

# Tell the Right Story

MATTHEW 25:34–40; LUKE 4:16–21, 46–55

## GOAL

Adults explore the good news of the radical, liberating realm of God that Jesus ushers in; they home in on the heart of the gospel and consider ways to share it.

Note: bit.ly addresses are case-sensitive.



Visit our YouTube channel, [bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR](https://bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR), for conversation starter videos.

## PRAYER

Holy One, we desire to be citizens of your realm. Give me courage to tell your story through my words and actions. Amen.

## THIS SESSION

Before diving too deeply into *Go Tell*, we want to be clear about what we are telling. We go and tell of the realm of God. In the Gospels, this is called the “kingdom of God” or “the kingdom of heaven.” This is the vision God has for God’s people to see and know and live God’s generous and just realm on earth as in heaven. The gospel carries a message of overturning the social structures with an upheaval of the status quo, a reordering of the powers that be, so that our human life on earth is more aligned with the God of justice, love, and grace.

We look at the actions and promises of Jesus and consider their radical implications. Jesus proclaims, lives, and points to God’s realm of justice, equity, compassion, healing, and peace. Ultimately, the good news that Jesus proclaims may not be good news to all who hear it. Although Jesus brings welcome promises to those who are imprisoned, poor, blind, and lowly, they may bring a level of discomfort for the privileged. As followers of Jesus in announcing God’s realm, we proclaim a sweeping reality that gathers up all aspects of life in God’s promise to renew creation and redeem humanity.

## THE BIBLE STORY

According to Luke’s Gospel, the first sermon of Jesus’ preaching career comes in Luke 4:16–21. He has just been tested by the devil during his time in the wilderness. After a trying forty days, Jesus returns to Nazareth. His first action upon returning to his hometown is to go to the synagogue to worship. He reads aloud from the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. The words will come to define Jesus’ ministry. He declares the year of the Lord’s favor, the time when God brings justice and equity to people who have heretofore been wronged and forgotten.

Mary’s *Magnificat*, Luke 1:46–55, can serve as an Advent text. After learning of her pregnancy, Mary goes to visit Elizabeth. She sings the promises that the child within her will fulfill: good news for the lowly and the God-fearers, reversal of fortune for the rich and powerful.

## SESSION PREPARATION

Depending on the options you choose:

- “Conversation Starter Video” (p. 5): See the Growing Faith Resources YouTube channel, [bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR](https://bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR), for a summary video of this practice and a conversation starter video for each session.

# GETTING STARTED

## WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Welcome participants and allow time for gathering activities particular to your group (*introductions, offering, prayer concerns, and announcements*). Review the Unit Overview on pages 4-5 of the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that a more detailed discussion of the practice can be found in the foundational essay, which begins on page 45 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Encourage participants to read the essay during the course of the next four sessions.

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- This and all sessions require that the leader and participants have their copy of the *Adult Reflection Guide* with them.

## TELLING THE GOOD NEWS

Invite participants to engage in a responsive reading. You begin with the first line of the refrain of the song “Go Tell It on the Mountain.” They respond to your first “Go tell . . .” with “over the hills and everywhere.” You repeat, “Go tell . . .” They ask, “Wait, go tell what?” Finally, you say a line of good news, which they repeat. Use the litany below and prompt them to repeat their lines. You will use this responsive pattern to open each session.

Go tell it on the mountain,  
**over the hills and everywhere.**  
Go tell it on the mountain . . .  
**Wait, go tell what?**  
Jesus brought good news.  
**Jesus brought good news.**

# INTRODUCING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

## CONVERSATION STARTER VIDEO

Show the “*Go Tell Overview*” video and the “*Tell the Right Story, Session 1*” video from the Growing Faith YouTube channel ([bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR](https://bit.ly/FMYouTubeGFR)). Lead a brief conversation about participants’ thoughts and questions the videos prompt as you introduce the session.

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- Internet-connected device

## EVANGELISM

Refer participants to “Consider” on page 5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that *Go Tell* is about *evangelism*, a term that may be fraught with challenging images and ideas. Use the questions on the page to discuss participants’ ideas about evangelism.

## BEFORE, AFTER, AND ALWAYS

Refer participants to “Consider” on page 5 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that each person’s faith journey differs. Some people can tell of a point in time when they heard, believed, and accepted the gospel; others have grown up in the faith and have known about God and Jesus since their very early years. No single journey is right or wrong. Use the questions on the page to consider participants’ faith journeys and the ways that following Christ affects their lives.

# FINDING THE PRACTICE IN THE BIBLE

Choose one or more options.

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- Bibles
  - Paper and pencil

## UPDATING THE MESSAGE

Have participants locate Luke 4:16–21 in their Bibles. Emphasize that this passage tells about the *starting* place of Jesus’ ministry. Ask what message they might give if they were starting a new ministry or preaching their first sermon.

Have participants take turns reading the passage aloud verse by verse. Form pairs and ask them to imagine Jesus standing in their church today, reading aloud verses 18–19. Have them rewrite and update the language of these verses. They might consider what it means to be anointed, who the poor and the captives are, who is metaphorically or literally blind. They should consider who Jesus would want to talk to and what message Jesus would convey.

Invite them to read aloud their Scripture with the updated language. Point out similarities in their messages. Ask them to think of any promises Jesus gave in this passage that have been fulfilled today.

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- Bibles
  - Pens

## THE RIGHT STORY

Form three groups, and assign each group one of these passages: Matthew 25:34–40; Luke 1:46–55; Luke 4:16–21. Have the groups read their assigned passage within their group and work together to determine the central message or “right story” communicated in their verses. They may write this message in their *Adult Reflection Guides*, and be ready to share the message with the whole group.

