

Session 1 - What is the Gospel?

OVERVIEW:

This lesson will walk us through the Gospel. A right understanding of the gospel is essential to the Christian life. We'll talk about the Gospel by walking through 4 categories: God, Man, Christ, and Response.

Ultimately, we want our students to come away from this lesson with not only the ability to articulate the gospel, but to see how it relates to everyday life.

As we'll see, the gospel begins with **God, who is the Holy Creator and Righteous Judge**. Because God is the Righteous Judge, He must punish the guilty. The bad news is that we are guilty sinners, and therefore we deserve God's judgment, which is eternal Hell. This punishment is righteous and fair because **we have sinned against God**; and the severity of sin is not merely determined by the sin itself, but by the authority of the one sinned against. And the gospel will only be received as good news if we first understand the bad news of our just condemnation. But the good news is that God did not leave us alone in our sin. He sent His only Son **Jesus, who lived a sinless life, died a sinner's death as our Substitute, and rose again victoriously**. By **trusting** Him for salvation and **repenting** of our sin, His record of perfection is transferred to us and our sinful record is transferred to Him, which is why God, the Righteous Judge, can now declare us righteous and blameless.

Talk about it:

1. In your own words, write out the key elements of the gospel

I. God: The Holy Creator and Righteous Judge

Read it:

Genesis 1:1

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth"

Genesis 1:27

*"So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them."*

Comment:

Most of us are familiar with the fact that God created everything, including us. But we need to realize that if God has created us, then He *owns* us. We are *accountable* to Him, and we will answer to Him.

Talk about it:

1. What does our culture think of the idea of being *accountable* to God, or being *owned* by God? What do *you* think of it?

It's *offensive* to our culture, as we've been trained to think of ourselves as independent.

Read it:

Exodus 34:6-7

"The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, 'The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, 7 keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty...'"

Comment:

This passage comforts us with the goodness and mercy of God; but we see that the good and merciful God, *"will by no means clear the guilty."* The bad news is that we are guilty, and therefore deserve punishment. For the gospel to be good news, we must understand the bad news.

II. Mankind: Sinful and guilty, deserving punishment

A. Sin makes us slaves

Read it:

John 8:34

"Jesus answered them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin.'"

Read it:

Romans 3:10-18, 23

"As it is written:

'None is righteous, no, not one;

11 *no one understands; no one seeks for God.*

12 *All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.'*

13 *'Their throat is an open grave; the venom of asps [snakes] is under their lips.'*

14 *'Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.'*

15 *'Their feet are swift to shed blood;*

16 *in their paths are ruin and misery,*

17 *and the way of peace they have not known.'*

18 *'There is no fear of God before their eyes.'*

23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*

Talk about it:

1. Where do we see examples of wickedness in the world?
People seeking revenge, mass shootings, abuse, etc.
2. Where do you see wickedness and sin in your own life?
3. Sin doesn't just describe what we *do*, it describes who we *are*. Why is it important for us to recognize how sinful we are?
If we don't know how sinful we are, we won't think God is justified in punishing us, and we'll never appreciate the grace of God.

B. Sin makes us guilty

Read it:

Romans 6:23a

"For the wages of sin is death..."

Comment:

"Death" here means not just physical death, but spiritual death in Hell, where we are separated from the love of God, only to suffer under His wrath.

Talk about it:

1. Does death/Hell seem like a harsh consequence for sin? Why or why not?
*Because all sin is **against God**, we deserve the highest punishment.*
2. We tend to think of ourselves as basically good. But do you *really* believe that you deserve Hell for your sin?
Leaders, encourage your students to be honest here.
If they don't understand the weight of their sin, the gospel won't be good news to them.

III. Jesus Christ: Substitute for sinners

Comment:

Thankfully, God did not leave us alone in our sin. He sent His Son Jesus to save us. Jesus lived a perfect life, died a sinners' death in our place, and rose from the dead. In His life, death, and resurrection, Jesus accomplished salvation for us, in at least 3 ways...

A. Jesus Forgives Our Sins

Read it:

Ephesians 1:7

"In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace."

Talk about it:

1. How would you define grace?

Grace is the undeserved gift of salvation in Christ

2. If our sins are forgiven, does that mean we're free to live however we want?

No, because we're not just freed **from** sin, we're freed **to** serve the Lord. And thinking that we're now free to live however we please is evidence that we likely haven't received grace

B. Jesus Gives Us His Righteousness

Read it:

2 Corinthians 5:21

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Talk About it:

1. What does it mean that we "become the righteousness of God"?

Jesus gives us His record of perfection, so that we can be counted as righteous before the Father.

C. Jesus Changes Our Identity

Read it:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11

"9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

1 Peter 2:9-10

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy."

Talk about it:

1. According to the above passages, how does our identity change when we become Christians?
We go from sinners to saints; from those who had not received mercy to those who have
2. How should this change of identity cause us to live, according to 1 Peter 2:9?
Because Jesus has saved us, our natural reaction should be to, "proclaim the excellencies of him."

Comment:

The good news of the Gospel is that, though we deserve God's wrath, in Jesus we can receive His grace, because Jesus has paid for our sins.

But, does everybody receive this salvation? If not, how can we make sure we do receive it? This brings us to our response.

4) Response: Repentance and Faith

Read it:

Mark 1:14-15

"Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe the gospel.'"

Galatians 3:16

"Yet we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified."

Talk about it:

1. How would you define Repentance?
Repentance - Turning away from your sin and turning to follow Christ
2. How would you define Faith?
Faith - Trusting, relying, depending on Jesus completely to save you from your sins
 - True faith consists of **knowing** the gospel, **believing** the gospel, and **depending** on the gospel for salvation.
 - False faith is misses one of the elements of knowledge, belief, and/or trust.
3. Why is it impossible to be saved by good works?
Good works don't solve the actual problem. The problem is not merely our sinful action, but our sinful hearts; and no amount of good works can undo a sinful heart.