



Resources | The Discover Podcast

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Discover Good News

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Session One

What is the Gospel

Good News

We are accustomed to hearing, sharing, and delivering good news. Think of the last time you received significant news: It could have been news that you and your spouse were pregnant; you got into the university you'd hoped; you passed the test you studied for; the offer to buy a house got accepted; your boss promoted you. As humans, we share and hear good news all the time.

As Jesus-followers, we have news—good news—news that we believe will bring lasting change to any person, family, city, and indeed the world. This news was announced nearly 2,000 years ago by a marginalized, out-of-nowhere spiritual leader in Galilee and this news has since changed the world. This news was broadcast by his small group of faithful followers, who declared that the Creator God of the universe had in fact stepped into the world he had made to restore it and reclaim it. This news was in direct conflict with the prevailing way of thinking, in which Caesar ruled the world from his capital in Rome. Yet this news reverberated through the Roman Empire and has found its way to us, on the other side of the world, on the Ozark Mountain Plateau. Indeed, it is news worth sharing.

What, though, is the content of this news? And how do we share it? That is the purpose of Discover Good News. In short, we're talking about evangelism, which literally means "sharing good news."

The Four-Story Gospel



The gospel is the greatest story ever told! It is the story the world desperately needs to hear. It is the story about a gracious Creator who desires to bring blessing and goodness into the world, but he wants to do so through people. The God of the Bible wants to bring life, beauty, and blessing to the world, and he has given us the amazing vocation of partnering with him in it.

The story's dark turn occurs early, however, as people rejected their Creator and instead sought to define the good life on their own terms. As a result, the agents of blessing for the world—humans—have instead brought brokenness, pain, and cruelty to the world. The Bible has many names for this, but one of them is the word “Sin.”

How would the Creator respond to his creatures rebellion? What would he do with human sin? The story of the Bible answers these questions in the most beautiful of ways: God stepped into the brokenness in order to redeem humans from their own sin. How? Jesus presented himself as the true King of the world. But he's a different kind of King. He lays down his life for his people, and on the cross, Jesus took the stain of sin upon himself, and in his resurrection He defeated the power of sin and death once and for all.

In the post-Easter world, new creation has come! The mission of God of putting-to-right all that has been broken by sin and death is underway, carried out by Jesus' kingdom-people: the church! One day, this restoration mission will be completed when Jesus returns in glory. What a gospel indeed!

“Christianity is all about the belief that the living God, in fulfillment of his promises to Israel, has accomplished all this - the finding, the saving, the giving of new life - in Jesus. He has done it. With Jesus, God’s rescue operation has been put into effect once for all... We are all invited - summoned, actually - to discover, through following Jesus, that this new world is indeed a place of justice, spirituality, relationship, and beauty, and that we are not only to enjoy it as such but to work at bringing it to birth on earth as in heaven. In listening to Jesus, we discover whose voice it is that has echoed around the hearts and minds of the human race all along.” — N.T. Wright

This is encapsulated in Jesus’ summoning of his followers in what we call the Great Commission:

Matthew 28:18-20 ^{NIV}

*Then Jesus came to them and said, “**All authority** in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and **teaching** them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am **with you** always, to the very end of the age.”*

Why Should We Share It?

- 1. We have the better story!**
- 2. We have been entrusted as ambassadors.**
- 3. We see a culture that is lost and hurting.**
- 4. We know eternity is at stake.**

Paul as a Model | Acts 17:16-34

1) Are you ‘greatly distressed’ by the idols of culture? (16)

Paul was resting in Athens, having sent his companions Timothy and Silas to check on house churches they had recently planted. He’s alone, tired, and busy. And yet, Paul can’t help himself: he looks around him in his city and sees that it is filled with idols. In the ancient Greco-Roman world, there were idol temples everywhere and most people kept idols in their homes. These gods were worthy of veneration and devotion, and appropriately honoring the gods helped ensure that the gods would bring you protection and provision in return. Yet these idols, to Paul, are at best nothing but empty shadows, or at worst backed by demonic power (See 1 Corinthians 8:1-6). Paul knows that to give devotion and honor to any other thing not only diminishes the glory due to the one Creator God, but also inevitably enslaves people to non-gods (See Psalm 115:1-8, Romans 1:18-32). All of this “greatly distressed” Paul. The Greek verb here is *parazuno*, which carries the idea of being really mad, irked, or provoked. To put it mildly, Paul responds to the idolatry he sees in his culture with a mix of anger and broken-heartedness. This inevitably moves him to action.

