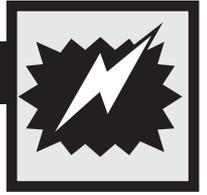


take it to God



The clearest Gospel message and the best communication skills are no substitute for heartfelt prayer and Spirit empowerment. Unless God draws your friend, and her heart is soft to respond, she will never come to faith. God doesn't want anyone to perish, and we shouldn't either (2 Peter 3:9). So ask God to break your heart for what breaks His, and really stand in the gap through prayer for those who don't personally know Jesus. So, grab one or two of the people around you, and spend the next ten minutes praying by name for those God has placed on your heart. Whether your witness is met with warmth or persecution, pray for Spirit-filled boldness.

“Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak Your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.’ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.” (Acts 4:29-31)

recapping



- ☞ What were you most inspired or challenged by in the devotions from the last week?
- ☞ Any stories to share as you pointed people to Jesus since the last session?
- ☞ How did you go with the three levels of challenge to share your story?

try this Sharing Your Story



Last week we explored how to tell your story. The challenge was to capture the central theme of transformation in your life, and simply **tell your story in under 100 words**. Even in a group of 20, at 45 seconds each, this activity should fly by, and be a huge encouragement as you hear the unique way God has met each person in the room. **For the next 15 minutes, as one big group, take it in turns to share why Jesus is good news to you. What difference does Jesus make?** (And if you haven't prepared anything, quickly jot a few ideas below, and take a risk by sharing off the cuff.)

truth time



- ☞ How much do I care if my friends hear about Jesus? How prepared am I to be the one to share?

Couldn't care less /
Not planning to share

Nothing matters more /
I'll do whatever it takes

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

- ☞ How valid are the main reasons I give for not sharing more?
- ☞ Do I feel sufficiently equipped to start intentionally pointing people to Jesus? If not, what am I still lacking, and how can I take responsibility for my own growth?

“The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and those who win souls are wise.” (Proverbs 11:30)

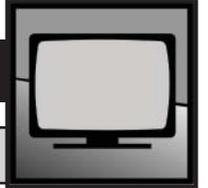
 *Optional mid session break point*

8 Steps to Being an Intentional Sign Writer

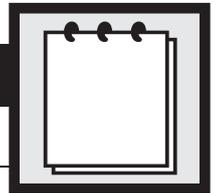
****Remember, after each step, flick to the back of this manual (pp. 70-71) and fill out the two-page chart entitled "SIGN STRATEGY: my plan for pointing people to Jesus."****
(You may want to pencil it in for now, as after more thought and prayer the plan may change.)

Video: #1 Learn

❖ Use it or lose it ... use what you've learned, and make a plan to keep growing



my thoughts



Step 1: Learn



Have a quick flick through the appendices now. What stands out? It could be something you need to do, listen to, study, read, or practice. Whatever it is, go to the "SIGN STRATEGY" page and pencil something in as a next step to becoming a more effective Sign.

Video: #2 Pray

❖ Ask God for 5 people in your normal networks, to regularly pray for



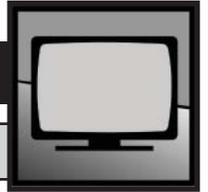
Step 2: Pray

Come up with a list of **five people from your normal networks** (e.g., family, work, university, school, sports groups) who you feel God brings to mind. Write their names down here ...

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Keep praying continually for these five people, that their hearts would be responsive to God's invitation to join him in The Big Story. Your commitment is to **pray for these people everyday**.

Are there particular needs for each person? And when and where in the day works well as a regular prayer time? Pencil in your action plan on the "SIGN STRATEGY" page.

Video: #3 Serve

❖ Your Sign is only as good as your capacity to love. “Witness” is always sacrificial

Step 3: Serve

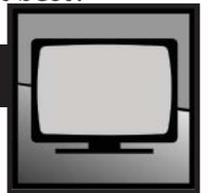
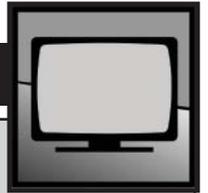
Being a Sign is always sacrificial. No wonder the Greek word for “witness” is *marturia*, the root word from which we derive the English word martyr. The most powerful witnesses are those who have died to their own agenda, and are living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) or literal martyrs for Christ:

“They triumphed over Satan by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony [marturia]; they did not love their lives so much as to shrink from death.” (Revelation 12:11)

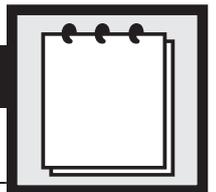
- ☞ What are some ways you have helped people in the past that have made a lasting impression on them? Has this helped make in-roads for sharing? If not, was your effort wasted? Why?

What is a practical way I can serve each person, giving them a taste of God’s love? ***Pencil in your action plan on the “SIGN STRATEGY” page.***

If you took your call to serve seriously, what might it look like? Perhaps Coral’s story says it best?

