

# *The "E Word"*

Further Exploration on the "Evangelism for Non-Evangelists" Webinar Series

## **Group Study Guide**

by Rev. Dr. Heather Lear

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***A CATALYST to EQUIP Disciples to SHARE the GOOD NEWS of Jesus Christ***

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## **HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE**

This study guide is designed to be a companion to the 3-week “E-Word” webinar series. The recorded sessions are available on The Foundation for Evangelism website at:

<https://foundationforevangelism.org/2019/12/05/the-e-word-webinar-series/>. The videos are available online and for download. (If you wish to download videos to use off-line, select the “Vimeo” icon on the bottom right corner of the video. Once the page loads, click the “Download” link below the video and details.)

This series was recorded in November 2019 with a small live virtual audience. Each session features a teaching session from a current or past E. Stanley Jones Professor of Evangelism, followed by a time of dialogue and questions from participants. This guide offers 60-minute and 90-minute options to accommodate the scheduling of both Sunday morning and mid-week gatherings. Depending on the level of engagement and discussion, the longer option could be broken up into two sessions.

## **WHO WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS STUDY?**

Sunday school classes, small groups, church leadership, and ministry teams would all benefit from this study. But remember, evangelism is not the job of a single committee or group within the church, so this resource would also serve as a great congregation-wide study. As disciples of Jesus Christ, all of us have the privilege of being bearers of the good news. While the questions are open-ended and can be used in most contexts, leaders may change or adapt questions for your ministry setting.

## **JOIN THE DISCUSSION ONLINE**

If you'd like to share your responses or see what others are doing in their congregation, join our "The E Word" Facebook group at [www.facebook.com/groups/779464832537500/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/779464832537500/).

## INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

In their book, *Transforming Evangelism*, two of the ESJ Professors, Hal Knight and Doug Powe, define evangelism this way:

*Evangelism is our sharing and inviting others to experience the good news that God loves us and invites us into a transforming relationship through which we are forgiven, receive new life, and are restored to the image of God, which is love.<sup>1</sup>*

Their definition is broad, compelling, and transformational. Yet evangelism is often understood and practiced in narrow ways. As you begin this study, use these questions to get a baseline for your group's understanding of and comfort level with evangelism.

- 1. How would you define evangelism?**
- 2. What practices come to mind when you think of evangelism?**
- 3. What are your current individual and congregational practices of evangelism?**

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<sup>1</sup> *Transforming Evangelism*, p.17.

## SESSION 1: Faith Sharing & “Why Jesus?” with Dr. Jack Jackson

Watch the Video at <https://vimeo.com/375732444>

(For a 1-hour session, watch the first 30 minutes of the recording.)

### *Discussion questions:*

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1. Dr. Jackson states that he has never heard a story as good as the story of Jesus.

***What is so good about Jesus that you choose to identify with, follow, and share the story with others?***

2. 2 Corinthians 5:20 declares that we are Christ’s ambassadors.

***What does that mean to you?***

3. In Galatians 1, Paul proclaims that it was God’s plan to reveal Jesus to him so that he could proclaim him among the Gentiles.

***How has Jesus been revealed in your life?***

4. Dr. Jackson states that most of evangelism in the past century has centered on justification and seeking an immediate response for the person/people hearing the Gospel message.

***Was the idea of awakening new to you?***

***Have you understood evangelism to require an immediate response?***

5. Dr. Jackson offers that we are invited to keep telling the story and respond throughout our lives.

***How does your congregation help people hear and respond during all stages of their faith journey?***

6. Dr. Jackson uses the acronym of **REVEAL** to explain the steps of faith sharing, with the first being...

**EXAMINE:**

***Have you ever mapped out your faith story and development?*** If not, consider making a timeline of your life and include the moments, people, and places of decision that have brought you to this point.

**LISTEN:**

Being a disciple is not just about agreeing to a set of theological statements or principles.

***How do you practice listening to others' stories, hopes, and struggles?***

***How does your congregation respond to what they are hearing from the community?***

**VERIFY:**

***What are examples of ways our lives can verify the Gospel?***

***How have our lives been transformed and made different because we said "yes" to Jesus?***

**ANNOUNCE:**

***Does your congregation intentionally link good works to the Gospel?***

***Would people serving in your mission opportunities be able to articulate why the church is serving and doing good, and how their motivation is different from a civic organization?***

**ENCOURAGE:**

***How do we encourage and create space for people to listen for the Holy Spirit both individually and in our work as a congregation?***

If your group meets for 90 minutes or longer, watch the remaining portion of the recording and share any responses you have to the Q & A session.

## SESSION 2: Evangelism & Discipleship with Dr. Lacey Warner

Watch the Video at <https://vimeo.com/375733492>

(For a one-hour session, please watch the recording until the 24:08 mark.)

