

# REACHING THOSE WE KNOW.

Evangelism Lessons from 2 Corinthians:

Week 1 | Living for Jesus

Week 2 | Loving Like Jesus

Week 3 | Depending on Jesus

Week 4 | Speaking about Jesus

## **About this study series:**

Evangelism is not a onetime event but a continuous process... as we do life with those around us.

It takes energy and effort to cultivate friendships over an extended period of time. But many of us already have these long term loving friendships with unchurched friends. The boys we went through school with, the girls from yoga, the colleagues at work or the mums from mums group. God has set the times and places that we would live (Acts 4:20) and by his providence blessed us with the families, social networks, and offices, schools we find ourselves in. Lets reach out with the gospel to the people we find in every sphere of our lives.

If you don't have many unchurched friends think about the potential relationships. Are there opportunities at a sport group, your university, office, home, gym class, mothers group, playtime, parents of your kids' friends, or even at church (welcoming newcomers or those you meet through community outreach activities)?

Over the next four weeks, I hope that you will grow more and more in your willingness to be a 'slave for Christ' to bring glory to him as you allow him to working through you to reach those you know with the Gospel.

Charles H. Spurgeon once prayed:

Oh! give us to serve Thee, and especially, and this prayer we have already prayed but we pray it again, make us useful in the salvation of our fellow man. O Lord, have we lived so long in the world and yet are our children unconverted? May we never rest until they are truly saved. Have we been going up and down in business, and are those round about us as yet unaware of our Christian character? Have we never spoken to them the Word of Life? Lord, arouse us to a deep concern for all with whom we come in contact from day to day. Make us all missionaries at home or in the street, or in our workshop, wherever Providence has cast our lot, may we there shine as lights in the world.

AMEN

# 1. LIVING FOR JESUS

Many of us question our ability to be effective for gospel ministry. Like Paul, we ask of ourselves, "Who is equal to such a task?" (2:16). In this study, the aim is to explore why in Christ all are competent for ministry. We don't need to leave evangelism to the 'professional evangelists' like a Billy Graham or our pastors at Church by the Bridge – the privilege belongs to each of us who live for Jesus.

**Intro:** What makes you apprehensive in sharing the Gospel with those that you know?

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 2:14-3:18

- What's God's purpose "through us"? (2:14) And how does God do this?
- What does it mean to belong to the procession? (cf 2 Peter 2:9)
- What do you think Paul means in saying we are "the smell of death" to some and "the fragrance of life" to others (2:15-16)?
- In contrast to those who boasted about their letters of recommendation, Paul says the Corinthian church are his letter (3:1-3). What sort of letter are they?
- In 2:16 Paul asked, "Who is equal to such a task?" What makes him commendable for service & evangelism? (3:4-6; 2:17 *from God, before God, in Christ*)?
- Where does the confidence & competency for service & evangelism come from?
- How is there freedom "where the Spirit of the Lord is"? Is it freedom to do what we want to do or freedom to serve God after being liberated from sin and taken captive to live for Jesus?

**Relevance:**

- How does the thought that Christianity spreads like a fragrance "through us" challenge you, your Connect Group and our church as a collective?
- How has this passage encouraged you to feel competent to live for Jesus and minister as one of his disciples?

**Reaching those we know:**

In Pairs - share your testimony, how Christ conquered you, in 2 mins in pairs. Challenge one another to share testimonies with people you know. Follow this up next week.

**Response:**

You are a letter from Christ. Pray that you would represent Christ to those around you. Share with each other 'your 3' and pray for them.

**Resources:**

**Notes on Verse 14:** "The question is, what did this picture of the triumphal procession mean to Paul – how did he see himself in relation to it? The answer is, not as victorious soldier (as some have thought), but as a conquered subject! Startling as this idea may be, the application goes beyond that to frankly shocking – because conquered enemies (or a representative group of them) were put to death at the end of the processional as a sacrifice to the Roman gods. Thus Paul viewed himself as God's captive being led to death... in order that Paul might display or reveal the majesty, power and glory of God, his conqueror." *R. Kent Hughes, in Preaching the Word, 2 Corinthians: Power in Weakness. Crossway, Illinois: 2006. pg 55-56*

**Testimony Help:** Your Story Workshop' Resource, available at <http://www.cbtb.org.au/core>  
OR read Chapter 6 in 'Just Walk Across the Room')

## 2. LOVING LIKE JESUS

Catherine Zeta-Jones' promise to Michael Douglas was finalised with a 10-carat antique diamond estimated at a crazy \$2 million. But not even this can compare to the act of love that God has demonstrated to us and our world: Jesus bore our sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (5:21)! Not only does this crazy love compel us to be living for Jesus, it compels us to love like him and actively share this good news with others. In this study we will explore how Christ's love motivates us for evangelism.

