



what is the  
**GOSPEL?**



April 8 - April 29



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## LIFEgroup Study Guide

This study guide follows along with LBF's current Sunday Message series, and is intended to be a supplement in your daily passionate pursuit of Jesus.

- *Watch last Sunday's message video:*  
*[[www.lbf.church/resources](http://www.lbf.church/resources)]*

Is your group stumped? Did you come to a question that you feel needs clarification? Our church isn't too big, you can contact Pastor Dan with your questions.

- *Contact Pastor Dan: [danfranklin@lbfchurch.com](mailto:danfranklin@lbfchurch.com)*
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### **The Gospel: Announcement or System?**

*1 Corinthians 15:1-11 • Pg. 4-6 • April 8*

### **The Gospel: Now or Later?**

*Romans 8:14-17 • Pg. 7-8 • April 15*

### **The Gospel: Rescue or Self-Help?**

*Ephesians 2:1-10 • Pg. 9-11 • April 22*

### **The Gospel: Individual or Communal?**

*Ephesians 2:11-18 • Pg. 12-13 • April 29*

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## Lesson 1: The Gospel: Announcement or System?

### Main Point

THE GOSPEL IS NOT AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT WHAT PEOPLE SHOULD DO, BUT RATHER AN ANNOUNCEMENT OF WHAT GOD DID.

*April 8 • Written by: Dan Franklin*

*I persecuted the church of God. <sup>10</sup> But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*

*<sup>11</sup> Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.*

### Explanation of the Passage

In 1 Corinthians 15:1, Paul begins his final major section of his letter. This final section focuses on both the fact and also the implications of the resurrection of Jesus. But he begins the section by focusing on the message surrounding the resurrection. He says that he wants to remind the Corinthians of the message that he preached to them. Not only did they hear Paul preach it, but they received it and they are currently taking their stand on it. To go further, Paul says that it is by this message that they are saved, if they hold firmly to the word that he preached to them. Otherwise, their belief will have been in vain.

Twice in verses 1-2 Paul uses the word “gospel.” In the Greek, the word means “good news.” In other words, Paul did not come to them with a bright idea or a new theory, but with an announcement. News is about something that happened. So Paul is reminding them that when he came to them he announced something that happened and that they believed this news and dedicated their lives to living in light of it.

Starting in verse 3 Paul begins to explain what the announcement was. He says that he passed the message along to them, implying that it was

### Getting Started

1. Define what Christians mean when they use the word “gospel.”

2. Give an example of a historical event that, if you found out it was untrue, would change the way you approach life.

### Digging In

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11,

*<sup>1</sup> Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.*

*<sup>2</sup> By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.*

*<sup>3</sup> For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, <sup>4</sup> that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, <sup>5</sup> and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. <sup>6</sup> After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. <sup>7</sup> Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, <sup>8</sup> and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

*<sup>9</sup> For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because*

not something that he invented. The message begins with Christ dying for our sins according to the Scriptures. This is an event that happened. In fulfillment of the prophecies about him, Jesus died as a sacrifice for the sins of the world. As Peter puts it: “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God” (1 Peter 3:18). Similarly, John writes, “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10). Jesus died so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God.

But that is not the only fact that Paul announced to the Corinthians. He also announced that Christ was buried, and then that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and then that he appeared to Cephas (Peter) and the Twelve apostles. In other words, Paul announced to the Corinthians an amazing event that took place in Jerusalem. A man named Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew Scriptures by dying for sins, being buried in the ground, being raised from the dead, and then appearing to his followers. In fact, Paul spends verses 6-8 naming people or groups to whom Jesus appeared. This was to confirm his resurrection. He left it not to one or two witnesses, but to many who could confirm that this event took place.

Paul then writes about the fact that Jesus appeared to him also. This took place when Paul was on his way to persecute and imprison Christians. Jesus appeared to him, spoke to him, and showed him grace (Acts 9). Paul humbly calls himself the least of the apostles, since he persecuted believers. He fought against God! But he was shown mercy. And by God’s grace, Paul says, he not only became a Christian, but also an apostle! And Paul says that this grace of God was not in vain because it led Paul to passionately spread the message to anyone and everyone who would listen.

