obey the Great Commandment, you must also obey the Great Commission?

-Packer writes, "The task laid upon the eleven [that is, the Great Commission in Matthew 28] is the Church's constant task. And if it is the Church's task in general, then it is your task and my task in particular. If, therefore, we love God and are concerned to glorify Him, we must obey His command to evangelize."

- On Pages 77-78, Packer talks at length about the strange, backwards, and especially sinful problem of Christians being reluctant to share the gospel with unbelievers. Did anything that he said in that section convict you?

-It might even be necessary to pause the discussion and pray along the lines that Packer suggests. "What we need to do is to ask for grace to be truly ashamed of ourselves, and to pray that we may so overflow in love to God that we shall overflow in love to our fellow-men, and so find it an easy and natural and joyful thing to share with them the good news of Christ." (78)

- “Evangelism is not the only task that our Lord has given us, nor is it a task that we are all called to discharge in the same way. We are not all called to be preachers; we are not all given equal opportunities or comparable abilities for personal dealing with men and women who need Christ. But we all have some evangelistic responsibility which we cannot shirk without failing in love both to our God and to our neighbor. To start with, we all can and should be praying for the salvation of unconverted people, particularly in our family, and among our friends and everyday associates. And then we must learn to see what possibilities of evangelism our everyday situation holds, and to be enterprising in our use of them.” (78)

- How is this statement freeing when it comes to evangelism?

- How is it also compelling when it comes to evangelism?

- What does it look like to be “enterprising” when it comes to evangelism?

- Of the five questions to ask of your evangelistic strategies, which one was the most clarifying?

- Which one was the most personally challenging?

- Did any of them show you your need to reform your evangelistic methods?

- 1) “Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to impress on people that the gospel is a word from God?” (87)

- 2) “Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to promote, or impede, the work of the word in men’s minds?” (87)

- 3) “Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey the whole doctrine of the gospel?” (88)

- 4) “Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey the whole application of the gospel?” (88)

- 5) “Is this way of presenting Christ calculated to convey gospel truth in a manner that is appropriately serious?” (89)

- A really helpful way to bring this home would be to have different people share about some of the people whom they have been praying for, and with whom they have been having gospel conversations.

-For instance, Jack could share about the person he has put on the group's list, giving some details about his relationship to this person, their life situation, etc., and the rest of the group could think about some ways to engage in gospel conversations with this person.

-The goal is to think through some of the categories given in the reading and to collectively come up with a faithful and compelling way to present the gospel to this person. You could do this with one or two of the people on the group's list, depending on how long it takes. (**Also, it may be wise to get out in front before the actual discussion and have a person or two ready to share when it comes to this time).

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

For this week's prayer time, consider praying along the lines of what Packer suggests toward the end of this session's reading: "What is needed is this: that we, who would speak for Christ [that is, evangelize], should pray constantly that God will put and keep in our hearts a sense of His greatness and glory, and of the joy of fellowship with Him, and of the dreadfulness of spending time and eternity without Him; and then that God will enable us to speak honestly, straightforwardly, and just as we feel about these matters." (90). Pray for these very things as a group.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

This week, make time to review both of the last two Scripture memory passages (Romans 10:13-15 and 2 Corinthians 5:16-21). The first one might be a little dusty in people's minds, so show each other grace as they reach back into their memory bank. To review the Scripture memory passage, have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on the passages.

In addition, let everyone know that you will try to take on one additional memory passage for the next study meeting. That passage will be Matthew 9:35-38.

Romans 10:13-15 - [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." [14] How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? [15] And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" (ESV)

2 Corinthians 5:16-21 - [16] From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. [17] Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. [18] All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (ESV)

Matthew 9:35-38 - [35] And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (ESV)

Session 6 - Chapter 4.1

I. "The sovereignty of God in grace does not affect anything that we have said about the nature and duty of evangelism." (pages 92-106)

Important Idea: "If we would be biblical in our outlook, we have to make room in our minds for the thoughts of divine sovereignty and of human responsibility to stand side by side." (93)

Important Idea: "Now, our question is: supposing that all things do in fact happen under the direct dominion of God, and that God has already fixed the future by His decree, and resolved whom He will save, and whom not—how does this question bear on our duty to evangelize?" (95)

Important Idea: "The principle that operates here is that the rule of our duty and the measure of our responsibility is God's revealed will of precept [His law], and not His hidden will of event [His plan]. We are to order our lives by the light of His law, not by our guesses about His plan." (96)

Questions for Discussion

*A note to discussion leaders: This one of the more theological of the sections of reading. It could be easy to get off in some unanswerable tangents. So be mindful of trying to bring discussion back to the main point: that we have no excuses (especially theological ones) for neglecting God's commands to evangelize.