This gives us our first principle for evangelism: **Are you stirred by the idolatry** that you see around you?

The most natural question may be: what are the idols we see around us? In the post-modern Western culture, these idols are equally pervasive, but a little more subtle than the ancient world: money, sex, power, beauty, individualism, materialism, capitalism, progressivism, the ‘American-dream,’ politics, comfort, etc.

2) Do you listen to the culture? (22-23, 28)

Paul shows a remarkable amount of cultural awareness in this brief little episode. Notice Paul’s ability to speak with humility and yet with boldness. He doesn’t move in with anger or fear,

instead he moves in with respect but deep conviction. He isn't afraid to challenge the cultural assumptions, but yet he does so winsomely. He shows knowledge of the city's objects of worship, poetry, philosophical systems, and deep convictions.

3) Can you contextualize the gospel message to your audience? (24-28)

Paul's ability to contextualize is noteworthy. He does so to two completely different audiences in one go. Notice the challengers to Paul in verse 18: the Epicureans and the Stoics. These are two ancient (with modern counterparts) conceptions of our world that greatly influenced how people lived.

Epicureans taught that the concept of "the divine" was distant and unconcerned with the things happening in the real world. God was transcendent and powerful, yet either wholly uninterested in this world or too distant for us to know either way. Thus, the best a person could do was this: Eat, drink, and be merry for tomorrow we die. Strangely enough, most Americans live their lives with a strangely Epicurean view of God, the gods, or spirituality.

Stoics taught that the gods were immanently available in everything around us. The spirit of the divine was embodied in this world: the trees, the sky, our bodies, etc. The best one could do was discover this reality, accept their fate in life, and try to live out a good life. Again, strangely enough, many Americans live a sort-of-spiritual lifestyle, trying to live right so that they might be enlightened and join the oneness of the universe around them.

In short, the Epicureans highlighted the transcendence of god, while the Stoics highlighted the immanence of god. Now watch Paul. He brilliantly weaves his gospel message to his audience. To the Epicureans, he speaks verse 24 to the Epicureans, while verse 25b and 27-28 masterfully contextualizes his presentation of the True God to the Stoics.

Do you listen to the culture in such a way to **contextualize** your message to your audience?

4) The gospel always points to Jesus as the resurrected King. (31)

Lest anyone think that the gospel is therefore an ambiguous message that can be spun however a person wants, Paul ultimately takes his message to the risen Jesus as the true King of the world.

The concept of a crucified King was ludicrous to the ancient Roman world. Those who were crucified had lost.

For Jews, the concept of a crucified Messiah was blasphemous. The Jews hoped for a national deliverer who would liberate their people from their enemies and restore their kingdom.

Jesus' resurrection, however, was the declaration to the world that Jesus indeed was Israel's Messiah. He had defeated their true enemy: sin and death. And in light of Jesus' resurrection, He alone is the world's true King. (See Romans 1.3-4) This **message of Jesus' kingdom** is at the heart of the gospel, for it is the announcement of a kingdom that pushes back against the darkness in the world and brings the message of hope, forgiveness, grace, and justice to every tribe, tongue, people and nation.

Why is the resurrection such good news?

What part of the message of Jesus' Kingdom do people around you find ludicrous or ridiculous?

5) You have to talk. To real people. About Jesus. Period.

This may sound obvious, but Paul actually went and spoke to real people about this message. There's an old saying by St. Francis of Assisi, "Preach Christ always, if necessary use words." While the sentiment of his message is certainly

valid—we should always demonstrate Christ with our lifestyle choices—the message has been hijacked.