**Intro:** How can the power of love motivate?

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 5:10-21

- What is Paul's motive for evangelism:
  - In verses 10-11? (fear)
  - In verses 14? (love)
- How do these fit together?
- How should Christ's love to compel/control us? (v15, 16, 20)
- How do these motivations contrast with motivations mentioned in 2:17, 4:2 & 5:12?
- In describing his message, Paul uses the words *reconciliation* and *reconciled* five times (5:18-20). What does it mean to be reconciled to God?
- Paul says God has given us this "ministry of reconciliation" (v18). What does this tell us about our role and God's role in evangelism?
- How does Paul illustration in 1 Corinthians 3:5-9, help explain these roles?
- What encouragement do these verses give you in sharing the Gospel?
- What do you think 2 Corinthians 5:10-21 presents as the core motivation for reaching out to people with the message of Jesus?

### **Relevance:**

- How strongly does "Christ's love" feature as a motivation for reaching those you love with the Gospel?
- How could your love for Jesus grow?
- Other than 'your 3', who are you an ambassador of Christ to? Whose life are you planting gospel seeds into or watering? Consider even people at church who may not yet be Christians? Welcoming at church provides great opportunity for evangelism.

### **Reaching those we know:**

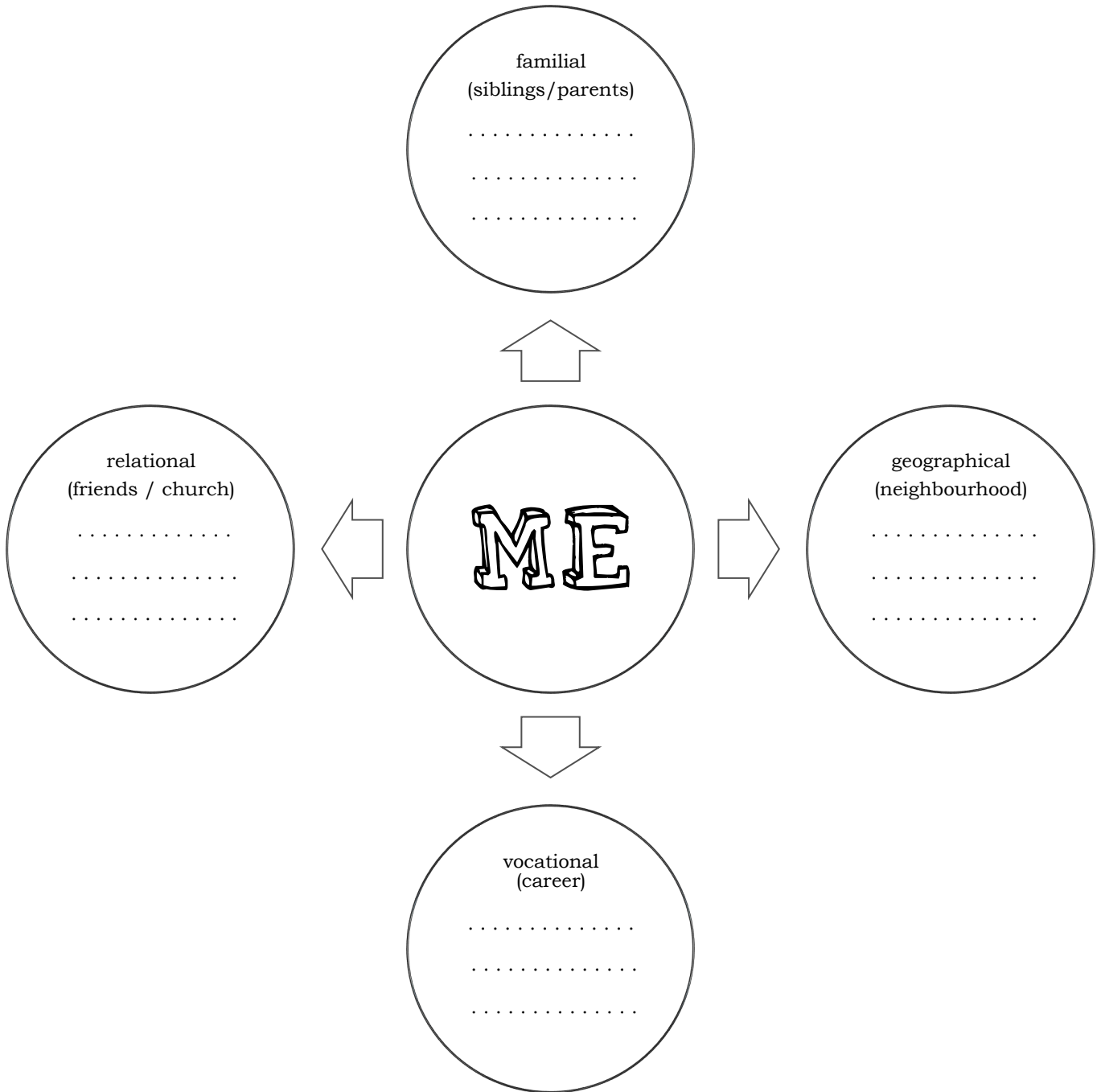
- In pairs, share what you love about Jesus? – Not how you became a Christian but what being a Christian means for you?
- Spend time in your connect group using the diagram on the next page to help you think more broadly about the people you know who you have opportunity to reach. Write down 3 names of people in each of your life's different spheres.

