Biblical Evangelism

By Brad Anderson, M.Div.
Course Description

This is one of the courses in the Tools for Teens curriculum. The goal of Biblical Evangelism is to give the student a thorough understanding of personal evangelism. We’ll define evangelism, study the theological underpinnings of evangelism, and learn how to communicate the gospel clearly and naturally. We’ll also study appropriate and inappropriate ways of presenting the gospel. The outcome should be a renewed desire for students to reach their peers with the gospel, accompanied by the ability to do so.

(1 Quarter)

About “Tools for Teens”

Tools for Teens is a complete discipleship curriculum designed to ground teens in biblical/theological content. The authors of this material believe in the following:

- Teens must be enabled to understand the doctrines of the Bible.
- Teens must be enabled to understand the content of the Bible.
- Teens must be enabled to understand the historical roots of Baptists, Christianity, and Fundamentalism.
- Teens must be enabled to relate to one another, authorities, and their community from a biblical perspective.

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What is Biblical Evangelism?

Why study evangelism? Doesn’t everyone already know the importance of spreading the gospel? After all, evangelism is simply “one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread,” as the saying goes. So why spend time on this topic?

Actually, not everyone understands the importance of evangelism. Many Christians have no idea how to communicate their faith. There’s even quite a bit of misunderstanding about what the gospel message consists of. Further, much of the emphasis in evangelism lately has been on methods rather than on the message. And some evangelists have been guilty of manipulating their audiences into submission rather than simply delivering the good news to them. Thus, evangelism is an important subject to understand.

Objectives

The goal of this series of lessons is to give the student a thorough understanding of personal evangelism. We’ll define evangelism, study the theological underpinnings of evangelism, and learn how to communicate the gospel clearly and naturally. We’ll also study appropriate and inappropriate ways of presenting the gospel. The outcome should be a renewed desire for students to reach their peers with the gospel, accompanied by the ability to do so.
Definitions

“Evangelism,” “testimony,” “witnessing” – these words are often used interchangeably. But significant differences exist in the meanings of these words.

Witness . . .

. . . to testify, to give an account of the truth. Witnessing occurs any time a believer rehearses the facts of the gospel within the hearing of an unbeliever. The emphasis is on communication of truth. The believer’s lifestyle also gives nonverbal witness of his commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord. Both life (behavior) and lip (verbal communication) must be consistent with each other. That is, Christians must back up what they say by how they live.

Testimony . . .

. . . an account of how one came to be saved; one’s reputation. When one is called upon to give a testimony, he tells about how he got saved. When one has a good testimony before others, it means that he has a good reputation or is an exemplary Christian. While witnessing is strictly limited to communicating the content of the gospel, giving a testimony usually emphasizes one’s personal journey to faith.

Note: Personal testimonies may or may not be helpful in communicating the gospel. If the emphasis is on the content of the gospel, and how you responded to it, then a testimony may be appropriate. But if the emphasis is on the more personal and emotional aspects of salvation, the one you are witnessing to may see salvation as an interesting experience that happened to you, but one that has no bearing on him. The object in giving a testimony is not to focus on your own personal experience, but to aid in communicating the gospel message.

What is Biblical Evangelism?
Lesson 1

What is an Evangelist?
In 2 Tim 4:5, Paul exhorts Timothy to “do the work of an evangelist.” An evangelist is literally a “preacher of good news,” that is, a missionary preacher of the gospel (Eph 4:11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers). This title is applied to Philip (Acts 21:8 We entered into the house of Philip the evangelist.) who appears to have gone from city to city preaching the word (Acts 8:4, 40). Judging from the case of Philip, evangelists had neither the authority of an apostle, nor the gift of prophecy, nor the responsibility of pastoral supervision over churches.

They were itinerant preachers, their special function being to carry the gospel to places where it was previously unknown. They seem to have had an ability for preaching the gospel to non-Christians. Thus, a true evangelist is not one who...
Evangelism

The English word “evangelize” comes from the Latin evangelium. The Greek word itself is a compound of eu and angelos. The first means “well” and the second, “messenger.” So the word “evangelize” means to bear a good message. Broadly speaking, evangelism is virtually the same as witnessing—communicating the good news about Jesus Christ. And anyone doing so is evangelizing. But in a sense, evangelism is the entire process of communicating the gospel message to an unbeliever, followed by that person’s conversion, his baptism, addition to the church, and growth in the faith. Evangelism as a process does not end at a profession of faith. Actually, evangelism has just begun when a soul is born-again. The burden of Matthew 28:19 is to “disciple,” not just to tell someone the gospel.1

Here’s a good definition of what it means to evangelize: to present Jesus Christ to sinful men in order that they might turn from their sin, accept Him as their Savior, and serve Him as their King in the fellowship of His Church.2

Biblical Basis for Evangelism

Matt 28:18–20 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The main verb here is the command to “make disciples.” To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher. Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus’ teaching (Matt 12:46–50). The Great Commission is given to the Eleven in their role as disciples (Matt 28:16). Therefore, they are models for all disciples.

1 Luther L. Grubb, “What Must the Church Do?” in Grace Theological Journal, V13 #1, Wtr 72, p. 20
In other words, fulfilling the Great Commission is the duty of all believers.

“All nations” has the sense of “tribes,” “nations,” or “peoples” and means “all peoples or nations without distinction,” including Jews. This is the basis of worldwide missions.

The words “baptizing” and “teaching” describes what happens to disciples: they are baptized and taught. The NT can scarcely conceive of a disciple who is not baptized or is not instructed. Baptism was and continues to be a sign both of entrance into Messiah’s covenant community and of pledged submission to his lordship. The force of this command implies that Jesus’ disciples are responsible for making disciples of others, a task characterized by baptism and instruction.3

Acts 1:8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

This text presents the theme for the whole book of Acts. The mandate to witness comes as a direct commission from Jesus himself—in fact, as Jesus’ last word before his ascension and, therefore, as one that is final and conclusive. All that follows in Acts is the result of Jesus’ own intent and the fulfillment of his express word. This commission lays an obligation on all Christians.

The command includes

a person: the person of Jesus, on whose authority the church acts and who is the object of its witness

a power: the power of the Holy Spirit, which is the motivation for the mission
a program: begins at Jerusalem, moves out to “all Judea and Samaria,” and extends “to the ends of the earth.”

The rest of Acts displays how the mission of the church in its witness to Jesus fared at Jerusalem (2:42–8:3), throughout Judea and Samaria (8:4–12:24), and as it progressed until it finally reached the imperial capital city of Rome (12:25–28:31).

Luke 24:46–47 And [Jesus] said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

In this text, Jesus Himself asserts that the message “should be preached . . . among all nations.” The church is responsible to fulfill this mandate. Since the church is composed of people, each believer is to do his part in proclaiming the gospel, both personally and in conjunction with his church.

Evaluation

The success or failure of evangelism, witnessing, and testifying is somewhat difficult to gauge. We are tempted to think that unless people respond to the message, we have been a failure. But remember that our duty is to plant the seed and water it. God is responsible for the yield, not us (cf. 1 Cor 3:6) If number of conversions were the gauge of success, many missionaries, not to mention Christ Himself, have been absolute failures. Missionaries frequently spend years evangelizing before making one convert. So success or failure in evangelism is not based on the number of converts. It’s common for people to say that the Lord is really blessing the ministry when many people are being saved. But it’s unwise to equate numbers of professions with the Lord’s blessing. Further, it is wrong for us to constrain, ma-
nipulate, or scare anyone into accepting Christ. The Holy Spirit’s job is to convict, reprove and rebuke sinful men of their need to repent. We simply, prayerfully, and naturally confront people with the message. We can’t control how people will respond. Ultimately, who does or does not accept Christ depends on God, not on us. “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jonah 2:9).

Motivation

We could pursue evangelism for several reasons – duty, fame, pride, guilt, to fill the church, to please the pastor, etc. But the supreme object in evangelism is to glorify God. The chief end of man is to glorify God in whatever he does. Evangelism is one way to do so. The ultimate aim is not to save souls or to make ourselves feel better. We serve and honor God by means of evangelism. This proper, God-centered (theocentric) approach focuses on the glory of God (doxological).

The second motivation for evangelism is a love for our neighbor. We should desire to see other people share in the blessings of salvation. Our concern for the well being of our friends should compel us to communicate to them the gospel message. There is something wrong if believers don’t care enough about their friends and family to share the gospel with them. Thus, the only true motivations for evangelism is a zeal for God and a love for others.

Conclusion

We have now set a solid foundation for the rest of our discussion on evangelism. We know what evangelism is and why we are supposed to do it. Next, we’ll focus on the ways evangelism should and should not take place.
For Further Discussion:

1. Has one fulfilled his duty if he witnesses to an unbeliever once?

No, it often takes repeated exposures to the gospel before one accepts it. “The idea that a single evangelistic sermon, or a single serious conversation, ought to suffice for the conversion of anyone who is ever going to be converted is really silly.” On the other hand, if you have accurately delivered the gospel to someone, that person is accountable for that information. Thus, if someone is open to the gospel, we should keep telling him. If a person absolutely refuses to hear the gospel, that’s his problem, not yours.

2. Why should one not feel guilty if his evangelistic efforts don’t result in conversions?

Because the results are not in your hands. God is responsible to harvest the fruit.

3. Why is it important to adopt the proper motivation for evangelism?

Any other motivation but the proper ones will result in failure, disappointment or improper behaviors, not to mention God’s disapproval. Remember, God is concerned about why we do what we do, not just about what we do.

4. Describe the biblical role of an evangelist.

He should travel around and preach the gospel with the intent of making converts to funnel into established churches or new churches. His primary role is to reach people with the gospel.

5. How do you gauge success in evangelism?

by the faithfulness and commitment of the evangelist, not by the number converted.

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5 Packer, p. 120.
Obstacles to Evangelism

Most believers understand their responsibility to reach others for Christ. Many do their best—they invite friends to church, pass out tracts, talk to their co-workers, etc. But many don’t even do that much. Only a minority of believers ever talk to anyone else about the Lord, and only a small minority ever lead someone else to a saving knowledge of Christ. Why is this the case? Why is it so hard to evangelize? There are several reasons why evangelism is so tough.

Misunderstandings about evangelism

Some believe they need a lot of specialized training to witness effectively.

Perhaps they are concerned about making a mistake when communicating the gospel – this is a serious matter, and they don’t want to mess up. Or perhaps they lack the confidence to answer potential questions. For example, “How do you know the Bible is true?” “How do you know Jesus rose from the dead?” “Why do you think you’re right and all the other religions are wrong?” “Why does God allow so much evil in the world?” Such questions are intimidating.

Answer: 1) Most believers can learn to communicate the gospel very effectively. If one understood it well enough to be saved himself, he should be able to tell others; 2) Tell what you know and don’t worry about
what you don’t know. Don’t be afraid to admit your lack of knowledge. Tell how you got saved. Advanced training is important and valuable, but not necessary.

Some are afraid that people will think they are strange and reject them.

They don’t want to lose friends or popularity. If they tell others about Jesus, they might suffer ridicule or insults. In other words, they are ashamed.

Answer: We should expect some opposition to the message. Jesus was crucified for that message. The disciples were killed for it. Millions of Christians have been persecuted for it. So it shouldn’t surprise us if people react negatively to the gospel message. Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel” (Rom 1:16). Are you?

Some may be uncomfortable with the methods of evangelism they have been taught.

People use various methods to spread the gospel: door-to-door evangelism (“cold calling”), street preaching, passing out tracts on the corner, telemarketing (phones), etc. Some people are uncomfortable with such activities.

Answer: 1) These are not the only methods of evangelism. In fact, the above methods are among the least successful; 2) lack of comfort should not deter one from evangelizing. Paul, for example, endured an amazing amount of discomfort (beatings, stoning, shipwrecks, imprisonment, rejection, etc.) as he spread the gospel. We can endure a little discomfort for the cause of Christ.

Some people may be disillusioned because of their lack of success.

Perhaps they have tried telling a friend or neighbor about Jesus and made a complete mess of it. Perhaps they have told all their friends, but none responded
favorably. Since no one responded in the past, they have decided not to try again.

