



high school group study



**jim burns**

general editor

**sharing  
your faith &  
serving others**



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# how to use the *uncommon* group bible studies

Each *Uncommon* group Bible study contains 12 sessions, which are divided into 3 stand-alone units of 4 sessions each. You may choose to teach all 12 sessions consecutively, to use just one unit, or to present individual sessions. You know your group, so do what works best for you and your students.

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) of each session's student handouts are available for download at [www.gospellight.com/uncommon/](http://www.gospellight.com/uncommon/). The handouts include the "message," "dig," "apply," "reflect" and "meditation" sections of each study and have been formatted for easy printing. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each session opens with a devotional meditation written for you, the youth leader. As hectic and trying as youth work is much of the time, it's important never to neglect your interior life. Use the devotions to refocus your heart and prepare yourself to share with kids the message that has already taken root in you. Each of the 12 sessions are divided into the following sections:

## **starter**

Young people will stay in your youth group if they feel comfortable and make friends in the group. This section is designed for you and the students to get to know each other better.

### **message**

The message section will introduce the Scripture reading for the session and get students thinking about how the passage applies to their lives.

### **dig**

Many young people are biblically illiterate. In this section, students will dig into the Word of God and will begin to interact on a personal level with the concepts.

### **apply**

Young people need the opportunity to think through the issues at hand. This section will get students talking about the passage of Scripture and interacting on important issues.

### **reflect**

The conclusion to the study will allow students to reflect on some of the issues presented in the study on a more personal level.

### **meditation**

A closing Scripture for the students to read and reflect on.



# unit I

## sharing your faith

A few years ago, I stood watching the Rose Parade with my family and a million other spectators in Pasadena, California. An older man who looked as if he were a few cases short of a full load shuffled up to me. At first I thought he was going to ask me for money, because he appeared to be homeless. But instead he said that God had told him to give me this message: “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Then he handed me a tract, and as he shuffled away, he yelled back, “God bless you, sir!”

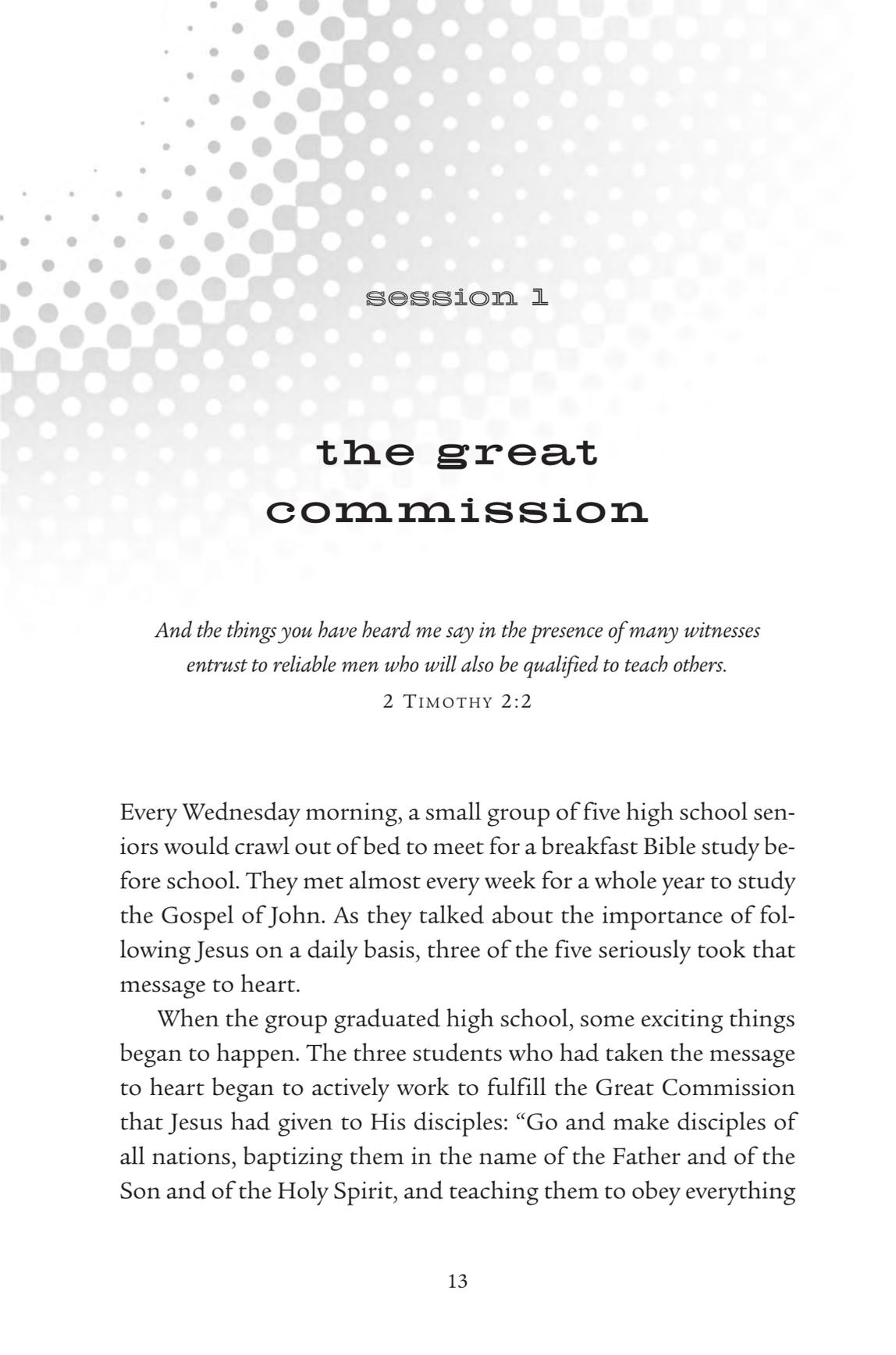
My first reaction was to laugh at him. After all, he needed a bath, and who was he to tell me about God’s love? I had spoken just the weekend before to several thousand kids on the same subject.

