


A PRELUDE TO *BIBLICAL* EVANGELISM

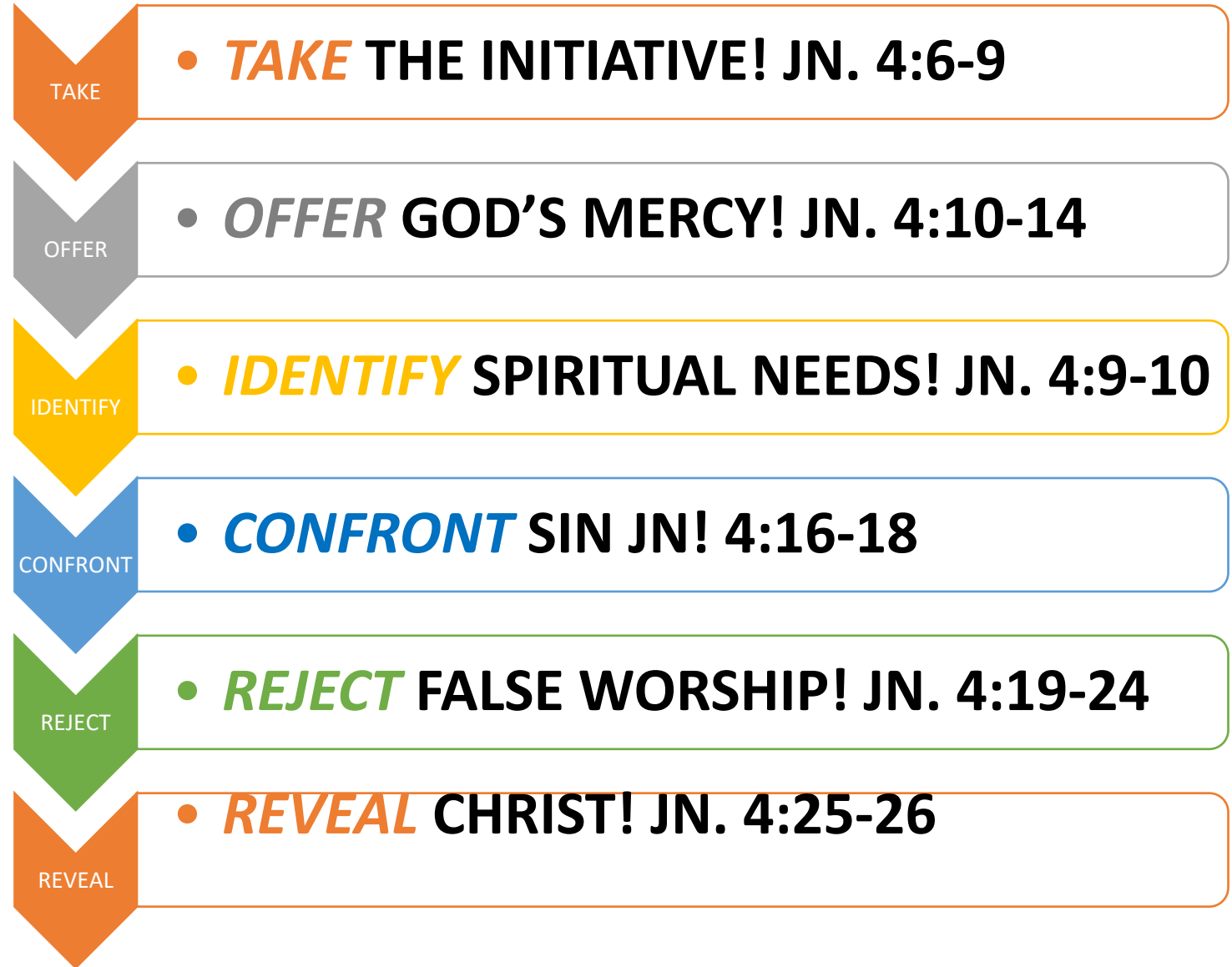


A large, ancient tree with thick, gnarled roots growing over stone ruins. The tree's trunk is massive and textured, with roots spreading out over the ground and onto the stone structures. The background shows more stone ruins and lush green foliage. The image is partially obscured by a white, jagged-edged shape on the left side.