Answer: The goal in evangelism is to glorify God by sharing the gospel with another person. Whether or not that person accepts the gospel is not under the control of the evangelist. All biblical evangelism is successful evangelism, regardless of the results. Conversions are the fruit that God alone can give. One should not stop telling others just because his audience is not interested the first time (or the second, third, fourth, etc.). Research has shown that on average, an unbeliever hears the gospel eight or nine times before he is willing to accept it. So don’t give up.

Some consider themselves too sinful to tell others.

They think of themselves as such poor examples of what a Christian should be that they are ashamed to even admit they are believers, let alone tell someone else of his need for Christ.

Answer: 1) It’s true that rebellious believers are bad testimonies. If their lives are a mess, or if they display ungodly attitudes and behaviors, they have nothing to offer anyone else. In fact, such people have little or no basis to think that they are Christians. It may be best if they keep silent to prevent others from getting the wrong idea of what a Christian is. Those in this state need to repent; 2) God uses regular, sinful people to evangelize. One does not have to be a “SuperChristian” to witness. It’s OK to admit that you still struggle with sin.

Separation

• At the time of a person’s conversion, it is likely that most of the people he knows are unconverted. He naturally wants to tell his friends of his salvation experience. But as he starts fellowshipping with a church and stops sinful behavior patterns, he will likely find that he has a whole new set of friends. Most of the people he
now associates with are Christians. Further, at church he may be hearing about the necessity of Christians to separate from ungodliness, worldliness, and all forms of evil. Hence, he spends as little time as possible around unsaved people.

• The outcome of the above scenario is that many Christians have little or no contact with unsaved people. This may be especially true of those in Christian school or in ministry. This is a problem, because every Christian is responsible to evangelize the lost. Thus, in an effort to fulfill his duty, one may resort to cold calling or passing out tracts. While these methods are valid, they are not very effective.

• Jesus provides us an example of how to interact with unsaved people. Although He never sinned, He spent much time with sinners. He did not join in their sinful activities, but he did not segregate himself from them. He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). Thus, while it is true that believers need to separate from ungodliness, it is also true that they should attempt to retain their relationships with unsaved people. It is through these relationships that believers spread the gospel. (In a future lesson we’ll study the concept of “redemptive relationships.”)

The cultural gap

Culture has to do with traditions, language, behavior, and ways of thought. Those brought up in a Christian culture know the religious language and customs. They share core beliefs and values. But the people we are trying to reach often do not share the same background and, thus, do not understand common religious words and customs. It’s difficult to communicate with someone who doesn’t know what words like “salvation,” “justification,” “repentance,” and “sanctification” mean. If we use words
that unbelievers don’t understand, we won’t be ef-
fective witnesses.

**Biblical illiteracy, spiritual immaturity, apathy, and wrong doctrine**

There are many reasons why believers don’t evangelize. We live in a time when many professing Christians are nearly biblically illiterate. Many believers have not progressed to the place where they could make a convincing, or even accurate, presentation of the gospel to an unbeliever. Spiritual immaturity and ignorance of the Bible hinder evangelism. Even those who do have a good grasp of the material may have no desire to reach the lost. They may see evangelism as the work of the pastor or the evangelist, but not a duty that applies to them. Some may even be convinced that it is unnecessary to spread the gospel because God will save whomever He wants without our help [hyper-Calvinism]. Thus, wrong attitudes and beliefs by professing believers are often major obstacles in evangelism. One of the purposes of this series is to prevent you from adopting these wrong notions.

**Disobedience**

Failure to evangelize boils down to simple disobedience. Christians have received a direct, unmistakable commission: “go and tell others.” No excuse for not doing so is valid. “Evangelism is the inalienable responsibility of every Christian community, and every Christian man. We are all under orders to devote ourselves to spreading the good news, and to use all our ingenuity and enterprise to bring it to the notice of the whole world.”¹ Note that this quote is from a Calvinist. Calvinists do believe in the necessity of evangelism.

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The Spiritual Condition of the Lost

The Bible states that the lost are in a tragic spiritual condition. The unbeliever is dead in trespasses and sin (Eph 2:1), under the wrath of God (Jn 3:36), hostile toward God (Rom 8:5–8), and blinded by Satan (2 Cor 4:3–4). Man does not have it in him to understand spiritual realities or to obey God. Animosity against God and rejection of God are a part of his fallen nature. He suppresses, evades and denies the truth. When he hears the gospel, he disbelieves and disobeys it – he is wholly incapable of any positive reaction to God’s Word.2 Theologians have a term for this condition: “total depravity,” which we’ll study in future lessons. Jesus said that the majority of people won’t be saved (Matt 7:13–14). Many people find the gospel message offensive and react negatively to it. So we shouldn’t be surprised if few respond favorably to the message.

Some people have tried to make the message more appealing to unbelievers. Instead of preaching the need for repentance, they preach that “God has a wonderful plan for your life” and “He is waiting for you to let Him enter your life.” Others deny the seriousness of sin, asserting that man’s real problem is a low self-esteem. Some advertise the Christian life as one of wealth and prosperity. Salvation supposedly results in a happy, fulfilled, adventurous, and exciting life. Some encourage folks to be saved as a fire escape from hell. Others show that applying biblical principles can make one’s life better. Each of these approaches is man-centered, i.e., each focuses on how God or salvation can solve the unbeliever’s problems and/or make his life more fulfilling. These approaches are improper, even if they seem to be working. We must preach the gospel whether or not people like the message. We can’t “water it down” by making it say something it does not.

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14 Obstacles to Evangelism
Lesson 2

Does belief in the sovereignty of God (Calvinism) hinder evangelism?

A common criticism of Calvinism is that it stifles evangelistic fervor. Calvinists supposedly believe that since God is going to save the elect anyway, it is unnecessary and futile to evangelize. Is this an accurate representation of Calvinist thought? No! In fact, just the opposite is true. The sovereignty of God in salvation creates the possibility that evangelism will be successful. Because man is dead in sin, he would not and cannot respond positively to the gospel. It is only when God extends grace to a sinner that he can respond in repentance and faith. Evangelism without God’s sovereignty is utterly hopeless and doomed to failure. “Were it not for the sovereign grace of God, continued . . .

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1 IBID, p. 107
Conclusion

There are many obstacles to evangelism: misunderstandings, the results of separation, the cultural gap between believers and unbelievers, spiritual immaturity and disobedience by believers, and the spiritual blindness of the lost. Nevertheless, none of these obstacles should prevent us from evangelizing.

For Further Discussion

Suggest ways of overcoming each of the obstacles mentioned above.
WHAT THE GOSPEL IS and how we “package” it are extremely important considerations, both of which we’ll discuss in this series. Half-truths can be just as incorrect as outright deceit. We must insure that we are proclaiming the whole gospel in the proper way.

We live in a culture that exalts things that work. If something effectively produces results, that mechanism or method must be “good.” If a method or machine fails to produce the desired result, we call this “bad.” Such a philosophy is called pragmatism. The popular saying, “Works for me,” reflects this philosophy well. Pragmatism says, “Whatever works is good.”

Pragmatism in some cases is appropriate. Who wants a car that doesn’t run or a boat that doesn’t float or an airplane that doesn’t fly? But in other cases, a pragmatic viewpoint is inappropriate. The kind of pragmatism that says, “The ends (goals, desired results) justify the means (methods, how to attain those goals)” is inappropriate in a Christian setting. Pragmatism applied to Christianity suggests that any method or program that results in souls being saved must be good. If the desired outcome occurs, then the method of achieving it must be good. The problem, as we will see, is that such pragmatism puts salvation in the hands of men rather than the hands of God.

In this lesson, we’ll examine a man-centered approach to the gospel and a man-centered approach to evangelism. By the end, you’ll see why pragmatism should not influence either our message or our method of communicating that message.
A man-centered approach to the gospel

Man-centered evangelism contains some biblical truths. Yet these truths are distorted and incomplete. We may think of the gospel message as a simple plan containing three or four basic facts. [E.g., tract “God’s Simple Plan of Salvation”] When we communicate these brief ideas to an unbeliever, and he accepts them, we have won that soul to Christ. Man-centered evangelism shortens or reduces the message in an attempt to make the gospel as attractive and easy to understand as possible. While the gospel is not overly complicated, we need to be sure not to reduce or abbreviate the content of the message. If we strip down the doctrinal content of the gospel, we are liable to mislead people, or even give them a false assurance of salvation. “When a half truth is presented as the whole truth, it becomes an untruth.”1

The following are examples of attempts to put the gospel into a format that is non-offensive to unbelievers.

**View of God**

God’s primary characteristic is love. A popular tract starts out by asserting, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” God is like an indulgent grandfather who desires a close relationship with the unbeliever, and is patiently waiting for permission to enter his life. God is a friend who wants to make your life better. God never imposes His will on man.

**View of humanity**

Man is a sinner, but has the ability to do good. Men seek after God and truth, but lack the correct facts. Man is imperfect and needs God to fix him up. Man needs forgiveness so he can escape hell. Man is sick and ignorant without God on his side.

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View of Christ

Jesus has come to give mankind abundant life. His death made man’s forgiveness and escape from hell possible. He’s gentle and meek, compassionate and understanding, sympathetic and non-judgmental. He’s a great example of how wonderful man can be. He’s like a powerful friend who helps us. Commitment to Christ as Lord is a secondary, optional step.

View of response to the gospel

Jesus is waiting for us to allow him into our lives. The decision is totally up to the free will of man. God awaits the sinner’s decision. Salvation is a mental assent to the facts of the gospel – it’s purely a change of the mind. Salvation is by belief alone – no repentance or commitment is necessary. One simply needs to make Jesus the object of his faith. The key to salvation is in the hands of the unbeliever. God votes for you and the devil votes against you, but you cast the deciding vote.

View of the Christian life

A Christian leads an exciting, fulfilled, abundant life. God removes all problems and the believer’s happiness is overflowing. Good times and pleasant feelings are the norm. Good Christians are healthy, wealthy and wise.

Why are the above views an inaccurate representation of the gospel? We’ll discuss that in the next lesson.

A Method-Centered Approach to Evangelism

A man-centered approach emphasizes method over message. Most evangelism conferences stress the “how to’s” of communicating the gospel rather than examining the content of the gospel. Method-centered evangelism emphasizes certain techniques that supposedly will result in the conversion of souls. Pragmatism (whatever works best) is
the name of the game. *Teacher, read from Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J.I. Packer, pp. 27–28

Background of method-centered evangelism

Charles G. Finney (1792–1875), a leading figure in the Second Great Awakening, popularized the idea that employing certain methods, rather than simply proclaiming the message, would lead to conversions. In Finney’s view, the basic barrier to conversion was the will, and the right use of “means” could affect the human will and lead to conversion.² His introduction of “new measures” into evangelism rejected Calvinism’s stress on human depravity and emphasized instead the ability of each human to decide for Christ.³ Finney’s great insight, made perfectly clear on the first few pages of his book, *Lectures on Revival*, is that conversion comes about by the exercise of free will. A preacher gets people to exercise their free will to convert by exciting the will. The more excited the will is, the more likely it is to convert. Therefore, the meeting must be exciting. Finney’s preaching and his methods were designed to catch the sinner’s attention, and once caught, to create an emotional outpouring that would result in conviction, which would then result in conversion.

Among the “new measures” that Finney employed to do this work were prolonged prayers and meetings, the anxious or inquirer’s meeting, the anxious bench (predecessor of the altar call), public prayers for known sinners, coarse and irreverent language, and women praying in mixed gatherings. Finney pressured his listeners into decisions, which were often no more than emotional responses. The rationale for all that Finney did during revival services was the gaining of converts. The numerical success of his methods was his vindication. D.L. Moody picked up on this reasoning when he said, “It makes no difference how you get a man to God, provided you get

² Finney said that a revival is “purely a philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means.”
³ JETS 40/2 (June 1997) 328. Finney was fanatically anti-Calvinist.
man there.” Such sentiments are rampant in Evangelicalism and in Fundamentalism today.