Many have hid behind this statement, assuming that simply being a nice person or obeying the Scripture's teaching will be enough to win people to Jesus. Lifestyle evangelism is certainly important, but to tell the good news, we must do just that: tell good news. It **must** be shared **verbally**. In other words, **you have to talk!**

6) You may 'go to jail.' (19)

Paul was dragged before the Areopagus, which in the city of Athens functioned much more like a courtroom or a judicial establishment than a philosophical classroom. This was where decisions concerning important matters (and people) were hashed out. In short, in verse 19, Paul was in trouble. The people were angry, and they were putting Paul on trial. This was regular fare for Paul, as many of the places he visited responded with hostility, antagonism, and outright violence. But Paul was undeterred.

In our Great Commission to make disciples, we are called to do so in the face of the same kinds of potential responses from our culture. Are you ready? **Have you counted the cost?**

Keep in mind, this is not hostility because your tactics are wrong or because you speak arrogantly, or you act like a jerk! This is opposition because the heart of the message of the gospel—a crucified and risen Lord—is foolishness to everything the cultures of the world stand for (1 Corinthians 1:18-25).

Power has been radically redefined. Glory now takes the form of sacrifice. The gospel calls out against the idols of every culture. This will inherently grate against the patterns, norms, and paradigms of the culture.

Are you prepared for this? Have you considered this? Jesus didn't call us to a safe and happy life, but to a full life (even in the midst of suffering or persecution).

Reflection Questions

Have you ever tried to share your faith before? If so, how did it go?

What keeps you from sharing your faith?

What about sharing the message of Jesus with a friend, neighbor, or coworker scares you? Please explain.

What about sharing the message of Jesus with a friend, neighbor, or coworker excites you?

Prayer Exercise

In your own words, summarize the message of the gospel.

Session Two

B.L.E.S.S.¹

Use your job, skills, and passions where we live, work, and play
to bless your city on mission for Jesus.

Begin in Prayer

How to Pray Effectively

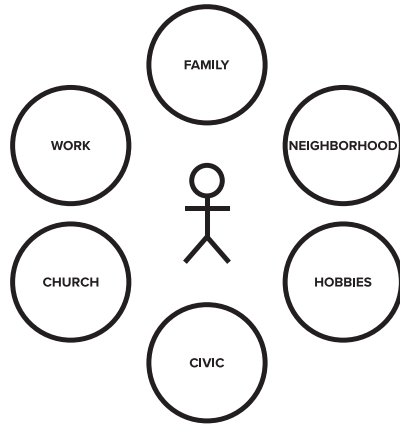
Plan: What is your plan to pray regularly?

Prepare: What posture and mindset do you need to assume?

Places: What places will you go to this day? Make a mental map.

People: What people will you interact with today?

¹ The material in this chapter is from the book *B.L.E.S.S. 5 Everyday Ways to Love Your Neighbor and Change the World* by Dave Ferguson and Jon Ferguson.



Listen

Author and journalist David Brooks defines two types of people: Illuminators and Diminishers.

Illuminators are those who make others feel seen, heard, and valued. They pay close attention, show genuine curiosity, and draw people out. In short, they help others shine by spotlighting their strengths, stories, and inner lives.

Diminishers are those who make others feel insecure, invisible, small, or judged. They are often self-centered, distracted, or dismissive in conversation. In short, they tend to flatten others into categories, overlook individuality, or dominate interactions.

How to be an Illuminator

- 1) Practice radical curiosity: Act open-ended, follow up questions, and show real interest in others' stories.
- 2) Be fully present: Put away distractions, make eye contact, and listen with your full attention.
- 3) Affirm people's worth: Recognize their contributions, emotions, and unique perspectives.
- 4) Resist labeling: Don't reduce people to stereotypes, political views, or job titles.

- 5) Create safe emotional space: Be a person with whom others feel free to be vulnerable and authentic.

How to Avoid being a **Diminisher**

- 1) Don't hijack conversations: Resist turning their story into one about you.
- 2) Watch for inattentiveness: avoid interrupting, checking your phone, or faking interest.
- 3) Avoid judgmental posture: Don't assume you know their motivations.
- 4) Don't reduce people to roles or labels: See them as individuals.

How to Listen Well: Four H's of Listening

History

"Tell me your story." "What's the high point, the low point, and the turning point of your life?" "Where did you grow up?"

Heart

"What's your favorite _____ (team, restaurant, vacation destination)?"

