



BIBLE FOUNDATIONS

What Is the Gospel?

A beginner's guide to the good news of Jesus Christ

Simple • Clear • Scripture-grounded

Purpose Of This Study

The word gospel means “good news.” It is the good news of what God has done through Jesus Christ to rescue sinners, reconcile them to Himself, and begin making all things new.

The gospel is the heart of the Christian faith. It is not merely advice for becoming a better person. It is not a list of religious duties, a political program, or a promise that life will always be comfortable. It is the announcement that the holy and loving God has acted in history through the life, death, resurrection, and reign of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this study is to explain:

- Why the gospel is necessary
- Who Jesus is
- What Jesus accomplished through His death and resurrection
- What grace, faith, and repentance mean
- How a person responds to the gospel
- How the gospel changes everyday life
- How the gospel fits into the larger story of Scripture

The main sections are written for beginners. The “Want to Go Deeper?” section explores several related truths at an intermediate level.

This guide is thorough and may be completed in sections. A suggested reading plan is provided near the end.

The Gospel In One Sentence

The gospel is the good news that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for sins, rose from the dead, reigns as Lord, and offers forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and eternal life to everyone who repents and trusts in Him.

Key passages:

- Mark 1:14–15
- John 3:16–17
- Romans 1:16–17
- 1 Corinthians 15:1–4
- Ephesians 2:8–10

The Gospel In Four Movements

The message of the gospel can be understood through four movements:

1. God created humanity for relationship with Him and for life under His loving rule.
2. Humanity rebelled against God, bringing sin, guilt, corruption, suffering, and death into the world.
3. God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, who lived without sin, died for sinners, rose from the dead, and reigns as Lord.
4. God calls every person to repent and trust in Jesus, receiving forgiveness, new life, and a restored relationship with Him.

These four movements may be summarized as:

God — Sin — Christ — Response

The gospel begins with God, addresses the problem of sin, centers on Jesus Christ, and calls for a response.

Part One

The Gospel Begins With God

Who Is God?

The Bible begins with God:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” — Genesis 1:1

God is not part of creation. He is the eternal Creator of everything that exists. All life depends upon Him.

Scripture reveals that God is:

- Holy — completely pure and separate from evil
- Righteous — always acting according to what is right
- Just — judging evil truthfully and fairly
- Loving — showing faithful, self-giving goodness
- Merciful — showing compassion toward those in need
- Gracious — giving kindness that cannot be earned
- Faithful — always keeping His promises
- Sovereign — ruling over all creation
- Personal — knowing, speaking, loving, and relating to people

God’s holiness and love do not compete with each other. His love is holy, and His holiness is loving. The cross displays both His justice toward sin and His mercy toward sinners.

Read: Exodus 34:6–7; Psalm 103:8–14; Isaiah 6:1–5; Isaiah 40:25–28; 1 John 4:8–10.

Why Did God Create Humanity?

Human beings were created in the image of God. Genesis 1:26–27 teaches that God created humanity to reflect His character and represent His rule within creation. Every person therefore possesses dignity and value. Human worth does not depend on intelligence, ability, wealth, age, ethnicity, health, achievement, or social standing.

Human beings were created to:

- Know and worship God
- Love God and one another
- Reflect God's character
- Care for creation
- Live under God's wise authority
- Enjoy fellowship with Him

The Bible's story begins with life, goodness, relationship, and peace. Sin and death were not presented as God's original design for human flourishing.

What Is God'S Kingdom?

God's kingdom is His saving rule and reign. It includes His authority as King, His work of rescuing people from sin, and the restoration of all things under His righteous rule.

Jesus announced, "The time is fulfilled, and God's Kingdom is at hand! Repent, and believe in the Good News." — Mark 1:15

The gospel is not only about going to heaven after death. It announces that God's promised King has come and that His kingdom has begun to break into the world through Jesus.

The kingdom is already present because Jesus has come, died, risen, and begun His reign. It is not yet fully visible because sin, suffering, and death remain. Jesus will return and bring God's kingdom to its complete fulfillment.

Part Two

The Problem Of Sin

What Is Sin?

Sin is any thought, desire, attitude, word, or action that rejects God's character, commands, or rightful authority. Sin includes doing what God forbids and failing to do what God requires.

Sin is more than making occasional mistakes. It is rebellion against God and a condition that affects the whole person.

Scripture describes sin as:

- Lawlessness — rejecting God's commands
- Rebellion — resisting God's authority
- Unbelief — refusing to trust God
- Idolatry — giving something created the devotion that belongs to God
- Falling short — failing to reflect God's glory and righteousness
- Spiritual slavery — being controlled by sinful desires
- Spiritual death — being separated from the life found in God

Read: Genesis 3:1–19; Isaiah 53:6; Mark 7:20–23; Romans 1:18–25; Romans 3:10–23; James 4:17; 1 John 3:4.

How Did Sin Enter The Human Story?

Genesis 3 describes humanity's first rebellion against God. The serpent questioned God's Word, distorted His character, and promised independence from His authority. Adam and Eve chose to disobey God.