Paul finishes with verse 11 where he writes about the unity of those spreading this message. He says that whether it was they (the original apostles who walked with Jesus during his ministry) or he (someone converted after Jesus’ resurrection), they all communicated the same message. The gospel is not Paul’s idea or Peter’s idea or John’s idea or James’ idea. The gospel is the announcement that God has reconciled the world to himself through Jesus’ death and resurrection. The gospel is not a system or belief or morality, but an announcement of what God has done.

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In verses 1-2, Paul speaks of “the gospel” as something that was received by the church, not something that was invented by the church. How does the idea of the gospel being received impact the way that you think about your personal faith?

5. The Bible is a big book. And yet in verses 3-5 Paul speaks of the gospel in terms of the events of Jesus’ life. If the gospel centers on the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, what do you think this means about the importance of the rest of the Bible?

6. Paul spends verse 6-8 talking about all of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. How do these appearances impact your personal faith in Jesus?

7. Paul gets personal in verses 9-11, referring to the grace he received from God. When you think back on your past sins and failures, how does this impact your attitude toward (a) God's grace and (b) other people?

## Wrestling with Issues

8. There are some who say that living out the spiritual truths in the Bible is more important than believing that the Bible stories actually happened. What is your response to this idea?

## Taking it to Heart

9. Our faith is usually most important to us in times of difficulty. In those trying times, what difference does it make to you that your faith is not based on a system, but on an event?

10. How does the idea of the gospel being an announcement impact how you think of sharing the gospel with others?

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## Getting Started

1. If God's ultimate goal for us is to be in heaven with him, why do you think he doesn't simply transfer Christians to heaven as soon as they believe?

2. How does your hope for eternal life impact how you approach life today?

## Digging In

Read Romans 8:14-17,

*<sup>14</sup> For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. <sup>15</sup> The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." <sup>16</sup> The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. <sup>17</sup> Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*

## Explanation of the Passage

Suppose that you were talking to a young man who, upon his 21st birthday, was set to inherit an extravagant estate from his family. As you talk, he begins to complain, saying, "I know that in the future I will be rich, but right now I don't see any of that inheritance. I just have to wait. It's nice to know that my future will be good, but until then I am just

## Lesson 2: The Gospel: Now or Later?

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### Main Point

THE GOSPEL BRINGS US NOT ONLY PROMISES FOR ETERNITY BUT ALSO STRENGTH AND HOPE FOR TODAY.

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slogging through life just like anyone else." You would likely respond, "Just like anyone else? Don't you live in your parents' estate? Don't you enjoy the privileges that go along with your family's wealth? Aren't you currently, at least in part, experiencing the benefits of the inheritance that you will one day receive?" In other words, you might point out that while the ultimate benefits of his inheritance are in the future, he is certainly experiencing a strong taste of those benefits in the present.

Believers must be careful not to slip into the thinking that the gospel only promises us a future benefit. While we await our final reward in eternity, the gospel brings us benefits right now. Paul talks about the now-and-future dynamic of the gospel in this passage in Romans 8.

Paul begins this passage by speaking of those who are led by the Spirit. He has already spent time in the beginning of Romans 8 speaking of the fact that all believers in Jesus Christ are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and that we all must choose to be led by the Spirit instead of being led by our flesh (our instinctive desires for instant gratification). Paul says that those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God. He is saying that those who have the Holy Spirit have been adopted into God's family. When we respond to the gospel, we are rescued from being God's enemies and we become his children. Paul explains this by saying that the Holy Spirit leads us not toward slavery to God, but toward adoption into his family. In fact, that Spirit enables us to be confirmed in the deepest part of ourselves that we are children of God.

Paul then begins to explore the implications of this. If we are children of God, then we are heirs. This means that we are heirs alongside Christ. And the one from whom we will reap an inheritance is God himself! This speaks of both our future reward and our current status. Because of the Holy Spirit we know that we will one day receive our inheritance and share in God's glory. And because of the Holy Spirit we also know that we are currently children of God. He listens to us, and guides us, and provides for us, and works all things for our good. Even if we experience suffering in the present, this only goes to confirm that we are God's children and that we can look forward to future glory. The gospel of Jesus gives us eternal reward, and it also gives us present hope and strength.

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. One of the key signs of being a Christian is being indwelt by the Holy Spirit. In what ways do you think your life is different because of the role the Holy Spirit plays in your life?

5. The Spirit we received does not make us slaves to fear. Because of the fact that you are adopted into the family of God, what are some things that you no longer need to fear?