### *Discussion questions:*

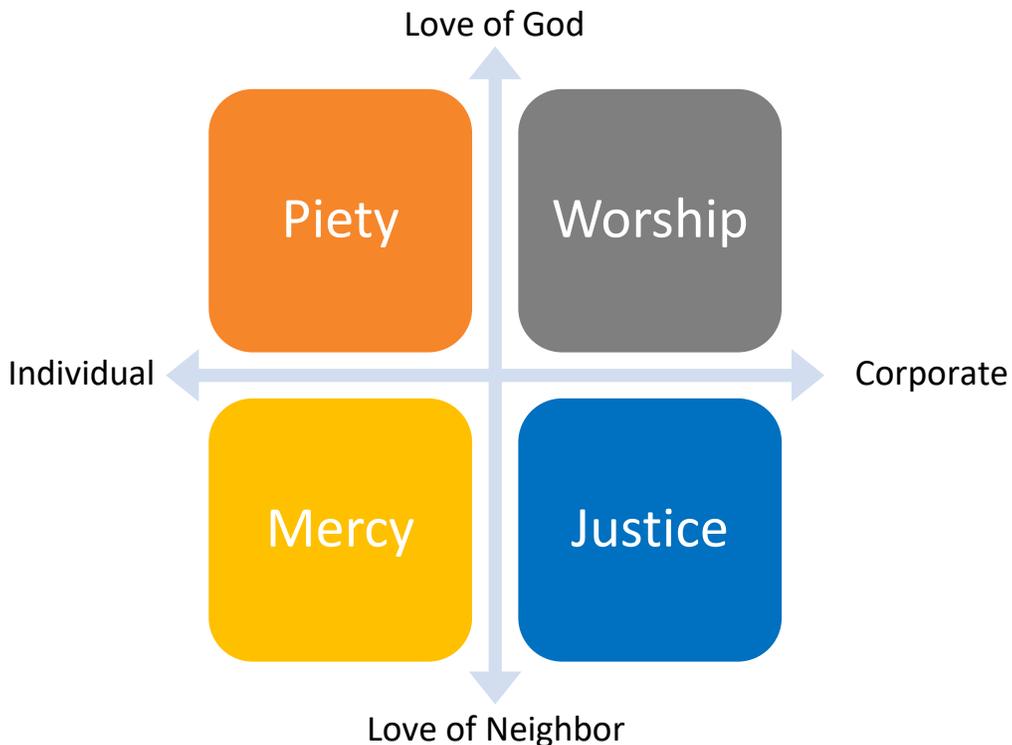
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- 1. Who is currently responsible for evangelism in your congregation?**
- Dr. Warner quotes part of the baptismal liturgy (“to proclaim the good news and live according to Christ”) as a commissioning for each of us.  
***Have you considered that practicing evangelism is part of living out your baptism?***
- With the constant pressure to recruit Sunday school teachers, committee members, and fill other vacant volunteer positions, it is easy to default to only focus on using gifts and talents for serving inside the walls of the church.  
***How do you help people understand and live into their Christian vocation not only in the church, but in their everyday lives?***
- John Wesley described 18<sup>th</sup> Century England, especially Oxford, as “comfortably slack.”  
***Do you think that the present-day church finds itself in a similar state to what she describes as the state of the Church in Wesley’s day?***
- Dr. Warner uses the images of a swamp and a garden to describe two different environments where things grow. The difference is the intentionality of the garden.  
***Does the growth occurring in your congregation more closely resemble the swamp or the garden? Why?***
- The early Methodist movement did not divorce faith and good works. The works of justice and mercy conducted in their communities (ie. The Foundry) verified their discipleship.  
***How closely are the mission and service opportunities in your congregation tied to discipleship?***

***Does your congregation understand doing good works as a response to God's love?***

7. Dr. Warner poses two questions at the end of her lecture:
- 1) How might practicing the means of grace help us to practice Christian discipleship?***
  - 2) How might these practices contribute to systems of discipling in our congregations?***

As a means of evaluating your congregation's current practice of the means of grace, consider plotting all your church activities for one month. Using your newsletter or online calendar, plot each activity in one of the quadrants of the Jerusalem cross: worship, piety, mercy, and justice. **In which areas does your congregation spend most of its time and energy? Which areas could use additional focus?**



If your group meets longer, watch the remainder of the recording and share your responses to the Q & A session.

## **SESSION 3: Contextual Awareness with Dr. Doug Powe**

Watch the Video at <https://vimeo.com/375737705>

(For a one-hour session, please watch the recording to the 22:20 mark.)

Dr. Powe begins by challenging us with the words from Romans 12:2 to not be conformed to the world, but to allow ourselves to be open to the new things the Holy Spirit is doing. In order to accomplish this goal, we must address some of the obstacles many of our congregation's face.

### ***Discussion questions:***

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- 1. Does your congregation struggle with having an insider mentality?***
- 2. How do and why do ministries and events get scheduled on the church calendar? Is it based on tradition, or is each item tested on whether it fits into the church's mission and context?***
- 3. "Four-I" Model of Ministry***

#### **INQUIRE**

***Is your congregation's programming based on assumptions about your community, member preferences, or the expressed needs of the community?***

***What are the unique strengths and gifts that your congregation has to offer?***

***How are you utilizing those strengths to align with God's Reign?***

#### **IMAGINE**

***Where are the places in your community where you see gaps between the current realities and the way God desires them to be?***

***What ministries do or could help bridge that gap?***

## **INCARNATE**

***What are your community partners in ministry?***

***Is your congregation able to articulate why these ministries are important and how they connect to the Reign of God?***

## **IMMINENCE**

***Does your congregation regularly evaluate each ministry and program?***

***Do you plan each ministry, program, worship service, etc. with an expectation of transformation?***

***If so, how are you measuring transformation?***

- 4. If you could have any impact on your culture or society as a congregation, what would it be?***

***What sort of culture would you need to create in order to have this change?***

***How could you cultivate the space, time, people, and resources to create this alternative culture?***

- 5. How does your congregation move individuals into deeper relationships with God and others so they can share your vision of a transformed culture and society through Jesus Christ?***

If your group meets for 90 minutes or longer, watch the remaining portion of the recording and share any responses you have to the Q & A session.