Their rebellion brought shame, broken relationships, suffering, exile, and death. Sin damaged humanity's relationship with God, other people, the self, and the created world.

Romans 5 explains that sin and death entered the human story through Adam. Every person now enters a world affected by sin and personally participates in rebellion against God.

The problem is not limited to harmful surroundings or inadequate education. Although those factors influence behavior, Scripture teaches that sin also rises from within the human heart.

Are Some People Better Than Others?

People do not commit identical sins or cause equal amounts of earthly harm. Scripture recognizes meaningful differences between wise and foolish behavior, justice and oppression, kindness and cruelty.

However, no person meets God's perfect standard. "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God." — Romans 3:23

Comparing one person with another does not remove guilt before God. A person may appear moral, generous, or religious while still resisting God, trusting personal goodness, or withholding worship from Him.

The gospel does not begin by dividing humanity into "good people" and "bad people." It reveals that every person needs God's mercy.

What Are The Consequences Of Sin?

Guilt

Sin creates real moral guilt before a holy God. Guilt is not merely an uncomfortable feeling. It describes an objective condition: God's law has been broken.

Corruption

Sin affects thoughts, desires, choices, relationships, and communities. It bends the human heart away from God.

Separation

Sin disrupts fellowship with God. Humanity cannot repair that separation through personal effort.

Slavery

Repeated sin creates patterns of bondage. People may desire freedom while repeatedly returning to what harms them.

Death

Romans 6:23 says that the wages of sin is death. Physical death is part of sin's curse, and final judgment involves everlasting separation from God.

Judgment

God's justice means that evil will not be ignored forever. This is sobering, but it is also good news for victims of injustice. God sees every wrong and will judge with perfect truth and righteousness.

Read: Isaiah 59:1–2; John 3:19–20; Romans 6:16–23; Ephesians 2:1–3; Hebrews 9:27; Revelation 20:11–15.

Why Can'T Good Works Save?

Good works matter. God commands love, justice, generosity, truthfulness, mercy, and obedience. Good works benefit other people and should increasingly mark the life of every believer.

However, good works cannot erase guilt or earn salvation. A judge does not dismiss a crime because the guilty person has also performed kind actions. In the same way, later obedience cannot undo earlier rebellion against God.

Religious effort cannot solve the problem either. Church attendance, prayer, baptism, Bible reading, giving, serving, and moral discipline are valuable when they flow from genuine faith. They cannot purchase forgiveness.

Ephesians 2:8–9 teaches that salvation is God's gift, received through faith rather than earned by works. Verse 10 then explains that believers are created in Christ Jesus for good works.

The order matters: Good works are the fruit of salvation, not the price of salvation.

Part Three

The Good News Of Jesus Christ

Who Is Jesus?

The gospel centers on a person: Jesus Christ.

Jesus is fully God and fully human. He is not merely a moral teacher, prophet, spiritual example, or religious founder.

Scripture teaches that Jesus is:

- The eternal Word who was with God and is God
- The Son of God
- The promised Messiah, or Christ
- The descendant of David and rightful King
- The image of the invisible God
- The Creator and Sustainer of all things
- The Savior of the world
- The Lord before whom every knee will bow

The title Christ is not Jesus' last name. It means "Anointed One" and corresponds to the Hebrew title Messiah. Jesus is the promised King who fulfills God's saving purposes.

Read: Matthew 1:20–23; John 1:1–18; John 8:58; John 20:28–31; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–20; Hebrews 1:1–4.

Why Did Jesus Become Human?

The Son of God took on a true human nature without ceasing to be God. This is called the incarnation.

Jesus became human in order to reveal God, fulfill God's promises, live in perfect obedience, represent humanity, bear the judgment sinners deserve, defeat sin, death, and the devil, become a merciful and faithful High Priest, bring people into God's family, and restore what humanity's rebellion had damaged.

Jesus experienced hunger, thirst, weariness, grief, pain, temptation, rejection, and death. Yet He remained without sin.

Because Jesus is truly human, He can represent human beings. Because He is truly God, His saving work has complete and everlasting value.

Why Does Jesus' Sinless Life Matter?

Jesus obeyed where humanity had failed. He loved God perfectly, loved others faithfully, resisted temptation, spoke truth, showed compassion, defended the vulnerable, and fulfilled the Father's will.

Jesus' sinlessness matters because He did not deserve judgment for personal sin, was qualified to offer Himself for sinners, fulfilled the righteousness humanity lacked, became the perfect example of faithful human life, and completed the obedient life that forms part of His saving work.

Read: Matthew 4:1–11; John 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:14–16; 1 Peter 2:21–24.

Part Four

The Cross

Why Did Jesus Die?

Jesus' crucifixion was not an accident or the failure of His mission. It was central to God's saving plan.

Jesus said that He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). At the Last Supper, He explained that His blood would be poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).

The apostles taught the same message: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." — 1 Corinthians 15:3

Jesus willingly gave His life. Human authorities acted wickedly in condemning Him, yet God used their actions to accomplish His redemptive purpose.

Read: Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Mark 10:32–45; John 10:11–18; Acts 2:22–24; Romans 3:21–26; 1 Peter 3:18.

