

Topic 1: A Radical Message

The Uniqueness of the Gospel of Jesus

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. — Romans 1:16

In all the history of the world there has never been anyone like Jesus. He, and his life were so extraordinary and impacted the world so strongly, that time itself changed! Our calendar is based on when he was born. BC - AD

What was so important about Jesus was his radical message of love – what we call the gospel. The word “gospel” comes from the Greek word *euangélion*, which simply means “good news.”

In the Old Testament, anticipating the dark years of the Babylonian exile, God moved the prophet Isaiah to encourage mourning Jews of a coming day when a God-sent messenger would “bring good news to Zion” (Isaiah 40:9). This anointed messenger, Isaiah foretold, would not only rescue the people of God (61:1-4), but also restore the perfect rule of God. In the New Testament this good news of God is immediately associated with the person of Jesus. Luke shows Christ beginning his public ministry by reading those very words of Isaiah and declaring them fulfilled (Luke 4:16-21, Isaiah 61: 1-2a). In other words, Christ was claiming to be the one about whom Isaiah prophesied. The gospel is the ancient promises of God realized in the person of Jesus Christ!

The gospel writers Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, all focus on Jesus – his words and works. The apostle Paul repeatedly referred to the “gospel of Christ” (Romans 15:19; 1 Corinthians 9:12; Galatians 1:7). Jesus is the gospel! He embodies God’s good news. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus made the way for us to have a relationship with God and experience his love forever.

G-O-S-P-E-L

The gospel is about **G**od.

The gospel is about **O**urselves.

The gospel is about a **S**avior.

The gospel is **P**owerful.

The gospel must be **E**mbraced.

The gospel is **L**ife-altering.

When we put our faith in Christ, an amazing transformation takes place. We become brand-new creations. This change is spiritual. It is actual and real. It is internal, fundamental, and essential. It affects our basic nature. This is regeneration. Jesus called it being “born again” (John 3).

The gospel is about **God**.

1. Examine with me Psalm 103. What does this beloved prayer/song reveal about God's nature?

2. Psalm 103 describes God as "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love." How do you see God based on your experience and based on what you have been taught?

3. Speaking of Jesus Christ, the apostle John wrote: "No one has ever seen God. But the unique One [Jesus], who is himself God, is near to the Father's heart. He has revealed God to us" (John 1:18, nlt). What does Jesus reveal to us about God?

The gospel is about **Ourselves**.

4. Considering Romans 3:10-18, 23 and Romans 6:2, why do we need a savior?

Many people believe humans are basically okay – maybe even divine. But the Bible tells us that we all come into this world as naturally self-centered rebels against God. As sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, we have inherited their sin nature, and we each have sinned in thought and deed. – **Rebellious!** The Bible tells us the penalty for such rebellion against God is death. At the most basic level, death is separation.

When we die physically, our souls are separated from our bodies, and we are separated from our loved ones. Spiritual death is the ultimate consequence of sin. It means separation from God and the life he gives. As spiritually dead people (see Ephesians 2:1), we do not have the power to "pull ourselves up by our own bootstraps."

5. What do you think total surrender looks like? Why do you think it is difficult to do?

The Bible makes it clear we are incapable of self-rescue... **BUT**

The gospel is about a **Savior**.

God has not left us alone in our helpless, hopeless state (remember his love?). God sent a Savior!

6. Consider Isaiah 53:1-6. This is a continuing description of the one the prophet identified as the bringer of good news. What does this passage say about Christ? What did his death accomplish? Consider: what would have happened if he hadn't died?

The penalty for sin is death. We deserved to die. But the Bible says Jesus acted as our substitute. He voluntarily took the punishment we deserved because of our sin.

"He was pierced for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5). Christ died, so that we might live. His triumphant cry from the cross ("It is finished!" John 19:30) means that humanity's debt to God because of sin has been "paid in full." In the resurrection of Jesus, we have undeniable evidence of his authority and power over sin and death.

The Gospel is **Powerful!**

7. From Romans 1:16 - The Greek word translated as "power" is the word *dunamis*. This is the word from which we get our English word "dynamite." How is the gospel like "spiritual dynamite"?

8. Second Corinthians 5:17 says, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" What does it mean to be a new creation in Christ?

What's in a Name?

Ten Names of Jesus that Show How and Why He Is God's Good News

Immanuel	Matthew 1:23
Jesus	Matthew 1:21
Lamb of God	John 1:29, 36
Gate	John 10:9
Prince of Peace	Isaiah 9:6
Light of the World	John 8:12
Pioneer and Perfecter of Faith	Hebrews 12:
Shepherd	1 Peter 2:25
Resurrection and the Life	John 11:25
Lord of Lords	Revelation 19:16

Which of these names represent a way in which Jesus has impacted your life?

Which name(s) represent a way in which you need Jesus?

When you pray, try calling Jesus by that name.

Concluding thought

"Grace" is the beautiful biblical word that means "undeserved favor." Grace is the great distinctive of the gospel. It's grace that makes Christianity unique among the world's religions. No wonder the apostle John described Jesus as being "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Reflections

An important part of discipleship is learning how to apply God's truths to your life. Below are just a few ways you can start thinking about what you've learned and apply it to your daily life.

1. Memorize our memory verse: Romans 1:16.
2. Write about your own experience with Christ. When did he become a real person to you, more than just an idea or a historical figure?
3. Watch the news on television or read it in the newspaper or online. Think about how the gospel of Jesus could bring hope to COVID-19, each crisis, crime, or tragedy.
4. Wrestle with one or two of the following: