

Rebecca Manley Pippert
with Dick Molenhouse



EMPOWERED

Equipping everyone for
relational evangelism

- LEADER'S GUIDE -

Empowered

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WELCOME TO EMPOWERED

I was recently interviewed on an American Christian radio show where people could call in. The subject was evangelism, and ten minutes into the interview the entire phone board lit up with callers from across the country. The comments were revealing.

Every caller spoke of someone they deeply cared about who was not a Christian.

While they longed for their friend to come to Christ, they felt completely inadequate in how to reach them.

Their fears were very similar: How do I raise the topic of faith naturally? What if I offend them or they reject me? What if they raise questions I can't answer?

Everyone essentially asked the same thing: How do I reach people in today's increasingly secular culture? As one caller put it:

“Jesus didn't suggest we share the good news—he commanded us to. But how do we communicate the eternal Christ in our secular, ever-changing world?”

Never has there been a greater need to share Christ with the world (starting with our own neighbors)—yet never have believers seemed more ill-equipped.

And that is why I am thrilled that you are willing to lead others through *Empowered*—a course that equips ordinary Christians for personal evangelism. This leader's guide should contain everything you need to lead effectively.

Empowered has been born through our own experience of helping other Christians to be excited about and equipped for sharing their faith. For the past thirteen years Dick and I have conducted training conferences and have been part of evangelistic initiatives

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around the world. For the first six years we ministered on every continent (apart from Antarctica!). Then for the next seven, we were focused primarily on Europe. Europe has long been considered the most challenging place for the gospel in the world—yet we have seen amazing fruit as Christians have reached out in even the most unlikely places.

It is imperative that we—all of us—know how to effectively communicate the gospel. We need to get beyond one-size-fits-all techniques. We need to learn to communicate the truth in a way that is also loving. Yet we need to remember, even as we seek to show Christ's compassionate love, still to share Christ's gospel truth.

We need to recover the “Jesus way”—the biblical way—by creatively and persuasively sharing God's truth in the context of authentic relationships and community, so that people may become radical, missional disciples.

Thank you again for giving up your time and energy to lead others through this course. We'll be praying that through your labors, your group and you yourself will be empowered to share the gospel in truth and love. And we'll be praying for your whole group, that the truths you hear, the Bible passages you study, the discussions you have, the thinking you do and the prayers you share will change all of you, and so change the lives and eternities of those around you.

Thanks,



Becky



Dick

HOW TO RUN THIS COURSE

Empowered is designed to be a flexible course to fit a wide variety of church settings. It can be used:

- ~ as a seven-week course in midweek groups or Sunday morning adult Sunday School.
- ~ as the teaching for a church-away day or weekend.
- ~ for a day conference.

The optimum group size for Bible study and discussion is 6-10—so if your group is larger than this (if, for instance, your whole church is gathered to go through the content), then break into smaller groups, each with one or two leaders.

To run the course, you will need the DVD or downloads... a leader's guide for everyone who will be leading a Bible study or other element of the session... and a handbook for every group member. In this leader's guide, the page numbers in the session-by-session section are the same as the equivalent page numbers in the handbook, to make it easy for you to refer your group to the correct pages.

The elements in every, or almost every, session are:

Intro: A short video clip introducing the theme of the session.

Bible Study: The main Bible input for each session, led by the group leader, allowing God's word to set the agenda for each session.

Talk: Biblically-based, practical presentations, filmed live at a conference in London. Talk outlines are provided in the handbooks and leader's guide.

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Talk Notes: Encourage your group to write down, as they listen to the talk, anything they find particularly helpful, need to think more about, or would like to ask a question about. If you have time and find it helpful, you could start the “Discuss” times by asking your group for their own thoughts, questions, etc.

Discuss: A time for you as a group to share your responses to what you have heard, learn from one another, and consider how you might apply the teaching to your lives, guided by the questions given.

Next Steps: Ideas for how group members might begin to live out what they've learned during the session. Give your group time to read through it before you finish with prayer—don't assume they will read it on their own after the session! (Note: If you are running this course over a single day or weekend, the next steps will be impossible to do between each session! So encourage participants to work through the “Next Steps” over the course of seven weeks or so after you have worked through this course.)

Pray: A chance to speak to God together about the themes of the session, either led by Dick via DVD, or done within the group. If the prayer includes DVD footage, see this as an intro to your time of prayer, and continue praying in your group after Dick has led you in prayer on the DVD.

Elements included in some sessions are:

Exercise (Session 5): Introduced by Becky during her talk.

Reflections (Sessions 1 and 7): Opportunities to reflect individually on hopes, questions, applications and resolutions.

TIMINGS

Each session is designed to last 90 minutes, with 15 minutes to enjoy each other's company beforehand. It is, however, possible to fit the session into 60 minutes if necessary. In the grid on page xiv showing the outline of each session, you will find timings for a 75-minute session (not including 15 minutes together before you begin) and a 60-minute session.