Gather participants to talk about the passages they read and the central message or “right story” the verses tell. Invite observations and comments about the similarities or differences in these “right stories.”

Refer to page 9 in the *Adult Reflection Guide* and read aloud the fourth paragraph on the page that begins “Of course, it’s impossible to distill . . .” Then discuss the two questions that follow that paragraph.

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- Bibles
  - Pens

## TURNING THE WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Form three groups and assign each group one of these passages: Matthew 25:34–40; Luke 1:46–55; Luke 4:16–21. Have the groups read their assigned passage within their group and work together to list the places where God’s vision turns the world upside down and challenges the status quo. They may write the list in their *Adult Reflection Guides*.

Gather participants to talk about the passages they read and the lists they created. Invite observations and comments about the similarities or differences in their lists. Use these questions to continue discussion:

- ➔ What kind of world comes into focus when you look at the realm of God in these texts?
- ➔ Do you think these texts encouraged a disparity between the marginalized and the privileged, or do they reflect a real separation in the New Testament world? Explain your response.
- ➔ How are these texts good news to the marginalized? To the privileged?

# FINDING THE PRACTICE THEN AND NOW

Choose one or both options.

## EUANGELION (GOSPEL)

Explain that *gospel*, translated from *euangelion* in Greek, is one of the most common words in a Christian’s vocabulary. But what does it mean in the original languages of the Bible? In this video clip, viewers discover that *gospel* is a royal announcement about Jesus, the crucified and risen king of the world who overcame death with his love. Show the YouTube video “Gospel” ([bit.ly/FMGospel](https://bit.ly/FMGospel), 4:30) Invite participants to discuss insights and impressions from the video. Use these questions for further discussion:

- ➔ How does the video expand your understanding of the gospel?
- ➔ How does Jesus’ message of God’s reign offer good news to people of his day?
- ➔ What is good news about God’s reign for our world?

## ARCHBISHOP OSCAR ROMERO

Explain that Oscar Romero was a Roman Catholic bishop in El Salvador who accompanied the poor and defended human rights in the midst of great violence. He was murdered by the military for his actions. Show the YouTube video “Oscar Romero Animation” ([bit.ly/FMRomeroAnimate](https://bit.ly/FMRomeroAnimate), 4:16). Invite participants to identify themes from Archbishop Romero’s life that are similar to themes in Jesus’ first sermon, Mary’s Song, and what is “done to the least of these.” Use these questions for discussion:

- ➔ How was Archbishop Romero’s life a witness to the sermon Jesus preached in Luke 4? In Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 25?
- ➔ How did Archbishop Romero’s work reflect the message about reversal of fortunes found in Mary’s Song in Luke 1?
- ➔ Archbishop Romero was martyred for his faith and his actions. Given that he wanted to help the suffering, why do you think people wanted to kill him? What risks come with living the message Jesus brings?

# PRACTICING THE PRACTICE

Choose one or more options.

## GOSPEL IN SEVEN WORDS

Refer participants to “The Gospel in Seven Words” on page 12 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Invite a volunteer to read aloud the paragraph describing the concept. Challenge participants to express the gospel message in seven words in light of insights presented in this session. Have volunteers tell the group what they wrote.

## MONEY AND TIME

Refer participants to “Money and Time” on page 13 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*. Explain that another way to tell the gospel story is to be clear about our commitments and values and how these are reflected in the way we spend and use time and money.

Have participants work independently and use their Bibles to review the Scripture passages for this session. They may respond to the bulleted

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Pens



Teaching Tip: You may want to review *The Christian Century* article to prepare for this activity. ([bit.ly/FM7Words](https://bit.ly/FM7Words))

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Bibles

Pens

questions in their *Adult Reflection Guide*. When their work is completed, use these questions for general discussion:

- ➔ How are you spending your money to affirm your values?
- ➔ How do you spend your time to live up to your commitments?
- ➔ What encouragement can you give one another to affirm and live into your values?

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- Bibles
  - Newsprint and markers

## NEW RULES

Explain that the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament and the Greatest Commandment of the New Testament stand as biblical rules for many disciples. Challenge participants to create new rules for a community that follows the example Jesus presents in his teaching. They may use their Bibles to review the Scripture passages for this session and consider teachings beyond today's passages.

These questions may help them formulate new rules: What sorts of behaviors might be expected of citizens in God's realm? What actions would be forbidden? How do these new rules make a community that is fair, just, and helpful?

Have participants share their new rules and record them on newsprint. Discuss whether it is possible to live by these new rules or laws in our current world and circumstances. Why could it not be possible? What might make it possible?

Encourage them to record their new rules in their *Adult Reflection Guides*. They may review them during the week to assess if they are living any of the new rules.

# FOLLOWING JESUS

## SESSION REVIEW

Refer participants to the "Following Jesus" paragraph on page 14 in the *Adult Reflection Guide*.

Use these questions to review the content of this session:

- ➔ Who is the good news for?
- ➔ If it's not good news for everybody, is it really the gospel of Jesus?
- ➔ How will you tell the *right* story this week?

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- Bibles

## PSALM 98

Close each section of this unit with Psalm 98, a song of praise inviting us to rejoice in what God has done.

Invite an individual to begin the reading by reading aloud verse 1, followed by the person on their left reading verse 2, and so on. Then invite everyone to say aloud or in their hearts one marvelous thing that God has done in their life, the community, or the world this week. Repeat Psalm 98:1a in unison:

O sing to the LORD a new song, for [God] has done marvelous things!