

Sharing the Gospel

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. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ... - 1 Corinthians 15:1-4:

God

- God exists, is at the origin of all things, and is active in creation
- Genesis 1:1 (and literally all of scripture)

Man

- Humans are sinful and rebellious
- Genesis 3, Romans 1:1-3:20 (I've chosed these two texts, because they act as kind of bookends)
- Sin earns death, seperation from a right relationship with God, and incites His jealous anger and wrath.
- Death: Genesis 2:16-17, Romans 6:23, Revelation 20:11-15 (again, these are bookends)
- Seperation: Exodus 26:30-35 (temple instructions showing the seperation of the Holy of Holies), Leviticus 16:1-17 (what it takes to even be in God's presence), Isaiah 59:2, Joshua 7:11-12, Romans 11:11-24, 2 Thessalonians 1:8-10
- Jealous anger and wrath: Exodus 20:1-6, 34:10-14, Deuteronomy 4:1-4 & 23-24, 6:14-15, 32:15-25, Romans 1:18, 2:1-9, Ephesians 2:3, 5:6, Colossians 3:5-7, Revelation 19:11-21

Jesus - Life

- Jesus is God, Immanuel (God with us)
- Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23, John 1:1-3 & 14, 5:17-18, 8:48-59, 10:22-33, 14:5-11 Philippians 2:5-7, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 1:1-3
- Jesus is human. He gets hungry, thirsty, tired, sad, angry, tempted, and everything else that comes along with being fully human.
- Matthew 1:1-17, Luke 3:21-38 (geneology), Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 2:1-21 (birth), Luke 2:40 & 52 (Jesus grows up and *learns*), Matthew 4:1-11, Mark 1:12, Luke 4:1-11 (temptation), Mark 3:20-21 & 31-35 (family drama), Hebrews 2:5-18
- Jesus lived a perfect life. No sin (spotless lamb).
- Isaiah 53:9, John 19:4, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:14-15, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 2:22, 1 John 3:5

Jesus - Death

- Jesus literally died on a cross
- Isaiah 53:10-12, Matthew 27:32-55, Mark 15:21-41, Luke 23:26-49, John 19:17-37, Acts 2:23, Philippians 2:5-8, Hebrews 2:14, Revelation 1:18
- Jesus is seperated from God (there is mystery here)
- Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34, (these next two may or may not help this point) John 20:17, 1 Peter 3:19-21
- Jesus, in His death, takes the punishment that we deserved
- Isaiah 53:4-12, Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, Romans 3:25, 4:25, 1 Corinthians 15:3, Hebrews 2:17, 9:11-15 & 26-28, 1 John 2:2, 4:10, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18

Jesus - Resurrection

- Jesus literally, physically came back to life
- Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-49, John 20:1-29, Acts 1:3-4, 2:22-24, 3:13-15, 4:9-10, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, Revelation 1:17-18
- Jesus is reunited with the Lord and ministers on our behalf
- Luke 24:50-51, John 14:2 & 12, 16:28, 20:17, Acts 1:7-9, 2:33, 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Colossians 3:1 Hebrews 1:3, 4:14-5:10, 6:19-20, 7:23-28, 1 Peter 3:22

Gospel Implications

We are now called to recognize our need to be put back into a right relationship with the Father. In our need, we look to Jesus alone to reconcile us to the Father through His life, death, and resurrection. We are then credited with His righteous life, our sin is paid for by His death, and we follow Him into new life. This means that we leave our old life behind, the life of sin, and submit to Jesus and His teachings in all things. In doing this, we both internalize and participate with Jesus in His death and resurrection. All of this, from first to last, is done through the empowering of God, the Holy Spirit, for the glory of God.

How does this work?

Jesus credits us with the life he lived, making us righteous.

- Leviticus 17:10-14 □ Matthew 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-25, Luke 22:19-20, Romans 3:21-26, 4:18-24 (emphasis on v. 24), 5:17, 9:30, 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (emphasis on v. 21)

Jesus dies the death we deserve and thereby removes us out from under the wrath of God.

- Jesus died *for* us: Matthew 20:28, Mark 10:45, John 10:11-15, 11:50-51, 15:13, Romans 5:6-8, 1 Corinthians 15:3, 2 Corinthians 5:14-15, Hebrews 2:9, 1 Peter 1:18-19, 1 John 3:16
- Rescued from Wrath: John 3:36, Romans 5:6-11, 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10 (emphasis on v. 10), 5:8-11 (emphasis on v. 9)

Jesus reconciled us *for* new life, where God is God and we are human. Back to the Garden, in a sense.

- Saved for new life: Romans 6:1-11, 7:4-7 & 14-25, 1 Corinthians 5:14-17, Galatians 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:20-24, Colossians 3:1-2,
- Moved from one Kingdom to another: Ephesians 2:1-10, Colossians 1:9-14 (emphasis on v.13), 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, 1 Peter 2:9-10

This new life continues after death, reconciled to God in His presence forever.

How do we receive this?

The Gospel that reconciles us is a free gift from God that is received by faith.

