



TEACH IT TALK SESSION 6

This talk guide is just that: a guide. It's not intended to be a manuscript to read aloud. It's here to give you ideas, structure, and stories to blend with your personal study (Prep It) as you prepare your talk.

The content complements the other Teach It guides, allowing you to give a talk on the same topic students are studying in other settings (such as small groups) without too much overlap.

1. Materials (Optional)

- A candle, match or lighter, lamp, flashlights and/or keychain lights, and a few students to act as “ushers”
- Pre-Session Video: If your group is too big or your meeting room is too well-lit to make it dark enough, make a video of the visual illustration below. Show the video instead of doing the exercise in the group setting.

2. Optional Openings

VISUAL ILLUSTRATION

This requires a little pre-session prep, but it works great. Recruit a few “ushers” beforehand, and make your room as dark as possible (black out the windows if possible). As students arrive, have your ushers escort students to their seats using a flashlight, keychain light, or even the light of a cell phone.

After students have gathered, start the talk in darkness with an unrelated story about something that happened to you today, or give some announcements. After a few minutes, light a lighter or a match. Continue the story, and after a minute or two, light a candle, and later a flashlight, then a lamp, and finally the whole room.

Then ask the group what it was like coming into a dark room, and listen to their responses. Chances are they became more and more accustomed to the darkness. Once you lit the match, it changed everything. That little light in all that darkness probably made a huge difference. As their eyes adjusted, it probably felt more and more normal, even though it was a very dark room. The flashlight made it even more uncomfortable, and the lamp may have even felt blinding at first.

PRE-SESSION VIDEO

Recruit eight to 10 students to go through the exercise above. Then break out a video camera and interview the students. Ask some to describe what they felt while walking into a dark room. Ask others what they were thinking when they sat in total darkness. Ask if their eyes adjusted to the darkness. Then ask how they (and their eyes) reacted as light was introduced to the room. Edit their answers and show the video in the group session.

POWER-OUTAGE STORY

Open your talk by describing a time when you experienced a long power outage or a very untimely one. Describe what it was like to navigate your home or office in the dark, and explain what you did to overcome the darkness.

3. Digging In

Whichever opening illustration you choose, explain that the point is simple:

No matter how dark the darkness is, eventually we get comfortable. Our spiritual eyes adjust. In fact, we may begin to enjoy it. We make small concessions that, pieced together, make one large concession. In the same way, even the smallest light in those situations makes a huge difference. A larger light even more so. And so on...

Continue with—

John 9:24-25 says this: “A second time they summoned the man who had been blind. ‘Give glory to God,’ they said. ‘We know this man is a sinner.’ He replied, ‘Whether he is a sinner or not, I don’t know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!’”

PERSONAL STORY

Share your testimony of how you came to know Jesus Christ. You may want to couch it in terms of darkness/blindness versus light/sight.

Here’s an example—

“I was blind but now I see!” That’s the single greatest testimony I can find in the Bible. It’s so simple and so true and so irrefutable. These were the words of the blind man healed in John 9 as the religious leaders were interrogating him about the “work” (healing) performed on the Sabbath. My story really isn’t all that different. I wasn’t blind in the sense that I couldn’t see shapes and colors. I was just blind to all of my wrong choices—the biggest choice being that I was living for myself. My pleasure. My needs. My life. “We all, like sheep, have gone astray”—like it says in Isaiah 53:6—is so true of me. And I was blind to that. I was just wandering off looking for life—and the more I looked, the emptier I felt. The blind man in the story might have felt unclean. People wondered aloud if it was him or his no-good family who caused his blindness. Obviously someone screwed up, so the question was, who? I don’t know that I ever felt unclean. I was comfortable in my surroundings. My spiritual eyes had adjusted to my surroundings. When I first heard about the God who loved me enough to die on a cross for me, that was eye-opening. That cast some serious light on what I’d been living for. I didn’t know love like that. I only knew a love of myself, of comfort, and of distraction. To think of a sacrificial love like this was beyond my understanding. At first it was overwhelming. It was blinding. It was almost too much. I knew a love like this demanded a response, and that scared me a bit too. Living in darkness, you don’t notice all the junk in the room...or in your life. It’s stuck somewhere in the corner, or even right under your nose. Either way, it went unnoticed.

Continue—

We’ve all been blind in one way or another. The Bible tells us that we “fall short” (Romans 3:23), that we turn our backs (Isaiah 53:6), and that the wage, or what we earn, is death in our relationships with God (Romans 6:23). The fact that God would step in where we’re blind and bring light to the situation is bigger than who you take to prom. In fact, it’s bigger than who you marry. It’s the biggest thing that can ever happen.

OPTIONAL MIX-INS

You may want to point out a few facts about John 9:

-When Jesus and the disciples came across a man blind from birth, the disciples asked the expected question of the day: Who’s to blame for this man being born blind? Who sinned to make this happen?

-Jesus straightened them out by saying that none of the family had sinned; the man’s blindness happened for a reason: that the works of God might be displayed in his life.

-Then Jesus made mud, put it in the man’s eyes, and asked the man to wash in the pool. The man could then see.

-Making mud was a fatal error, since this constituted work on what turned out to be the Sabbath.

-This led to a full investigation by the Pharisees, keepers of all things Sabbath, which ultimately resulted in the formerly blind man being kicked out of the synagogue.

I think sometimes we even get sort of blasé or ho-hum about that news. If so, that's a blind spot. What we have is bigger than the cure for cancer. We have the words that lead to life—eternal life. It's just that huge.

1 Thessalonians 5:5-8 says:

You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet.

We are a room full of sons and daughters of the light—sons and daughters of the day. You're looking back at a son (or daughter) of the light and a son (or daughter) of the day. And I'm sure all of us are confused by what that even means. Here's my best stab at it: We're told that we don't belong to the darkness because we were redeemed; we were made right. We belong in the light. And I guess the natural conclusion to that is: We need to start living like it.

There was a perfectly awful song that came out a few dozen years ago called, "The Freaks Come Out at Night." And the point of the song was that nothing good happens after midnight. This was the artist's take on inner-city living and knowing that bad things tended to happen at night. That's certainly not always true, but it is true that people who do bad things tend to like to hide those bad things. If you want to hide the fact that you're breaking into a house, you probably shouldn't do it at two in the afternoon. On some level, you're probably a lot less tempted to do wrong things out in the open, or in the light. You're probably less tempted to do some of these little screwball things we get caught up in doing once you see it in the light of day and know what the wiser thing to do is.

4. Taking It Inward

Continue with—

When the man formerly known as blind was kicked out of the synagogue, that had to have been a lonely moment for him. As a Jewish male, to him the synagogue was not only his "church life," but also his social life. All his friends attended that synagogue—and now they wouldn't associate with him. I love what it says in John 9:35: "When [Jesus] found him..." This means Jesus was looking for him—or at least Jesus went to him, since he knew where he was (being all-knowing and everything). The point is, Jesus went to the newly healed man in his loneliest hour. The man was probably thinking, *What good is it to see when you don't have any friends?*

And then Jesus asked the question that would display the work of God. It wasn't the healing that displayed the work of God. It was the answer to this question: "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man said, "Lord, I believe."

5. Wrapping It Up

Finish with—

Jesus is asking you the same question right now. Picture him seeking you out in the middle of all the dark situations in your life. Picture him kneeling down, cupping your face, and asking, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?"

You and I have access to the light of the world. All we have to do is say, "Yes, Lord, I believe." And the works of God will be displayed in our lives—like a fireworks show.