Inappropriate evangelistic methods:

The used car salesman approach

Making the best possible “sales pitch” and providing limited information. Used car salesmen are notorious for pointing out the good points of a car while neglecting its problems. Used car evangelists try to “sell” the gospel to unbelievers by making salvation as appealing as possible. They present part of the truth, but not the whole truth. For example, emphasizing God’s love while ignoring His holiness and righteousness. Or preaching salvation through faith without mentioning repentance. Or showing the benefits of salvation without talking about the costs of discipleship. This approach places the burden of the evangelism process on the messenger rather than God—others may go to hell if you are not a very good salesman.

The “Come down the aisle to be saved” approach

Insisting that a person must walk an aisle or come to the altar to be saved. Preachers often proclaim the gospel, but then exhort their listeners to walk an aisle rather than to trust in Christ. They express it, “Now if you’d like to be saved, stand up and walk up front and talk with Mr. So-and-so.” The danger of this method is that people confuse salvation with physical activity—walking an aisle, raising a hand, talking to a counselor, etc. It also implies that one can be saved only by participating in some physical activity. But salvation is an internal, personal matter, one that does not have to be expressed by walking up front or even raising one’s hand. Preachers must direct souls to Christ, not to an aisle or an altar.

High Pressure Tactics

Forcing an unbeliever to make a decision. High-pressure tactics range from emotional appeals
to avoid the fires of hell to arguing with a person until he relents. High pressure is often brought to bear during invitations at the end of services. The evangelist encourages, berates, cajoles, and exhorts unbelievers to be saved. He often employs highly emotional stories and music to get people to move. He may even place “ringers” in the audience who have previously agreed to go forward as examples to others. When under such influences, unbelievers may make “decisions” for the wrong reasons. Obviously, such decisions are invalid.

The “Jesus can meet your needs” approach

Showing the unbeliever how salvation can solve his problem(s). This tactic emphasizes how employing biblical principles can make one’s life better, more successful, happier, and more fulfilled. God is like a cosmic vending machine, and Jesus is a friendly helper. The goal is to convince the unbeliever that being saved would be in his own best interests. This approach distorts the gospel and appeals to human selfishness. Actually, salvation may, and often does, create more problems than it solves. Thus, this appeal is unethical.

The “Evidence demands a verdict” approach

Showing the unbeliever how logical and historically accurate Christianity is. This approach seeks to answer the unbeliever’s intellectual questions, with the goal of persuading him that Christianity is correct. The problem is that conversion is far more than an intellectual assent to the facts. No one is ever debated into salvation. The Holy Spirit has to convict the person of his sin, his need to repent, and his need for Christ. It’s far more than pure intellectual assent to a set of facts.

The “My life is a witness” approach

Proclaiming the gospel through an exemplary Christian lifestyle in the hopes that the unbeliever would be drawn to such a lifestyle. While it is true that believers ought to “let their lights shine” before unbe-
lievers, it is impossible for unbelievers to convert to Christ on that basis alone. Frankly, the “silent witness” approach is not evangelism at all.

The “Jesus on my tee shirt” approach

Using Christian advertising to reach the lost. By use of flashy graphics, catchy phrases, and by mimicking popular tee shirt slogans [e.g., “No Fear” – “Fear God,” “Got Milk?” – “Got Jesus?” “Gold’s Gym” – “God’s Gym.”] believers communicate gospel truth to the unsaved. Bumper stickers, door signs, baseball hats, ear rings, bracelets, checks, envelopes, mugs and the like help spread the gospel. The problem with this approach is that it cheapens and degrades both Christianity and the gospel message. The gospel is reduced to a slogan or an advertising campaign. This method simply does not communicate the content of the gospel.

Employing any of the above methods in evangelism is inappropriate. Jesus Christ and His gospel are not commodities to be bought and sold. No one should be pressured into an emotional conversion experience. And no believer should think that living an exemplary life or wearing a Christian tee shirt fulfills his evangelistic duties. We should avoid all such method-oriented, man-centered evangelistic enterprises.

The primary weakness of the man-centered approach to evangelism (besides being unbiblical) is its high view of human nature. It suggests that man is sinful but not dead, estranged but not God’s enemy, and unwilling but not unable to seek God’s pardon. The true biblical position is that man is utterly unable to contribute anything to his own salvation. All he can do is throw himself upon the mercy of God. He has neither the ability nor the inclination to repent or believe on his own. The God-centered approach, as we shall see, takes these truths into consideration.
Conclusion:

Biblical evangelists want to avoid both man-centered and method-centered evangelism. In the next lesson, we’ll discuss God-centered and message-centered evangelism.

For Further Discussion:

1. Have you ever made a “decision” because of an emotionally charged message or a high-pressure speaker? Was the decision a lasting one?

2. What is the underlying problem with man-centered evangelism?

   It’s all dependent upon the idea that man is in charge of the process. Salvation is simply getting the man to change his mind. God-centered evangelism stresses communicating the message and letting the Word and the Holy Spirit do the work of conversion. Conversion is not something man drums up – it’s the work of God.

3. What are some of the negative results of man-centered evangelism?

   1.) Its false assurance of salvation for those who are not saved; 2.) Its emphasis on method over message; 3.) Its focus on numbers as a gauge of success; 4.) Its reliance upon human ability/skill rather than the power of God.
IN THE LAST LESSON, we discussed man-centered evangelism, which focuses on methods rather than on the message.

A Brief Review of Man-Centered Evangelism:

View of God: God’s primary characteristic is love. God is a friend who wants to make your life better. God never imposes His will on man.

View of humanity: Man is a sinner, but has the ability to do good. Men seek after God and truth, but lack the correct facts.

View of Christ: Jesus has come to give mankind abundant life. His death made man’s forgiveness and escape from hell possible.

View of response to the gospel: Jesus is waiting for us to allow him into our lives. The decision is totally up to the free will of man. God awaits the sinner’s decision. Salvation is a mental assent to the facts of the gospel—it’s purely a change of the mind.

View of the Christian life: a Christian leads an exciting, fulfilled, abundant life. God removes all problems and the believer’s happiness is overflowing.

In this lesson, we’ll examine a God-centered approach to the gospel and a God-centered approach to evangelism.
A God-Centered Approach to the Gospel

View of God

God is the holy, righteous, all-mighty Creator. God is awesome and sovereign. God has total authority over all mankind, and does as he pleases with His creation. Holiness, not love, is God’s chief attribute. God must enable man’s fallen will for it to respond to God’s invitation. God rules.

View of humanity

Man is thoroughly sinful and will not and cannot come to God by his own will power. Humanity is blind, lost and dead in sin. Man is an enemy of God and a rebel who needs a new mind, heart and will.

View of Christ

Jesus is the perfect Son of God who sacrificed Himself as the payment for sin. The ultimate aim of His earthly work was the glory of God, not the salvation of man. His death and life of obedience were equally important. He is prophet, priest, and king. Jesus is both Lord and Christ.

View of response to the gospel

One must repent of his sin, that is, he must acknowledge that he has sinned, feel sorry for it, ask forgiveness for it, and resolve to forsake it. He must turn to Christ in faith with his whole self – mind, emotions, and will. Ultimately, God’s choice is the basis for salvation – God initiates the believer’s response to the gospel. Both repentance and faith are gifts from God and cannot be “worked up” by unaided man.

View of the Christian life

The Christian experiences continual, steady growth as he struggles against sin and toward Christ-likeness. Obedience is the key to joyful living. You are to be dedicated to God-honoring behavior and attitudes, not self-satisfaction. Serving others, rather than be-
Assurance of salvation comes through the work of the Holy Spirit\(^1\) and through the evidence of a changed lifestyle.

Last time, we looked at several man-centered methods of evangelism. A man-centered approach emphasizes method over message. Method-oriented evangelism emphasizes certain techniques that supposedly will result in the conversion of souls. Pragmatism (whatever works best) is the name of the game.

**A God-Centered Approach to Evangelism**

God-centered evangelism emphasizes the following:

**Methods and means of evangelism are flexible.**

Over the history of the church, believers have used various means of spreading the gospel. The method is not important; the message is. God-centered evangelism may use a variety of methods to communicate the gospel. Any appropriate method will do, as long as the message gets across. God-centered evangelists don’t put much stock in popular or trendy evangelistic programs.

A corollary of this idea is that programs should never get entrenched as “sacred cows.” The evangelist should never be so committed to a program or method that he keeps using it when it is no longer useful or appropriate.

For example, cold calling or door knocking – at one time was more acceptable than it is now. Today, most people don’t appreciate door-to-door visitation. In some locations, it’s virtually impossible to visit like that. Yet some would say that you are unspiritual if you don’t go door-to-door. That’s because they put too much value on the method.

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1 The Holy Spirit convinces the believer that the Word is true (Jn 16:7) and that the believer is truly saved (Rom 8:16).
God-centered evangelism is message-driven.

The central goal is to communicate the good news about Jesus Christ, and that message alone. It also insists that the whole message of the gospel be proclaimed, not just the “good stuff.” Christ is not presented as simply a fire escape from hell. He’s not the “Mr. Fix-it” who can solve all problems. Following Christ is not just a way to make one feel better about himself. God-centered evangelism does not shy away from proclaiming the costs of discipleship, nor the wretched condition the unsaved person is in. We cannot water down the message in order to make it more popular. The next four lessons will go into detail regarding the message of the gospel.

God-centered evangelism recognizes that God, not man, is sovereign.

“Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9). God calls those He will to salvation. We can plant, water, and weed, but “God gives the increase” (1 Cor 3:6–7). The evangelist’s responsibility is to proclaim the message clearly, accurately, and boldly and to pray for sinners to respond. There is no need for extra measures or special methods to generate responses. One can’t argue anyone into the kingdom, nor can he intellectually convince anyone to be saved. Conviction of sin is the work of the Holy Spirit, not the evangelist. We rely on the power of the message and the power of the Holy Spirit, not our own abilities to persuade.

“Though it is proper to reason with men, persuade men, beseech men, there will be no response unless God in His grace attends with enabling power the words we speak. Our evangelism must be based on a dependence on the Lord. Our hope of results must be in Him, not in man’s will or in any other faculty of our hearer.”

2 Walter Chantry, Today’s Gospel, p. 86.
Success is not defined in terms of the numbers of respondents, but in terms of the faithfulness and obedience of the evangelist.

“The results of preaching depend, not on the wishes and intentions of men, but on the will of God Almighty.”\(^3\) Hence, whether none, few, or many respond to the gospel, God gets the glory, not the evangelist.

Pressure tactics to generate numbers are not only unnecessary, they are dangerous. Manipulating a non-genuine profession of faith will often have disastrous results, both for the person and for the church. An emotional response to a pressurized altar call is exactly what the evangelist does not want. Such “decisions” are often false and short-lived. Those who do respond to such manipulation may possess a false assurance of salvation. Obviously, a church full of such false professors would be a mess. Thus, the biblical evangelist will proclaim the message of the gospel, invite the unsaved to respond in repentance and faith, and leave the matter with God.

The God-centered evangelist expects to see the fruits of repentance (Matt 3:8) in the life of a professing believer.

Those who are converted to Christ are new creatures (2 Cor 5:17) and should thus display clear evidence of a commitment to Christ. A Christ-like lifestyle is the most significant evidence of a true state of regeneration (1 Jn 2:3–6). Those who persist in sin and disobedience after professing to be saved are accounted as false professors. It doesn’t matter what people say is true if their behavior doesn’t match their words (Matt 7:17–23; Tit 1:15–16). The doctrine of perseverance states that a true believer will ultimately persevere in faith and in good works. Those who do not persevere never had true faith to begin with.

This is contrary to the popular idea of the persistent “carnal” Christian. The mythic “carnal” Christian is one who never makes any progress in the Christian life. He professes to be saved, but all evidence of such is lacking. A person of this sort is not carnal; he’s unsaved.

Pragmatism (whatever works best) is not a consideration.

The main question is, “What honors and pleases God the most,” not “What will get the most converts.” Hence, some methods of evangelism that may yield a great many responses are not used because they are deemed inappropriate. The ends never justify the means.

This is contrary to the popular idea that anything that yields converts must be good. If many people get saved by using certain methods, those methods must be blessed by God. Such thinking is mistaken. Apparent results do not sanctify any method. We must not fall into the trap of pragmatism.

God-centered evangelism adopts a couple of presuppositions:

Man knows something about God, and he rejects what he knows (Ps 19; Rom 1:16f). There is no need to validate or prove the Bible from external evidence. The Bible validates itself.