What Did Jesus Accomplish On The Cross?

Substitution

Jesus suffered in the place of sinners. "He was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities." — Isaiah 53:5

Sacrifice

The Old Testament sacrificial system taught that sin brings death and that atonement requires a God-provided sacrifice. Those sacrifices pointed forward to Jesus, the perfect and final sacrifice.

Propitiation

God's righteous judgment against sin was satisfied through Christ's sacrifice. The Father sent the Son in love, and the Son willingly gave Himself.

Redemption

Redemption describes release secured by the payment of a price. Through His blood, Jesus frees people from slavery to sin and brings them under His gracious rule.

Reconciliation

Sin created hostility and separation between humanity and God. Through Christ, God brings former enemies into peace and relationship with Himself.

Justification

To justify means to declare righteous. God forgives the believer's sins and grants a right standing before Him because of Christ.

Victory

At the cross and resurrection, Jesus defeated the powers of sin, death, and the devil.

Covenant

Jesus established the promised new covenant. Through Him, sins are forgiven, God's law is written upon transformed hearts, and the Holy Spirit dwells within God's people.

Read: Romans 3:23–26; Romans 5:6–11; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:7; Ephesians 2:13–18; Colossians 2:13–15; Hebrews 9:11–15; 1 John 2:1–2.

Did The Father Stop Loving The Son At The Cross?

No. The cross was the united saving work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The Father loved the world and sent the Son. The Son willingly laid down His life. Hebrews 9:14 says that Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit.

Jesus truly bore judgment and experienced the horror of sin's curse. His cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" points to Psalm 22, a psalm that begins in suffering and ends in vindication and worldwide worship.

The cross should not be described as a conflict within God. It displays the unified love, justice, wisdom, and mercy of the triune God.

Part Five

The Resurrection

Did Jesus Really Rise From The Dead?

The gospel announces that Jesus physically rose from the dead on the third day.

The resurrection was not merely the survival of Jesus' influence, a symbolic expression of hope, or a private spiritual experience. The tomb was empty, and the risen Jesus appeared to His followers in a real, transformed body.

He could be seen and touched. He spoke, ate, and invited His disciples to examine His wounds. His resurrection body was physical, but it was no longer subject to decay and death.

Read: Matthew 28:1–10; Luke 24:36–49; John 20:19–31; Acts 1:1–11; 1 Corinthians 15:1–8.

Why Does The Resurrection Matter?

The resurrection confirms that Jesus is the Son of God and promised Messiah; His sacrifice for sin was accepted; sin and death have been defeated; Jesus is alive and reigns as Lord; believers are

justified and given new life; the Holy Spirit has been poured out; future bodily resurrection is certain; God's new creation has begun; and Jesus will return to judge and restore the world.

Without the resurrection, the Christian message collapses. Paul wrote that if Christ had not been raised, Christian faith would be futile and believers would remain in their sins.

A Beginner'S Summary Of The Historical Evidence

The resurrection cannot be tested in a laboratory because it is a claim about a unique event in history. It can, however, be investigated through historical evidence.

Jesus was crucified and died.

Jesus' death by Roman crucifixion is reported in all four Gospels and is recognized by the overwhelming majority of historians who study the period.

The tomb was found empty.

All four Gospels report that women were the first witnesses to the empty tomb. In that culture, inventing women as the primary discoverers would have been an unlikely choice if the account had been created merely to sound persuasive. The empty-tomb claim was also proclaimed in the same region where Jesus had been buried.

Many people believed they encountered the risen Jesus.

The Gospels and New Testament letters report appearances to individuals and groups, including Peter, Mary Magdalene, the Twelve, James, and more than five hundred people at one time.

The resurrection message began very early.

First Corinthians 15:3–7 preserves a summary of the gospel that Paul had previously received. Many scholars recognize that this tradition arose very early, close to the events themselves. It declares that Christ died, was buried, was raised, and appeared to witnesses.

The disciples were transformed.

The disciples went from fear and confusion to publicly proclaiming that Jesus had risen. Their willingness to suffer does not by itself prove that their belief was true, but it strongly suggests that they sincerely believed they had encountered the risen Jesus.

Former skeptics became witnesses.

James, a brother of Jesus, had not believed in Him during Jesus' public ministry but later became a leader in the Jerusalem church. Paul had persecuted Christians before becoming one of the resurrection's most influential witnesses.

Historical evidence does not force faith or remove every possible question. It does show that belief in the resurrection was not a legend that slowly developed centuries later. The resurrection proclamation appeared at the beginning of the Christian movement and requires a serious explanation. The Christian conclusion is that God truly raised Jesus from the dead.

Jesus Is Lord And King

What Does It Mean That Jesus Is Lord?

Calling Jesus “Lord” means more than treating Him as a helpful spiritual adviser. It recognizes His divine identity, authority, kingship, and rightful claim over every part of life.

Jesus is Lord over individuals, families, churches, nations, spiritual powers, history, creation, life, and death. Salvation includes rescue from sin and entrance into the kingdom of God’s beloved Son.