### **Response:**

The love of Christ controls the Christian. Pray that we would continue to be motivated to live not for ourselves but for Him who died for us. May God grant us boldness to implore those we know to "be reconciled to Christ".

**Resources:** see the "sphere" on next page – also available at <http://www.cbttb.org.au/core>

[www.withoutashepherd.com](http://www.withoutashepherd.com)



**resource: reaching those you know sphere!**

### 3. DEPENDING ON JESUS

Even though we strive to live for and love like Jesus, we do not have the “surpassing power” to save those we know. Such is from God and not from us (4:7).

In his book, *Let the Nations Be Glad*, John Piper writes:

*“Life is war. That’s not all it is. But it is always that. Our weakness in prayer is owing largely to our neglect of this truth. Prayer is primarily a wartime walkie-talkie for the mission of the church as it advances against the powers of darkness and unbelief. It is not surprising that prayer malfunctions when we try to make it a domestic intercom to call upstairs for more comforts in the den. God has given us prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie so that we can call headquarters for everything we need as the kingdom of Christ advances in the world. Prayer gives us the significance of frontline forces and gives God the glory of a limitless Provider. The one who gives the power gets the glory.”*

In this study, we explore why prayer is perhaps the most powerful activity of evangelism. A significant amount of time in this study should be dedicated to prayer.

**Intro:** How important is prayer? What does prayer indicate about our relationship with God? Why do we ask God for things in prayer?

**Read:**

2 Corinthians 4:1-12

- What forces does Paul see at work behind those who reject and those who accept his gospel (4:4-5)?
- Who does the work to heal unbelievers (us) from the power of blindness? (4:6)
- In what ways does Paul contrast the glory of the gospel with the weakness of those who preach it (4:7-18)?
- What is the relationship between our frailty (“jars of clay”) and God’s “all-surpassing power”? How does 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 affirm this relationship?

**Relevance**

- What do these verses indicate about our relationship with God?
- How can Paul's perspective help us with our own weaknesses and mortality?
- How does the reality of our frailty inform the priority we should give to prayer, in our evangelism and in our everyday?

**Reaching those we know**

Spend an extended period of time in prayer.

**Response:**

Pray that you will be made strong even in your weak places that you might rely wholly on Jesus, as you live for and love like Him. Intercede for your friends: Nothing less than creation power can be applied to their blind souls. There was, and is, no one beyond the grace of God.