God-centered evangelism approaches people on the basis of the gospel.

We should not appeal to people’s needs, wants, fears, or fancies. We’re not selling goods or services. We simply proclaim the message and exhort people to respond to it.

Conclusion:

As you can see, a God-centered understanding of the gospel differs significantly from a man-centered understanding of it. Hence, a God-centered
evangelistic approach differs markedly from a man-centered approach. This explains many things. The philosophy, methods, and practices of churches that are man-centered will be vastly different from those of God-centered churches. [If you want to apply labels, a God-centered philosophy is Calvinistic and a man-centered is Arminian.]

**For Further Discussion:**

1. Which do you think would be more acceptable with the unsaved world, a man-centered philosophy or a God-centered one?

   man-centered, because it makes more sense, is less offensive, and is easier.

2. Why don’t we want to appeal to the felt needs of our audience? [i.e., show them how salvation can make their lives better – no hell, better marriages, more success at work, better interpersonal relations, etc.]

   If we approach people in that way, we run the risk of generating false professions. I.e., people “get saved” for the wrong reasons – they want the success and good things Christianity has to offer. Those are results of salvation but not reasons to get saved.

3. What are the underlying presuppositions of a man-centered approach to evangelism?

   1. Salvation is in the hands of man; 2. Salvation is purely man’s choice; 3. Professions can be generated by certain methods; 4. The gospel message must be packaged and made as appealing as possible.

4. What are the underlying presuppositions in a God-centered approach?

   1. God is sovereign in the whole matter of salvation; 2. The message is more important than the messenger; 3. We cannot persuade or constrain professions of faith; 4. Our duty is to proclaim the message, not worry about results.
5. Can one legitimately say that, since God is sovereign, the believer does not need to bother with evangelism? (After all, God will save those He wants without our help.)

No, such an attitude is inconsistent with the mandate to evangelize.
The Gospel, Part 1: God

As we mentioned in the last lesson, there is not total agreement, even within evangelical circles, regarding what the content of the gospel is. Some would say that anyone who believes in Jesus is saved. Some would include baptism and communion with the gospel.

What exactly is the gospel? It’s a common word, but one quite meaningless to most people. The word “gospel” (from the Anglo-Saxon “God-spell”) literally means “good word” or “good news.” It is the rendering of the Greek euangelion, i.e., “good message.” Tyndale suggests that the gospel signified “good, merry, glad and joyful tidings, that makes a man’s heart glad, and makes him sing, dance, and leap for joy.” It’s a common NT word, used over 75 times, mostly by Paul. The word has three basic meanings (depending on the context):

1. The joyous proclamation of God’s redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of man enslaved by sin. More simply put, the gospel is the good news which tells about Jesus Christ.¹

2. It was afterwards applied to each of the four histories of our Lord’s life, published by those who are therefore called “Evangelists,” writers of the history of the gospel (i.e., Matthew, Mark, Luke and John).

3. The term is often used to express collectively the gospel doctrines; and “preaching the gospel” is often used to include not only the proclaiming of the good tidings, but the teaching men how to be saved; the declaring of all the truths, precepts, promises, and threatenings of Christianity.²

¹ R.H. Mounce in Evangelical Dictionary of Theology.
² Gill
It is termed

“the gospel of the grace of God” Acts 20:24
“the gospel of the kingdom” Mt 4:23
“the gospel of Christ” Rom 1:16
“the gospel of peace” Eph 6:15
“the glorious gospel” 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Tim 1:11
“the everlasting gospel” Rev 14:6
“the gospel of salvation” Eph 1:13

A Definition: The gospel includes the proclamation of the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, a theological evaluation of the person of Jesus as both Lord and Christ, and a summons to repent and believe for the forgiveness of sins.3

The gospel is the instrument of conviction (1 Thes 1:5) and of conversion (Col 1:6), the very power of God for salvation to those who believe (Rom 1:16).

In the next four lessons, we’ll examine what the Bible proclaims to be the content of the gospel. When presenting the gospel, we want to focus on four main topics: God, man, Jesus Christ, and the appropriate response – repentance and faith.

This lesson will look at the first issue one must understand: Who is God?

When witnessing, we must start with a definition of God Himself. “Evangelism always requires preaching on the attributes of God.”4 Because most people in our culture are biblically illiterate, we cannot assume that they have a proper view of God. In fact, we must assume the opposite. This is a drastic change that has occurred in the last 30 years. Previously, most people in the US had a working knowledge of the Bible and understood right from wrong. The Bible was taught in public schools, so most people knew. Not so anymore. Hence, we have to start with the very basics of theology. We must begin the evangelistic message with God and His glory. We can’t explain the work of Christ until we present a true picture of God.

3 Gill
4 Walter Chantry, Today’s Gospel, p. 25.
Elements of the Gospel:

God is the sovereign Creator

Unbelievers need to understand that:

- The God of the Bible exists. There is no room for atheism, pantheism, polytheism, or any other “theisms” other than biblical monotheism. Those who disbelieve or doubt His existence are fools. God has communicated to man. The Bible truly defines who God is and what He is like.

Many people reject this first assertion of Christianity. It’s usually not that they are convinced intellectually that there is no God. Instead, people don’t want there to be a God because His existence would impose limits on their behavior. Note this quote by the atheistic French philosopher Jean Paul Sartre.

God does not exist and . . . we have to face all the consequences of this. It is very distressing that God does not exist, because all possibility of finding values in a heaven of ideas disappears with him. . . . [I]f God does not exist, we find no values or commands to turn to which legitimize our conduct.

Because we are God’s creation, He owns us and we have no inherent rights. He may do with us as He pleases. He is the potter and we are the clay. Man’s duty is to honor and obey God.

God, by His good pleasure, freely created and sustains us, and we are fully dependent upon Him for everything necessary to live and to enjoy life.

- God created us to bring honor and glory to Himself. Because God is the highest standard, there can be no greater goal than to bring honor to God.
- We are accountable to Him, and He will judge us one day.
• God’s primary characteristic is holiness. God is unique, set apart, and absolutely pure. “God is light and in him is no darkness at all” (1 Jn 1:5).

• God is righteous. He is right and sets the standard of right and wrong. Therefore, I know whether or not I am righteous, not by comparing myself to others, but by comparing myself to God Himself.

• God is also gracious, merciful and loving. He has provided a way for those who have rebelled against Him to be forgiven. He will save those who call upon Him.

Note: We are required to proclaim and explain the above truths. But it’s not our duty to prove God’s existence. We simply declare what the Bible says is true. We start where the Bible starts: “In the beginning, God created.” The Bible asserts, it does not prove. It’s up to God to convince people of the truth of Scriptures. That’s the job of the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:7–11).

Assignment: In Acts 17:24–31, Paul gave a detailed presentation of theology. What are the attributes of God that Paul discusses here?

Who God is: Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, the One in whom we live and move and have our being.

Who God is not: is not far from us, not like gold or silver

What God does: gives life to all, has made men, has determined the times appointed and the bounds of men’s habitation, commands all men to repent, will come in judgment.

What God does not do: dwells not in temples, is not worshiped with men’s hands, has need of nothing

What does Paul’s presentation suggest about how we should present the gospel to people? We tell people very clearly what God is like and what He is
not like. We shouldn’t shy away from doctrinal truth. Theology is part of the message.

**Other Key Verses:** Deuteronomy 32:4; Isaiah 6:1–3; Romans 9:19–21; Revelation 4:11

**Main Point:** God exists and has an absolute claim on our lives as our Creator. He owns us, and we are accountable to Him.

**Key Question:** Since God has created you and graciously given you all that you have; and since He owns you because you are His creation, why don’t you love and obey Him as He has commanded you?

**Potential Reactions:** No one likes to be told that someone else is his master. People greatly value personal freedom and self-determination, especially in our society. So those who hear that God is their owner will likely react negatively. On the other hand, there are those who will welcome such news. The law of God is written in men’s hearts (Rom 2:15), and an accurate gospel presentation will resonate with this internal law. God will use a gospel presentation to save some.

### Conclusion:

An accurate presentation of the gospel must begin with a definition of who God is and what He is like. God is the sovereign, holy and righteous Creator.

### For Further Discussion:

What if people are not convinced when you tell them about God?

That’s a matter between them and God. We do not need to prove anything – we simply declare what is true. We could bring forth some very strong arguments in support of our assertions – why the Bible is true, historical and archeological support, etc. But that’s not our job. The Holy Spirit must convince people of the truth of Scripture. The Gospel, not our
arguments, is the power of God unto salvation. We should not be discouraged if people don’t believe what we tell them.

Assignment:
Pair off and take turns telling each other about God.
The Gospel, Part 2:
Man

We learned last time that the proper place to start a presentation of the gospel is with a clear, accurate definition of God. The essential truth to communicate is that God exists and has an absolute claim on our lives as our Creator. He owns us, and we are accountable to Him. Once this has been established, we can go on to the next topic – man and his sinful condition.

Unbelievers must understand the state of their relationship to God. Because of their biblical illiteracy, most people have a wrong conception of their spiritual condition. They may not even admit that they are sinners. So the goal here is to show people the true nature of their spiritual state apart from God.

Elements of the Gospel:

Part 1: God is the sovereign Creator.

Part 2: Man is the sinful creature.

Unbelievers need to understand that:

People are neither machines nor animals.

Most modern thinkers say man is one or the other – a soul-less collection of chemicals. The physical is all there is. People are creatures made in the image of God for the purpose of glorifying and fellowshipping with God.
All people are sinners.

All are guilty of offending a holy and righteous God.
All have failed to fulfill the purpose for which they were created.

**Biblical definitions for sin:**

- To miss the mark. Judges 20:16; Rom 3:23. This is the most common idea.
- To pass over a boundary, to pass by. Normally translated “transgression.” A transgressor is a lawbreaker. Numbers 14:41–42; Matt 15:2–3; 1 John 3:4
- To rebel. Rebellion is a stubborn disobedience—sin with a bad attitude. Isa 1:2–4.
- To pervert or make crooked. Isa 19:14
- Others: foolishness, wickedness, disobedience, ignorance, failure, trespass.

The essential or basic aspect of sin is selfishness, placing oneself in the place of God; a failure to let God be God.

Sin is also a principle within man. All men have a sin nature (Gal 3:22). Sin is a condition, a character quality or state of being.

**Strong:** “Sin is lack of conformity to the moral law of God, either in act, disposition, or state.”

**Thiessen:** “Sin is both an act and a principle, both guilt and pollution.”

Sins of commission: doing what should not be done. 1 Tim 5:13

Sins of omission: failing to do what should have been done. Jam 4:17

Note: It’s not just certain behaviors that are sinful. The Bible frequently mentions sins of the heart such as hatred, coveting, lust, idolatry, and unbelief. Paul states, “Whatever is not of faith is sin” (Rom 14:23). So the fact that a person is moral in his behavior does not guarantee his purity of heart.
Take plenty of time to define the concept of sin. Most people either see sin as the really bad offenses (murder, robbery, adultery) or deny the existence of sin altogether. Thus, it’s important to show people how sinful they are in God’s sight. Good places to start: the Ten Commandments (Ex 20, and especially as interpreted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, Matt 5–7), the story of the Rich Young Ruler (Luke 18:18–30), and Paul’s life (Rom 7:7–13).

**The consequence of sin is death. Rom 6:23**

- Spiritual death occurs because of sin. Spiritual death is the separation of the soul from God (Isa 59:1–2). The unsaved person is currently in a state of spiritual death (Eph 2:1–2) and is condemned (John 3:36).
- Physical death occurs because of sin. Physical death is the separation of the soul from the body.
- The Second Death occurs because of sin (Rev 20:14). Those who continue in their sinful condition will be eternally separated from God in a place of eternal punishment called hell.

**Sin extends to the whole of man’s being. Man is totally depraved.**

Total depravity does not mean that every person’s lifestyle is equally corrupt and wicked, or that sinners are always as bad as they can be. Total depravity does mean that the unredeemed are depraved in their minds, their hearts, their wills, their emotions, and their physical beings. They are utterly incapable of anything but sin. Sinners may not always sin as wickedly as possible, but they cannot do anything to please God or earn His favor. Sin has tainted every aspect of their being.¹

- Sin has penetrated every part of man – body, soul and spirit. Jer 17:9; Rom 3:11–12; Tit 1:15

• The unsaved person has the capacity to commit the worst kinds of sin. Given the proper circumstances, any sin is possible. Rom 1:18ff.

