



# Mentoring In Christ

## Discussion #1: The Gospel

**GOAL:** To help a person understand the core pieces of the gospel story and consider their own personal response to the gospel's invitation to be right with God through Christ.

### For The Mentor

#### What do we mean by this concept?

The gospel is the 'good news' about what Jesus has done for us. Paul talks about the gospel as the power of God for salvation (Romans 1:16-17). It's the core understanding of who God is and what he has done for us. In the gospel, there are answers to some of the biggest questions we ask (why so much pain and evil in the world, how can I be saved and have meaning in my life, etc.). The gospel is a message that demands a response (to receive or reject Christ, there's no middle ground). The gospel helps us see God accurately, see ourselves honestly, and see our world carefully. A person who receives the gospel learns to use the gospel as a lens (or filter) by which we see and interpret all of life through. It's this message that we are to share with others.

#### The core message of the gospel:

1. **Creation** – God is the creator. He made all things and sustains all things. He made humanity for life and relationship with him. We are most satisfied in relationship with our creator.
2. **Humanity's sin** – When sin entered the picture with Adam, it changed everything. All the pain, shame, insecurity, frustration, and emptiness that we feel in life comes as a result of sin. Sin separates us from the relationship with God we need the most.
3. **Humanity's effort** – Historical people try to fix the brokenness and emptiness caused by sin and make ourselves right (and right with God). We try to find things of the world to give ourselves to make us happy. We try to be good and make up for the wrong we've done in life. We try to compare ourselves to other people to help us feel better about ourselves. In the end, humanity can never fix what sin has broken.
4. **Christ's Work** – Where humanity could not provide a solution to sin's problem, Jesus comes and makes a way for humanity to be made whole and right with God. God doesn't leave us to figure this out on our own, but he comes near, puts on flesh, and does what we could not do and stands in our place on the cross. The gospel invites us to receive the free gift of salvation and life that Jesus is offering us. We receive this gift through our faith or belief in Christ and what he has accomplished.
5. **Relationship with God/Following Christ** – In saving us, God saves us 1) From Sin, 2) Into his family, the church, and 3) For a purpose. In following Christ, we live out this salvation in our relationship with Christ. Our faith or belief in Christ is demonstrated through our obedience to him and commitment to go and do what God is asking us to go and do. The greatest joy is found in a person trusting and following Jesus. In following Jesus, we are invited to participate in the work God has prepared for us to do.
6. **Eternity with Christ** – Salvation is not just from the effects of sin today, but for eternity in the future. While God is a God of love and forgiveness, he is also a God of justice and wrath. One day, Jesus will return to earth and God will make all things right. Those who know Christ will spend eternity with Christ in heaven, enjoying the relationship with God and others we were created for. Those who do not know Christ will experience eternal punishment for sin in hell, separated from God's grace.

#### Helpful passages?

- **Genesis 1-3** – This passage outlines the creation of the world and humanity's design for relationship with God and with others. In this passage we see the pinnacle of God's design living in perfect relationship with God and each other (Genesis 2) and this relationship damaged by sin (Genesis 3). These chapters explain for us the state of our world today. Romans 1:18-32 is also helpful.
- **John 3:1-21** – Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus highlights a person's need to be saved or 'born again.' This is something that God does rather than humanity attaining. Jesus reveals God's heart for people in that he comes not to condemn but to save. Some people will not receive Christ due to their pride and fear of admitting sin.
- **Ephesians 2:1-10** – This is one of the most helpful passages in the New Testament outlining the gospel. It highlights the reality of man's condition in sin and the fact that we are not saved by our own efforts but by the work of Christ. God saves us for a purpose (to do good works). This is probably the most helpful passage to talk with students about the gospel!
- **Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-11** – Sin has caused death and separation from God, but Jesus provides what we cannot. He loves us while we are still sinful and makes us way for us to be right with God.

- **1 Corinthians 15:1-58** – This is Paul’s reminder of the gospel based in Christ’s resurrection from the dead. He demonstrates proof from Christ’s resurrection as well as the implications. We will be raised for eternity with Christ and our efforts here for Christ are no longer in vain. For a greater picture of judgement and eternity with Christ look to Revelation 20 & 21.
- **2 Corinthians 5:15-21** – This is another helpful passage highlighting the gospel of newness in Christ. The gospel changes how we see all of life. Christ has saved us to live for him. All this work is through Jesus who takes our sin on himself and gives us his righteousness in exchange.

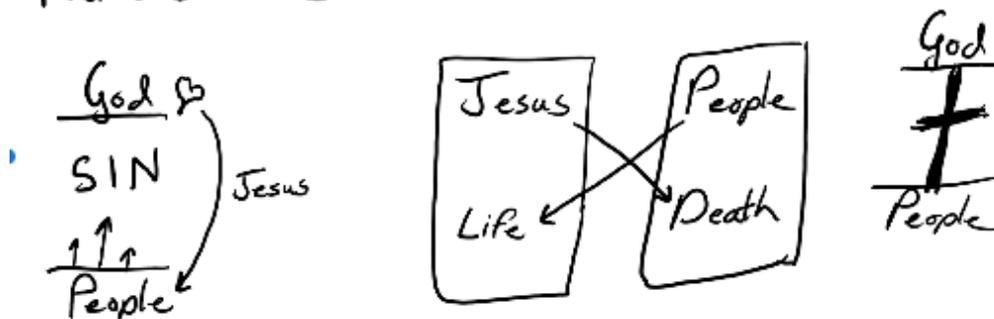
**Why this matters?**

Without a core understanding of the basic gospel a person cannot have a relationship with God. Without the gospel our relationship with God is based on our own efforts to please God rather than Christ’s efforts for us. There are many people that even call themselves Christians and attend churches who don’t have a relationship with Christ based on faith because they’ve never really contemplated the gospel message. Understanding the gospel puts us in a place of humility before God as we admit our sin and our need for him. Understanding the gospel also puts us in a place of gratefulness in that we realize all that we have comes from God and is undeserved. The reason a Christian obeys and trusts God is not to receive things from him but because he or she is eager to say thanks and honor the God who has radically saved him/her. Without this understanding we will never actually have a relationship with Christ based on faith.