Habits

"What do you like to do with your free time?" "What are you into?"

Hurts

"How are you doing with _____ (name the situation)?" "How do you feel about _____ (name the situation/issue)?"

As we consider how we may listen to the community around us, we may borrow from Rich Gorman's advice on "listening for the Four P's of a Place."

Pain

Every community has challenges, blind-spots, broken places, and difficulties that put a strain on that particular community. As Dave and John Ferguson wrote, "There's pain in every place, and if you want to bless a particular community, you cannot turn a blind eye to its pain."

What are the challenges and difficulties in your community?

What areas of brokenness exist? Do you see gaps in your city or workplace where the gospel can bring redemptive light?

Who is hurting in your community?

Pennies

The economy of any given community greatly affects the mindset and attitude of that community. Some communities are more blue-collar, others more white collar. Some have many job opportunities and resources are abundant, while others do not.

How has the local economy affected people's lives, whether positively or negatively?

Power

Every collection of people into an ordered society has some form of authority or power, whether this is in the form of governmental structures or agencies, or whether it is in the form of business councils or school boards. In many communities, businesses hold a significant amount of power.

Where does power rest in our community?

If we were going to bless our community, which power structures would be the most helpful and which would be the most hostile?

Parties

Communities celebrate together. From birthdays to state-championships to graduations, people love to come together to cherish a shared set of values. These values are embraced and celebrated in a whole host of ways, from large stadiums to neighborhood gatherings.

What do people celebrate in your community?

What values are re-enforced through these celebrations?

Eat

Create a Meal Calendar.

Meal	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S
Breakfast							
Lunch							
Dinner							
Coffee							

Each week, intentionally plan one or more of these opportunities to share a meal with someone in your community who may not know Jesus.

Serve

How can you serve your neighbor practically?

R-P-M-S

How's my neighbor doing **Relationally**?

- How is their home life?
- How is their marriage, dating, family?
- Do they have close friendships?
- How are their work relationships?

How's my neighbor doing **Physical**?

- How is their overall health?
- How is their energy level?
- Are they getting enough sleep?
- Are their eating and exercise habits healthy?

How's my neighbor doing **Mental**?

- Are there any signs of anxiety?
- Is there any indication of depression?
- Have I noticed any mood swings?
- Are they learning? If so, what about?

How's my neighbor doing Spiritual?

- Do they sense something is missing in their life?
- Are they willing to allow you to pray for them?
- Do they have a spiritual curiosity?
- Do they initiate spiritual or religious conversations?
- What do they believe?
- Why do they believe it?

Using the above, how is your neighbor doing? How can you serve them practically this week?

How can you serve alongside your neighbor?

Story

How to tell a story

All stories have the same basic form.

They begin with an **exposition**. In this section you lay out the pieces that make up the story. Who are the characters? What is the setting? What is normal life like in this story?

Then we move to the **crisis**. In this section life is disrupted. A great challenge faces a character in the story. The heart of every story is how characters face this challenge. It gives the story a center that organizes and balances everything else. How the crisis resolves is the theme or thesis of the story.

Finally, we arrive at a **conclusion**. Here we see the results of how our character faced their great challenge. In thinking through your story, summarize the following three parts of your story:

1. **My life before Jesus**

2. **How I met Jesus**

3. **My life since I met Jesus**

As we tell our stories, we can follow this basic outline. First, give us the exposition. Who are you? Where did you come from? This is your life before Jesus. What was normal life like apart from Christ?

Then, what was your crisis moment? Was there one large challenge that brought you to faith? What was the conversion like? How did you meet Jesus? Don't be too thrown by the word 'crisis.' For many, there is one big crisis event. For others, the challenge may be a pattern, example: "I was always crushed by a sense that I'm not enough."

Finally, what is the conclusion for you? In one sense, your story is still ongoing! It is not concluded. But as believers we live our lives in the new normal of following Jesus as king. Tell people what life is like for you now. You may have many decades of life in your story. You don't have to tell everything! Let the crisis organize the information for you.

If you have a similar story with the person you're talking to, or maybe they're going through a crisis similar to yours, make sure and contextualize your story to their circumstances. Listen to them, and sometimes you'll be surprised how Jesus rescued you from something that somebody else is currently going through.

