

The Gospel Anyone Can Understand

Jesus said, "Go into all the world and **preach the Gospel** to every creature."
Mark 16: 15

So what is it that Jesus was talking about and what was the understanding of the first century church members about the message?

The Gospel Is Good News

The word Gospel, as used in the New Testament, means "a good message" or "to announce good news".

For our task of Evangelism, leading others into relationship with Jesus, we must determine what this good news could be.

Gospel vs. Gospels

Just so we are not confused, there is a difference between the above mentioned terms. The "Gospel" is the message that we are going to learn about here and present to people who need a relationship with Jesus.

The "Gospels" are what we call the first four books of the New Testament; Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These four books chronicle Jesus' birth, life on earth, death and resurrection.

"Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you." Matthew 28:20

In reality, all of what Jesus taught that is recorded in the four Gospels is part of the Good News. It is why they are called THE GOSPELS! Everything in God's Word is good news to those who will believe it and live according to it.

The people who lived during New Testament times were looking for a Messiah, a Savior, who had been told about by the prophets of Old Testament times. The good news for them was that He had arrived.

There should have been great rejoicing over Jesus' coming, but some doubted and would not believe the good news.

The Gospel - A Summary

Part 1 - God loves us and wants an eternal relationship with us

Part 2 - Man disobeyed and fell away from intimate relationship with God

Part 3 - God has a plan to get us back into right relationship that involves sacrifice

Part 4 - Jesus makes the sacrifice for us

Part 5 - We only need to accept Jesus' sacrifice and repent (turn away) from our disobedience (sin) in order to come back into right relationship with God

Good News - God Loves Us - Part 1

Part of the Good News that Jesus preached was that God is a loving God who wants an eternal relationship with every human being.

I've included a few references below for you to begin with. Remember, Bible study is a life long endeavor. You don't have to "know everything" before you are able to share what you already know.

Use these verses as a starting point to understanding God's love toward us.

*Luke 15: 11-32 - The Prodigal Son

*John 3: 16 - 17 - God Loves the World

*Luke 13: 34-35 - Jesus Weeps Over The People Of Jerusalem

*Romans 5:8 - While we were still sinners, God loved us enough to offer a sacrifice for us.

*1 Timothy 2:1-6 - Paul teaches Timothy that God desires all of mankind to be saved, through Jesus Christ.

Read through these verses and prayerfully consider what is being said.

It is crucial that you understand this point in order to better comprehend the rest of the Gospel message. If God is not a loving God who cares about you and desires a relationship with you, then the rest of the message would make no sense.

The Good News Continues

Once we gain an understanding of God's incredible love for us, the rest of the good news story really begins to make sense.

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Witnessing Tip #1

As you begin to share the good news with people, you will soon realize that each person has a different level of current understanding and will need a different starting point in the message of the Gospel.

This lesson is designed to give you a complete overview of: God's Love, Why we need Salvation, How Jesus offers us that Salvation and what we need to do in order to receive His Salvation. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in where you need to begin this message with each individual. Each part of the message builds on the other.

Part 2 - The Gospel Explains Why We Need Salvation

The good news story of the Bible starts from the very beginning.

In Genesis, Chapters One and Two, we learn about God's perfect creation. I will not go in depth about the creation at this time, except to mention that in the account, we see that man is the only thing created in God's image. It makes us special and set apart from the rest of creation.

Adam and Eve were the first two humans and they were only given one rule to follow, *"But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it..." Genesis 2:17*

In Genesis Chapter Three, we find the story about how Adam and Eve disobeyed God, ate from the tree and caused the disobedience (sin) to enter into the world condition. This sin or disobedience to God creates a separation in the intimate relationship that Adam apparently had with God. *"They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day..." Genesis 3:8*

So far, not such good news!

God puts them out of the Garden of Eden to protect them from eating from the Tree of Life, because He does not want them to live for eternity separated in relationship from Him. Even in the process of sending them out of the garden, we see an expression of God's love for them. Adam and Eve had created clothes from fig leaves. God replaces their ill-advised clothing choice with new clothes made from animal skins. Thereby beginning this relationship with a sacrifice. *Genesis 3:21*

Part 3 - Sacrifice Is Necessary For Forgiveness Of Sin

All through the Old Testament, we see the pattern of animal sacrifice necessary for the atonement (forgiveness) of sin. Specifically, sheep are mentioned as the animal that God required for the atonement sacrifice.

