

LIVING STONES DISCIPLESHIP GROUP



FIRST SEMESTER UNIT 5

"[Y]ou yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

1Peter 2:5



UNIT 5: What is the Gospel?



IN THIS SESSION

- :: What is the Gospel?
- :: What makes the gospel 'good news'?
- :: How the gospel different from religion?
 - :: How does the gospel work?
 - :: How the gospel gets us home.

UNIT 5: What is the Gospel?

// OPENING SCRIPTURE

"For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might
become the righteousness of God."

2Corinthians 5:21, ESV

// OPENING PRAYER

// FOLLOW-UP FROM PREVIOUS UNIT

Memory Verse :: John 14:6

Homework :: Did everyone in the group complete this unit's work and activities (if applicable)?

UNIT 5: What is the Gospel?

// The Gospel is the Core

:: The gospel is news. It is the news of what God has done to accomplish salvation on our behalf through Jesus Christ. The Greek word 'gospel' is euangelion (εὐαγγέλιον), which means good news of an event that changed the listeners' condition and required a response. Examples may be news of a victory in war, or news of the ascent of a new king.

:: The gospel is the core of Christianity. Fill out 1Corinthians 15:1-4 below: *(taken from the ESV translation, available online at <http://www.esvbible.org/>)*

"Now I would remind you, brothers, of the _____ I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being _____, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of _____ importance what I also received: that Christ died for our _____ in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was _____, that he was _____ on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures..."

:: From these four verses in 1Corinthians 15, how would you define the gospel?

:: The Apostle Paul calls the gospel a matter of "first importance" (v3). What does he mean?

// What makes the gospel 'good news'?

:: As mentioned above, gospel is good news that changes a person's condition and requires a response. This is evident from the opening words of Mark's gospel. Jesus began His ministry with these words, **"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."** (1:15) Based on this verse, what is the announcement of good news? And, what is the required response?

:: If the gospel is the good news, there must be bad news. In fact, the worse the bad news, the greater the good news. The darker the room, the brighter the light appears. The bad news is implicit in Jesus' words in Mark 1:15 (above). Use the verses below to expound the bad news.

- Romans 3:23. Bad news: "All have _____."
- Romans 6:23. Bad news: "The wages of sin is _____."
- John 3:36. Bad news: "Those who disobey Jesus, die under God's _____."
- John 3:19-20. Bad news: "Men love _____ more than light."
- Romans 3:10-12. Bad news: "No one is _____. No one seeks _____."
- 2Thessalonians 1:9. Bad news: "Hell is _____."

:: So that's the bad news. Use the verses below to explain the good news:

- Romans 5:8 & John 3:16. Good news: "God _____ us!"
- Romans 5:8, 8:32, John 3:16. Good news: "God gave His _____ for us!"
- 2Corinthians 5:21. Good news: "Jesus became _____ for us."
- Galatians 3:13. Good news: "Jesus redeemed us from the _____ of the law!"
- Romans 5:19 & Philippians 3:9. Good news: "We are made _____!"
- Ephesians 2:8-9. Good news: "Salvation is not a result of our _____!"
- John 10:27-29 & Philippians 1:6. Good news: "We are _____ in Jesus!"
- 1Peter 1:3-4 & 3:23-24. Good news: "We have an eternal _____!"
- 1Corinthians 15:51-53. Good news: "We will receive a resurrected _____!"

// How is the gospel different from religion?

:: The gospel is a message of grace, not merit. This is different than religion. Religion says, “*I obey, therefore I am accepted by God.*” The gospel says, “*I am accepted by God through Christ, therefore I obey.*” Religion makes us our own savior. The gospel makes Jesus the only Savior.

:: The gospel is a reversal. Jesus wins our salvation by losing. He shows His power through weakness. He comes to wealth by giving all away. Jesus shows us that God saved us not because we are strong, but because we were weak. We are saved by faith, not faithfulness.

:: This is the opposite of religion. Religion is a person’s attempt at earning God’s favor by doing good deeds. Read Ephesians 2:8-9. According to this passage, what is the basis of our salvation? Explain.

:: Jesus explained the difference between works based salvation in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. Read Luke 18:9-14. Mark down the differences between the Pharisee and the Tax Collector below:

THE PHARISEE...		THE TAX COLLECTOR...
COMPARED HIMSELF TO (v11): _____	VS	COMPARED HIMSELF TO (v13): _____
TRUSTED IN (v9): _____		TRUSTED IN (v13): _____
WENT HOME: (v14): _____		WENT HOME: (v14): _____
“_____ himself” (v14)		“_____ himself” (v14)

// How does the gospel work in our lives?