Think through each of those components and write out your story here, or at least a brief sentence regarding each of these components.

Write Out Your Story

Session Three

Contextualize the Gospel

*“Contextualization is giving people the **Bible’s answers**, which they may not at all want to hear, to questions about life that people in their **particular time and place** are asking, in language and forms they can **comprehend**, and through appeals and arguments with force they can **feel**, even if they reject them.”*

-Tim Keller

The Importance of Contextualization

Once you have engaged the person in relationship, conversation, friendship, etc. it is now important to consider how you may shape or frame the message of the gospel in a way that is compelling, pertinent, or beautiful for them. This can be challenging, yes, but it is often highly effective in helping people hear the gospel for the first time.

If you’re speaking to a progressive, what facets of the gospel message may be helpful to highlight? What about a passionate conservative? What about someone from another country with a different background? What about a Boomer? What about someone from Gen Z? How can the richness of the gospel message address the people around you in your workplace, neighborhood, and city?

Evangelism ‘Flow-chart’

1: Setting Determines Approach

One-touch ——— Process

If you think about the relationships in your life, your approach to sharing the gospel will necessarily move across a spectrum. For example, if you are on an airplane with someone, and you only have the two hours of the flight and you want to engage someone with a spiritual conversation, you will likely only have this one encounter with the person, thus if you aim to share the gospel with them you must appreciate this.

However, if you’re talking with one of your siblings or a good friend, your approach will necessarily have to adjust to be more of a relational process over time. One-touch evangelism will by necessity require a more intentional conversation and dialogue with the person, while process evangelism has the ability to work its way into real-life situations and conversations. Both, however, require urgency!

The first decision you must make is which approach should you take. Then, once you have decided, move to the next.

What process would be most appropriate for sharing the gospel with your neighbor?

2: What is their familiarity with the Gospel?

Highly familiar ——— Highly unfamiliar

People growing up in the “Bible belt” may come to the table with a familiarity and awareness of concepts or ideas of Christianity. Some may have grown up in a Christian family and went to church often. Others may have been a part of a Christian organization. Some may have gone through a process of deconstructing their former faith, while others may have simply drifted away from it without any real awareness. In sharing the gospel with people, it is helpful to recognize if they have some of the “furniture” (ideas, concepts, stories, and theology) of Christian teaching already in their brains. Often this Christian ‘furniture’ is there, but it is misplaced, jumbled, or confused. Evangelism, then, may involve helping them rearrange that furniture in a way that lines up with the gospel and is compelling to their imagination. In short, you re-train them in the good news and its implications for life.

Other people, however, have little familiarity with Christian teaching. Perhaps they come from another religious background, or maybe they come from a more secular area of the Western world. Many people see Christianity as a threat to culture, as something highly politicized, bigoted, or dangerous. It is imperative to be sensitive to this when sharing the message of the gospel with them.

What do they believe? Why do they believe it? What circumstances caused them to believe such things? Are they consistent in their worldview? What shaped them? Where are they from? These are important considerations when getting to know another person.

Once you have learned their familiarity with Christianity, move to the next.

How familiar is your neighbor with the gospel?

Lots of skepticism, questions, or doubts — Little skepticism, questions, or doubt

Imagine with me: there is a path through the woods, this path represents the path toward understanding and trusting the message of the gospel; sometimes there's debris in the way, and sometimes it's blocking the path altogether. This debris, or underbrush, may be in the form of a wound they've experienced from someone who called themselves a Christian, from a church that hurt them, from a personal experience with someone they love who was hurt by the church. This underbrush may be caused by a personal sadness or bitterness. Perhaps they had a loved one get sick and prayed that God would heal them, and the person died and they're just frustrated at God. This underbrush may be in the form of a serious challenge or flaw they see in Christian doctrine or ethics. For example, many people may struggle to even give the gospel an opportunity because they feel like Christian teaching on homosexuality or gender is incompatible with reason and justice. They may find the historical or scientific claims of the Bible incompatible with the world they see and experience.

Regardless of what their questions, doubts, fears, wounds, or concerns may be, in sharing the gospel you will often have to address this debris as best you can. Sometimes you'll have to clear some (or much) of it away, lovingly and carefully.