• When an unbeliever does do right, it is for the wrong reasons. Such good works do not aid in salvation [are not meritorious]. Isa 64:6

• Sin causes degeneration—sinners are getting worse and worse. 2 Tim 3:13

• The unsaved person has no possible means of salvation within himself. He is dead and condemned. He is unable and unwilling to seek God or seek forgiveness. Rom 3:10–11; Eph 2:1–2

Other Key Verses: Isaiah 64:6–7; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 1:18ff, 3:10–23, 7:7–25; Philippians 3:4–6

Main Point: The unbeliever has rebelled against his Creator and is dead in trespasses and sin. He is separated from God and under His wrath and condemnation.

Key Question: Why do you deny the fact that your sin has separated you from God, prevented a right relationship with Him, and will eventually result in eternal punishment?

Conclusion:

The goal of this part of a gospel presentation is to show the unbeliever the dreadful state of his spiritual condition. He is lost, dead, and condemned. It’s only after understanding this awful reality that one will begin to see his need of a savior.

Note the Quote: When asked how he would witness to someone if he only had one hour to speak, Francis Schaeffer stated, “I would spend 45–50 minutes on the negative, to really show him his dilemma – that he is morally dead – then I’d take 10–15 minutes to preach the gospel. I believe that much of our evangelistic and personal work today is not clear simply because we are too anxious to get to the answer without having a man realize the real cause of his sickness, which is true moral guilt in the presence of God.”
For Further Discussion:

1. What would you say to a person who was religious (morally upright) but lost?

   The morally upright person needs to understand their true sinfulness. 1. Show the fact that all have sinned; 2. Point out that even small things (thoughts, attitudes) can be sinful; 3. Read the story of the publican and the Pharisee; 4. Show that no one is saved by works.

2. Why is it important to define sin when you are presenting the gospel?

   Because most people in our culture have a wrong view of sin—they may not believe in it at all, or they may think that sin is only the big ones (murder, robbery, etc.)

3. What if the person you are talking to refuses to acknowledge his depraved spiritual condition?

   Then he’s probably not ready to get saved. A person must understand that he is lost and blind before he acknowledges his need to be found and be healed.

4. Many churches orient their services to appeal to “seekers,” concerned unbelievers who are seeking after God. But the Bible states that “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom 3:11). How do you explain this apparent contradiction?

   When the unsaved “seek” God, they are not really seeking God, but rather the benefits God can give. It’s ultimately a selfish desire on the part of the unbeliever. An unbeliever truly seeks God only when God is in the process of drawing that person to Himself. God seeks man, not vice versa.

Assignment:

Pair up and practice telling each other about sin.
The Gospel, Part 3: Jesus Christ

We’ve learned thus far that the proper place to start a presentation of the gospel is with a clear and accurate definition of God. God exists and has an absolute claim on our lives as our Creator. Unbelievers must also understand the state of their relationship to God—they are lost, dead, and condemned.

Today we’ll discuss the third topic to communicate when witnessing: the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Part 1: God is the sovereign creator.

Part 2: Man is the sinful creature.

Part 3: Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is the only Savior.

Unbelievers need to understand and accept certain facts regarding:

The person of Jesus Christ (who He is)

- Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity (Jn 1:1–14). He is essentially equal with God. Several facts show that He is fully God. He is eternal (Jn 1:1), holy (Heb 7:26), omnipresent (Eph 1:22–23), omnipotent
(Matt 28:18), and omniscient (Col 2:3). He was instrumental in the creation of the universe (Jn 1:3, 10) and currently sustains all things (Col 1:17).

Why was it so important for Jesus to be fully divine? Because a supernatural transaction had to occur – He had to pay the penalty for sin, to suffer the infinite and eternal wrath of God against sin. No mere man could do that. Only God could.

- Jesus Christ was a human being. Several facts show that He is truly man. He was born (Matt 1:1), possessed a body (Jn 1:14) and soul (Matt 26:38), grew (Luke 2:52), was tempted (Heb 4:15), and died (Jn 19:30). Why is it so important for Jesus to be fully human? Read Hebrews 2:17.

- Jesus Christ is the God-Man. He is fully God and fully man. He has all the attributes of God and all the attributes of man.

- Jesus Christ is the one and only Savior and Redeemer (Jn 14:6; Acts 4:12). There is no other means of salvation.

- Jesus Christ is compassionate and merciful, and invites sinners to come to Him for salvation (Jn 4; Luk 7:36–50).

- Jesus Christ is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Ac 10:36; Rev 17:14).

The work of Jesus Christ (what He has done)

- He came to earth in the flesh (Jn 1:14). He was a real human being with a physical body. He was not a phantom or spirit.

- He lived a life of perfect obedience. He perfectly fulfilled the Law of Moses. He never sinned (Heb 4:15).

- He offered himself as the innocent, substitutionary sacrifice for sin. He took the guilt of sinners upon himself and endured...
God’s judgment for it in his death on the cross (2 Cor 5:21). He took upon himself the punishment that sinners so richly deserve. His sacrifice satisfied the just anger of a holy God against sin (Col 1:20). While the death of Christ is sufficient for all men (Heb 2:9; 1 Jn 2:2), it is efficient only for those who exercise faith in Him (1 Tim 4:10; Jam 2:14–19).

- He rose from the dead, conquering sin and death and proving the truth of all He said and did (Rom 1:4, 4:25). He ascended back to His Father and is currently interceding for believers.

- He will judge the world in righteousness. Believers will receive rewards; unbelievers will be cast into hell (1 Cor 3:11–17; Rev 20:11).

**Main Point:** Jesus Christ, the God-man, through His life, death, and resurrection, provides the one and only way to eternal life.

**Key Passages:** Isaiah 53:1–11; Mark 10:33–34, 45; John 14:6; Acts 2:22–24, 36; 4:12

**Review:** God is our righteous and holy creator. Man is sinful and separated from God. Jesus Christ has provided the only means of bridging the gap between God and man.

**Question:** Why are you trying to reach God through any means other than Jesus Christ?

**Conclusion:**

The goal of this part of a gospel presentation is to give the unbeliever the necessary facts about Jesus Christ and to show him that there is no other way to be saved than the means Jesus Christ has provided.

**For Further Discussion:**

1. What about those who have never heard about Jesus Christ?

   If the only way of salvation is thru Christ, then those who have never heard cannot be saved. Remember...
that God extends salvation to whomever He wants. The fact that God saves anyone is pure grace.

2. How far in error about the person and work of Christ can one be and still be saved?

You have to be pretty close to orthodox in order to be saved. Some of the finer points are not as important (e.g., how many natures Jesus has).

Assignment:

Pair up and practice telling each other about Jesus Christ.

Eutychianism: Jesus possessed only one nature (divine, not human).

The Orthodox (correct) View: Jesus is both fully God and fully man. He has the attributes of both God and man. He is the God-man.
The Gospel, Part 4a: the Response: Repentance

We’ve learned thus far that the proper place to start a presentation of the gospel is with a clear and accurate definition of God. God exists and has an absolute claim on our lives as our Creator. Unbelievers must also understand the state of their relationship to God – they are lost, dead, and condemned. We learned last time that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, provided the only means of salvation through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection.

The gospel message requires a response. Mental assent to the concepts contained in the gospel is not enough. The evangelist must press home the point that people must respond to the message. “Whenever evangelism takes place, the witness should seek for a genuine response. Superficial, well-meaning decisions tend to sabotage the real thing.”

The proper response has two parts: repentance and faith. When one repents of his sin and turns to Christ in faith, he is born again (i.e., converted, saved).

Note: It’s common for evangelists to call for a physical response to the gospel. That is, activities such as walking an aisle, signing a card, raising one’s hand, talking to a counselor, and the like often go hand-in-hand with an invitation to be saved. But we must not confuse or substitute a physical re-
response for a genuine heart response. One is not saved by a physical activity. The evangelist must explain that such actions are not the basis of salvation. He must avoid connecting salvation to a physical activity. “Faith and repentance are inward movements of the mind, emotion and will. They cannot be measured by simple outward tests.” Urge people to respond to the Gospel, but don’t attach a physical activity to it. Make sure your audience knows that you are talking about an internal, heart decision. It’s unnecessary to participate in any physical activity in order to be saved. This is one of the dangers of the invitation system – the evangelist makes too much of a connection between being saved and walking an aisle or doing some other activity. For example, they may say, “If you want to be saved, come forward.” It’s easy for people to think that they are saved because they came forward, signed a card, or whatever.

The first aspect of a correct response to the gospel is repentance. Repentance and faith are like two sides of the same coin – they do not occur independently, and they cannot be separated. “Repentance and faith are Siamese twins. Where one is found, the other will not be absent.” Conversion is the result of repentance and faith. Today we’ll examine the first part of the equation – repentance.

**Repentance**

**Texts**

Isaiah 55:7 Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.

Luke 18:13 God, be merciful to me, the sinner!

Luke 24:47 . . . repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Acts 2:38 Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

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3 In fact, it’s quite common for evangelists to insist that concerned people come forward in order to be saved. The typical reason given is that “a decision without action is just a good intention.”

4 IBID, p. 57.
Acts 3:19 Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

Acts 11:18 When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.

Acts 17:30b ... but now [God] commands all men everywhere to repent.

Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Definition:

Repentance is an interesting and often misunderstood concept.

1. The verb *metamelomai* is used of a change of mind, such as to produce regret or even remorse because of sin, but not necessarily a change of heart.

2. *Metanoeo*, meaning to change one’s mind and purpose. This verb, with …

3. The cognate noun *metanoia*, is used of true repentance, a change of mind, purpose, and life, to which remission of sin is promised.

Repentance consists of:

- a true sense of one’s own guilt and sinfulness
- an actual regret or sorrow for sin
- a desire to seek God’s pardon
- turning away from sin and toward God
- a perception of God’s mercy in Christ

True repentance is a change of heart and purpose affecting the whole man – intellect, emotion and will. True repentance involves a persistent striving after a godly way of living. The true penitent is conscious of guilt (Ps 51:4, 9) of pollution (Ps 51:5, 7, 10) and of helplessness (Ps 51:11; 109:21, 22). Thus he acknowledges himself to be just what God has always seen him to be and declares him to be. But repen-
tance comprehends not only such a sense of sin, but also an apprehension of mercy, without which there can be no true repentance (Ps 51:1; 130:4).

4. The literal meaning of “repentance” is “a change of mind.”

- a change of mind away from sin
  Revelation 9:21 Neither repented they of their murders, nor of their sorceries, nor of their fornication, nor of their thefts.

- a change of mind toward God
  Acts 20:21 Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

5. Repentance is best described as a turning away from sin and toward God. It’s a total about-face. It’s an inner response of the whole person.

The origin of repentance

Repentance is the act of the sinner turning from sin. But the true or ultimate origin is not man himself. Repentance is a gift of God by an operation of the Holy Spirit. It is an act of man under the power and influence of the Holy Spirit (cf. Acts 5:31, 11:18). Man cannot and would not repent in and of himself.

2 Timothy 2:25 . . . if God perhaps will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

False or inadequate definitions of repentance

1. Some assert that repentance has no place in the gospel at all. They say that it may accompany salvation, but not necessarily.  

4 Easton’s Bible Dictionary
5 Dallas Theological Seminary seems to be a primary source of such thinking. Men like Zane Hodges, Charles Ryrie, and Paul Enns all deny that repentance (turning from sin) has any place in a gospel presentation. If they include repentance at all, they redefine the term, focusing on the changing one’s mind aspect of the term. Repentance, according to them, then is simply changing one’s mind about himself and about Christ. It has nothing to do with turning from sin, in their view. Such a view is deficient and misleading.
Why is this wrong? Repentance and faith always go together. Jesus and the apostles taught repentance, not just faith.

2. Penance: the idea that one must pay for his own sin by some painful or sacrificial activity. The Roman Catholic Church prescribes penance when one confesses his sin to a priest. The penance is supposed to pay for the temporal aspects of sin.