6. What are some ways that being adopted into God's family impacts your life today?

7. What do you think it means when Paul says that believers will share in God's glory in the future?

## Wrestling with Issues

8. Paul says that we are no longer slaves to fear. Yet the concept of fearing God is extremely common in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. What do you think is the proper role for fear of God for Christians?

## Taking it to Heart

9. In what practical ways does living as a child of God impact the way that you approach the things he has called you to do?

10. How does the assurance of the Holy Spirit's presence in your life change the way that you view yourself?



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## Getting Started

1. Do you tend to think people are generally good or generally bad? Explain how you arrived at your answer.

2. What are some ways that you've seen people use the Bible as a self-help manual to address their own problems?

## Digging In

Read Ephesians 2:1-10,

*<sup>1</sup> As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, <sup>2</sup> in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. <sup>3</sup> All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. <sup>4</sup> But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, <sup>5</sup> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. <sup>6</sup> And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, <sup>7</sup> in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. <sup>8</sup> For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—*

## Lesson 3: The Gospel: Rescue or Self-Help?

### Main Point

THE GOSPEL IS NOT ABOUT GOD IMPROVING US, BUT ABOUT GOD RESCUING US.

*April 22 • Written by: Dan Franklin*

*<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.*

### Explanation of the Passage

The solution to any issue is based strongly in a diagnosis of the problem. If one person diagnoses that a car needs a new engine, he will solve the problem differently from someone who simply thinks that the car is out of gas. The same principle holds true for human beings. We will arrive at solutions for humanity based on our understanding of our core problem. This leads us to solutions like enforcing strict morals, building self-esteem, treating depression, and emphasizing physical and mental health. Our solutions will only be as good as our diagnosis of the problem.

In Ephesians 2:1-3, Paul diagnoses humanity's problem when we are apart from Christ. And the diagnosis is grim. He says that we are not merely dying, but that we are dead in our sins. In other words, our only hope is a resurrection. He goes on to say that we used to live in these sins when we followed the ways of the world and its ruler. In other words, people who sin are not being original thinkers. They are simply following the norm of the world and following the voice of the devil. We follow his lead when we gratify the cravings of the flesh and follow its desires and thoughts. In other words, we follow the devil's lead when we say yes to our immediate desires, whether it be for food or drink or sex or money or bursts of anger. All of this activity leads us to the point where we are deserving of God's wrath.

Paul's diagnosis is not simply that human

beings have some quirks and some imperfections. In other words, our problem can never be solved by a few new rules, some friendly advice, or some encouraging thoughts. We are God's enemies! We are on the road to condemnation! Our diagnosis should cause us to tremble.

But then God acted. Paul doesn't say that we did something to get ourselves out of our mess. Instead he says that God, because of his great love for us, brought us from death to life. He poured out his grace and mercy through Jesus. And Jesus—through his sacrificial death and resurrection—has given us new life.

And we're not only rescued from punishment, but we are given God's riches. We are promised eternal life, sharing in the glory of God! Through all eternity God will put his great mercy and grace on display through the goodness he shows to those he has saved.

Paul then soberly reminds us that we are saved by God's grace and not by our own works. But even though we are not saved by good works, this doesn't mean that good works play no role in our lives. In fact, we ourselves are God's good work. He has re-created us and he intends for us to live out the good works he created us to do. In other words, we obey God not because this earns us entrance into his family, but we obey God in order to fully live out our new identity. We give generously to others, forgive those who have wronged us, use our spiritual gifts to serve others, and speak kind and life-giving words. We live out our new identity because God has rescued us from death and brought us new life.

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In verses 1-3 Paul writes that the main problem for human beings is that we are dead in sins and enemies of God. How does this differ from what the typical American might say about the main problem of human beings?

5. Paul says that we were brought from death to life not because of our own good choices, but because of God's great love. If you embrace this truth, how will it impact how you (a) think about and (b) treat those around you who are making destructive decisions?

6. In verses 6-7 Paul says that God not only forgave us, but that he has promised us eternal riches with him in eternity. Do you find that you spend more time thinking of what God has saved you from or what God has saved you for? What do you think has been the impact of your answer?

7. In verses 8-10 Paul makes crystal clear that we are saved by God's grace and not by good works, but that he has created us anew for good works. What are some good works that you think God has specifically created you to do?