What Does Jesus’ Ascension Mean?

After appearing to His followers, Jesus ascended into heaven. The ascension means that Jesus returned to the Father’s presence, was enthroned as the promised King, intercedes for believers, poured out the Holy Spirit, directs the mission of the church, and will return in glory.

Will Jesus Return?

Yes. At His return, evil will be judged, the dead will be raised, God’s people will be fully transformed, creation will be renewed, every wrong will be addressed, and God will dwell with His people forever.

Read: Acts 1:9–11; Acts 17:30–31; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Titus 2:11–14; Revelation 21:1–5.

Grace, Faith, And Repentance

What Is Grace?

Grace is God’s undeserved favor toward sinners. Salvation is not a reward for religious performance. God takes the initiative, provides the Savior, accomplishes redemption, and calls people to receive His gift.

Grace does not mean that sin is unimportant. Grace is costly because Jesus bore sin’s judgment. It also trains believers to turn from sin and live in a way that honors God.

Read: Romans 3:23–24; Romans 11:6; Ephesians 2:4–10; Titus 2:11–14.

What Is Faith?

Saving faith is more than agreeing that certain facts about Jesus are true.

Knowledge: A person must hear and understand the basic message of Christ.

Agreement: A person recognizes that the message is true.

Trust: A person relies on Jesus Christ rather than personal goodness, religious activity, or any other source of hope.

Faith is only as strong as its object. Salvation does not depend on having perfect feelings or never experiencing questions. It depends on the faithful and sufficient Savior in whom trust is placed.

What Is Repentance?

Repentance is a Spirit-enabled change of mind and direction concerning God, sin, and Jesus Christ. It includes recognizing sin truthfully, grieving sin rather than merely regretting its consequences,

turning from rebellion, turning toward God, desiring to follow Jesus, and beginning a changed way of life.

Repentance does not mean becoming sinless before coming to Christ. It means abandoning the defense of sin and turning to the Savior for mercy.

Faith and repentance are closely connected. Faith turns toward Christ; repentance turns away from sin and self-rule.

Is Repentance A Work That Earns Salvation?

No. Repentance does not purchase forgiveness. God grants repentance, and the Holy Spirit awakens the heart to respond. A repentant person comes empty-handed, admitting the inability to self-rescue.

Part Eight

How To Respond To The Gospel

What Does God Call A Person To Do?

Jesus calls people to repent and believe the gospel. A genuine response includes acknowledging God as Creator and rightful King, admitting personal sin and guilt, recognizing the inability to earn salvation, believing that Jesus is the Son of God who died and rose again, trusting Christ's saving work, turning from sin and self-rule, confessing Jesus as Lord, and beginning a life of following Him.

Can A Prayer Save Someone?

No particular arrangement of words saves a person. Jesus saves.

Prayer is one way to express repentance and faith. A sincere response may include confession of sin, a request for mercy, trust in Jesus' death and resurrection, surrender to Jesus as Lord, gratitude for grace, and a request for strength to follow Him.

Sample Prayer

Holy God, sin has separated this life from You, and no amount of personal effort can remove that guilt. Thank You for sending Jesus Christ, who lived without sin, died for sinners, and rose from the dead. Mercy and forgiveness are needed. Trust is placed in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord. Please give new life, cleanse from sin, and lead this life in obedience to You. Amen.

The prayer is not a formula. The essential response is genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

How Can Someone Know Whether Faith Is Real?

Saving faith rests on Christ and His promises, not on the strength of a passing emotion.

Signs of genuine faith may include trust in Jesus rather than personal merit, a growing hatred of sin, a desire to obey God, love for other believers, willingness to confess and turn from sin, perseverance in following Christ, and the developing fruit of the Holy Spirit.

These signs do not earn salvation. They are evidence that God is at work. Believers still struggle with sin. Growth may be gradual and uneven.

What If Doubts Remain?

Questions and doubts do not automatically prove that faith is absent. A person struggling with doubt can bring questions honestly to God, read the Gospels carefully, examine the evidence for Jesus' resurrection, ask mature Christians for help, remain connected to a faithful local church, distinguish emotional uncertainty from deliberate unbelief, and remember that faith rests on Christ's trustworthiness.

Part Nine

What Salvation Includes

Forgiveness: God cancels the believer's guilt because Christ bore the judgment for sin.

Justification: God declares the believer righteous in Christ.

Reconciliation: Former enemies are brought into peace with God.

Redemption: Christ frees people from slavery to sin and brings them under His lordship.

Regeneration: The Holy Spirit gives new spiritual life. This is also called being born again.

Adoption: God welcomes believers into His family as His children.

Union with Christ: Believers are joined to Christ and share in the benefits of His life, death, resurrection, and reign.

The Gift of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit dwells within believers, assures them of adoption, teaches them, transforms them, and empowers them for faithful living.

Sanctification: God progressively makes believers more like Jesus.

Perseverance: God preserves His people and enables them to continue in faith.

Glorification: When Christ returns, believers will be fully freed from sin and raised to everlasting life in renewed bodies.