:: There is a big problem with all this. How can God forgive guilty sinners without punishing them for their sin? Wouldn't that make God unjust? A judge who lets a guilty criminal go free is an unjust judge. How can God justify (declare righteous) sinners without basing that justification on anything in them? That is precisely the issue Paul addresses in the book of Romans.

:: Read Romans 3:21-27. The key concept in this very dense paragraph is summed up in three points. Fill out the following summary from the ESV Bible (esvbible.org).

- “**All have _____ and fallen short of the glory of God**” (v.23)
- So, God put forth Jesus Christ “**as a _____ by His blood**” (v.25). This means Jesus took our place, took the punishment of our sins Himself. Jesus was the substitute to pay the penalty of our sins.
- Therefore we might be made righteous before God “**through _____ in Jesus Christ**” (v.22) and “**justified by His _____ as a gift**” (v.24).
- This is how God has shown that righteousness comes from God, through the work of Jesus Christ. It does not come from any work we do. In this way God can be “**_____ and the _____ of the one who has faith in Jesus.**” (v27)

:: The Reformer Martin Luther wrote this: “*There is a righteousness which Paul calls ‘the righteousness of faith.’ God imputes it to us apart from our works...So then, have we nothing to do to obtain this righteousness? No, nothing at all! ...Now God sees no sin in us, for in this heavenly righteousness sin has no place...I am indeed a sinner in this life of mine and in my own righteousness, but I have another life, another righteousness above this life, which is in Christ, the Son of God...Nothing gives peace like this passive righteousness. The troubled conscience has no cure for its desperation and feeling of unworthiness unless it takes hold of the forgiveness of sins by grace offered free of charge in Jesus Christ.*” Our sins are imparted to Jesus. Jesus righteousness is imputed to us. Luther called this “the great exchange”.

:: This concept is beautifully captured by the Apostle Paul in 2Corinthians 5:21, “**For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.**”

DOCTRINE MATTERS:

IMPUTED RIGHTEOUSNESS: At salvation God reckoned (“thinks of”) the righteousness of Christ as belonging to the believer. Through faith, God credit’s the believer’s account with Jesus’ own righteousness, declaring them as righteous. This is different from the Roman Catholic doctrine of infused (imparted) righteousness which states that righteousness is merited by Christ, but maintained by the believer’s good works.

// How the gospel gets us home...

:: Once we’ve realized what God has done for us in Christ, in giving us all we need for faith and salvation, we are freed from looking for justification and salvation in other things. Some examples.

- A young man does not need to find “acceptance” in women because he knows he is eternally accepted in Christ.
- A young woman does not need to seek justification in her beauty since she knows she is already beautiful to God because of Christ.
- A businessman doesn’t need power or wealth to prove he is successful, because Jesus became poor to give him the eternal riches of His salvation.
- A woman with a sinful past doesn’t have to prove to God that she is worthy of His love. She knows that God loves her because He gave Jesus to die for her.

:: What are some other ways the gospel frees us from searching for salvation in other things?

:: There is nothing we need to do to earn salvation. It was God’s gift. We are free to serve Him without ulterior motives. We do good works because of the good work He did for us. Obedience is responsive. It springs out of thankfulness.

:: Finally, the gospel brings us home. It keeps us from trusting in anything other than Jesus and empowers us to endure until the end. The gospel is our guarantee we will meet God in eternal glory.

UNIT 5: What is the Gospel?

PRAYER REQUESTS // PRAISE REPORTS

Go around the room and have each person share a prayer request and/or a praise report. Members should commit to praying for these requests.

ENCOURAGEMENT & HONOR

Romans 12:10 says, “**Outdo one another in showing honor.**” Go around the room and offer 1 or 2 points of encouragement to one another.

“Encourage one another and build one another up...”
1Thessalonians 5:11, ESV

UNIT 5: What is the Gospel?

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

:: Memorize the following verse(s):

**“For our sake He made Him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in
Him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

(2Corinthians 5:21, ESV)

:: Complete the Unit 6 worksheets and activities (when applicable).

:: Pray for the needs of your brothers/sisters in your group.

:: Ensure you are able to attend the next session.