**Resources:**

See “What to pray for?” over the page

**resource: what to pray for?** \*(there is more you can pray for than this table)

|                        |   |  |
|------------------------|---|--|
| Matthew 9:37-38        | Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”  | For God to raise up other Christians around those you know and love.   |
| 2 Timothy 2:25-26      | ... in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will.   | May God grant repentance and freedom to our children, spouses, friends, siblings, parents, and colleagues.   |
| 1 Peter 3:15           | But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect.  | May my hope in Christ be evident in my life so to give people reason to ask me about Jesus. And confidence to do so.                                 |
| Romans 10:1            | Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved.   | To desire the salvation of your friends (and Jews).  |
| Colossians 4:2-6       | Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone. | For humble dependence on God; open doors; clarity; wisdom; willingness to make the most of every opportunity; words of grace and salt.               |
| Psalms 34:8            | Taste and see that the LORD is good; blessed is the man who takes refuge in him.  | Would those we know take refuge in our Lord Jesus Christ.  |
| 1 Thessalonians 1:9-10 | ... for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead— Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.   | That we would hear reports from our family at church about those we know turning to God.   |
| Philemon 6             | I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.  | Active in evangelism & full of understanding.  |
| Romans 10:13           | Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.   | May this be true of those we are sharing the gospel with.  |
| Romans 10:14-15        | How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”   | Let your connect group be a people known for our beautiful feet.   |
| 2 Corinthians 4:15     | ...so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.  | May God get the glory as his grace reaches those we know.  |
| 2 Corinthians 1:11     | ... as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many.  | Help our mission partners. Pray for the missionaries your connect group supports. Thank God in weeks to come as you see him answer prayers you pray. |

# 4. SPEAKING ABOUT JESUS

As our hearts are stirred with the love of Christ, our faith should lead us to be outspoken with the Gospel. How great it would be if each of us could not “help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20) in history and in our lives. In this study we will examine what to speak and why we speak about Jesus!

**Intro:** What is the Gospel? What needs to be included when you share the gospel? What are the advantages and disadvantages of using a gospel outline?

**Read:** 2 Corinthians 4:1-15  
 (Other good passages to reference: Colossians 4:2-6; 1 Peter 3:15)

## What to speak?

- How does the “mercy” & “ministry” in 4:1, encourage him to not lose heart?
- What is the method by which Paul speaks and shares the gospel?
- What does it mean to set forth the truth plainly?
- What is the truth of the gospel?
  - Compare the gospel summaries found in 2 Corinthians.
  - What does Paul include and not include?

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><u>2Cor. 5:14-15</u><br/>                 For Christ’s love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.</p> |  |
| <p><u>2Cor. 5:21</u><br/>                 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.</p>   |  |
| <p><u>2 Cor. 8:9</u><br/>                 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.</p>  |  |
| <p><u>2 Cor 13:4</u><br/>                 ...crucified in weakness, yet he lives by God’s power</p>  |  |

- What needs to be included for us to be able to say we have shared the gospel?

## Why we speak?

- What motivates Paul to speak-out regardless of the personal consequence? (4:13-14)
- What is His conviction based upon? (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14)
- What would be the consequences if Paul does not speak? (4:15)
  - Whose benefit is he speaking for?
  - What is the relationship between Paul’s willingness to speak and God’s glory?

## Relevance

- Does your conviction about the Gospel result in a willingness and boldness to speak about Jesus?
- How can your conviction deepen?

**Reaching those we know:**

- Think about how you would go about inviting those you know along to church, outreach activities, Easter or Christmas? Challenge each other to invite friends to church/event to hear the Gospel.
- Think about how you could go about gospeling those you know yourselves:
  - What are the advantages of using your own story of becoming and being a Christian as a starting point for talking to people about Jesus?
  - What are the advantages of using current issues or topics in the news to talk about Jesus? Think of a current issue in the news. Brainstorm what Jesus would have to say about it and how as a Christian, you might be able contribute to a conversation about it.
  - Discuss in pairs or in the group as a whole:

“It's Monday morning. Another working week begins. You walk through the office hallway, thinking about the tasks you need to get done today. You make eye contact with a colleague, and throw out a casual, “Hey, how was your weekend?” She looks tired, and she stares blankly into the distance and replies restlessly, “I kicked my partner out, He's been sleeping with my best friend.”

Read through the article “What to say when...” for ideas on how to respond – or encourage individuals to read the article at home.

**Response**

Thank God for those who spoke about Jesus to you. May we each be willing to speak to others and introduce them to the good news that brings life to them and glory to our God.