New Creation: God will renew heaven and earth, remove death and sorrow, and dwell with His people forever.

Read: John 3:1–8; Romans 5:1–11; Romans 8:1–30; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Galatians 4:4–7; Ephesians 1:3–14; Titus 3:3–7; Revelation 21:1–5.

Part Ten

A Biblical Example Of Gospel Transformation

Zacchaeus: Grace That Produced Change

Luke 19:1–10 records the story of Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector. Tax collectors often worked with Roman authorities and could become wealthy by collecting more than was required. Zacchaeus was rich, but he was also viewed as a sinner and an outsider.

When Jesus entered Jericho, Zacchaeus climbed a tree to see Him. Jesus stopped, called Zacchaeus by name, and chose to stay at his house.

The surrounding crowd complained because Jesus had welcomed a known sinner. Zacchaeus responded by promising to give half of his possessions to the poor and repay four times anything obtained through fraud.

Jesus then announced that salvation had come to the house and described His mission: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost.” — Luke 19:10

This story illustrates several gospel truths:

- Jesus seeks the lost.
- Grace does not wait for social approval.
- Salvation produces repentance.
- Repentance seeks to repair harm.
- The gospel transforms priorities, possessions, relationships, and conduct.
- Jesus remains the center.

Personal Reflection

- In what areas is Christ calling for trust rather than self-reliance?
- Is there a sin that needs to be confessed and abandoned?
- Has anyone been harmed in a way that should be addressed?
- What evidence of God’s grace is beginning to appear?
- How can gratitude for salvation shape the use of time, money, words, and relationships?

Part Eleven

What Comes Next?

Does Following Jesus End With A Decision?

No. Conversion begins a lifelong relationship of discipleship.

A new believer should begin to read and obey Scripture, pray regularly, join a faithful local church, be baptized, participate in Christian fellowship, learn sound doctrine, worship with other believers, confess and turn from sin, serve others, share the gospel, depend on the Holy Spirit, and grow in love, humility, holiness, and endurance.

These practices do not maintain salvation by human effort. They are ways God nourishes, strengthens, corrects, and matures His people.

Baptism And Differences In Christian Practice

Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize those who become His followers. Baptism publicly identifies a person with Christ and His people. It pictures cleansing, union with Christ, death to the old life, and resurrection to new life.

Christians agree that baptism is important and that it was commanded by Jesus. Faithful Christian traditions differ concerning whether baptism should be administered only to professing believers or also to children of believers; whether it should be performed by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling; how baptism relates to conversion, church membership, and God’s covenant promises; and the precise way baptism relates to the grace of God.

These differences should be studied carefully through Scripture and discussed with trustworthy church leaders. Baptism must not replace personal faith in Christ or become a reason for pride and division.

The gospel itself remains centered on what Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection. Baptism is a commanded response to the gospel, not an additional achievement that makes Christ's work sufficient.

The Local Church And Differences Among Christians

Every follower of Jesus needs the life of a faithful local church.

A healthy church ordinarily proclaims the biblical gospel, teaches Scripture faithfully, worships God, practices baptism and the Lord's Supper, encourages prayer, develops accountable relationships, serves people in need, helps believers grow in holiness, and sends believers into the world as witnesses.

Christian traditions differ on church government, worship style, spiritual gifts, the timing and form of baptism, the Lord's Supper, and other secondary matters. These differences deserve careful study, but secondary disagreements should not be confused with the gospel itself.

A church should be evaluated primarily by whether the Bible is treated as God's authoritative Word; Jesus is confessed as fully God and fully human; salvation is taught as God's grace received through faith in Christ; Christ's death and bodily resurrection are clearly proclaimed; repentance is taken seriously; the congregation is encouraged to love God and others; and leaders are accountable and marked by biblical character.

What If A New Believer Fails?

Christians continue to battle sin. Failure should not lead to hiding from God or pretending that sin does not matter.

When a believer sins, the appropriate response is to admit the sin honestly, receive correction from Scripture, remember Christ's sufficient sacrifice, turn away from the sinful pattern, seek accountability where needed, repair harm when possible, and continue following Jesus.

Part Twelve

Common Misunderstandings About The Gospel

"The gospel is simply 'be a good person.'"

The gospel is not advice about self-improvement. It is news about what God has done because people cannot save themselves.

"All sincere people will be saved regardless of what they believe."

Sincerity does not make every belief true. Jesus presented Himself as the unique way to the Father, and the apostles proclaimed salvation in His name. This truth should produce humility and loving witness, not arrogance.

"God will accept anyone whose good deeds outweigh the bad."

Scripture does not describe judgment as a balance scale. Sin creates real guilt, and only Christ provides the righteousness and forgiveness needed.

“Jesus came only to provide a moral example.”

Jesus is the perfect example, but an example alone cannot forgive sin or defeat death. He came as Savior, sacrifice, risen Lord, and King.

“The gospel promises health, wealth, and an easy life.”

Jesus promised forgiveness, God’s presence, eternal life, and final restoration. He also told His followers to expect suffering, opposition, and self-denial.

“Grace means obedience does not matter.”