HOW TO RUN THIS COURSE

EXTRA RESOURCES

During the course, participants will be pointed to extra resources in the back of the handbook which they will need as they follow the “Next Steps.” These are:

Praying Powerfully (pages 69-70 of the handbook)—needed for Session 3

Big Questions (pages 71-72)—needed for Sessions 5 and 6

Helpful Ways to Outline the Gospel (pages 73-75)—needed for Session 6

Apologetics: Resources for Answering Tough Questions (page 77)—mentioned by Dick in his Intro to Session 6.

To go alongside Session Seven, you will also find a downloadable Q+A resource, written by Becky, answering common questions about Seeker Bible Studies. Simply go to: thegoodbook.com/SBSAnswers

For advertizing the course beforehand to your church to encourage people to come, you will find promotional material, including a trailer, here: thegoodbook.com/empowered/promo.

LEADING AN EFFECTIVE COURSE

THE BIBLE STUDY AND DISCUSS ELEMENTS

To make the group discussion time as effective as possible, it is important to:

Create an atmosphere of authenticity. Most Christians have fears and a sense of inadequacy when it comes to evangelism (you may well feel that way yourself). Sharing your own failed attempts at witnessing could be an encouragement! But don't be afraid to also share how God has helped you grow stronger in this area. Pray that people will feel free to be themselves.

Create an atmosphere of Christ's love. Christians genuinely want their family members and loved ones to know Christ. But they often feel totally inept at being effective witnesses. So there is usually an amount of guilt and, frankly, a lack of faith that God could use them in their weakness. But as they learn of the transforming power of the gospel—how God loves them and wants to use them just as they are; that he understands their fears and doubts but that the power of witness comes from God, not our giftedness—it will enable them to relax and start believing that they could do this. Pray that each person will experience the love of Christ in a fresh way.

Create interactive participation: One challenge in any group discussion is group dynamics. For example, there is often a talkative person who wants to answer every question. Without diminishing his or her enthusiasm, you could say, “That is helpful. What do the rest of you think?” If the problem persists, then enlist their help outside the study and ask them to help you to draw out the quieter ones. Equally, be ready to ask quieter people for their view by name. Make sure that it is a question that either has a simple answer (“John, what does verse 1 say about how Paul was feeling?”), or one where the answer cannot be wrong (“Evie, what big truth about evangelism are you taking away from this session?”).

Don't be afraid of silence: Resist the temptation to answer your own questions! Give people time to reflect on the questions in the Bible study or the Discussion questions. But in your preparation each week, think of alternative ways of asking the same question should there be a prolonged silence.

HOW TO RUN THIS COURSE

Beware tangents: These studies are not intended to unpack every aspect of the passage being studied—rather, they focus on what we can learn from the passage about sharing our faith with those around us. They are deliberately limited to 4-5 questions, to ensure you move through the study in the time given in the session. Explain this to your group at the start of the Bible study in Session One, and remind them of it if necessary.

Expect that at some point someone will ask a question that isn't particularly relevant to the topic. For example, when you ask a question on the passage from Luke 23 in Session Two, someone may ask, "Is the casting of lots for Jesus' clothes a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy?" or "Could the darkness have been an eclipse?" When this happens we need gently but firmly to respond, "Excellent question. But since we have a lot to get through, would you mind if we save it for after the study, or I get back to you about it in the week?" (Be sure you then return to it with that member afterwards!)

Pay attention to time: A critical skill in leading this course is paying attention to the allotted time given to each section. If we allow, for example, the Bible-study discussion to go over, then we will take away from the other important aspects of this course. While we don't want to appear to be drill sergeants, it is very important to keep each section roughly in the allotted time.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Pray each week at home for the people in your group.

Pray for their faith to grow and that they'll develop confidence that God can use them.

Ask God for fruit! "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15 v 8). Pray that God will lead the participants during the course to non-Christians who are, or will quickly become, spiritually open, and that they'll have encouraging conversations.

Pray that there will be conversions. Just one person leading a seeker to Christ will have a huge impact on the whole group!

Give time for prayer in your group.

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Encourage each person to pray. Acknowledge that praying aloud in front of others can be awkward at first. Encourage those who are anxious about it to just attempt short, one-sentence prayers until they feel more comfortable. Eventually this will be something they really look forward to.

PRAYER PARTNERS

Encourage your group in the first week to select a “prayer partner” from within the group to meet with once a week for the duration of the course (if you are doing the course in a day or over a weekend, then the prayer partners would meet for the next few weeks, as participants work through the “Next Steps” week by week). This will enable them to pray and discuss what they are learning, and to follow through on the “Next Steps”—and it will dramatically help them to apply what they are learning. The temptation in modern culture is to be a consumer: we are willing to receive but not to act upon the truth we are learning. Having a prayer partner strengthens us in actually getting on with living out what we’ve learned and have been equipped for and challenged about.