Video: God's Love in the Dog Park**Video: #4 Extend**

❖ We must “Go!” and evacuate the Christian bubble, spending more time building real friendships with those outside the Church, also forming networks to reach those on the margins ... friendship evangelism by itself will never achieve the Great Commission

my thoughts**Step 4: Extend**

- ☞ Be honest ... how many genuine friendships do you have with those outside the Church? What are you doing to foster these friendships? How many nights out a week do you have for Church events, and how much time do you spend (not at work) investing into those not following Jesus?
- ☞ What would it take to change this pattern? The time has to come from somewhere: what are you prepared to give up? What’s the reward for doing life differently?
- ☞ What are natural ways I can spend more time with those I’m trying to reach? Which networks (work, family, sport, hobbies, etc.) could I be more intentional with to reach those outside the church? And what totally new activity will help me “Go” to people unlike me, on the margins?
Pencil in your action plan on the “SIGN STRATEGY” page.

Video: #5 Bridge



- ❖ Asking insightful questions, giving gifts (e.g. books), tickets, or invitations can help

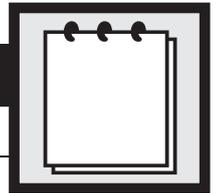
Step 5: Bridge

- What authors, books, artists, CDs, and gifts generally have you found to connect well with friends outside the Church?
- Besides, questions, gifts, tickets, and invitations, are there any other sorts of bridges you can think of? How have you used these kinds of bridges in the past? What's worked the best?



Have a think through which of these approaches would be best for each of your five people (maybe multiple bridges for some?) and be generous in reaching out to them—there is no better way to invest time and money. **Pencil in your action plan on the "SIGN STRATEGY" page.**

my thoughts



Video: #6 Share



- ❖ Look for ways to share something of your story, and analogies to make it clear

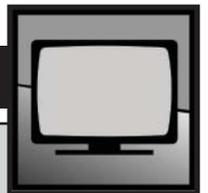
Step 6: Share



What angle on your story best fits each person's life? Is there a particular analogy that addresses their key confusion about, or objection to, the Gospel? How will you facilitate opportunities to tell *The Big Story*? **Pencil in your action plan on the "SIGN STRATEGY" page.**

- Turn to someone else and share the one experience in your life that has given you the greatest opportunity to share about God.

Video: #7 Connect



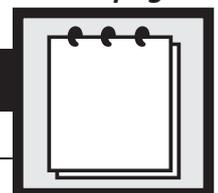
- ❖ Link them into your networks, as many prefer to *belong before they believe*. That said, be salt and light, in but not of the world to be an effective witness

Step 7: Connect



For each person you're trying to reach, what might be the best program to invite them to, or community to connect them with? **Pencil in your action plan on the "SIGN STRATEGY" page.**

my thoughts

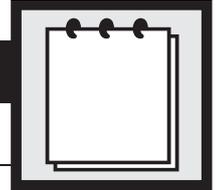


Videos: #8 Challenge



- ❖ Repentance is the gateway to reconciliation with God, so don't be afraid to ask if they're ready to commit to God: *Is there anything right now stopping you from getting right with God and accepting Jesus as Lord (Boss/King/Ruler/Master) of your life? If not, would you like to give your life to Jesus right now?* ... admit need, turn from sin, trust in Christ's sacrifice and resurrection, and invite Jesus to have control through His Spirit

my thoughts

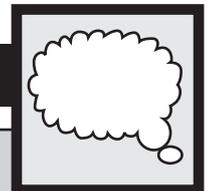


Step 8: Challenge



For each person you're trying to reach, if or when the time comes that you challenge them to make a commitment, note their response, and pray into where they're at. And if they positively respond, definitely record the date they came to faith—it's their most important birthday! **Pencil this in your action plan on the "SIGN STRATEGY" page.**

big ideas (wrap up)



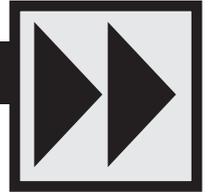
- ❖ This is the last video clip, so thanks for the journey, and be sure to read "closing thoughts" on p. 44

* Well written Signs always get read. But to get the message out, you need a clear plan

* Your SIGN STRATEGY involves 8 key steps:

- » LEARN: What's your next step to becoming a more effective Sign?
- » PRAY: Each day, lift up your five people to God, and ask for boldness to share
- » SERVE: Your Sign is only as good as your capacity to love
- » EXTEND: Free up time to reach those outside Church and on the margins
- » BRIDGE: Whether a question, gift, or invitation, find an inroad to go deeper
- » SHARE: Tell the Gospel via a timely story or analogy that connects with your friend
- » CONNECT: Radical love and inclusive community helps them belong before they believe
- » CHALLENGE: Never be afraid to sensitively ask for their response

where to from here?



Remember, some will respond positively to the Gospel, others will not. **Success in evangelism is sharing the good news of the Kingdom, in the power of the Spirit, and leaving the result up to God.** We are simply a Sign pointing people to Jesus, doing whatever we can to remove obstacles that keep people from understanding and receiving the message. If someone rejects the Gospel, and even you in the process, continue loving and praying for them. But know that there is no greater honour than to be an agent of reconciliation, an ambassador of the Kingdom—so be bold and step out for the glory of God (Matthew 5:10-16; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 6:18-20).