- Grace through faith: Ephesians 2:1-10 (emphasis on v. 8), Acts 15:11, 18:27, 20:24, Romans 1:17, 3:21-30, 4:4-5 & 16, 5:1-2, 10:8-13, 11:5-6, Galatians 2:19-21, 2 Timothy 1:9, 3:14-15, Titus 2:11, 3:7
- Believe: John 3:16, 5:24-26, 6:28-29, 11:25-26, 20:30-31, Acts 10:39-43, 16:31, Romans 10:9-10, 1 Peter 1:8-9,

Before we share the Gospel:

Receive the Gospel, personally. Jesus invites us into a relationship with Him first. Then, as citizens of His kingdom, He commissions us out as Ambassadors. 2 Corinthians 5 begins with our home in Heaven, then turns to our ambassadorship for Jesus.

Be an earnest person. If there are major issues in your life, pursue those with the Lord with urgency. We want to be people who are in earnest pursuit of Jesus, inviting others to join us. We don't want to be simply saying truths that don't inform our real lives. Consider Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:21-24. Although it is in the context of anger, the principle is still present to wait to give our gift to the Lord and to first get right in our relationships according to His standards.

Pray. This has to do with recognizing our dependance on God for success and being desperate for people to receive it.

Paul requests prayer for him to share well – Ephesians 6:18-20, Colossians 4:2-4, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2. We need God's help to share the message with the right disposition and wisdom.

Pray, understanding that God needs to show up and be seen in our presentation of the gospel. John 6:44. We pray in advance for God to be at work in the hearts of those we share with, that they might hear the word and receive it.

Sharing the Gospel:

We should begin by saying that there is more than one way to share the Gospel, yet there is only one Gospel. We are not able to give an exhaustive strategy for sharing the gospel. Therefore, it will be the goal to apply wisdom to this topic and give a few principles for sharing the gospel, understanding that God may lead us to change directions in any given situation.

When looking at the building blocks of the Gospel, we notice that the truths build on one another. God, the position of Man, Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. If someone doesn't believe in God, then Man's position in relation to that God is not relevant. If people are not in a broken relationship with God, we don't need a savior. It continues like this. Therefore, when sharing the gospel, we need to first listen to what they presently believe and start to address the conversation at the first point of divergence from the Gospel. This requires us to ask questions and listen to their answers well.

God

One of the assertions of the Christian faith is that people actually do believe in God. We see this in Romans 1:18-20. Of course, not everyone claims to believe in God and the gods some people believe in are not the God of Scripture. Therefore, when engaging this step, it is often our goal to point out their present belief.

The moral argument. The notion here is that absolute moral duty exists, because there is one who is able to impose earnest "oughts" on all of humanity across all of space and time. This is God. Without God, it is not simply the case that moral duty is relative, it is that it is non-existent. Yet, each of us are offended by people who "wrong" us. We feel in our bones "injustice", when we are the "victims" of it. Nobody thinks rape and murder are only wrong, simply because of the pragmatism of a social contract. If there were only two people left on the planet, murder would still be wrong.

The Cosmological argument. If you've ever heard of things like the uncaused cause, unmoved mover, or the watchmaker argument, then you've heard this idea. The point of engaging this with a person in presenting the gospel is not to prove the existence of God. It is to point out that the person you are speaking to already finds it reasonable to believe in Him.

The Position of Man

In the West, there are still a great deal of people who will openly confess that they believe in God. However, they will follow this up with this notion of people being good. Most of us grew up on Disney, in one form or another, where the major throughline of essentially all of their content was that people are good way down deep. Villains are made more and more relatable, explaining their behaviors away on a broken past. Our heroes do dark things for noble causes. And our heroes are at their best when they can remind the villains they are good people, underneath all of the death and atrocities they commit.

A part of the difficulty that our society is facing is that we are not able to cut the difference between someone's value and their judicial, moral position. We have no category for a person that is bent towards evil, performing evil acts, while still being valuable and worthy of respect and dignity. Therefore, in order to salvage the dignity side of the conversation, we explain away the evil and call everyone "good". Christianity gives a more robust anthropological picture. People have the image of God on them, so they are valuable. But they are fallen, sinful, rebellious, which explains the behavior.

When we are the victims of a heinous crime, we will admit that a good God must punish. He must be just if He is to be good. This becomes doubly necessary if we desire God to make eternity a good place to live. From there, the next question is; "What should God punish and what should that punishment look like?" We should understand that the better we want Heaven to be, the more God must punish. If God punishes murderers and rapists, but gives liars and thieves a pass, then Heaven will have not murder and rape, but you may be robbed and lied to.

The point is this, God is good, He is just, and He will make eternity perfect for those who seek to dwell with Him there. Our society is entirely broken and all of human history is a blaring testimony to our wicked we are.

In terms of what justice requires, by way of punishment, there is a concept that people tend to get intrinsically. The punishment should fit the crime. The greater the crime the greater the punishment justice requires. The heinousness of a crime is relative to the value of the victim. If you crush a rock with another rock, nobody cares. If you kill a cat or a dog, people will care more. If you kill a person with a rock, you will be in serious trouble. God is infinitely valuable and a crime against Him is the height of evil. Therefore, crimes against God deserve the highest form of punishment.

