

## THE GOSPEL IN ME

**Darren Wright**

**“In the Habit” session for use with devozine meditations for May 4–10, 2015.**

### MAKING THE CONNECTION

“In our confirmation class last year, one of the final questions was this: *What does living the gospel in our community look like?* One of the young people asked if a course was offered on how to be a neighbor. We were a bit stumped. Courses focus on mission, education, the Bible, confirmation, baptism, justice, and contemplative living—but seldom on what it means to be a good neighbor.

“One of our tasks this year is to think about studying how to love our neighbors. We thought we might start the course by having a barbeque and inviting our neighbors with no aim other than to meet and get to know one another. Surely one step toward breathing the gospel is to be a good neighbor.

“How would you live the gospel so that it is good news to all? How would you live the gospel’s call to love neighbors?” —Darren

### MEET THE WRITER

**Darren Wright** is a Uniting Church Youth Worker serving in the Riverina Presbytery in New South Wales, Australia, as the Presbytery Education and Discipleship Worker. Darren has previously worked in congregational ministry, high school chaplaincy, and local government as a youth worker. His interests include music (Moby, Radiohead, Ben Harper, The National, Muse, All India Radio), film (*MegaMind*, *Harry Potter*, *How to Train your Dragon*, *Scott Pilgrim*, *Big Hero 6*), TV (*Chuck*, *Doctor Who*, *Big Bang Theory*, *Community*, *Agents of SHIELD*), theology, pop-culture, young people in at-risk areas, and the connection of church, theology, and pop culture.

**NOTE:** This session offers two choices. The first is to explore what it means to be a neighbor to your community. The other is to enter into an imaginative devotional reading of a Gospel.

### STUFF YOU WILL NEED

#### Option 1

- barbecue and equipment
- food and drinks
- paper plates and cups, plastic flatware

## Option 2

- Bibles
- crayons
- paint
- pens
- paper
- canvas

## PLUGGED IN

- + *The Work of the People* has a long list of resources that explore living and breathing the gospel. Delve through the videos, find a few you like, and spend some time reflecting on what they say to you. One of my favorites is entitled “What Is the Gospel?” by Lisa Sharon Harper. (<http://www.theworkofthepeople.com/what-is-the-gospel>)

## CHECKING IN

### Option 1

If you take on this task, you’ll help the group organize a barbecue. Have group members choose the neighborhood (probably the church’s neighborhood), send out invitations, plan a menu, and buy food. Invite people living or working on the street to an outside barbecue.

The purpose of the barbecue is not mission. It is not the time for handing out tracts or inviting the neighbors to church. It’s not a fundraising activity either. It is the time to get to know the people in your neighborhood, to get to know their interests, names, struggles, and so on.

Before the barbecue, invite group members to spend some time in prayer. During the barbecue, encourage them to get to know the people on the street. Afterward, during the clean up, ask them to reflect on what being a neighbor and living the gospel might look like in the church’s neighborhood.

### Option 2

Make the room you meet in comfortable. Provide snacks. As group members arrive, welcome them and encourage them to make themselves comfortable.

When everyone is present, invite group members to reflect on the readings from **devozine** this week:

**What reflection made you think or changed the way you thought about the gospel?**

**Do you have a favorite Gospel?**

**How do you define the gospel?**

**Gospel means “good news.” What is the good news? Whom is the good news for?**

**What does living the gospel mean?**

**Whom do you know that lives the good news? Why do you think so? In what ways do they live the gospel?**

## **EXPLORING THE WORD**

### **Scripture: The Gospel of Mark**

One of the sayings we learn when we are young is this: *You are what you eat.*

**Do you think that you are what you read?**

**How often do you enter into devotional reading?**

Devotional reading starts with being comfortable. Invite group members to find places in your meeting space where they can be alone and comfortable.

Explain to the group that they are going to read the gospel, specifically the Gospel of Mark, in an imaginative way. Devotional reading may be fast or slow, and no tests or written work will be required after the reading. They may read at their own pace, in their own way. Devotional reading invites the reader to enter into the text without needing to find an answer to a question or to find information. The goal of the reading is to enter into the text and to inspire the imagination.

Encourage group members to read until something in the text strikes them—a word, a phrase, a story that they find interesting, confronting, or inspiring. Tell them, when they reach something they would like to explore further, to stop reading and to contemplate their reaction to the text. They may want to paint or draw something to help them imagine the text in a different way, or perhaps they would like to imagine themselves in the story. Whatever they decide will help in their contemplation, they may go back to reading and continue to contemplate, imagine, and reflect.

Give the group 30 minutes to read and to explore the Gospel of Mark. Then invite volunteers to talk about what they discovered about the story, about God, about themselves as they practiced devotional reading.

Encourage everyone to participate in imaginative, devotional reading every day during the upcoming week.

## **SHARING IN PRAYER**

Invite group members to become aware of their breathing and then to slow their breathing, synchronizing their inhaling and exhaling with the rest of the group.

Invite people to tell the group three events during the last week for which they are grateful, three events happening in the world for which they would like to pray, and three situations in their community about which they would like to pray. Ask people to name these as they breathe out, one per breath.

As the prayer ends, offer to God all the events named, thank God for the good news of the gospel, and breathe together a final “Amen.”

## **TAKING IT FURTHER**

- Invite group members to interview several people in the church community, asking them how they live the gospel. Then suggest that they create a video, blog, or book for the community that explores how we can each live out the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Invite the group to host barbecues on several streets in the neighborhood.
- Suggest that the youth keep an eye open for people moving in and out of the neighborhood and offer a hand to help them move in. They may also want to provide coffee and doughnuts and offer to help unpack boxes.

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