

Main Passage: Ezekiel 3:16-19

Purpose: To understand that part of living a Gospel-centered life requires us to be Gospel proclaimers.

Session Snapshot: Once we understand the power of the Gospel and what it means for us, the only natural response is to surrender our lives to the Lordship of Christ. Part of yielding our lives to Christ includes becoming ambassadors for His Kingdom. We must *know* this Gospel message and become representatives of and *proclaimers* of this message. If we want to be men of God who live Gospel-centered lives, we must become proclaimers of the Gospel.

GETTING STARTED

Kick off your time together by introducing a new theme.

FIRST, explain to your group that they will be beginning a new video series that looks at one aspect of what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. This series will unpack the truth that to be a disciple, we must surrender to a Gospel-centered life. This 5-week study will guide men to understand what we mean when we describe a life as Gospel-centered.

If this is your first session as a group, consider introducing yourself, if necessary, and having the men in your group introduce themselves. If you want to pass around a contact sheet or do any other first-session "housekeeping tasks," this is the time to do it.

FINALLY, if there are no questions or other input, transition into the *Digging In* section of your leader's guide.

DIGGING IN

Jump into the session by watching this week's video.

FIRST, if this is the first session, explain to the group how your time together will work. Explain that you will watch a video that is usually about 15 minutes long, followed by a short discussion of the video. Then, you'll spend a few minutes in Bible study, followed by a closing activity. Consider encouraging men to take notes as they watch the video. (Remember, a participant guide is available to you if you would like to distribute it to your group.) If this isn't your first time through, simply ask if there are any questions and then get started with the video

THEN, play the video. You can access the video by logging into your Iron Hill Press account.

When the video is over, lead men in a short discussion based on what Rick covered. Feel free to come up with your own questions, or consider asking some similar to those below:

- **Rick suggested that even if God never did another thing for us outside of the cross, that would still be enough to earn our devotion. Do you agree? Why or why not?**

- However, God *has* done more for us and continues to do more. In what other ways do we experience the blessings of God on a regular basis?
- Why is it important to understand that being a disciple and living a Gospel-centered life is a *response* to what God has already done for us? What happens when we lose sight of this truth?
- When you imagine someone faithfully living out a "Gospel-centered life," what characteristics, qualities, and actions define that type of person?
- Do you think a person can live out a Gospel-centered life without ever sharing the Gospel in some capacity? Why or why not?
- Why do you think so many Christians struggle to share the Gospel? What is holding us back?
- Were you encouraged by Rick's words that we don't have to have some elaborate plan in order to faithfully witness to others? Can you think of examples when a simple Gospel comment was impactful or fruitful?

FINALLY, transition into the *Opening the Word* portion of your time together by saying something like the following:

- **Throughout Scripture, we see an expectation from God that His people will be a light to others. We're going to spend a few minutes studying in Ezekiel to learn more about our responsibility to witness to others and what God expects from us.**

OPENING THE WORD

Spend time going deeper into a specific concept Rick introduced in the video.

FIRST, explain that you will be studying a passage from Ezekiel 3:16-19. As Rick emphasized in the video, part of living a Gospel-centered life is our calling to be Gospel proclaimers. In this passage, Ezekiel shares a message from the Lord that emphasizes our responsibility to share this message with others.

We must make sure your people have a good understanding of the context of the passage you'll be studying. Provide the context for the passage using the following bullet points:

- **Author:** Ezekiel is written as the prophet Ezekiel's visions from God.
- **Time frame:** Ezekiel was written between 593 BC and 573 BC, which are the dates of Ezekiel's first and last vision in the book.
- **Purpose:** The prophet Ezekiel's name means "God strengthens." This is a good name for a prophet who proclaimed a message of judgment and a later restoration of God's people for His glory. The book is a series of visions showing Israel the work and ways of God and their failure to follow His commands.

THEN, read or have a volunteer read the first three verses, Ezekiel 3:16-18. When the volunteer has finished, direct their attention to the beginning of verse 16. Lead the group in a brief discussion. Ask something like:

- **Why is it significant that this is the Lord's Word and not just a thought from Ezekiel?**
 - *Answer:* This emphasizes the weight of what is about to be said! It cannot be taken lightly if it comes from the mouth of God.
- **What comes to mind when you think about the role of a watchman? Is it an important role? What responsibilities does this include?**
 - Answers will vary. Most importantly, the role of a watchman is not only about being alert but specifically about warning others (v. 17) of impending danger.
- **What can happen when a watchman fails to warn others?**

- *Answer:* A watchman who fails at this task has failed to uphold his highest duty, and his failure endangers the lives of others.
- **Most of us can probably imagine a watchman guarding an outpost from enemies. But what kind of watchman is in mind here? What is the watchman giving a warning about?**
 - *Answer:* This kind of spiritual watchman is meant to give warning about God’s judgment against sin: “You shall surely die” (v. 18; see also Gen. 2:17). He warns that there are *real* and significant consequences for rebelling against God and urging the wicked to repent and be made right with God.
- **Do you think the role of a watchman was unique to Ezekiel or other OT prophets, or do you think believers in the church today are still called to this role? Why?**
 - *Answer:* The idea of watchmen not only appears here in Ezekiel 3 but also in Hosea 9:8 and Isaiah 56:10. We might be tempted to think this responsibility was unique to Ezekiel, but the weight of Scripture suggests that all believers today have a similar responsibility. Have your men considered how much *more* we know the full truth (and good news!) of the Gospel than men like Ezekiel?