THE FRUIT OF
THE RIGHTEOUS IS A
TREE OF LIFE,
AND HE WHO IS WISE
WINS SOULS.

PROVERBS 11:30 NASB

**PRINCIPLES
FOR
BIBLICAL
EVANGELISM
FOUND IN
JOHN 4, “THE
WOMAN AT
THE WELL.”**



I. THE HIGH COST OF *REJECTING* GOD.

II. REJECTING GOD'S *RESTRAINTS*.

1. THE *CONSCIENCE*.

2. THE *FAMILY*.

3. THE *GOVERNMENT*.

4. THE *FAMILY*.

THE *CHURCH*

- There is one more restraint God has placed in society—*THE CHURCH* functions as its *SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY*. God has called His people to be a righteous and sanctifying influence in this world. In the *SERMON ON THE MOUNT*, *JESUS* said,

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; BUT IF THE SALT HAS BECOME TASTELESS, HOW CAN IT BE MADE SALTY AGAIN? IT IS NO LONGER GOOD FOR ANYTHING, EXCEPT TO BE THROWN OUT AND TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT BY MEN. YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. A CITY SET ON A HILL CANNOT BE HIDDEN; NOR DOES ANYONE LIGHT A LAMP AND PUT IT UNDER A BASKET, BUT ON THE LAMPSTAND, AND IT GIVES LIGHT TO ALL WHO ARE IN THE HOUSE. LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN IN SUCH A WAY THAT THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS AND GLORIFY YOUR FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.” (MATT. 5:13–16)₅

- ***WE UNDERSTAND THE EFFECTS OF SIN***—how it has corrupted God’s creation and set it on a destructive trajectory. We understand the world is dark and decaying. ***BUT THE LORD HAS ESTABLISHED HIS CHURCH AS THE LAST LINE OF RESTRAINT AGAINST SIN’S INFLUENCE.*** We are the ***SALT*** that slows the decay and the ***LIGHT*** that diminishes the darkness.
- ***THROUGH OUR CHRISTLIKE INFLUENCE***—through our ***LOVE, MERCY, HUMILITY, KINDNESS, COMPASSION, AND HOLINESS***—we’re called to restrain the corruption and chaos of sin. In that regard, ***THE CHURCH IS THE MOST PRECIOUS COMMODITY IN THE WORLD.***
- However, just as ***CHRIST WARNED***, the effects of salt and light can be diminished. ***SALT*** can become impure and lose its taste. ***LIGHT*** can be covered up and hidden. ***THE TRAGEDY TODAY IS THAT SO MANY CHURCHES HAVE FAILED TO BE A PRESERVING, ILLUMINATING INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD.***

7 WAYS WE CAN **LOSE** OUR **SALTINESS** AS DISCIPLES:

1. STOP **READING SCRIPTURE** AS WE SHOULD.

Scripture is a vital guide for the Christian life. It is **“A LAMP FOR MY FEET, A LIGHT ON MY PATH”** (PSA. 119:105). When we stop reading Scripture, we can easily lose our way, thus faltering in the **DISCIPLE-LIFE**. **“WITHOUT SCRIPTURE’S GUIDANCE WE LOSE THE SALTY SAVOR OF GOD’S LIFE IN AND WITH US.”**

2. STOP **PRAYING** AS WE SHOULD.

If Scripture is the guide for our life as disciples, prayer is the lifeblood of our disciple-life. Prayer is our communication with God, but it is also the way in which we abide in Christ. The same way that branches abide in the vine, our discipleship is rooted in the life of God through prayer (**JN 15:1-17**). **IF WE WANT OUR LIVES SATURATED WITH THE **FLAVOR** AND **PRESERVATIVE** OF GOD’S LIFE IN US, THEN WE MUST BE **PEOPLE OF PRAYER**.**

3. LIVE SO CLOSE TO THE WORLD THAT NO ONE CAN TELL YOU'RE A DISCIPLE.

We sometimes talk of disciples as **IN** the world but not **OF** the world (JN. 17:14-15). While we understand that **PAUL** wanted to become all things to all people so that he might bring people to Christ (1 COR. 9:20-22), **THIS DID NOT MEAN HE HID HIS DISTINCTIVENESS AS A CHRIST FOLLOWER.** Salt becomes less salty by being diluted. So, too, if no one can tell we're disciples of Christ, then we may be on the pathway of losing our saltiness.

