

# Impact Leaders: A Brief Introduction

## What is Impact?

The key to answering this question is to consider the role of DICCU in general. DICCU's self-stated **aim** is "*to reach every student in Durham with the good news of Jesus Christ, so that God is glorified*". Everything that the CU does must have this aim in mind. We are a mission team within the university and Impact plays a vital role in **equipping** and **exciting** the various colleges to more effectively and passionately spread the gospel within their colleges.

Impact is essentially a **Bible study** that runs for around half an hour. It is important to remember that it is *not the same as a church Bible study*, which involves teaching the Bible in a more informal way than a sermon. The **primary aim of impact** is to come together as a group of students from different churches and *unite* around the gospel, letting it challenge us and enthuse us to speak to those in our colleges.

The **vision** for Impact studies is that, as we consider such an incredible gospel, in God's word, that we become unable to keep silent about it to those in our colleges. This vision is best **summarised** in Acts 4v20:

**"...we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"**

From the surrounding context, we see that the Apostles were facing the first challenge to their proclamation of to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Peter and John were seized and thrown into jail for the night before being brought before the Sanhedrin, who commanded them not to speak or teach again about Jesus. Peter and John replied that they must obey God and that they could not keep silent about all that they had seen and heard of Jesus.

*This is what we want Impact to do. We want to see all that we once were in our sin (Eph 2v1-3); how God planned from the very beginning to save us (Gen 3v15) from the just punishment that we deserved (Rom 6v23) by sending his only son to die in our place and take our punishment (2 Cor 5v21) how he sent his Spirit to equip us (Acts 2v38) and even now uses us to take this good news to those around us (Rom 10v14); and how we will one day be raised to new life forever, perfected and living in perfect relationship with him in heaven (2 Cor 15v42-44). As we study God's word and begin to scratch the surface of all that God has done for us in Jesus Christ, then we should be **so excited** about this gospel that we are able to say with Peter and John, "we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard".*

So, this is the vision of Impact, fulfilling the overall aim of DICCU itself. This is the **beating heart** of Impact, and if you do nothing else, *seek to run studies that have this vision at their very core*. This is why we have Impact at all, instead of just putting events on or just spending time together as a social group in our colleges. But now let us briefly consider some more practical points that seek to achieve this vision in Impact.

## What is an Impact leader?

An impact leader should be *someone who has the attitude of Peter and John* and who sets the example in their **evangelism** to those in their Impact groups. If they are leading studies that have the primary purpose of exciting believers who meet around God's word to evangelism, when they themselves are failing to get stuck into spreading the gospel out of gratitude and love towards a gracious God and such an

incredible saviour, then they are completely missing the point and are ill-equipped to lead.

They must also do "their best to present themselves to God... As one who correctly handles the word of truth" (Rom 12v3). Handling God's word is an incredible privilege, but also a sobering responsibility. It should not be taken lightly and *adequate preparation is vital*, as are the SLOBS sessions. However, remembering that Impact is not a church Bible study, an Impact leader should not seek to dominate their group, or put across their own particular theological views that are not related to the vision of impact. Rather, an impact leader should be characterised by **humility** and must seek to commit themselves and their studies to God in prayer, that he would strengthen them and use them.

## How should Impact studies work?

We have seen what the main vision of Impact is and how the impact leader should seek to live out this vision and correctly handle God's word so that this vision is faithfully brought out. Now we will consider just how the studies should be run. *Always keeping the vision of Impact in your mind* will ensure that your studies are achieving their purpose. **The way that the study is run** will have a big influence on how well those in the group catch the vision. Impact is a *group of students* looking at God's word *together*, not one person teaching (the "not church" thing again).

Impact studies should be a group exercise where all feel comfortable in contributing. The Impact leader's job is to guide the discussion so that those in the group are excited by the gospel. They have the advantage of having looked at the passage beforehand and having been to SLOBS and prepared questions to get the study going. To use an **analogy**, the impact leader should be like a sheepdog that runs around a flock of sheep and **guides** it in the way it should be going (although obviously in a less intimidating way). They know just where the study should be going thanks to prep and SLOBS, so they can direct it in the way it should go and if it starts wandering in the wrong direction they can gently bring it back. This is a **real skill** and one that *only comes with practice*. Be prepared to fail miserably at times, but never forget that *God's word always accomplishes its purpose* (Isaiah 55v10-11), and that his Spirit dwells in you to strengthen you in your service to him.

Once Impact is finished, there is time for prayer, but don't make a clean break between the two. *Praying through the passage* is a really helpful response to all that you have studied. Also, encourage your Impact group to *share names* of those they are seeking to reach with the gospel, so that you can pray with them and also have accountability within the group. This is a great way to make sure that the Impact studies are connected to evangelism throughout the week.

Finally, **be encouraged** as you share God's word with those in your group and as you seek to help them catch the vision of impact through studying God's word. Serving God in this way is an immense privilege, and not just for the life to come (Matt 6v19-21), as Paul prays for Philemon, "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*" (Philemon v2). This is our prayer for Impact leaders: that as they serve God they would grow in their witness and their love for him and would be better equipped to continue in their service.