Grace saves apart from works, but the grace that saves also begins transforming the believer. Obedience is evidence of living faith, not its purchase price.

“A single emotional experience guarantees salvation.”

Emotions may accompany conversion, but they are not the foundation of assurance. Genuine faith rests on Christ and begins producing perseverance and spiritual fruit.

“Christianity is mainly about going to heaven.”

The gospel includes everlasting life with God, but its hope is larger. It includes reconciliation, transformation, resurrection, the reign of Christ, and the renewal of creation.

“The gospel is only for non-Christians.”

Believers never outgrow the gospel. The same grace that brings salvation continues to shape humility, repentance, worship, obedience, relationships, and hope.

“Sharing the gospel requires answering every question.”

A person can share the central message faithfully without knowing every answer. It is appropriate to admit uncertainty, study a question, and continue the conversation later.

Part Thirteen

How To Share The Gospel Simply

A Simple Four-Part Explanation

God: God is the holy and loving Creator. Humanity was made to know Him and live under His good rule.

Sin: Every person has rebelled against God. Sin brings guilt, separation, corruption, and death. Good works cannot erase that guilt.

Christ: Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He lived without sin, died for sinners, rose from the dead, and reigns as Lord.

Response: God calls people to repent and trust in Jesus. Everyone who comes to Christ in genuine faith receives forgiveness, new life, and reconciliation with God.

A Short Gospel Summary

God created humanity to know Him, but every person has sinned and become separated from Him. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, lived without sin, died in the place of sinners, and rose from the dead. God now offers forgiveness and eternal life as a gift to everyone who turns from sin and trusts in Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Helpful Questions For A Conversation

- What is the present understanding of Jesus?
- What does the word gospel mean to you?
- What do you think separates people from God?
- How do you think forgiveness is possible?
- Have you ever read one of the Gospels?
- What questions make Christianity difficult to consider?
- Would it be helpful to read a passage about Jesus together?

Guidelines For Sharing The Gospel

- Pray for wisdom, love, and clarity.
- Listen before speaking.
- Treat the other person with dignity.
- Explain sin honestly without acting superior.
- Keep Jesus at the center.
- Distinguish the gospel from political or cultural preferences.
- Avoid pressuring someone into an insincere response.
- Admit when an answer is not known.
- Offer to study questions together.
- Trust the Holy Spirit to work.
- Continue showing love regardless of the response.

Part Fourteen

Practice Activities

Activity 1: Explain The Gospel

Write a short explanation using these four headings: God, Sin, Christ, and Response.

Activity 2: Complete The Sentences

- The gospel is good news because:
- Sin is serious because:
- Jesus' death matters because:
- Jesus' resurrection matters because:
- Grace means:
- Faith means:
- Repentance means:
- Following Jesus means:

Activity 3: Read And Observe

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–8. Write down what Paul says is of first importance, what happened to Jesus, which events fulfilled the Scriptures, who saw the risen Jesus, and why the witnesses matter.

Activity 4: Identify The Misunderstanding

Consider these statements and explain what is true, incomplete, or incorrect:

- “God will accept anyone who tries hard and behaves well.”
- “Jesus came to show people how to love.”

- “Grace means that choices no longer matter.”
- “The resurrection is an inspiring symbol.”

Activity 5: Trace The Gospel Through Romans

Read Romans 1:16–17; 3:21–26; 5:6–11; 6:23; 8:1–4; and 10:9–13. For each passage, identify the human need, what God has done, the role of Jesus, the promised result, and the appropriate response.

Want to Go Deeper?

Intermediate Study

1. The Meaning Of “Gospel” In The First-Century World

The Greek word translated “gospel” is euangelion, meaning good news or a joyful announcement. In the ancient world, the word could describe news of a military victory, a royal birth, or the beginning of an emperor’s reign. The New Testament uses this announcement language to proclaim the true King, Jesus Christ.

The gospel is therefore more than a private method of gaining inner peace. It is a royal announcement: Jesus has fulfilled God’s promises, defeated sin and death, been enthroned as Lord, offers salvation, and calls every person to allegiance and faith.

2. The Old Testament Roots Of The Gospel

The gospel did not appear without preparation. The Old Testament creates the expectation of God’s saving work through creation, the fall, the first promise of victory over the serpent, the promises to Abraham, the exodus, Israel’s covenants, the sacrificial system, the Davidic kingdom, the prophets, and the hope of restoration after exile.

Jesus fulfills these patterns and promises as the offspring of Abraham, Son of David, true Israel, Passover sacrifice, suffering Servant, covenant mediator, risen King, and giver of the Spirit.

Read: Genesis 3:15; Genesis 12:1–3; Exodus 12; 2 Samuel 7:8–16; Psalm 2; Isaiah 9:1–7; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Ezekiel 36:22–28; Daniel 7:13–14.

3. Did Jesus And Paul Preach Different Gospels?

Jesus frequently preached the kingdom of God. Paul frequently explained justification, Christ’s death for sins, and salvation by grace through faith. These are not competing messages.