**Resources:** see “What to say when...” over the page.

## **“What do you say when ...?” Office small talk**

by Hayley Neal / Briefing #376-7 / January 2010

*Here's another example of how to speak God's life-changing word in any and every situation—this time, from Hayley Neal, who writes about Monday morning office small talk.*

It's Monday morning. Another working week begins. You walk through the office hallway, thinking about the tasks you need to get done today. You make eye contact with a colleague, and throw out a casual, “Hey, how was your weekend?” He looks tired, and he stares blankly into the distance and replies restlessly, “My girlfriend walked out. She's been sleeping with my best mate.” Do you automatically respond by wondering what the office boundaries are for over-sharing? Are you filled with compassion or judgement for your colleague? Or do you feel just plain uncomfortable, and blush? What words, if any, do you reply with?

We know that we should speak, but often we Christians find ourselves out of our depth, and don't know how to respond. Whether because of fear, timidity or an inability to articulate something helpful in the moment, we miss great opportunities, and prove ineffective in witnessing to our broken world.

So what is the silver bullet? How do you build enough humble confidence to talk with someone who doesn't share the same values as you? And how on earth do you seize the opportunity with something creative to say that will point people to Jesus in conversation? The hard thing that we all know about conversations is that you can't rehearse them. So instead of giving you the silver bullet (which doesn't exist, by the way), let me show you how the gospel transforms our conversations.

Let's have a look at a second attempt at the conversation with the colleague. As an evangelistic endeavour, how would you rate it? A success? A failure? Something in between?

**You:** How was your weekend?

**Colleague:** My girlfriend walked out. She's been sleeping with my best mate.

**You:** Oh, ah ... yeah. Um ... sorry mate, you must be floored. Can't believe you made it to work today. Did you want to grab lunch today and chat?

**Colleague:** Lunch would be good ... But don't worry about me. I'll be all right.

**You:** All right? If I were you, I would be devastated—and pretty angry.

**Colleague:** Really?

**You:** You wouldn't be? I reckon you've got every right to feel hurt.

**Colleague:** Well, yeah, hmm. I suppose I'm heaps angry. It's just so humiliating. I feel like such an idiot; I didn't see it coming. Anyway let's chat at lunch.

Although this conversation has not yet articulated the gospel, it demonstrates the kind of compassion the gospel explicates. It makes assumptions that the gospel would have us make: we make gospel assumptions when we share just a slice of the gospel in an attempt to show that Jesus is worth considering or reconsidering.

So what are the gospel assumptions in this particular situation? Firstly, broken relationships and life experiences impact us. Secondly, broken relationships (and betrayal) hurt. When your non-Christian colleague feels betrayed and breaks up with someone he has been sleeping with, you can assume that it will have an effect on him and that he will be hurting. It is worth expressing that you think that what's happened is sad, even though you think premarital sex is wrong.

In these types of situations, some of these gospel assumptions can help us respond creatively. You can:

- Affirm that people are made for relationship and intimacy, which sex can either affirm or injure
- Recognize the hurt and betrayal in the situation because you know the bonding power of sex
- Share a positive apologetic for marriage—that, “As a Christian, I view sex as best kept for marriage—where security and commitment are fostered”
- Acknowledge (if appropriate and relevant) the pain of being separated from someone you have enjoyed sexual intimacy with (whether that intimacy has occurred within or outside of marriage). Perhaps over time, you might like to explore the controversial topic of forgiveness.

Perhaps, if your colleague raises more things about God or if you feel that there is a natural link to this, you could share with them a helpful illustration from John Dickson's *A Sneaking Suspicion*:

The media ‘sexperts’ can fool us into believing a Datsun view of sex. Lend it out. It's not that special. But in God's eyes, sex is more like a Porsche. It is valuable. It demands care. It is something precious to us (and to him), not merely the machinery by which we get about and enjoy ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Gospel assumptions apply just as much to the Christian as they do to our unbelieving friends who may have a more try-before-you-buy approach to sex and relationships. The gospel applies to us all because this is God's world, so let us make use of the gospel in showing the love of Christ to not just our work colleagues, but to the world.

#### **Endnote**

<sup>1</sup> John Dickson, *A Sneaking Suspicion*, Matthias Media, Kingsford, 2004 (1992), p. 17. This can also be found at <http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/briefing/library/5795>