Before moving to the next verses, you must remind your group of the following:

- **If the role of a watchman was only assigned to Ezekiel or specifically to certain church leaders, then this passage isn't relevant for most of us. We could end this study right now. But the New Testament paints a clear picture that believers are called to be Gospel proclaimers, which means this responsibility has been passed on to all of us. It is true that those in positions of leadership will be judged more strictly (James 3:1), but everyone has a responsibility. In these next few verses, we’re going to see the heart of God more clearly on what He expects from His watchmen.**

NEXT, direct your group's attention to Ezekiel 3, and have someone read verse 18 again. Then, ask the following questions:

- **Just so we’re all on the same page, two people are being held accountable here. Who are they?**
 - The “wicked,” or the sinner, is responsible for not turning aside from his iniquity.
 - The watchman who fails to warn this sinner is responsible for not giving a warning.
- **Why do you think God would entrust such a weighty task to us as His watchmen? How does that make you feel?**
 - Answers will vary. Emphasize that God wants us to participate with Him as He works to reconcile a lost world to Himself. He doesn’t need us, but He *wants* us as His ambassadors to reach the world with the Gospel (Cor. 5:20). As we join Him in this work, we not only draw closer to Him in fellowship but also glorify Him with our lives!
- **Does any part of you worry that you might fail in this role—that you might somehow be responsible for someone not coming to faith in Christ?**
 - *Answer:* While God makes it clear that we have a responsibility to witness to others, we should by no means believe that anyone’s salvation depends on us. This important distinction will become clearer as we look at the next verse.

THEN, read the final verse, Ezekiel 3:19. After seeing the stern warning that God gives to the unhelpful watchman, see how God speaks differently when the watchman fulfills his duty. This verse reveals something important about how God views the responsibility of His watchmen. Ask:

- **Did you notice that even though the watchman did his job this time, the result was still the same for the sinner? He didn’t repent. Why do you think God used an example like that?**

- *Answer:* We would be wrong to think that God does not care about the fate of the sinner, but explain that God’s primary concern here is with our *faithfulness*. If we do our part to testify to the Gospel, we can leave the results in His hands, and we remain guiltless. Because salvation belongs to the Lord (Psalm 3:8) and not to us, our actions alone—or inactions—cannot save or condemn anyone.
- **If this responsibility is a matter of faithfulness and not effectiveness, why does God care so much about it? What do we learn about the heart of God?**
 - Answers will vary. Consider sharing a few of these truths:
 - God desires our faithful obedience because He knows it’s best for us.
 - If He only cared about effectiveness, he wouldn’t leave it in our hands!
 - When we join Him as Gospel proclaimers, we will find ourselves growing in Christlikeness and maturing in our faith.
 - God is glorified when we grow in obedience and proclaim His Gospel!
- **Reflecting on what God expects from His watchmen—His followers—do you think it’s possible to live a Gospel-centered life without telling others about the Gospel?**
 - *Answer:* No. God expects His followers to be Gospel proclaimers as we point others away from the broad road that leads to destruction and toward the straight and narrow path that leads to life!

FINALLY, say something like this to wrap up the lesson:

- **These verses can be tough to read since many of us struggle to be faithful Gospel proclaimers. However, if we desire to truly live a Gospel-centered life, this is an area in which we must commit to growing. God knows that it is for our good—and His glory—when we mature into believers who use our lives to testify to the gospel of His grace (Acts 20:24).**

Ask if there are any questions and if there are none, transition into *Accepting the Challenge*.

ACCEPTING THE CHALLENGE

Focus your group’s attention on a few key takeaways from your time together.

FIRST, explain that you want to challenge the group to focus on the takeaways from this session. Consider starting this portion of your session by asking your group what they think are the main application points from your session. Allow discussion to go until there are no more suggestions.

Then, if necessary, supplement your discussion with the following application points. Say something like:

- **One key understanding is that God has called all of us to the role of Gospel watchmen.**
 - Remind your group that a person’s response to the Gospel is the single greatest decision they will ever have made in their lives. God calls us to be faithful in warning others that they “shall surely die” in their sin unless they repent and receive His gracious gift of salvation through the Gospel. We cannot stand by idly while non-believers walk in sin that leads to death!
- **And because of that calling on our lives, we must also be intentional in seeking out opportunities to share the Gospel.**
 - The charge to us is not merely, “Be ready to share the Gospel if someone asks about it.” No, our calling goes beyond that. We are called to advance God’s Kingdom— to spread the Gospel to those who don’t know it and to witness faithfully to those who are indifferent about it. Who in your workplace, community, family, or friend group *needs* to hear the Gospel this week?

- **Third, we must leave the results in God's hands.**
 - We can't save anyone. God alone can do that. Likewise, we can't condemn anyone. They are responsible for their own decision. None of us are capable of thwarting God's plan for the salvation of others! Our job is to be faithful and leave the results to Him.

If it feels appropriate, allow some discussions about some of these topics.

FINALLY, encourage men to continue to marinate on these points in the week to come. Challenge them to listen to what God is trying to tell them and respond accordingly. If there are no more questions or input, close your time together in prayer.