- In your own words, how is it impossible to use God's sovereignty as an excuse to avoid evangelism? (Even if you wouldn't say it out loud, you might think it, or at least practice it).

- "In God's ordering of things, therefore, evangelism is a necessity if anyone is to be saved at all." (98)

- Remember our very first set of memory verses in Romans 10? What do they have to say about this?

- How does Deuteronomy 29:29 give you everything you really need to know regarding the antinomy (mystery) between God's sovereignty in election and man's responsibility in evangelism?

Deuteronomy 29:29 - [29] The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. (ESV)

"It is none of our business [knowing who is elect], and should make no difference to our action." (99)

- If you are honest with yourself, what is the main factor that keeps you from evangelism?

-A failure to grasp evangelism's necessity? A failure to grasp evangelism's urgency? A failure to love your (even non-elect) neighbor? The fear of man?

- For those who would consider themselves more interested in emphasizing God's sovereignty (or even hiding behind God's sovereignty as an excuse for not doing evangelism) what will you do with Romans 10:13? Or with 1 Timothy 2:3-4?

Romans 10:13 - [13] For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." (ESV)

1 Timothy 2:3-4 - [3]...God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (ESV)

- What piece of reasoning in this chapter did you find the most helpful in compelling you toward in evangelism?

- "Unbelief in the Bible is a guilty thing, and unbelievers cannot excuse themselves on the grounds that they were not elect....The Bible never says that sinners miss heaven because they are not elect, but because they 'neglect the great salvation,' and because they will not repent and believe....God gives men what they choose, not the opposite of what they choose." (105)

-What about this is challenging to understand? But even so, is it true?

- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

Pull out the group's list of unbelieving friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Ask if anyone has any updates regarding any of the people on the list. Ideal updates would be things like details from a spiritual or even gospel conversation had with that person.

Devote some time to praying for those people, as well as to praying for your group members to have opportunities and boldness to share the gospel with these people.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Set aside some time to review the Scripture memory passage discussed last time. Have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on Matthew 9:35-38. Use this as an opportunity to show gracious accountability in this discipline of memorizing Scripture.

Matthew 9:35-38 - [35] And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. [36] When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. [37] Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; [38] therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." (ESV)

Session 7 - Chapter 4.2

II. "The sovereignty of God in grace gives us our only hope of success in evangelism." (pages 106-126)

Important Idea: "Some fear that belief in the sovereign grace of God leads to the conclusion that evangelism is pointless, since God will save His elect anyway, whether they hear the gospel or not. This, as we have seen, is a false conclusion based on a false assumption....So far from making evangelism pointless, the sovereignty of God in grace is the one thing that prevents it from being pointless. For it creates the possibility--indeed, the certainty--that evangelism will be fruitful. Apart from it, there is not even a possibility of evangelism being fruitful. Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, evangelism would be the most futile and useless enterprise that the world has ever seen, and there would be no more complete waste of time under the sun than to preach the Christian gospel." (106)

Important Idea: "For God does what man cannot do. God works by His Spirit through His Word in the hearts of sinful men to bring them to repentance and faith. Faith is a gift of God....So, too, is repentance....You and I cannot make sinners repent and believe in Christ by our words alone; but God works faith and repentance in men's hearts by His Holy Spirit." (112-113)

Questions for Discussion

- Have you ever thought about the impossibility of the success of evangelism apart from God's sovereign grace? Were you struck by Packer's (and the apostle Paul's) description of our total fallenness and inability to hear truth apart from God's grace? (see pages 106-108)
- Do you ever find yourself discouraged or disillusioned in the fruitfulness of evangelism? If so, did any of Packer's four cures on page 112 speak to your feelings?
- "You and I will never write off anyone as hopeless and beyond the reach of God if we believe in the sovereignty of His grace."
 - Is there anyone you have written off as hopeless and beyond the reach of God?
 - How is that more of an indictment on your low view of grace than your low view of that person?