4. LACK INTEGRITY AND CHRISTLIKE CHARACTER.

Disciples of Jesus are called to look like Jesus. **WE ARE TO RESIST SIN AND EXHIBIT THE FRUIT OF GOD'S SPIRIT IN OUR LIVES (GAL. 5:13-26).** **PETER** said that the godly behavior and character of disciples will lead people to an encounter with God (1 PET. 2:11-12). If our daily lives does not point to Christ, then we may lack saltiness.

5. NEVER TALK ABOUT JESUS.

JESUS called His disciples to be witnesses to Him (**ACTS 1:8**). While we want our **LIVES** to be a witness to Christ, we also want to give witness to Him with our **MOUTHS**. If we never say a word about Jesus to anyone else, then we lack what **PAUL** describes as **GRACE-SEASONED SPEECH: “LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE ALWAYS FULL OF GRACE, SEASONED WITH SALT, SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW HOW TO ANSWER EVERYONE” (COL. 4:6).**

6. THINK ONLY ABOUT YOUR OWN NEEDS.

We lose our saltiness when we stop thinking of others' needs and only think of our own needs. When Jesus was asked how He would summarize God's law, He said it was **LOVING GOD** with all of who we are and **LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR** as ourself. (**MATT. 22:36-40**).

SALTY DISCIPLES ARE AWARE OF OTHERS' NEEDS, BOTH MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL, AND ***REACH OUT TO CARE FOR THOSE WHO ARE IN NEED, BOTH WITHIN THE CHURCH, COMMUNITY AND BEYOND.***

7. LET OTHER INTERESTS BECOME MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOD AND HIS KINGDOM.

Just as love for ***neighbor*** is part of the summary of God's law, so, too, is love for ***God*** for all of who we are— ***“ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND”*** (MATT. 22:37). If people know more about the ***HOBBIES, SPORTS TEAMS, FOODS, POLITICAL ALLEGIANCES, CAUSES, OR EVEN FAMILY WE LOVE***, but never know our love for God, then there may be a lack of salt evident in our lives. ***JESUS*** said, ***“SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM AND HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND ALL THESE THINGS WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU AS WELL”*** (MATT. 6:33).

- **BACK TO OUR STUDY, FALSE TEACHERS** abound—charlatans promoting religious *Ponzi schemes* and selling *phony miracles*. Unholy and immoral leaders tarnish the church’s testimony. **WORLDLY ENTERTAINMENTS DOMINATE**, while hard truths are dulled or dismissed altogether. **WHOLE DENOMINATIONS** deny the **AUTHORITY, SUFFICIENCY, AND INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE**. Others deny the **DEITY OF CHRIST**.
- **TOO MANY CHURCHES DON’T CONFRONT SIN, DON’T CALL FOR HOLY LIVING, AND DON’T UPHOLD THE GOSPEL AS THE ONLY HOPE FOR SALVATION. WHAT KIND OF RESTRAINT CAN A CHURCH LIKE THAT PROVIDE?**
- **“A WEAK, WORLDLY, FALSE CHURCH HAS NO ABILITY TO RESTRAIN THE CHAOS AND CORRUPTION OF THIS WORLD. A CHURCH LIKE THAT ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTES TO THE PROBLEM.”**
- **GOD’S PEOPLE NEED TO BE DIFFERENT**. We need to be **SALT AND LIGHT**, AND **LIVE HOLY LIVES THAT GLORIFY THE LORD AND ADORN HIS GOSPEL**.

IS GOD EVER *UNJUST*?