Here is a simplified explanation of the process. The animal was placed on an altar. The one seeking forgiveness placed their hands on the animal and confessed their sin, in effect, transferring their sin to the animal and sacrificed it as an offering to God.

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A few points to consider: The animal was of great value to the owner who was performing the sacrifice. The sheep had to be the most valuable in the flock because it had to be perfect, no blemishes.

A more in depth study of the sacrifice will be added to the website at a later date. For now, let's keep going.

Part 4 - Jesus Makes The Sacrifice For Us

In the Scriptures, Jesus is referred to as "The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world." *John 1:29*

He lived a sinless life, making Him a lamb "without blemish." Even the Roman officials could not find fault with Him. "I find in Him no fault at all." (Pilate) *John 18:38*

The others who were crucified with Him also acknowledged His lifestyle. "...this man has done nothing amiss." *Luke 23:41*

The birth, life, death and resurrection of the Messiah, the Savior, the Christ, was declared by the prophets centuries before. Jesus fulfilled all of their prophecies. I will include a link to a list of fulfilled prophecies in the near future.

The Scriptures also tell us that Jesus willingly took upon Himself all of the sin of the world, thereby offering Himself as a sacrifice for us. "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." 2 *Corinthians 5:21*

Also read all of *Romans Chapter 5*

The Apostle Paul states the good news best in *Romans 5:8*,

"God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Part 5 - The Really Good News

Because Jesus made the sacrifice for us, there is a way for us to come into right relationship with God!

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man comes to the Father but by me." *John 14:6*

Jesus' sacrifice on the cross opens a door for our access into the Kingdom of God. So, what do we need to do in order to go through that door.

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"Repent (turn away from your sin), and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission (forgiveness) of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38

This was the Apostle Peter's reply to the people when they asked, "What shall we do?"

Witnessing Tip #2

Many people try to begin witnessing to others with the part of the message that includes repentance. Many people do not understand the idea of repentance or turning away from sin because they have no concept of what sin is. At times, you will need a way to take non-believers through all five parts of the process in order for them to understand their need for a relationship with God. Become familiar with the reason "why" we need salvation. Build on a solid foundation.

Many people have come to know the Lord through a series of Scriptures in the book of Romans. Commonly called, "The Roman Road to Salvation" these Scriptures give a quick reference outline to the Gospel message.

Romans 3:23 - "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God..."
Establishes the fact that we are **ALL** sinners who are separated from God.

Romans 6:23 - "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Separated from God means the penalty of death (Hell) Reference Revelation 20:10-15. God gives us a gift that we do not deserve through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:8 - "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

Again, we are shown the sacrifice made on our behalf, illustrating God's great love for us and His desire to be with us for the rest of eternity.

Romans 10:13 - "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Repentance, submitting, following the teaching of Jesus Christ is required for salvation. Saved from what? Saved from an eternity separated from God. Saved to what? Saved to an eternal home in heaven, described in Revelation 21:1-7

Don't Forget The Resurrection

Before we move on to different tools and methods that you can use to share the good news message of Jesus, let's consider the rest of the story.

The fact that Jesus came and died for our sins is truly good news. But, if the story about Jesus coming and dying on the cross as a sacrifice for us ended with His burial in a tomb, where would we be? We would not be any better off than the people of Old Testament times because we would need to continue offering sacrifices!

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In John 2:19, Jesus makes a bold statement,
"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."
Jesus often spoke in parables (stories that had a hidden spiritual meaning). In this case, the people listening to Him thought He was talking about a building, but Jesus was really referring to Himself.

He was telling them that He would rise again after being crucified.

The Apostle John describes his encounter with Jesus in Revelation 1:8
"I am He that lives and was dead; and behold, I am alive forevermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

Because Jesus rose again on the third day, we no longer are required to offer animal sacrifices on altars. Jesus was the final sacrifice! It is an awesome message of love, sacrifice, grace and power. Study it. Memorize it. Share it with others and they will be transformed by the power of a loving and merciful God!!

Remember that this is just a starting point for your study on The Good News. There is much more to learn and apply to our lives. As a matter of fact, it is a life-long, never-ending learning process.

Once again, I would like to remind you that you do not need to "know everything" before you begin to share the good news with others. Your most powerful witnessing tool is your own testimony. The story of how God changed your life, how you came to an understanding of God's love and provision for you, is one of the most effective and natural ways of sharing the Gospel with others. It's good news to you and it will be good news to others.