Over these three sessions we've covered a lot of ground. In particular, you've learned how to Sign Post *The Big Story* of the Gospel, the kind of Sign Language that will cross communication barriers so your message and testimony make sense, and in this session, how to be Sign Writer who is actively praying and caring for, and intentionally sharing with five people God has laid on your heart. *But where to from here?*

Just do it! Being a witness is not complicated. Oftentimes we keep putting it off until we've read just one more book, heard just one more sermon, or felt convicted just one more time. But being a witness right now is our identity in Christ; it's what we were saved to do.

*“But you are the ones **chosen by God**, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, **God’s instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you—from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.**”*

(1 Peter 2:9-10, MSG.)

Therefore, I'm not ashamed of the Gospel:

“It's news I'm most proud to proclaim, this extraordinary Message of God's powerful plan to rescue everyone who trusts Him.” (Romans 1:16, MSG.)

There are a few **next steps**, though, that help solidify what you've learned and put it into practice:

- Go back and **re-read through these notes**. If there are any activities or challenges you never tried (especially learning how to share *The Big Story* and putting together your story in under 100 words, sharing it online or with a friend), then give them a go.
- Work through the last **5 devotions** following this session, one per week day. Really ask God to open your heart and speak through His Word, as you learn from some stellar examples of being a Sign of the Kingdom, pointing people to Christ.
- A community wide event like **“Church in the Park”** is a great way to enact Sign. So invite some friends along as an outreach opportunity, and pray that God would powerfully use this event. The service could centre on one last SIGN: **The Cook: Call the Hungry to Get the Party Started!** An easy way to live this Sign is to volunteer as a cook, or throw in some money to provide a great meal!
- As a small-group, you might like to extend this series, finishing whatever you skipped over. Check out Bill Hybels' *Just Walk Across the Room*, which is excellent follow-up material. At the very least, consider taking **one more week to wrap up SIGN**, where you each share something you've learned, something you were challenged by, and the **best opportunities you've had to point people to Jesus** over the course of the series. Get into the habit as a group of regularly praying for the people you're trying to reach, and increasingly focus your group outwards to reach the kind of people on the margins for whom Jesus' heart beat. Then, **share the excitement together of seeing those you love enter the Kingdom.**

Some Closing Thoughts ...

Well, I hope the time you've spent journeying through SIGN has been worth it. Each and every believer is called to be a Sign that points people to Jesus. But I hope you've picked up across this series that while we have the same good news to share, each of our Signs will look different. As the Gospel seed takes root in your life and grows, may a thousand different flowers bloom, each in its own way reflecting the beauty of Christ and His Kingdom. Paint, write, create, design, analyse, love, serve, ask, cook, excite, captivate ... however you do it, make the most of every opportunity to embody and share the Gospel. I know a guy who is a Sign through the way he designs shoes (<http://www.fluevog.com/>). Everyone's drawn by the funky styles and excellent craftsmanship, and intrigued by the messages imprinted on the rubber base: "Your sole directs your destiny"! My vision is that rather than evangelism being one man behind a microphone, we might instead contribute to a world where everywhere people look, they can't but help see Signs pointing them to Jesus ... countless parables embodying the Kingdom. So, *what's your Sign?*

One last thought: *evangelism can be discouraging*. You pray, you care, you share, and still you may see little fruit. Don't fret. Your efforts are never wasted. I've heard that on average it takes around four years and twenty encounters with the Gospel before someone responds. Someone sows, another waters, but God makes the seed grow (1 Corinthians 3:6-8)—so you're one link in a long chain, a small part of the whole. Be faithful in your calling. And over time, your labour will bear fruit. As it says in Psalm 126:5-6,

*"Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.
Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow,
will doubtless return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them."*

But remember this, "Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously" (2 Corinthians 9:6). **So go crazy and make your seed, and your Sign, count.**

God bless,

Your brother in Christ and co-labourer in the Kingdom of God,

Dave Benson

One More Sign ... The COOK

(Luke 14:12-24; 15:11-31; Revelation 22:1-5, 17)

Remember the Master who prepared a great banquet and sent his messengers to deliver the invitations? Many were asked, but most were preoccupied; so the summons extended to take in anyone with a grumbling stomach, wanting a feed. *Who are you inviting to God's feast? And what are you offering as an entrée?* Our Kingdom cooking offers a taste of the great banquet where Jesus Himself waits the table; all are invited, but only the hungry come home. Elder brothers resist as they're full on self-righteousness. Younger brothers resist as they're full on sin's pleasures for a season. But when our best efforts look like pig-slop, it's time to taste God's grace. **So if you want to point people to Jesus, then be a COOK... Call the hungry to get the party started.**

☞ What challenged you most in this message?

☞ How would your life and witness look different if you took on the Sign of the **Cook**?