And then it happened—I read the little tract he gave me. Sure enough, it was the simple, beautiful gospel. The printing wasn’t as nice as this book, and there was no color—just a simple, black-and-white clear message of God’s love for humankind. I wondered,

*Did God really tell him to speak to me? Am I really a brother of that nameless man? Was his style of sharing his faith effective? Should I have been standing on the street corner of the Rose Parade preaching with a megaphone like some of the others?* I still don't have all the answers, but for some reason that little bearded man with the oversized coat made an impression on my life.

I didn't take up his style of witnessing, because I don't even think it is the most effective way to share our faith. However, the next time I used some of the material included in this section, I was more aware that God uses many different ways to reach His creation. Yet He still tends to work through us on a one-on-one basis as we learn the Great Commission and how to better communicate a lifestyle of love to a generation that hasn't responded to Him.

You have the opportunity to place lifelong witnessing skills into the hands of your students, and, at the very least, remind many of them once again that God told us to tell them that He loves them—a whole bunch.



session 1

**the great  
commission**

*And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses  
entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others.*

2 TIMOTHY 2:2

Every Wednesday morning, a small group of five high school seniors would crawl out of bed to meet for a breakfast Bible study before school. They met almost every week for a whole year to study the Gospel of John. As they talked about the importance of following Jesus on a daily basis, three of the five seriously took that message to heart.

When the group graduated high school, some exciting things began to happen. The three students who had taken the message to heart began to actively work to fulfill the Great Commission that Jesus had given to His disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything

I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20).

One of the students went to Costa Rica on a month-long college mission trip and served as a rock-climbing instructor at a Christian camp. Another traveled to Haiti as a medical missionary. The third faithfully worked with junior-high and high-school students, leading a number into personal relationships with Christ. As for the two others? Unfortunately, one dropped out of sight, and the other went to college and became a communist. (Well, three outta five ain’t bad!)

Paul’s admonition to Timothy to find reliable men qualified to carry out the Great Commission is an important reminder of what our task is as youth workers. God wants us to be developers of people—disciple-makers who influence young people to bring others to Christ. Given this, the mark of our effectiveness as youth workers is not how many students are in our youth group but how many students actually become disciples of Jesus Christ.

The most important investment of our time and energy is discipling young people to carry out the Great Commission. That is something they can do on their campuses, in their homes, on their sports teams and at their places of work. Young people *can* make a powerful difference for God in everything they do, and God wants to use them for His kingdom today. The Great Commission is not reserved for adults only. That’s a wonderful message that we get to share with the students we serve!

*Nothing can be made more plain than that God is bent on the conquest of the world. . . . God can employ all methods but chiefly loves to work men upon men.*

CHARLES WESLEY

group study guide

# the great commission

starter

MAD BIBLELIBS: Get together with four or five people. Have one person in the group ask the others to provide the appropriate type of word for each blank in the following paragraphs. Make sure that the person does not read the sentence—just have him or her ask for the word. When all of the blanks have been filled in, read each paragraph aloud.

**jonah**

It came to pass that Jonah, a (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ man, was asked by the Lord to go to (place) \_\_\_\_\_ and to tell all the people there that they should turn from their evil (nouns)

**Note:** You can download this group study guide in 8½" x 11" format at [www.gospellight.com/uncommon/sharing\\_your\\_faith.zip](http://www.gospellight.com/uncommon/sharing_your_faith.zip).