Why is this wrong? Jesus paid for all our sin, so we don’t have to.

3. Resolve: turning over a new leaf; a desire or commitment to do better [e.g., New Year’s resolution]

Why is this wrong? Resolve is part of repentance, but only part. It falls short of the full definition.

4. Contrition (sorrow for sin): Judas “repented” (metamelomai) or was sorry for his sin, but this was not true repentance (Mt 27:3). The rich young ruler went away sad, too, but this was not repentance (Mk 10:22).

Why is this wrong? Same as #3.

5. A pure change of mind: one changes his mind from disbelief to belief. Repentance is a simple change of mind about God and Jesus Christ. It’s purely an intellectual activity.

Why is this wrong? Same as #3. Repentance affects intellect, emotion, and will. It includes sorrow for sin and a turning from it. It’s a total-person response, not just the mind.

The basis of repentance

A person repents because he is convinced that he is sinful and under God’s wrath and condemnation. While it is the Holy Spirit who does the convicting of sin, it’s the messenger’s job to show the sinner how desperate his condition is. The best way to do so is to
show the unbeliever how he has broken God’s law. Reading the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20), and James 2:10 (For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.) will suffice to show that all people have broken God’s law and are guilty. No one can claim to be “pretty good” or “not that bad.” Only when one understands the depravity of his own soul will he sense the need to repent.

Main Point: Part of the appropriate response to the gospel message is repentance. When one is convicted of his sin, he must turn from it.


Review: God is our righteous and holy Creator. Man is sinful and separated from God. Jesus Christ has provided the only means of bridging the gap between God and man. The first part of an appropriate response is repentance – acknowledging one’s sin and turning away from it.

Questions: Are you willing to admit that you have offended God by your rebellion against Him? Are you sorry about your sin? Are you willing to turn away from your sinfulness?

Conclusion

The command to “turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus” (Ac 20:21) summarizes the gospel invitation. The Bible is clear: Repentance is at the heart of the gospel call. We need to confront sin and call sinners to repentance – to a radical break from the love of sin and a seeking of the Lord’s mercy. Unless we are preaching repentance we are not preaching the gospel our Lord has charged us to preach. If we fail to call people to turn from their sins, we are not communicating the same gospel the apostles proclaimed.

6 Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, p 70.
For Further Discussion:

1. What is the spiritual condition of a person who believes (or says he does) but has not repented?

   He is unsaved. A partial response is inadequate. Or (potentially) he may be misled – he may have repented, but he just did not recognize that he was repenting (i.e., he’s ignorant, untaught).

2. Does repentance imply that one will no longer sin?

   No, but a true convert will remain penitent – sensitive to sin and willing to turn from it whenever he sins.

3. What can you do if a person doesn’t sense his need to repent?

   1. It’s really the Holy Spirit’s job to convict of sin, not ours; 2. We can show the person the true state of his sinful condition before God.

4. Is repentance a totally separate act?

   No, it’s only part of the correct response to the gospel. Repentance goes along with faith. They are the two aspects of the one act of conversion.

Assignment:

Pair up and practice telling each other about repentance.
We’ve learned thus far that the proper place to start a presentation of the gospel is with a clear and accurate definition of God. God exists and has an absolute claim on our lives as our Creator. Unbelievers must also understand the state of their relationship to God – they are lost, dead, and condemned. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, provided the only means of salvation through His perfect life, sacrificial death, and bodily resurrection. We learned last time that the gospel message requires a two-part response: repentance and faith. Repentance is a total-person turning away from sin.

When one turns from sin, he turns to God in faith. Faith is the flip side to repentance – they go together. When one repents of his sin and puts his faith in Christ, he is converted.

So what exactly is faith? That’s the issue we’ll deal with in this lesson.

Faith

Texts:

John 3:16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.
Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.

Romans 1:17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Romans 10:9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.

Ephesians 2:8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

Definition:

The short definition

Saving faith is the knowledge of, assent to, and unreserved trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The refined definition

- Part of faith is knowledge of some facts. This is the content of what is believed. One must know about God, sin, Christ, repentance and faith. Faith is not some kind of mindless “leap” into the dark. There is a factual, historical, intellectual basis for our faith. Faith is grounded on objective reality.¹ This is the intellectual aspect of faith.

- Part of faith is assent or affirmation of the truth. One must accept the facts as true and applicable to oneself. This is the emotional aspect of faith.

- Part of faith is trust or confidence. One relies upon the person and work of Christ – He is the object of faith (Ac 16:31). Faith is believing the facts and trusting the Person. It is wholly leaning on Christ. Faith lays hold of Christ Himself. This is the volitional aspect of faith – an exercise of the will.

Note: An aspect or part of faith is submission. Since faith is confidence, reliance and trust in Christ, it fol-

¹ John MacArthur, Faith Works, p 46.
lows that those who have faith in Christ are submissive to Him. Faith results in loyalty, submission, and duty. Simply put, faith in Christ as Savior always results in commitment to Him as Lord.

“Practical acknowledgment of Jesus’ Lordship, yielding to His rule by following, is the very fiber of saving faith... Unless you bow to Christ’s scepter, you will not receive the benefits of Christ’s sacrifice.”

Faith, like repentance, is a whole-person response – intellect, emotion, and will. True faith is obedient faith.

The Origin of Faith

- Saving faith is different from ordinary trust or confidence, which anyone can exercise. Saving faith is not ordinary trust turned toward Jesus Christ.

- Saving faith does not come from the senses (seeing, touching, smelling, etc.). It does not come from historical investigation, nor does it come from human reasoning. Saving faith is not the result of being convinced or persuaded intellectually that the gospel is true.

- Saving faith is a gift from God. While it is the sinner who believes, the ability and desire to believe come from God. Man has no capacity within himself to believe. God must enable him to believe.

Note several texts in this regard:

Acts 14:27 *God... opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.*

1 Corinthians 12:3 *[N]o man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost.*

Ephesians 2:8 *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.*
Philippians 1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

- Definition: Saving faith is an operation of the Holy Spirit on the will of the sinner by which he freely and voluntarily responds to the gospel message. “Faith is the act of a heart made alive by the sovereign power of God.”

False or inadequate definitions of faith

Misleading statements or vague ideas

Any of the following statements by themselves are inadequate to convey the true idea of faith. A thorough discussion of what faith means is necessary.

- Ask Jesus into your heart (or life).
- Accept Jesus as your personal savior.
- Give your heart to Jesus.
- Come to Christ.
- Believe in Jesus.

Intellectual faith

This refers to merely a belief in the facts of the gospel. Some say that simple faith is all that God requires – no repentance of sin, no submission to the Lordship of Christ, just pure belief. “Easy-believism” is a suitable label for such an idea.

The Results of Faith

Faith is an internal reality with external consequences. Works are not part of faith, but faith will inevitably result in good works and godly behavior. Faith is the root; works are the fruit. Faith that does not produce fruit is dead faith (Jas 2:19).

Faith obeys.

Scriptures frequently equate obedience with faith (Jn 3:36; 1 Pet 1:22). Believing and obeying are such parallel ideas that the New Testament uses the

3 Walter Chantry, Today’s Gospel, p. 84.
4 MacArthur, pp. 50–53.
words interchangeably. One gets saved by obeying the gospel.

*Faith endures.*

The doctrine of perseverance asserts that one who is truly saved will persevere (continue) in faith and good works. Those who fail to persevere were never truly saved.

**Other Expressions for Faith**

- Receive John 1:12
- Drink John 4:14
- Eat John 6:53
- Commit or deposit something 2 Timothy 1:12
- Obey Hebrews 5:9

**Main Point:** The appropriate response to the gospel message is repentance and faith. Saving faith is an operation of the Holy Spirit on the will of the sinner by which he freely and voluntarily responds to the gospel message.

**Key Passages:** John 3:16, 3:36; Acts 16:31; Romans 1:17; Galatians 2:16; Ephesians 2:8

**Review:** God is our righteous and holy Creator. Man is sinful and separated from God. Jesus Christ has provided the only means of bridging the gap between God and man. The first part of an appropriate response is repentance – acknowledging one’s sin and turning away from it. The second part of the response is putting one’s faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith go together.

**Questions:** Are you willing to recognize Christ as your Lord and Savior? Do you assent wholeheartedly that the facts of the gospel apply to you? Do you want to cast yourself upon him as your only hope of salvation?
Conclusion:
The person and work of Jesus Christ is the object of saving faith. When one turns from sin and trusts in Christ, he is saved.

For Further Discussion:
1. Why is it dangerous to preach easy-believism?
   Besides the fact that it’s unbiblical, doing so results in false professions of faith. People may think they are saved when they really are not.

2. Can people exercise saving faith on their own initiative? No Why not? Because of total depravity

Assignment:
Pair off and practice telling each other about saving faith.
We have tried thus far in this series to go into some depth regarding the content of the Gospel. It ought to be abundantly clear by now that evangelism requires more than just a five-minute chat. To communicate the content of the Gospel in an accurate and meaningful way may take awhile.

We’ve examined the content of the Gospel and the appropriate response to it. Before going on to discuss how to do evangelism, we’re going to look at some wrong ideas regarding evangelism. It’s important to do so because such ideas are quite common, and we want to avoid them.

The primary target for criticism in this lesson is a doctrine known as easy-believism. Easy-believism is a dangerous doctrine because it produces false professions of faith, fills the church with unbelievers, and gives a false sense of security to those who may be lost.

Primary teachings of easy-believism

“Salvation is based purely on belief or faith.”

Anyone who believes in Jesus is saved. Faith is defined as simply believing the facts of the Gospel. Faith is a purely intellectual activity.
“Repentance is not required for salvation.”
Some re-define repentance to mean a simple change of mind from unbelief to belief. Others assert that no kind of repentance is necessary at all.

“Submission to the Lordship of Christ is not required for salvation.”
One need only trust Christ as Savior at the point of salvation; at some later point, one may recognize Him as Lord. Ideas like commitment, submission, and loyalty have no place in an evangelistic invitation.

“Nothing about the costs of salvation is mentioned in an evangelistic invitation.”
The evangelist mentions only the benefits of salvation and the ease of attaining it.

“Since believing in Jesus is so easy, one need not go into much depth or take much time when communicating the Gospel.”
One need only agree that he is a sinner and that Jesus is the Savior to be saved.

“Since belief in Jesus is all that is necessary for salvation, the evangelist is encouraged to use any and all methods to generate belief.”

“No evidence of salvation need follow belief.”
One may live his entire Christian life in bondage to sin. Such believers are carnal Christians — they are believers who have never grown in their faith or shown any fruit of salvation. Believers may even renounce their profession of faith and still be Christians. Easy-believism states that as long as a person believed in Christ at some point in time, then he is saved, whether or not that belief continues. The believer need not persevere in faith or good works. As long as one claims to believe, others must acknowledge that he is a Christian.
“There are two classes of Christians: carnal and spiritual.”

Carnal Christians continue to exhibit sinful attitudes and behaviors just as they did before they were saved. Spiritual Christians have made a decision at some point after salvation to commit or devote themselves to Christ. It is only after this decision that the believer is able to make progress spiritually. Regular Christians are believers; committed Christians are disciples. Discipleship is not required of regular believers.

“Assurance of salvation is based only on the promises of Scripture.”

Since God says He will save those who believe, one must simply trust that what God says is true. If one doubts his salvation, he simply looks back to his decision to believe Jesus.

Standing in stark contrast to easy-believism is an idea that some call Lordship Salvation. Lordship Salvation takes the opposite view to all the ideas stated above.

Primary Teachings of Lordship Salvation:

Faith is more than mere intellectual assent to the Gospel. Faith is a total-person response (intellect, emotion and will) to the person and work of Jesus Christ.

- Repentance is a necessary part of the response to the Gospel. (See Lesson Eight)
- Submission to the Lordship of Christ is a required part of faith. Words such as commitment, submission, and loyalty are perfectly suitable when describing saving faith. (See Lesson Nine)
- The evangelist carefully discusses the costs of discipleship. Jesus called his disciples to take up a cross and follow Him. He called them to leave everything. He insisted on first place
One cannot invite a sinner to Christ without telling him the costs involved.¹

• The evangelist takes all the time necessary to carefully discuss the issues involved in conversion to Christ. He wants to reduce the possibility of a false profession of faith.