Have you ever considered the stark contrast between *JUDAS ISCARIOT* and the *THIEF ON THE CROSS*? One was a *CLOSE* disciple of *JESUS CHRIST* and gave three years of his life to the best, most intensive religious instruction available anywhere. *BUT HE LOST HIS SOUL FOREVER*. The other was a hardened, lifelong criminal who was still mocking everything holy while being put to death for his crimes. *BUT HE WENT STRAIGHT TO PARADISE FOREVER*.

The difference in the two men could hardly be more pronounced—nor could the endings to their respective life stories be more surprising. **JUDAS** was a disciple in Christ’s closest circle of twelve. He preached, evangelized, ministered, and was even given power **“OVER ALL THE DEMONS AND TO HEAL DISEASES”** (LK 9:1).

JUDAS seemed like a model disciple. When **JESUS** predicted that one of the twelve would betray Him, no one pointed the finger of suspicion at Judas. He was so thoroughly trusted by the other disciples that they had made him ***their treasurer*** (JN. 13:29).

They evidently saw nothing in his character or attitude that seemed questionable, much less diabolical. **BUT HE BETRAYED CHRIST, ENDED HIS OWN MISERABLE LIFE BY SUICIDE, AND ENTERED INTO ETERNAL DAMNATION LADEN WITH HORRIFIC GUILT.**


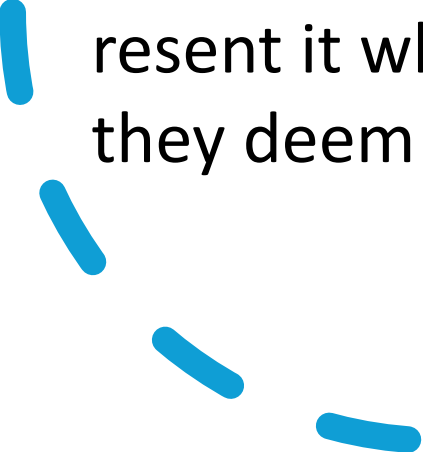
What **JESUS** spoke about him in **(MK. 14:21)** is chilling: **“WOE TO THAT MAN BY WHOM THE SON OF MAN IS BETRAYED! IT WOULD HAVE BEEN GOOD FOR THAT MAN IF HE HAD NOT BEEN BORN.”**

- **THE THIEF ON THE CROSS**, on the other hand, was a *career criminal*—a serious enough villain that he had been sentenced to die by the slowest, most painful form of capital punishment known to man. He’s called a **ROBBER** in **(MATT. 27:38)**—the Greek word there speaks of a brigand or a highwayman. He was crucified with a partner—both had been slated to be executed along with **BARABBAS**, an insurrectionist and killer **(LK. 23:18–19)**.
- All of that indicates that the **THIEF ON THE CROSS** was part of a gang of cutthroat ruffians who stole by violence and lived by no law but their own passions. He was clearly vicious, mean-spirited, and aggressive because in the early hours of the crucifixion, *both he and his cohort in crime were taunting and reviling Jesus along with the mocking crowd* **(MATT. 27:44)**.

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- But as that thief watched **JESUS** die silently—**“OPPRESSED . . . AFFLICTED, YET HE DID NOT OPEN HIS MOUTH; LIKE A LAMB THAT IS LED TO SLAUGHTER”** (ISA. 53:7)—the hardened criminal had a remarkable last-minute change of heart.
 - Literally in the dying moments of his wretched earthly life, he confessed his sin (LK. 23:41), uttered a simple prayer: **“JESUS, REMEMBER ME WHEN YOU COME IN YOUR KINGDOM”** (LK. 23:42)—and **WAS USHERED THAT VERY DAY INTO PARADISE** (LK. 23:43), **CLOTHED IN PERFECT RIGHTEOUSNESS, ALL HIS GUILT BORNE AND PAID FOR IN FULL BY CHRIST.**

APPARENT *INJUSTICE*

- Those who think *HEAVEN* is a reward for doing good might protest that this was throwing *JUSTICE* out the window.
- *THE THIEF* had done nothing whatsoever to merit heaven. If it's possible to forgive such a man so completely in the dying moments of a wretched life filled with gross sin, wouldn't it also be proper for *JUDAS'S* one act of treachery to be canceled (or mitigated) on the basis of whatever good works he had done while following Christ for three years?
- People do occasionally raise questions like that. The Internet is dotted with comments and articles suggesting *JUDAS* was dealt with unfairly or judged too harshly.