\_\_\_\_\_. But Jonah, because he was (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_, refused to go and instead decided to travel by (mode of transportation) \_\_\_\_\_ to (place) \_\_\_\_\_. However, while Jonah was asleep under the (noun) \_\_\_\_\_, the Lord caused the sea to be (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_, and the (noun) \_\_\_\_\_ decided to throw Jonah into the (liquid) \_\_\_\_\_. As Jonah (verb) \_\_\_\_\_ for his life, he was swallowed by a giant (animal) \_\_\_\_\_. Jonah begged the Lord for forgiveness and was then given a second (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. He was thrown up on the (noun) \_\_\_\_\_ and, with a (facial expression) \_\_\_\_\_ across his face, he went on to do as he was told.

### noah

Many years ago, the Lord looked upon the people of the earth and saw that they were very (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_. So the Lord decided to send a great (noun) \_\_\_\_\_ that would cover the entire (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. Now, Noah was a (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ man, and the Lord said to him, “Noah, go build yourself a (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. Go out and gather up both male and female of every living (noun) \_\_\_\_\_ and put them inside the (noun) \_\_\_\_\_.” So Noah did as God instructed. And when he was (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_, the (liquid) \_\_\_\_\_ began to fall from the (noun) \_\_\_\_\_. All of the (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ people began to cry out, (exclamation) “\_\_\_\_\_,” but it did them no good. (Number) \_\_\_\_\_ days later, the (weather pattern) \_\_\_\_\_ stopped. Noah sent a (animal) \_\_\_\_\_ out of the window to see if the ground was (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_. It flew back with a (noun) \_\_\_\_\_, and the Lord sent a (adjective) \_\_\_\_\_ rainbow to let Noah know that never again would He destroy the world with a (noun) \_\_\_\_\_.

**message**

After Jesus’ resurrection, He met with His disciples in Galilee and gave them a final command that has since become known as the “Great Commission.” This commission represented the task that Jesus wanted them to accomplish during their time on earth, as His work was now finished and He would soon be ascending to heaven. Each part of the Great Commission had great significance to the disciples—just as it has great significance for us, His disciples today. Jesus’ words are recorded in Matthew 28:18-20:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

Let’s take a look at each section of this final command to discover why it is so significant for us today.

1. First, in Matthew 28:18, Jesus says, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” Notice that Jesus did not take His authority from anyone—it was given to Him because it was rightfully His. Based on this verse, what authority does Jesus have?

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2. How does having this authority affect the meaning of Jesus' words?

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3. In verse 19, Jesus says to “go and make disciples of all nations.” The word “go” is both a command and an encouragement to take action on our faith. What is a “disciple”? Who were Jesus' disciples?

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4. How would we “make disciples”?

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5. Where are we to go? Who are we supposed to invite to become disciples?

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6. Jesus then says to baptize these disciples “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” Given this, what is a person saying when he or she makes the decision to become baptized?

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7. What is the significance of saying, “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,” before being baptized?

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8. Why is baptism an important part of becoming a disciple?

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9. In Matthew 28:20, Jesus says to teach these disciples “to obey everything I have commanded you.” Given this, what is our job when we witness to others about Christ?

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10. How can a person know what Jesus wants them to do?

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11. Jesus concludes by stating, “And surely I will be with you always, to the very end of the age.” How does the fact that Jesus is always with His followers help them to accomplish the job of making other disciples?

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12. What does this verse tell you about Jesus’ relationship with His disciples?

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### **dig**

Jesus’ final words to His disciples are recorded in Acts 1. After giving them the Great Commission, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to help them and guide them as they went out to do His will on the earth. In Acts 1:6-11 we read the following:

*So when they met together, they asked him, “Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”*

*He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

*After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.*

*They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."*

1. In this passage, Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would come to live in each believer after He ascended to heaven. How would the Holy Spirit help the disciples carry out the Great Commission?

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2. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus uses the words "make disciples," while in Acts 1:8 He uses the words "be my witnesses" to describe what He wants them to do. How do these phrases describe the job that Jesus gives to His followers?

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3. How do you think the words of “the men dressed in white” encouraged the disciples?

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4. When Peter received the Holy Spirit, He immediately followed Jesus’ command and told others how to become disciples of Jesus. Jesus entrusted the job of making disciples to people like Peter—and to people like us. Why is carrying out the Great Commission so important for all followers of Christ?

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5. What would happen if we didn’t obey this command?

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6. What promise have we been given as we seek to make disciples of all nations (see Matthew 28:20)?

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7. When will the work of the Great Commission be completed (see Matthew 28:20; Acts 1:11)?

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**apply**

If you are working through this study in a group, get together with three or four others. Read each of the following statements and list one item for each blank:

The good news is \_\_\_\_\_,  
but the bad news is \_\_\_\_\_.