When we speak to an individual about the gospel, the most important point about this part of the conversation is not getting them to admit that society is broken and full of people who are sinners, not doing what God requires. The point is for them to realize their own participation in this. Even they know that they shouldn't lie, even if they don't believe in the authority of Scripture. Yet, they lie. There are plenty of other sins that people commit, knowing full well they are wrong. The conclusion is that we know God must be just, but that doesn't look good for us. We need good news.

Jesus – Life

This is where the good news comes in. If the person is on board with the first two points, this is where the "good news" comes in. God loves us and desires to be restored in relationship with us. He is not willing to compromise His just character or cease being good in order to have us. Therefore, He puts on flesh to join us in His creation. Immanuel, God with us. He lived the perfectly righteous life that we should have lived, but nobody before or after Jesus ever accomplished.

Jesus is the Lord. His life and ministry is a testimony to this truth. He did many miraculous things that vindicate His divinity. This was done publicly and witnessed by a tremendous number of people and written down within a generation

by multiple witnesses. ONce we've accepted the premise that God exists, that He can do whatever He wants in His creation, including joining it, should not be beyond imagination.

One of the major points here in the evangelical conversation is that God came to us, because He wants us.

Jesus – Death

Jesus died the death that we deserve. He satisfied the justice of God by paying the full debt of sin, so that anyone who puts their faith in Jesus might receive His righteousness and have their debt paid.

Jesus' death was willful (John 10:18). It was for our justification (Romans 3:21-26, 5:6-11). It removes us from the wrath of God (John 3:36, Romans 1:18 paired in 3:21-26, 5:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:9).

This is important in terms of Gospel presentations in our context. There are many people in our midst that carry the banner of Christ over their head and think of themselves as Christian, because of their upbringing and a social sense of belonging. Yet, these people do not believe in the gospel, because they don't believe that man is fallen, but good, and this belief is paired with the notion that Jesus did not die for our sins, taking the wrath of God. Therefore, they see no need to trust Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive His righteousness, in order to receive salvation. There is no need for such a thing in their minds. These people are not Christian and need the Gospel just as much as any non-believer.

Jesus – Resurrection

Jesus rose from the dead on the third day. This is the reward of His righteousness and the power of God the Holy Spirit within Him. All who put their faith in Him receive His righteousness and His Spirit and therefore look forward to joining Jesus in physical resurrection.

This is good news, because it is never too late to put your faith in Jesus, receive the forgiveness of your sins, and have eternity to enjoy all that God has purchased for you. The weight of new life as a part of good news is more pressing on people who are closer to and more familiar with death.

It is worth noting that it is rare to find someone who earnestly believes in all of the previous major points, yet fails to believe in this one.

Interestingly, for a context that claims atheism as the new normal, a striking number of people still claim to believe in life after death. Therefore, this often takes less convincing. What does take some conversation is that someone has already participated in this life after death and that it is physical life. Yet the evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of Jesus being risen from the dead. This includes the claims of multiple eyewitnesses, the conversion of the apostles, including Paul, and the birth of the Church among the same people who were alive to witness His death. This does not include the countless numbers of people of each generation who have encounters with Jesus.

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Things to be careful of in evangelism:

“Relational Evangelism” that never turns into actual evangelism. The Gospel is a message and it cannot be conveyed by simply being a kind person. Paul is clear in Romans 10:5-15 that people must hear the Gospel in order to call on the name of Jesus for salvation. We are called to tell them.

Getting to sin and wrath, but not the Gospel, is neither loving nor our calling as ambassadors of reconciliation. Holding signs that proclaim the reality and consequence of sin is not sharing the Gospel.

Disposition matters. It is easy to get into the headspace that says that it is upon us to tell people the truth, such that our primary motivation in telling people the Gospel is to relieve our conscience. Therefore, getting the theology right is all that matters. We are not caring how it is received, as long as we get it out, our hands are clean. We are commanded to love God and love others, this should be a natural outworking of love. We must care about people.

One strategy in closing:

When Jesus teaches His disciples, He draws from much of what they already know in order to convey spiritual truths to them. The Gospel can be a difficult thing to relate to. It can be difficult to land it on the ground and not have it live as a conception in our minds only. Therefore, there is wisdom in looking for living examples in the lives of the people we are aiming to share the gospel with. Then, when the moment presents itself, to draw the parallels from the event on the ground to the Gospel.

In 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, Paul talks about being all things to all people in order to be more effective in sharing the Gospel. There are so many things that make us more or less relatable to people. This includes the normative language we use, the clothes we wear, food we eat, music we listen to, politics we find compelling, sports teams we cheer for, and so many other things. Because of the weight of the Gospel, we need to be flexible and open-handed in how we engage with others in areas that do not threaten our submission to Jesus, so as to be more relatable and therefore more affective at sharing the Gospel.