

## Aim of lesson

To help the young people to stand up at school for the things they believe, and to deal with the difficulties that may arise.

To discuss the teaching and preaching of the gospel. To review the methods we use and assess their effectiveness, and to consider alternative methods.

## Bible background

The gospels and the Acts form the obvious background for this lesson. The following passages will provide source material; there are many other passages to choose.

Matthew 4:17; 9:35; 24:14; Acts 4:2; 5:42; 8:4; 10:42; 15:35; 17:3 on; Romans 1:15; 10:14-15; 1 Corinthians 1:18-21; Galatians 1:8-11; 3:8; Philippians 1:18; Colossians 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:13; 2 Timothy 4:2

## Preparation required

Think through the discussions that could arise and be prepared to be encouraging, understanding, honest, not shocked but also positive with suggestions.

## Suggested outline of lesson

It is intended that this lesson should be an opportunity for discussion. How you balance the discussion between personal witness and more formal methods will depend to a large extent on the background and needs of the young people.

Everybody will have experienced the conflict of knowing how and when to talk about their beliefs, both in the classroom and outside. The aim should be to let them talk about their experiences in a sympathetic atmosphere and to help them to talk about their faith in a confident way.

The opportunity can also be taken to discuss ecclesial teaching methods and to gain feedback about what the young people find most helpful. Many students will have both experience of and opinions about preaching methods and their effectiveness. There may be criticism of current practices and it can be useful to follow this with the question 'What do you propose?' The following questions may help to stimulate discussion.

## Personal preaching

1 Corinthians 9:16-18

Have you had a specific experience of talking to someone about your beliefs or how you spend your time? How did it start? What was the response?

What stops us speaking to our friends about our faith? Romans 1:16

It is often tempting to keep quiet about our faith. What are the advantages? (less ridicule and difficult questions). Disadvantages? (it is harder when people eventually find out, and we might be tempted to lie about what we do at weekends and in the evenings).

What about telling others confidently what we believe? What are the advantages? (opportunities to invite them to Youth Group or meetings; everyone knows where we stand; others are more likely to respect us; we are less likely to be invited to inappropriate parties or offered drugs etc.) Disadvantages? (it's not always easy!).

It may be helpful to the young people if they can identify some (not necessarily three) specific things they plan to do, or to do differently.

Which of these approaches is best?

Is personal preaching more effective than community preaching? (Perhaps you need somewhere to take a personal contact!)  
Philippians 3:17; 1 Timothy 1:16; 4:12; Titus 2:7

How 'pushy' should we be in our personal witness?

Should people who are not yet baptised preach? What are the differences between what you can say to your friends before and after your own baptism?

How can we open conversations or respond to opportunities to speak of our faith? Much will depend on the members of your group. The aim should be to give them specific and appropriate words they can choose to use; for example in a

discussion about the existence of God or the origin of the universe a simple statement such as 'Well, I believe in God' may be an appropriate witness, rather than a long speech.

## **Community preaching**

Can we derive methods for today from the ways Jesus and the apostles preached? (You could ask for ideas and make a list)

Is it right to use 'new' methods not available in Jesus' time? (e.g. radio, the internet, etc.)

Is there a difference between teaching and preaching? (imparting knowledge, imparting conviction?) Matthew 11:1; Acts 5:42.

Should we ask people to come to us or should we go to them? (New Testament practice may give an indication) Luke 13:22.

How can we make our ('lectures', Sunday School/Bible School, billing, canvassing, advertising, etc.) more effective?

## **Coming to a conclusion**

Discussions can sometimes be very interesting but leave an 'unfinished' feeling at the end. This can be avoided by drawing up a summary of Bible principles about preaching with supporting passages. The following is a suggested outline to which you may care to add.

Why do we preach? (Commanded - Matthew 28:19-20, to share our joy, out of concern for others)

When should we preach? (whenever there is opportunity, when someone asks a question, Mark 6:1-2)

Where should we preach? (we should take the message to the people in any way we can, we need a regular pattern of preaching to give continuity and stability for those learning - e.g. our 'lectures', Mark 4:1)

How should we preach? (from the scriptures, centred on Jesus, with simplicity - 2 Corinthians 1:12, 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, humbly - 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, 2:3-5, with appropriate language - Jesus used parables and many everyday examples - Luke 8:5-8).

## **Follow-up**

During the course of this discussion the young people may make comments on Ecclesial preaching activities which it would be appropriate for you to discuss with the Arranging Brethren. This may be an opportunity to help the young people, and to improve the witnessing of the ecclesia.

## **Relevance to our lives**

It is important that the young people realise that we all have difficulties preaching and can join in discussing ways to help each other.

## **Prayer**

Teach us, Lord to share our faith and the good news of the gospel with those around us. Give us courage so that we may be confident in our professions of faith. Help us not to be upset by rejection or ridicule but remember the rejection of the Lord Jesus and the promise of eternal life in his kingdom. Amen.

## **Other suggestions for activities**

Design a pamphlet, poster or invitation to a meeting, Sunday School, or Bible Reading Group.