• The evangelist uses only those methods that are in keeping with the character of God and with the evangelistic task. Since preaching is the primary means of proclaiming the gospel (1 Cor 1:18f), preaching is the focus.

“Evidence of salvation will always follow true conversion.”

New creations in Christ (2 Cor 5:17) will give evidence of their new spiritual state by a radical change in attitudes and behaviors. Lack of spiritual fruit is evidence of a lost condition (Matt 7:15–20). Lordship salvation teaches that true believers will persevere (continue) in the faith and good works. They may backslide for a time, but they will not ultimately reject Christ. Lordship salvation does not teach sinless perfection, but it does expect to see some fruit of repentance.

Evidences of salvation from 1 John: Characteristics of true believers

• walk in the light (1:6–7). They display Christ-like behaviors and attitudes.

• are sensitive about sin. They confess and forsake it (1:8–10).

• are obedient (2:3–5, 29). Jesus said, “If you love me, obey my commandments.”

• love other believers (3:10–15, 5:1–2). No love = no salvation.

¹“The cross not only brings Christ’s life to an end, it ends also the first life, the old life, of every one of his true followers. It destroys the old pattern . . . in the believer’s life, and brings it to an end. Then God who raised Christ from the dead raises the believer and a new life begins. . . . We must do something about the cross, and one of two things only we can do—flee it or die upon it.” A.W. Tozer, The Roots of Righteousness, pp. 61–63. Quoted in Faith Works, p. 205.
• affirm sound doctrine (2:20-23). They are orthodox.
• follow after holiness (2:29, 3:6-9). They are not sinless, but they are striving to cease from sin and follow the Lord.

The idea that a true believer can continue in a carnal state is false.

There are not two categories of believers. All Christians are disciples and should strive to fulfill the biblical characteristics of a true disciple. A Christian will continue to struggle with sin (see Rom 7), but he will also make progress in his desire to be more like Christ. Those who continue in sin and/or who fall away were never truly saved in the first place (1 John 2:19).

Assurance of salvation is based on the evidence, not on a simple profession of faith.

Those who have no evidence of salvation can have no assurance. Many who claim to be saved are not.

Matt 7:21–23 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Titus 1:15–16 Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.

1 John 2:4–6 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.
Conclusion:

While we want to see people respond to the gospel, we dare not stoop to the level of easy-believism. Salvation is free but it’s not cheap. Jesus told us to count the costs. It’s a misrepresentation to preach an easy, superficial, undemanding “gospel.”

For Further Discussion:

1. Is it likely that you can lead someone to a saving knowledge of Christ in five minutes?

   It’s possible if the person is ready, understands, and is under conviction, but it’s not likely to happen regularly.

2. What’s the danger of attaching a physical response to an invitation to be saved?

   Someone might confuse the two – i.e., think he is saved because he participated in a physical act. This is especially true of children. They are often susceptible to peer pressure and suggestion, and desire to gain the leader’s approval. So they’ll do whatever the speaker asks, even if they don’t understand the Gospel.

3. What are the bases of assurance of salvation?

   Believing the right doctrine, behaving the right way and the internal witness of the Holy Spirit.

4. Why is it important to tell people the costs associated with salvation?

   1. Because Jesus told us to; 2. To prevent false professions; 3. To be honest.
We are at the point where we can discuss the how to’s of evangelism. We have the necessary background information to accurately and appropriately present the gospel. We now want to focus on the best way of doing so.

Most books on evangelism lay out a certain method that the author believes is most biblical or that has the most potential for success. We’ve already seen that methods are flexible and not sacred. We must focus more on the message itself than on the methods used to communicate it. Nevertheless, we are now ready to think about a method of evangelism. This lesson will discuss the idea of relational evangelism.

First, a few reminders about God-centered evangelism:

We are more concerned about making an accurate presentation of the gospel than we are about conversions. Never compromise the content to secure conversions.

We are more focused on our responsibility than our results (Acts 20:26–27; cf. Matt 23:37, 38; Ac 17:32, 34). The question is, “Did I present the message clearly and accurately?”, not “Did the person get saved?”

Our confidence is in God’s power through His Word rather than our persuasiveness (1 Cor 2:1–5; 2 Cor 4:1–7). We trust in the power of God’s Word to raise the dead to life. Our job is not to defend the Word, but to
proclaim it and to give it an opportunity to work.1 “Though it is proper to reason with men, persuade men, beseech men, there will be no response unless God in His grace attends with enabling power the words we speak. Our evangelism must be based on a dependence on the Lord. Our hope of results must be in Him, not in man’s will or in any other faculty of our hearer.” 2

We must commit ourselves to speak the truth when God opens the door. Opportunities for evangelism are God-ordained. We must have a God-centered, gospel optimism based on the fact that the gospel is powerful (Rom 1:16–17) and can draw a person to Christ.

Prayer is the supreme God-ordained method in evangelism. Unless God changes a person’s heart, nothing lasting will be achieved.3 Prayer acknowledges that conversion of souls is God’s work and that we are entirely dependent upon Him to bring a soul to faith. Prayer must precede and accompany all evangelism.

It’s the Holy Spirit’s job, not the evangelist’s, to convict the sinner of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Jn 16:7–11). God is responsible for bringing a soul to conversion. Believers are an important part of that process, but it’s God’s responsibility to convince the unbeliever of the truth of the Word.

**Definition of Relational Evangelism:**

Relational evangelism occurs within the normal, everyday patterns of life; witnessing to your friends; telling those within your circle of influence; witnessing where you find yourself. Some would call this developing “redemptive relationships.” Relational evangelism stands in contrast to a scheduled program of evangelism (like visitation, door-to-door calling, telemarketing, etc.). Rather than waiting for a program, one takes the opportunities to witness as they come up. There is nothing wrong with program-driven evangelism, but one should evangelize more than just as part of a program. Evangelism should be a way of life.

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Some people have the idea that they have discharged their duty for evangelism by participating in a weekly program. Thus, they might speak to many strangers while going door-to-door, but they don’t talk to their neighbors about the Gospel.

Some have a wrong idea about “Lifestyle Evangelism.” They assert (wrongly) that lifestyle evangelism is witnessing through your lifestyle/behavior (i.e., being light and salt, but not saying anything). But lifestyle evangelism teaches that one evangelizes (communicates the gospel) as part of his lifestyle rather than, or in addition to, an evangelistic program.

Biblical Basis for Relational Evangelism

John 1: 40–41 One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.

John 1:45 Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

John 4:6–7 Now Jacob’s well was there. Jesus therefore, being wearied with his journey, sat thus on the well: and it was about the sixth hour. There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink.

Colossians 4:3–4 [Pray] for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds: That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.

1 Peter 3:15 Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

The biblical pattern seems to be that each person is responsible to reach those within his or her sphere of influence. Friends reach friends. One uses the relationships he has to extend redemption to others (hence the term “redemptive” relationships).
The Benefits of Relational Evangelism:

- You work within the sphere of influence you already have. There is no special program to run or schedule to keep.
- You bring your influence to bear on those you have the most influence over. Your friends, family, and co-workers are much more apt to listen to you than they would be to listen to a stranger. Research has shown that most people get saved under the influence of a familiar person. Your opportunities for successful evangelism are much greater within this group than they are with any other group.
- Opportunities for witnessing arise naturally. You talk about the Lord and salvation as you would talk about any other important topic. One can wait for the right time to proclaim the Word rather than confront people when it may be inappropriate. Because you know your audience well, you are better able to sense when the best times and places to witness would be.
- Your audience (friends, family, co-workers) has much more at stake in their relationship with you than with other evangelists. That is, they may never darken the door of a church, listen to a gospel radio program, or attend an evangelistic campaign, but because of their relationship with you, they may be willing to listen.
- Redemptive relationships are not hard to develop. Because it fits into one’s normal patterns of life, this method of evangelism is natural and effective.

Relational evangelism contradicts the idea that evangelism is done only as part of a program. Evangelism can occur at any time and in any context, not just on a certain schedule.
How to present the gospel

Preparation

- Know and be able to explain the Gospel message. Know references and have verses memorized. Know it well enough to feel somewhat comfortable explaining it.
- Prepare what you would say if you had the opportunity.
- Ask God for those opportunities.

Directing the Conversation (SCOTT)

Relational evangelism stresses communicating the gospel as part of a normal conversation. How do you bring a conversation around to the place where the gospel fits? Begin with common interests and seek to move deeper into values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Their Secular Life (family, occupation, interests)

Their Church background

This helps us identify if they are involved in a church ministry at a Bible-believing church; understand their presuppositions and present level of knowledge about spiritual things.

Our Testimony: Church or personal

Our church

Don’t’s
- Appear proud, just enthusiastic.
- Draw pointed comparisons between your church and theirs (how much better yours is than theirs).
- Talk about what you like.

Do’s
- Be enthusiastic.
- Suggest there is a difference between yours’ and others’.
• Focus on the importance of God’s Word.
• Highlight the blessing of fellowship.
• Personalize it. Use your own experience.

Our personal testimony

Content

What your life was like before you received eternal life.

How you received eternal life.

What having eternal life has meant to you.

Don’t’s
• Give away the answers to the two questions (from above).
• Sensationalize your testimony.

Do’s
• Establish the fact that we all need a relationship with God and that it is available.
• Lay the foundation upon which you will make the presentation – what one is like before salvation, how you were saved, and what that has meant.

Three Questions

Ask, “May I ask you a question?” Any of these questions is suitable to bring the person to a point of decision.

“Have you come to the place in your spiritual life where you know for certain that if you were to die you would go to heaven?”

“Suppose you did die today and stand before God, and He was to say to you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ What would you say?”

“1 John 5:13 shows us that we can know for certain where we’ll spend eternity. May I take a few minutes to show you from the Bible how you can know?”
Transition

Many people would answer these questions the same way that you did – that is, they believe they have to earn heaven or somehow be good enough for God to let them into heaven. But I discovered some great news. According to the Bible, salvation is a free gift from God.

Leading a person to accept Christ

Assuming the person has responded appropriately to one of the above three questions, or shows some level of interest, you then want to proceed to lead the person to Christ. Be very careful at this point. How you communicate the gospel, and the appropriate response to it, is critical. If you preach an easy-believism style invitation, the person may make a false profession. If you attach a physical activity to the response, the person may think he’s saved because he participated in some activity (even a prayer). If you put too much pressure on the person, he may respond just to get you off his back. If you add anything to the Gospel, you make it into a works salvation.

Explanation:

Clearly and carefully explain the basics of the gospel. It’s very important that you understand these concepts and are able to accurately convey the content of the gospel and the required response.

- Who God is: the sovereign Creator
- Who man is: the sinful, rebellious creature
- Who Christ is and what He did:
  1) God the Son, the Lord and Savior
  2) lived a perfect life, died a sacrificial death, rose again
- What the appropriate response is:
  1) repentance: acknowledging sin, sorrow for it, turning from it
  2) faith: knowledge of, assent to, and trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ
• What the costs of discipleship are
  1) death to self
  2) submission to Christ as Master

**Application**

“Have I made this clear?”

“Do you understand what repentance and faith are?”

“Do you understand the costs of discipleship?”

“Do you have any questions?”

**Invitation**

“Is there anything that would keep you from turning to Christ for salvation?”

“Would you like to receive Christ as your Master and Savior?”

**Reception**

Encourage the person to pray, confessing his sin and pleading for God’s mercy.

Encourage the person to ask Christ to be his Master and Savior.

Close in prayer.
Character and Communication in Witnessing

1 Thessalonians 2:3–8 For our exhortation did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in deceit. But as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel, even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts. For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness – God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ. But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing mother cherishes her own children. So, affectionately longing for you, we were well pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God, but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us. (NKJV)

THE ABOVE passage tells us several important truths about evangelizing:

Deceit has no place in evangelism. We are not trying to trick anyone into being saved. We must be perfectly honest when presenting the gospel. We must not use flattering or manipulative words, gimmicks, or tricks when exhorting others to be saved.