**An approach for discussion:**

Most people have created their own ‘gospel’ through their own ideas of God and the false idea they have heard from others and culture. It’s helpful to draw out misunderstandings of the gospel as much as it is to explain the basics of the gospel clearly. I find the gospel is best explained through drawing pictures and simple statements that highlight what God has done. There are many helpful ways to learn to draw the gospel in pictures. Many of Gateway’s youth staff and mentors have sat with Mathias while he draws the gospel on a whiteboard. Below is another picture from David Soncrant highlighting the gospel. I would encourage someone to practice drawing and explaining the gospel through some pictures that work for you. Helpful resources can be found through Googling “the bridge diagram” or “the gospel is 6 words.” When sharing the gospel it is important to remember that the gospel demands a response. No matter how fumbled the message might feel, I would always encourage a mentor to ask a student to consider what kind of a response to the gospel they have or will make.

Romans 6:23



**Discussion with Mentee**

**Before you read**

- If someone asked you what the gospel is, how would you answer that question? What are some of the basics of the gospel that you would want to share?
- What do you think are some of the big misunderstandings that people have about the basic gospel message of Christianity? (some examples: you’re saved by doing good things, everyone is basically good person, etc)

## **Passage(s): Read & Discuss**

### **Read: Ephesians 2:1-10**

- What sticks out to you in this passage?
- How does Paul describe the condition of humanity in the beginning of the passage? What can someone who is dead do to change his/her position?
- What is it that makes a person alive with Christ?
- What does Paul say a person is saved for?
- How does a person express or demonstrate a faith in Christ that saves? What does that mean to have faith or 'believe' as the scriptures often say?

### **Read: Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-11**

- What does Paul tell us about man's condition?
- What is the remedy for man's condition in this passage?
- When do we see God helping man—is it before he's right with God or after?
- How would a person feel about him/herself if he/she truly understood his/her condition before God? How then should a person who is saved feel toward God?

## **The concept to get across**

Ephesians 2:8-10 is probably the best summary of what we want to make sure a mentor clarifies with a student about the gospel. We don't earn our salvation or do things ourselves to make things right with God we instead receive this gift that God is giving us. A great question to ask is about receiving a gift. What effort or work do you do to receive a gift from someone? You simply gratefully open it and enjoy it. This is the same for us with God. He's offering us salvation; we simply receive it and live it out with the help of the Holy Spirit.

### **Questions:**

- What effort or work do you do to receive a gift from someone? How is that the same for us receiving salvation from God?
- Can a person reject the gift that God is offering? What does that look like?
- Have you received the gift of salvation that God is offering? What makes you sure?
- If you are unsure or have not received the gift, what is holding you back?

## **Why this matters**

The gospel is a uniquely different message than any other religion in the world. Other religion is offering a salvation that you attain rather than receive. This is no gospel at all nor is it truly a salvation. Someone who doesn't understand the core gospel of grace and God's saving work in our lives will never relate to God by grace. He or she is always going to live in some sort of fear or confusion or distance. For students to live out a healthy relationship with Christ, following him he/she must grasp this core message.

Also when we know the gospel well we can spot false messages in culture and even in church settings and discussions. We can see through a false message that sports or academic success or a dating relationship will save you. We can see through a message of manipulation or performance rather than grace in coming to God. We can see through a false pressure to do things for God so God will give you things.

## **Encouraged Response**

A few responses that might make sense for a person:

- **Hardness & disbelief.** This is often expressed in big questions about God that are difficult to answer or in telling past stories about how Christians have hurt you, etc. This is not the worst thing in that it gives you a greater insight into what confusions the person has about God or about following Christ that you can address.
- **Expressing barriers that keep them from believing or responding to the gospel message.** This is a healthy step! When someone says, "I'm not ready to believe because of this specific thing, then you can begin to share truth directed to this one barrier."
- **Receiving Christ and beginning to live a life of thanks and worship to God.**
- **Expressing thanks and worship to God.** Telling your story of when the gospel first made sense to you and how the message literally changed your life.

**More Bible To Read On Your Own:**

- See the scriptures above. Encourage your mentee to read all of the scriptures above to further their understanding of salvation.

**Evidence of Integration**

The goal of these discussions is not to get information across as much as helping someone integrate this into their lives. Here are a few things to look for in your first and future discussions with this person:

- Baptism as a response to salvation and wanting to share with others what God has done in his/her life. Baptism is the right response for anyone who is receptive to the gospel message and has not been baptized.
- A growing gratefulness to the Lord for what he has done.
- Humility before God. When we grasp the gospel, we can't be proud people before the Lord as we realize everything we have comes from God and are given by the Lord.
- Using this gospel message as a lens to think about all of life. How do you respond to political questions, social issues, big decisions, relating to people. A person who grasps the gospel will begin to apply the gospel message to all parts of life.