The good news is \_\_\_\_\_,  
but the bad news is \_\_\_\_\_.

The good news is \_\_\_\_\_,  
but the bad news is \_\_\_\_\_.

The good news is \_\_\_\_\_,  
but the bad news is \_\_\_\_\_.

The good news is \_\_\_\_\_,  
but the bad news is \_\_\_\_\_.

Share your good news/bad news responses with the group, and then consider the following questions in light of Jesus' command to make disciples:

1. How does it feel to receive good news?

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2. How does it feel to receive bad news?

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3. God chooses to use His followers to reach others with the good news of freedom from sin and eternal life through Jesus. Because of this, if we don't share the gospel with others, there may be some people who will not have the opportunity to become part of God's family. Read Matthew 9:35-37. How does Jesus describe the people who are waiting to hear the good news?

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4. How do you tend to feel toward people who need Jesus? Does your attitude match that of Christ's? Why or why not?

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5. Who are three people in your life right now that need your love, care and the opportunity to hear about belonging to Jesus Christ?

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6. What fears do you have when it comes to telling others about Jesus?

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7. What can we as members of our youth group do to follow the Great Commission?

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**reflect**

When Jesus returns to this world as He promised, the time for making disciples will be over. For each person, the opportunity to become a disciple ends when his or her life ends or upon Jesus' return. Having a heart for people who haven't accepted Jesus' love and forgiveness is key to wanting to obey Jesus by making disciples.

Francis of Assisi (1182–1226) is an excellent example of someone whose heart was changed and softened when he obediently showed God’s love to others. Francis, born Giovanni Francesco di Bernardone, enjoyed a rich and easy life as a young man because of his father’s wealth and the permissiveness of the times. What he wanted from life was glory. But just when he was on the verge of achieving it, God met him in a dream and told him to “serve the Master, not men.”

This caused Francis to go through a time of spiritual crisis, during which time he quietly searched for something worthy of his complete devotion. One day while he was out riding, he met a leper. The leper was loathsome and repulsive in the ugliness of his disease. Nonetheless, in a decisive moment of illumination, Francis suddenly perceived in this leper the embodiment of God’s beauty—a human being to be loved and cared for tenderly. He dismounted his horse, gave the leper all the money he had on him, and kissed his hand. Francis was never the same again.

When Francis learned to understand and cherish each individual person as a unique reflection of God’s creative genius, a true attitude of human concern and compassion began to form within him. Through grace, Francis turned his initial revulsion at the sight of a leper into a personal triumph over judgment, bigotry and false assumptions. In turn, this impulse led to a movement of peace that would affect legions of people for centuries.

Francis of Assisi spent the rest of his life serving his Lord Jesus Christ. He wrote these famous words as a prayer to God from the heart of a man who had a deep desire to be an instrument of God’s will on this earth: “Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace. Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; and where there is sadness, joy.”

1. How have you seen people—famous and ordinary—carry out the Great Commission today?

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2. Read 1 Peter 3:8-9 and 13-15. What attitudes do you see in the prayer of Francis of Assisi and these verses from 1 Peter? Why is the right attitude important for those who want to follow Jesus and make disciples?

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3. What challenges does the Great Commission give to you?

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4. Someone once said, “Whether it’s next door or in another country, it is not an option but a command to share the good news.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

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5. What is your heart's attitude toward people who are lost? What would help your attitude be more like that of Jesus (see Matthew 9:35-37)?

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6. Whose power should we rely on when sharing the good news about Jesus (see John 16:13 and Acts 2:38)?

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### meditation



But as for me, I will always have hope; I will praise you more and more. My mouth will tell of your righteousness, of your salvation all day long, though I know not its measure. I will come and proclaim your mighty acts, O Sovereign Lord; I will proclaim your righteousness, yours alone.

PSALM 71:14-16

# sharing and serving: the heart of following Jesus

Teens have a reputation for being self-absorbed and “all-about-me,” but most of them care deeply about God and others and just wish they knew how to show it. With *Sharing Your Faith and Serving Others*, you can equip the students in your group to make a difference in the world by seeing others as Jesus sees them. Teens will learn how to use their gifts in service to others, how to lead their peers with gentleness and compassion, and how to share their faith by being an encouraging, generous friend. These 12 sessions of youth-friendly Bible study are the newest edition to the *Uncommon* curriculum series created by veteran youth minister Jim Burns. Action-packed, fun activities and insightful discussion outlines will get your teens thinking about the Great Commission and the Great Commandment and talking about how they can follow Jesus in love and obedience. Plus, you can download reproducible student handouts for every session—find out how inside!

I don't know anyone who knows and understands the needs of the youth worker like Jim Burns.

## DOUG FIELDS

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I heartily recommend these studies.

## RICK WARREN

Author of *The Purpose Driven Life*



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