- “The idea that a single evangelistic sermon, or a single serious conversation, ought to suffice for the conversion of anyone who is ever going to be converted is really silly.” (121)

-In what ways were you convicted by what Packer had to say about patience?

- “It is God’s intention that [His omnipotence to save and our impotence save] should drive us to prayer....It is His way regularly to withhold His blessings until His people start to pray....If you and I are too proud or too lazy to ask, we need not expect to receive. This is the universal rule, in evangelism as everywhere. God will make us pray before He blesses our labors in order that we may constantly learn afresh that we depend on God for everything.” (122)

-Do you agree with this? If not, why not?

-If so, are you faithful to practice prayer in this way? What steps could you take to make prayer more your practice of prayer match your belief regarding prayer?

- “There are two sides to the evangelistic commission. It is a commission, not only to preach, but also to pray; not only to talk to men about God, but also to talk to God about men. Preaching and prayer must go together.” (125)

-Why then might it be important to enlist the prayer support of people in our Growth Group when it comes to people we intend to share the gospel with?

-What steps could you take in your group to better ask for prayer support in evangelism?

-And How might the regular asking for prayer continue to spur others in the group on in evangelism?

-Consider devoting time in your regular Growth Group meetings to praying for the preaching of the gospel in CFC worship services.

- Upon concluding this study, how has your understanding and practice of evangelism been challenged?
- Upon concluding this study, how has your understanding and practice of prayer been challenged?

- Have the memory verses that we've worked on in this study helped spur you on in evangelism and prayer? If so, in what ways?
- Was there anything else from the reading that you found helpful, challenging, or even wrong that we have not yet discussed?

Prayer Time

Pull out the group's list of unbelieving friends, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Ask if anyone has any updates regarding any of the people on the list. Ideal updates would be things like details from a spiritual or even gospel conversation had with that person.

Devote some time to praying for those people, as well as to praying for your group members to have opportunities and boldness to share the gospel with these people.

Scriptures to Memorize as a Group

Set aside some time to review the Scripture memory passage discussed last time. Have people pair up in groups of 2 or 3 and quiz each other on Matthew 9:35-38. Use this as an opportunity to show gracious accountability in this discipline of memorizing Scripture.

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Conclusion

Our hope is that this book has helped spur on the members of your group in their practice of evangelism. We also hope that the regular practice of praying for unbelievers that the members of your group are in relationship with becomes a regular part of your weekly Growth Group meetings. There are some very simple ways you can carry over parts of this study into your regular Growth Group rhythm to help make evangelism an important focus of your group. The simplest way would be to consistently ask for names of unbelieving friends, co-workers, neighbors, and family members during your regular prayer times. For instance, if at the end of your night together you ask for prayer requests, you could also specifically ask for people that the members of the group are seeking to share the gospel with. This keeps the evangelistic task regularly on the minds of your group members. You might also even maintain the list that the group started keeping earlier in the study. Regularly pray for the members on that list, and regularly add names to it. And if, by God's grace, one of the members of the list comes to know the Lord, be sure to share that with the group for encouragement.

You could also plan to make one of your fellowship nights from time to time and intentional night of inviting unbelievers to your gathering. This puts people out there to be regularly seeking evangelistic relationships. And hopefully it provides an opportunity to even proclaim the gospel at one of these fellowship gatherings, whether in a whole group setting or even in one-on-one conversations. There are many other ways that this could be done.

Packer writes, "We all have some evangelistic responsibility which we cannot shirk without failing in love both to our God and to our neighbor. To start with, we all can and should be praying for the salvation of unconverted people, particularly in our family, and among our friends and everyday associates. And then we must learn to see what possibilities of evangelism our everyday situation holds, and to be enterprising in our use of them." (78)

How can you lead your group to embrace their evangelistic responsibility moving forward? And how can you help one another to be enterprising in their use of the opportunities presented to them?