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- **JUDAS** himself seemed to be the type of person who kept score on such matters. He protested, for example, when **MARY** anointed the feet of **JESUS** with a costly fragrance. He knew the precise value of the ointment (equal to a year's wages), and he complained, **"WHY WAS THIS PERFUME NOT SOLD FOR THREE HUNDRED DENARII AND GIVEN TO POOR PEOPLE?"** (JN. 12:5). He no doubt would have thought that *the grace* **JESUS** showed *the* **THIEF** was inappropriately extravagant as well.
 - People who have devoted their lives to religion do sometimes seem to resent it when God reaches out and graciously redeems someone whom they deem unworthy of divine favor. FOR EX. **JONAH!**
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JUSTICE VS. GRACE?

- What we have to bear in mind is that **ALL PEOPLE ARE TOTALLY UNWORTHY. NO ONE DESERVES GOD'S FAVOR.** We are all guilty sinners who deserve nothing less than damnation. **NO ONE WHO HAS SINNED HAS ANY RIGHTFUL CLAIM ON THE KINDNESS OF GOD.**
- **GOD, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS EVERY RIGHT TO SHOW MERCY AND COMPASSION TO WHOMEVER HE CHOOSES (EX. 33:19).** Furthermore, when He shows mercy, it is always in lavish abundance. As He told **MOSES**, He is **“THE LORD, THE LORD GOD, COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS, SLOW TO ANGER, AND ABOUNDING IN LOVINGKINDNESS AND TRUTH; WHO KEEPS LOVINGKINDNESS FOR THOUSANDS, WHO FORGIVES INIQUITY, TRANSGRESSION AND SIN” (EX. 34:6–7).**

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- People who protest that ***God is unfair or unjust*** when He shows grace to the least-deserving people simply do not understand the principle of **GRACE**.
 - **UNDILUTED JUSTICE** would mean immediate death for every sinner, because **“THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH”** (ROM. 6:23). The truth is, nobody really wants what is **“FAIR.”** **WE ALL DESPERATELY NEED MERCY AND GRACE.**
 - At the same time, **GRACE IS NOT UNJUST**, because Christ made full atonement for the sins of those who trust Him—and thereby turned justice in their favor. **“IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AND TO CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS”** (1 JN. 1:9).

- BECAUSE CHRIST TOOK THE PENALTY OF SIN ON HIMSELF, GOD CAN JUSTIFY BELIEVING SINNERS (EVEN NOTORIOUS SINNERS LIKE THE THIEF ON THE CROSS) **WITHOUT** COMPROMISING HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

“HE [IS BOTH] JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER OF THE ONE WHO HAS FAITH IN JESUS” (ROM. 3:26).

- What if God shows mercy to a **WRETCHED THIEF** in his death throes while condemning someone with a religious track record like **JUDAS**?

“THERE IS NO INJUSTICE WITH GOD, IS THERE? MAY IT NEVER BE!” (ROM. 9:14).

“HE HAS MERCY ON WHOM HE DESIRES” (ROM. 9:18).

- **GOD’S MERCY MUST NEVER BE THOUGHT OF AS A REWARD FOR GOOD WORKS. HEAVEN** is not a prize for people who deserve it. God **“JUSTIFIES THE UNGODLY” (ROM. 4:5).**
- **GRACE IS BY DEFINITION UNDESERVED, BUT IT IS NOT UNJUST OR “UNFAIR.” DON’T TRY TO SUBJECT GOD’S GRACE TO CHILDISH NOTIONS ABOUT FAIR PLAY AND EQUITY.**
- No one has any rightful claim on God’s mercy. **HE IS PERFECTLY FREE TO DISPENSE HIS GRACE HOWEVER HE SEES FIT.** As He told **MOSES, “I WILL HAVE MERCY ON WHOM I HAVE MERCY, AND I WILL HAVE COMPASSION ON WHOM I HAVE COMPASSION” (ROM. 9:15).**