

Launching the New Believer

The healthy birth of a new child of God is a time for rejoicing. But what we do next dramatically affects how fruitful the newborn will be as a servant of God. In this final session we will:

- Consider when to cut a new believer off from former associates and when to leave those relationships intact,
- Observe how to integrate the new believer into a vibrant community of believers for growth,
- Discover how to promote multiplication through the new believer's network of relationships, and
- Summarize our strategy for reaching the lost.

In Session 11, Gerry was struggling with letting Christ control his life, and Jackie was stunned to realize she was a Pharisee. In this session, we see how both resolved their issues and how the launching of Gerry as a new believer affected his unsaved friends.

1. How had Gerry's journey only just begun?



2. What did Jackie learn through her experiences with Gerry, Linda and Raz?

3. Describe how a new believer's network of unbeliever friends enhances the multiplication process.

4. The following is a list of the main points made in the series.
- a) Which ones have you found to be especially valuable insights?

 - b) Which ones still need clarification or practice?

Keys to Being Living Proof

1. There is a huge gap between the assumptions and the values of Christian and non-Christian culture. We need to take a person's *culture* into account when we bring the gospel to that person.
2. All people have *built-in receptors* to the gospel: guilt, desires for love and significance, and fear of death.
3. Unbelievers are unable to make the first move toward Christ because spiritually they are *lost, poor, imprisoned, blind, and dead*.
4. God draws unbelievers to Himself through three *supernatural resources*: the Holy Spirit, the Bible, and us.
5. Evangelism is a *process* of guiding someone, in the power of God, to make *mini-decisions* on the way to choosing for or against Jesus Christ. Our tasks in that process are to:
 - Cultivate – prepare the *emotional soil*
 - Sow – plant the seed of the Word in the *mind*
 - Harvest – pick the crop, get a decision of the *will*; and
 - Multiply – send people out to repeat the process.
6. We must make the first move toward the lost around us. We do this by establishing *common ground* on which to build a friendship. We address our friend's emotional barriers.
7. Being a good testimony is being light in a dark world and living with *grace* (unconditional, forgiving love) and *truth*. It is not flaunting our moral righteousness.
8. Early in our friendship, we need to *raise our flag* as people who base our lives on the Bible. We need to avoid raising the flag as a member of a church or denomination, or as people who abstain from fun.
9. Living among unbelievers requires that we trust the Holy Spirit to deal with their behavior, commit ourselves to please God rather than people, come to Bible-based convictions about disputable matters, and learn to say no graciously.
10. We begin sowing truth when we tell *faith stories* – glimpses of what it's like for us to be believers, glimpses of biblical outlook. These start dealing with our friend's mind.



11. To be living proof of truth, we need to be *in the process of learning and applying* what the Bible says about lifestyle – relationships, money, priorities, and so on. We don't have to be perfect; it's the direction we're heading that counts.
12. The key to fitting evangelism into busy schedules is *including unbelievers in our ongoing lives*.
13. No one has all the gifts it takes to reach the lost. We need to work in *teams*.
14. When we've won our friend's trust and have intrigued them with our biblical lifestyle, we are likely to have success in inviting them to *study the Bible* with us.
15. A Bible study for unbelievers must be relaxed, nonreligious, fun and nonthreatening.
16. The focus of the Bible study, whether topical or book-centered, is *"Who is Jesus?"* We may not be able to fix on this question immediately in a topical study, but our goal is to move toward this issue.
17. Asking and answering *questions* are our main Bible study techniques. We use launch, guide and summary questions paragraph by paragraph, at about a chapter per session.
18. When we've satisfied our friend's emotions and intellect, his or her *will* still needs to be committed. We can confront this will be making the will issue plain, telling our own story of accepting Christ, and/or using a gospel tract.
19. Normally, a new believer should *maintain contact* with unbelieving friends. Instead of burning bridges with confrontation, the new believer should become *our partner* in cultivating (loving), sowing (studying the Bible) and harvesting old friends.

For Further Reading

Jim Petersen, *Living Proof*, chapters 23 and epilogue.

"Probably the most dangerous thing about methods is that when they work, we begin to rely on them. We experiment with something. It works. As we become successful, we slip into thinking that continued success is a matter of just keeping the activity going. We feel that if we just repeat it long enough and hard enough, we will accomplish our goals. But when we transfer our confidence to such success-formula approaches, we are also resorting to carnal weaponry.

Our primary spiritual resources are the Spirit of God and the Word of God. Any true progress, any real spiritual victory, is gained through the power of these two forces."

Jim Petersen, Living Proof