## Wrestling with Issues

8. Paul is very clear that it is inappropriate for Christians to “boast” about their salvation. That said, is it ever appropriate for Christians to look at the transformation God has brought about in their lives and to feel “proud” of this in some way?

## Taking it to Heart

9. What are some dangers you might fall into if you begin to look at the gospel simply as a message that helps you along in your life, rather than a message that leads to a spiritual—and eventually a physical—resurrection?

10. What keeps you from spending more time reveling in the grace that you have received through the gospel of Jesus?

# what is the GOSPEL?

## Lesson 4: The Gospel: Individual or Communal?

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### Main Point

THE GOSPEL NOT ONLY RECONCILES US TO GOD,  
BUT ALSO TO ONE ANOTHER.

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*by which he put to death their hostility.<sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.<sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.*

### Explanation of the Passage

William Shakespeare once wrote a play about two warring families who were squarely at odds with one another. In fact, the people around them wondered what it would take for these two families to set aside their differences and experience friendship. As it turned out, it took death. When Romeo, from the house of Montague, and Juliet, from the house of Capulet, fell in love, it seemed that their quarreling families would keep them apart. But after the tragic death of these two star-crossed lovers, the road was paved for peace. Peace became possible because of a death.

In this passage, Paul addresses the fact that Jesus has brought about peace not only between man and God, but between man and man. He begins by speaking about how the Gentiles historically have been distant from both God and God's people, the Jews. They not only lacked the physical sign of God's people—circumcision—but they also lacked the practices and the moral character that went along with God's covenant people. They were estranged from God, from God's promises, from the community God established, and from the hope that God supplied.

But God acted. This is the gospel! God brought peace, and this peace came through a death. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ has allowed those who were far off to come near. And through his death, Jesus

### Getting Started

1. When we see groups of people who are at odds with one another, what are some ways that our culture seeks to bring about peace?

2. Name some types of people with whom you have historically had problems getting along.

### Digging In

Read Ephesians 2:11-18,

*<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)—<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.*

*<sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,<sup>15</sup> by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace,<sup>16</sup> and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross,*

himself is our peace. We might assume that Paul is talking about our peace with God (as he spoke about in Romans 5:1-2). But he is not. The peace of which he speaks is the peace of the two groups—Jews and Gentiles—becoming one. Jesus destroyed the metaphorical wall that separated them, which was illustrated by the literal wall in the Jerusalem temple that separated the court of the Gentiles from the places where the Jews could enter. Jesus created in himself a new humanity by fulfilling the law and dying in order to bring forgiveness and righteousness to all who would believe in him.

Paul says that Jewish and Gentile Christians are now unified as the people of God. They have forgiveness through the same Savior, they have access to the same Father, they are indwelt by the same Spirit, and their hostility is put to death through the cross.

In this passage Paul paints a picture not only of the harmony that Jesus can bring, but of the harmony that he has brought. There are times when Christians don't live as if they've been reconciled to God. In those moments we might say to them, "Jesus purchased your peace with God." In the same way, we can speak to Christians who are embroiled in conflicts with one another, "Jesus purchased your peace with one another." This applies whether the conflicting people are Jews and Gentiles, husbands and wives, black and white, or democrats and republicans. Jesus is our peace.

3. What struck you most about this passage—or about the sermon, if you heard it?

4. In verses 11-12, Paul describes the conflict that formerly existed between the Jews and Gentiles. What are some different groups that tend to be similarly at odds in our culture today?

5. According to Paul, the animosity between Jews and Gentiles was solved not through human peace talks, but through the blood of Christ. How, specifically, do you think the sacrifice of Jesus can bring unity to conflicted groups of people?

6. Paul mentions several ways in which the Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians have unity in Christ. What aspects of this reality most stand out to you, and why?

7. In light of the Christian unity that Paul speaks of in this passage, share about some ways that unity in Christ has overcome differences that you have had with other Christians.

## Wrestling with Issues

8. This passage specifically speaks of unity between Christians. What ways, if any, do you think the gospel brings about peace between Christians and non-Christians?

## Taking it to Heart

9. What are some practical ways that you can look at others through the grid of the peace that Jesus has brought about through the gospel?

10. What individuals, or groups, do you think God is calling you to focus on as you pursue greater peace and unity in light of Jesus' gospel?