Jesus announced and inaugurated God’s kingdom. His death and resurrection are the decisive events through which the King defeats His enemies, establishes the new covenant, and brings people into His kingdom. Paul proclaimed the same Jesus as crucified, risen, and reigning Lord.

4. The Many Dimensions Of The Atonement

No single biblical picture exhausts the meaning of the cross. Scripture presents penal substitution, victory over evil powers, sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation, covenant, and Christ’s example of self-giving love. These dimensions belong together.

5. Justification, Sanctification, And Glorification

Justification is God’s once-for-all declaration that the believer has a righteous standing through faith in Christ.

Sanctification is the ongoing work of God through which the believer grows in holiness and Christlike character.

Glorification is the future completion of salvation when believers are raised and fully freed from sin and death.

6. Union With Christ

Believers are described as being in Christ, crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, raised with Christ, seated with Christ, hidden with Christ, and heirs with Christ.

Union with Christ means that salvation's blessings are received through relationship with Him. Believers receive forgiveness, righteousness, adoption, new life, and future resurrection because they belong to Christ.

Read: Romans 6:1–11; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:4–10; Colossians 3:1–4.

7. The “Already” And “Not Yet” Of The Gospel

God's kingdom has already begun, but it has not yet reached its final completion.

Already: Jesus has come, sin has been atoned for, Jesus has risen, Satan has been decisively defeated, the Spirit has been given, believers possess eternal life, and the church carries the gospel to the nations.

Not yet: Sin still affects the world, believers still struggle, suffering and death continue, evil has not received final judgment, the dead have not yet been raised, creation has not yet been fully renewed, and Christ's rule is not yet universally acknowledged.

8. Assurance And False Assurance

Biblical assurance rests first on Christ's completed work and God's promises. It is strengthened through trust in the biblical gospel, dependence on Christ alone, the witness of the Holy Spirit, growing love, repentance, perseverance, and spiritual fruit.

False assurance may rest on family background, church attendance, baptism without personal faith, repeating a prayer without repentance, emotional experiences, knowledge without trust, good works, or comparison with others.

9. What Does The New Testament Mean By “Another Gospel”?

A message becomes “another gospel” when it changes the identity of Jesus, denies His saving work, replaces grace with human merit, removes the call to faith and repentance, or adds requirements as necessary grounds for justification.

10. Contextualizing The Gospel Without Changing It

Contextualization means communicating biblical truth clearly within a particular language and culture. Faithful contextualization uses understandable language, learns the listener's questions, explains unfamiliar biblical concepts, identifies cultural idols and hopes, removes unnecessary cultural barriers, and preserves the gospel's essential message.

Unfaithful contextualization hides difficult teachings, recasts Jesus according to cultural preferences, removes sin, judgment, repentance, or the cross, treats one human culture as identical to Christianity, or promises benefits Scripture does not promise.

11. Why Believers Still Need The Gospel

The gospel is not merely the entrance to Christianity. It shapes the entire Christian life by producing humility, confidence, repentance, forgiveness, generosity, courage, unity, mission, and hope.

Study Summary

The gospel begins with the holy and loving God who created humanity for relationship with Him. Humanity rebelled against God. Sin brings guilt, corruption, separation, slavery, death, and judgment. Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who became truly human. He lived without sin and fulfilled God's promises.

Jesus willingly died for sinners. His cross brings substitution, sacrifice, redemption, reconciliation, justification, victory, and the new covenant.

God raised Jesus bodily from the dead. The resurrection confirms His identity, validates His saving work, defeats death, and guarantees future resurrection.

Jesus ascended and reigns as Lord. He will return to judge evil, raise the dead, and renew creation.

Salvation is God's gift of grace. It is received through repentance and faith rather than earned through good works.

Those who trust in Christ receive forgiveness, justification, reconciliation, adoption, the Holy Spirit, new life, and everlasting hope.

Good works do not purchase salvation. They grow as the fruit of salvation.

Every believer is called to follow Jesus within the fellowship of His people and to share the good news with others.

Seven-Day Reading Plan

Day 1: God, Creation, And Sin

Read Genesis 1:26–31; Genesis 3:1–19; Romans 3:9–26.

Day 2: The Identity Of Jesus

Read John 1:1–18; Colossians 1:15–20.

Day 3: The Cross

Read Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Mark 15; 1 Peter 2:21–25.

Day 4: The Resurrection

Read Luke 24; 1 Corinthians 15:1–28.

Day 5: Grace, Faith, And New Life

Read John 3:1–21; Ephesians 2:1–10; Titus 3:3–7.

Day 6: Gospel Transformation

Read Luke 19:1–10; Romans 6:1–14; 2 Corinthians 5:14–21.

Day 7: The Final Hope

Read Romans 8:18–39; Revelation 21:1–5; Revelation 22:1–5.

Suggested Modular Plan For Individuals Or Groups

Session 1: Why the Gospel Is Needed — Parts One and Two.

Session 2: Who Jesus Is — Part Three.

Session 3: What Jesus Accomplished — Parts Four and Five.

Session 4: How to Respond — Parts Six through Eight.

Session 5: How the Gospel Changes Life — Parts Nine through Eleven.