Our ultimate aim is to please God, not men. From the evangelist’s point of view, we are trying to please God by spreading the gospel. Our real aim is not the conversion of souls, but the approval of God.
Our relationship with those we are trying to convert must be as Paul describes it above – gentle, affectionate, and unselfish. We see people as God does, not just as souls to win.

Character in evangelism

Jesus instructs us to “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Who we are as evangelists is almost as important as what we say. If we come across to our audience as hypocritical, holier-than-thou, or insincere, our efforts will be fruitless. Our life must correspond to our message. We must back up what we say by how we live. We must live in such a way that people see God in us. An individual with a good testimony is one who models the character of God. He spreads life and hope rather than despair, conflict and death. He’s like salt and light, a singular exception in a disoriented world.1 Several characteristics should be true of witnesses:

Holiness

Holiness is not only moral uprightness; it is distinctiveness. The evangelist should be distinctive in his behavior and attitudes. Holiness compels us to make a break with the pagan value system of our society. We are calling people to embrace something radically different from what the world has to offer. If our audience sees nothing special in us, it will have no reason to seriously consider our message.

Compassion

The Gospels repeatedly show Jesus’ compassionate care for people. Compassion for the lost should drive us to share the Gospel with them. We should present the Gospel in a way that is sensitive and kind. We must treat people with respect, dignity, and honor.

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1 Jim Petersen, Evangelism as a Lifestyle, pp. 66–67, 71.
Patience

Dealing with unsaved people requires patience. The evangelist may have to cover the same ground repeatedly. The audience may show great interest one day and apathy the next. Even when the results don’t seem to come, the evangelist must patiently wait, pray, plant the seed, water it, and wait on God for the harvest.

Honesty

As we’ve already seen, some people are compromising the message in order to gain a wider acceptance. We dare not do so. We must proclaim the gospel in all its fullness, not failing to include both the benefits and the costs of salvation. We must live lives of integrity. Such a life will be prominent, in stark contrast to a dark world full of dishonesty.

Truth

Our society has rejected truth, and is thus adrift on a sea of uncertainty. Christians, on the other hand, own truth – both God (Jn 14:6) and the Word (Jn 17:17). Believers have a reference point to start from and guidance along the way, which allows them to chart the right course. They also have solid answers to the toughest of man’s questions. As they live in the light of God and the Gospel, Christians are a statement from God to the world that He has the answers.2

Love

Someone once said, “90% of evangelism is love.”3 People are not objects to be won like trophies – they are real people who need our compassion. Evangelism is loving other people to Christ. Read 1 Thessalonians 2:8.

2 IBID, p. 74.
3 Bob Smith, IBID, p. 107.
Whether we like it or not, those we seek to win will decide either to accept or reject Christ based in part on what they see in our lives. It’s not uncommon for converts to say that the reason they came to Christ was the exemplary life of a Christian friend. On the other hand, it’s quite common for those who reject the gospel to do so because of the lack of Christlikeness in professing believers. If your life is characterized by the above attributes, your witness will be attractive and natural. You’ll find plenty of opportunities to talk with others about Christ if you model Christlike character. You’ll automatically be a light in a dark world.

Introducing unbelievers into a community of believers (a church, Bible study, fellowship group, etc.) who model Christlike character is an important part of the evangelistic process. Unbelievers should see an obvious difference in the lives of Christians. Unbelievers may not even be willing to take you seriously until they’ve seen genuine Christlikeness in you and in other believers.

**Communication in Evangelism**

As we’ve seen, a godly lifestyle can be an effective tool in evangelism. But we must go beyond simply being a good example. An essential part of evangelism is a verbal witness – we must tell others the gospel and exhort them to make the appropriate response to the message. God’s ordained method of evangelism is proclaiming the message verbally (Rom 10:14–15; 1 Cor 1:18–21).

We communicate differently with different people. Our interaction with our parents is different from that with our siblings. We talk to our teacher or principal differently than we do with our friends. Some people we see occasionally for a minute or two; others we see daily for extended periods. We all understand that different relationships call for different styles of communication.
Jesus gave us many examples of this truth. He made friends with sinners and witnessed to them (e.g., Zaccheus), but he confronted religious people (e.g., Nicodemus). He spoke with the woman at the well in one way (John 4) and with the rich young ruler in a different way (Mark 10).

The point is that we have to discern how best to communicate the gospel with different audiences.

The ignorant and indifferent

This is the largest class of unbelievers. They need to be surprised and challenged to see the folly of their paganism. Such people must be confronted and warned about the consequences of their sin. Passages such as the rich young ruler (Lk 12:13–21) and the woman at the well (Jn 4) may be appropriate.

The self-righteous

Like the Pharisees, such people are involved in organized religion and think highly of themselves, but are not saved. They are basing their salvation on good works. They need to see that they are not as virtuous as they think they are. A good place to start with such people is the Ten Commandments. Show them how everyone has broken all of the commandments. Also see James 2:10, which asserts that if we’ve broken even one commandment, we’ve broken them all. Show such people that many who claim to be saved are really lost (Matt 7:21–23).

False Christians

With the prevalence of easy-believism, it is common to find people who claim to be saved but show evidence of the opposite. Such people need to understand the true content of the gospel, the requirements for salvation, and the evidence that follows salvation. Texts like Titus 1:15–16 and 1 John 2:3–6 are appropriate.
Deliberate Atheists
These people reject the whole notion of God, sin, and salvation. Often, such people reject God because of His moral requirements. They are frequently hostile toward believers and toward organized religion. If such people will listen, we should simply communicate the gospel to them. If they have honest questions, we should seek to answer them.

Seekers
Some people we talk with may be awakened to their need of salvation because God is in the process of bringing them to faith. We must point such people to Christ and remind them of the correct response to the gospel. Isaiah 53, Psalm 51, and John 3 are good passages to direct them to.4

Cultists
Cults are growing very quickly all around the world. We will likely have many opportunities to speak with cultists. We may find them knocking on the door at our homes. Recognize that such people are not true believers – they are far from the truth, false prophets, and guilty of leading others astray. When interacting with cultists, be brief, firm, and to the point. Don’t be drawn into an argument unless you are well prepared. Emphasize salvation by grace alone through faith alone and the deity of Jesus Christ. Cultists love to use biblical terms but with different meanings. Therefore make the cultist define his terms. John tells us not to welcome false prophets into our homes (2 John 10–11). See 2 Peter 2 for a good description of false prophets.

No matter whom we are dealing with, we want to communicate the gospel in a natural and sensitive manner. Few appreciate bluntness and abrasiveness.

4 The only true seekers are those under the conviction of the Holy Spirit. Other “seekers” are trying to please themselves. Cf. Rom 3:11.
Nor do people respond well to a sales pitch. You want to introduce the gospel, but in a way that is most likely to be taken seriously. Almost any conversation can result in a discussion of the gospel.\(^5\)

Believers must take the initiative in establishing redemptive relationships. Become aware of people around you. Be friendly and outgoing – greet them, say, “Hello.” Seek interaction. Look for common interests or needs. Love people unconditionally. Seek the good of others regardless of their response. Introduce them to your Christian friends.

The following situations from Metzger’s book *Tell the Truth* is helpful.

**Situation:** Someone complains about developments in the world or among certain people.

**Response:** “Why do you think people do such terrible things? What do you think God thinks of that?”

**Situation:** Someone you have helped thanks you.

**Response:** “You’re welcome. I want to help people. My perspective on life was really changed when I became a Christian.”

**Situation:** Someone helps you.

**Response:** “I really appreciate your help. What made you that way? Are you a Christian?”

**Situation:** You receive a compliment for something you’ve done.

**Response:** “Why, thank you. I’ve gotten a new perspective on this since Jesus came into my life. I appreciate the world around me more – knowing who made it.”

\(^5\) Example: read pp. 80–82 in *Evangelism as a Lifestyle.*
**Situation:** Someone is telling of their good fortune or luck in a matter.

**Response:** “Do you think God has a reason for allowing you to experience this good thing? How do you account for the good things that have happened to you?”

**Situation:** You’re given too much change after a purchase.

**Response:** “You know. At one time I would have kept the money, but Jesus Christ has turned my life around. Do you know Christ?”

Other points to turn the conversation toward the gospel:

- Casual references to Christ’s involvement in our lives
- The basis of our value system or political views
- The importance of our church
- Current trends or social problems
- References to well-known Christians

**Conclusion:**

Verbal and non-verbal witnessing must come together in evangelism. A verbal witness without a loving relationship tends to be impersonal. And a non-verbal witness may attract attention, but it does not communicate the gospel. Thus, the best personal evangelism occurs through creating and maintaining redemptive relationships – being a Christlike friend to the lost and using that friendship to communicate the Gospel. And when you add the influence of a group of Christlike people to verbal and non-verbal witnessing, the result is a powerful and appealing evangelistic outreach.
For Further Discussion:

1. What happens when one’s verbal witness is not backed up by his lifestyle?

   In this case, one’s words have no weight. Hypocrisy is obvious.

2. Is non-verbal witnessing really witnessing?

   No. There is no such thing as a silent witness. The value of a non-verbal witness is that it attracts attention and is appealing. It gives the believer a basis for communicating the gospel.

3. Why is it important to introduce a prospective convert to a community of believers?

   To give that person an opportunity to see what being a Christian is like. Also, to show the believer that you are not alone in what you believe.
The Gospel Bridge

The Final Lesson in this series will provide a handy and memorable scheme or plan for presenting the Gospel that includes the main ideas we’ve focused on throughout the series.

Sometimes it is helpful to visualize what you are trying to communicate. The old expression, “A picture is worth a thousand words” underscores this point. One means of visualizing the gospel is called The Gospel Bridge.

Our pardon
Turn: repent of sin; Ac 3:19; 20:21
Trust: believe in Christ; Jn 3:16; Ac 16:31

Man’s problem
Sin: Rom 3:23; Isa 53:6
Penalty: Death; Rom 6:23

God’s purpose
His own glory: Rev 4:11; 1 Cor 10:31

Based on the visual from Jim Petersen, Living Proof, p. 248.
How to explain *The Gospel Bridge*

Note the three main sections of the tract: man’s problem, our pardon, and God’s purpose. Everything in the tract falls under these three main headings.

- Start by explaining the idea of a bridge joining two cliffs, as illustrated above. A bridge is needed to allow man to be with God.
- God is our Creator. He made man for fellowship with Himself. He is worthy of our praise and obedience.
- Man has rebelled against God, is separated from Him, and is under judgment because of sin. All have sinned and gone astray. The penalty for sin is death. Unbelievers are spiritually dead (Eph 2:1) and separated from God. Those who continue in this condition will experience eternal death.
- People try to bridge this gap by their own efforts (religion and good works). All such efforts fall short.
- Jesus provides the solution to this problem. He gave himself as our sacrifice for sin by dying on the cross and suffering God’s judgment against sin. He provides the one and only means to be with God.
- Our pardon (forgiveness) for sin comes through repentance and faith. This is the proper response to the gospel. Make sure to thoroughly explain the details of both repentance and faith.
- Those who repent and believe are no longer condemned; they have passed from death to life. Their sins are forgiven and they are reconciled to God.
- Jesus calls upon us to respond to this message: repent and believe. Acknowledge your sin to God. Turn from it. Cast yourself upon God’s mercy and ask Christ to be your Savior and Lord.
Benefits of *The Gospel Bridge*

It provides a pre-planned format for presenting the gospel. It gives you a roadmap. You know what to say.

It provides a visual representation of the truths of the Gospel.

It’s simple, yet provides nearly all the necessary information to lead someone to a saving knowledge of Christ.

It’s easily memorable and can be carried on a small card or in tract form.

**Assignment:**

Study *The Gospel Bridge* closely. Attempt to memorize it. Try to write it out on a separate sheet. Practice going through it with someone else.
For Further Study

The following resources were helpful in producing this series. Bold sources were especially helpful.

Evangelism and Church Growth class notes, David Doran, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, 1995

*Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*, J. I. Packer

*Evangelism as a Lifestyle*, Jim Petersen


*Living Proof*, Jim Petersen

*Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life*, Donald Whitney

*Tell the Truth*, Will Metzger

*Today’s Gospel: Authentic or Synthetic?*, Walter Chantry