Session 6: Understanding and Sharing the Gospel — Parts Twelve through Fourteen.

Session 7: Intermediate Study — Select two or three topics from “Want to Go Deeper?”

Reflection Questions

5. How would the gospel be explained in one or two sentences?
6. Why must the gospel begin with God rather than with human needs?
7. What is sin, and why is it more serious than making mistakes?
8. Why can good works not erase guilt?
9. Who is Jesus according to Scripture?
10. Why does Jesus’ sinless life matter?
11. What did Jesus accomplish through the cross?
12. Why is the bodily resurrection essential?
13. What early evidence supports belief in the resurrection?
14. What is the difference between grace and earned reward?
15. How are faith and repentance connected?
16. What is the proper relationship between salvation and good works?
17. What does the story of Zacchaeus reveal about gospel transformation?
18. Why are baptism and participation in a local church important?
19. How should differences among faithful Christian traditions be approached?
20. Which misunderstanding about the gospel is most common?
21. What makes sharing the gospel difficult?
22. How does the gospel provide hope during suffering?
23. Which truth in this study needs further investigation?
24. What response does the gospel call for today?

Key Terms

Adoption: God’s act of welcoming believers into His family as His children.

Atonement: Christ’s work of dealing with sin and restoring sinners to God through His sacrificial death.

Conversion: The turning to God that includes repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ.

Faith: Trusting Jesus Christ and relying on His saving work.

Gospel: The good news of what God has accomplished through Jesus Christ.

Grace: God’s undeserved favor and saving kindness.

Incarnation: The eternal Son of God taking on a true human nature without ceasing to be God.

Justification: God's declaration that a believer is righteous because of Christ.

Kingdom of God: God's saving rule and reign, inaugurated through Jesus and awaiting final fulfillment.

Messiah: God's promised Anointed King. The Greek equivalent is Christ.

Propitiation: The satisfaction of God's righteous judgment against sin through Christ's sacrifice.

Reconciliation: The restoration of peace and relationship between God and sinners.

Redemption: Release from slavery secured through the price Christ paid.

Regeneration: The Holy Spirit's act of giving new spiritual life.

Repentance: A change of mind and direction that turns from sin toward God.

Resurrection: God raising Jesus bodily from the dead and the promised future raising of the dead.

Sanctification: God's continuing work of making believers holy and Christlike.

Substitution: Christ suffering in the place of sinners.

Union with Christ: The believer's spiritual relationship with Christ through which salvation's blessings are received.

Key Passages

Genesis 1:26–27; Genesis 3:1–19; Isaiah 52:13–53:12; Mark 1:14–15; Mark 10:45; John 1:1–18; John 3:16–17; John 14:6; Acts 2:22–39; Romans 3:21–26; Romans 5:6–11; Romans 6:23; Romans 10:9–13; 1 Corinthians 15:1–28; 2 Corinthians 5:17–21; Galatians 2:15–21; Ephesians 2:1–10; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:15–23; Titus 3:3–7; 1 Peter 2:21–25; Revelation 21:1–5.

Conclusion

The gospel is the good news of God's saving work through Jesus Christ.

The holy Creator did not abandon rebellious humanity. The Father sent the Son. Jesus lived in perfect obedience, died for sinners, rose from the dead, ascended to the Father, and reigns as Lord. Through Him, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, new life, adoption, the Holy Spirit, and the hope of resurrection.

This salvation cannot be earned. It is received by grace through faith. God calls every person to turn from sin, trust in Jesus, and follow Him.

The gospel is simple enough to be shared in a few sentences, yet deep enough to shape an entire lifetime. It humbles the proud, welcomes the broken, frees the guilty, transforms the sinner, strengthens the suffering, and gives hope beyond death.

Jesus Christ is not merely part of the good news. Jesus Christ is its center.

Closing Prayer

Holy and gracious God,

Thank You for the good news of Jesus Christ. Thank You for sending the Son to live without sin, die for sinners, and rise in victory over death.

Please bring sin into the light, deepen repentance, strengthen faith, and guard against trusting in personal goodness. Give clarity where questions remain and courage where obedience is difficult.

Let the truth of the gospel produce humility, gratitude, holiness, love, and hope. Help every part of life come under the gracious lordship of Jesus.

May this study point continually back to Scripture and to Christ, the crucified and risen Savior.

Amen.

A Note About Responding

Anyone ready to respond to the gospel is encouraged to speak honestly with God, confess sin, place trust in Jesus Christ, and begin following Him.

Connection with a faithful local church is an important next step. Mature Christian leaders can provide guidance concerning baptism, Bible reading, prayer, discipleship, and life within the family of God.

Anyone who still has questions is encouraged to keep seeking. Read one of the Gospels, examine Jesus' words and actions, investigate the resurrection, and ask God for understanding.

A Note About Sharing

The gospel should be shared with truth, gentleness, patience, and love.

The goal is not to win an argument, pressure someone into a decision, or display superior knowledge. The goal is to bear faithful witness to Jesus Christ and entrust the results to God.

"Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." — Romans 10:17