For example, if someone was hurt significantly by a Christian, the first thing you may have to do is simply listen to their story, express sorrow for their pain, and apologize on behalf of Christians and Jesus. You'll be surprised how often simply hearing a person's story and compassionately understanding it goes in them opening up to the story of the gospel. You may have to bring in a resource to help answer their difficult questions. Resources like Tim Keller's Reason

for God or the Bible Project Podcast may be a great starting point. In evangelism, you must be aware of the underbrush and the debris.

What obstacles stand in the way of your neighbor hearing the story of the gospel with an open mind?

4: What do they affirm or value?

Connect ——— Challenge

The opportunity, if possible, is to build on areas of connection with the person you are sharing with, yet also to demonstrate how the gospel story challenges their worldview in compelling ways.

For example, as you get to know a person, you may find that they have a high value for nature and conservation. They may even attribute its beauty and design to God in a vague sense or a “higher power.” The story they tell might go something like this: one day everything was beautiful and green until humans showed up began not only using but abusing natural resources and polluting the natural world. We need to live more simply and conserve natural resources to get back to a healthy, balanced, and beautiful earth.

Can you see the story structure? The interesting thing is that there is quite a bit of common ground with this story and the gospel story. God created everything good, and He is working to restore all of creation. It is interesting, even exciting, for people to hear these kinds of commonalities with Christians, especially if you show them specifically in Scripture—like Genesis 1 or sections of Revelation 21 and 22 in this case. The gospel story, however, also states that humans are the problem, but in a significantly different way—

humans have a problem with sin and idolatry! The gospel story also says that we cannot reverse the damage of sin to each other and our world on our own no matter how hard we try. We need a savior, and God sent Jesus as the Savior to redeem and restore all things.

Speaking the truth of Jesus in love in everyday conversation often comes through big sweeping stories like these that summarize the truth of who God is and what He is doing in the world and in lives. The gospel story can help us tell the big picture story of the Bible. It can also help us listen for areas of commonality with not-yet believers as well as opportunities to show how the gospel story has compelling differences.

What values do people in the Boomer generation tend to elevate? What about Gen X, Millennial, Gen Z, etc.?

What biblical values does your community embrace (whether they know they're from the Bible or not)?

What values or stories do you need to challenge or lovingly contradict?

5. What are their idols?

“Idols” may sound like a strange concept, but consider how our heart’s deepest desires ultimately drives the direction of our lives.

As you get to know someone, you will notice what drives them, what values they cling to, what hopes they hold, and what they need to provide them with their sense of worth, beauty, significance, or honor. These often manifest themselves in a person's life. At the heart, every human has an option: to receive their significance, meaning, and value from their Creator or grasp for it in something else.

Placing something or someone in the position of deity is idolatry and every human battles this throughout life (whether they're in the church or not). Notice: a person may overwork and neglect their health and family because they have an idol of success or materialism that they believe will satisfy them. A person may overdrink or overeat to escape or self-medicate, because they have an idol of pleasure or control. A person may move through dating relationships in unhealthy ways because they have an idol of their own self-image or an image of the perfect mate. There are many other examples (see *Counterfeit Gods* by Tim Keller).

In listening to the person, what are their idols? What do they look to for their happiness or their satisfaction? What language do they use that indicates their hopes are in something else beside the Creator? What tells them they matter? How do they feel secure or beautiful? These are the kinds of things you're listening for in relationship and can often be catalysts for contextualizing the message of the gospel to the person.

The question for all of us is then: How is God better than that idol? How can I articulate the message of the gospel in such a way to demonstrate that Jesus is better?

What are the idols you see around you in your culture?

How do they manifest in your city, neighborhood, friend-group, culture, media?

Prayer Exercise

Begin assessing the people you wrote down last week and thinking through this ‘flow-chart.’ What approach would work best? How familiar are they with the story of the Bible? What are their hopes and dreams? What are their fears? Which gospel-theme (see appendix below) may be compelling to them, and which ones may be difficult for them to hear?

Session Four

Making the Gospel Appealing

Appealing: To make something attractive or interesting.

In thinking through sharing the good news of Jesus, we must also consider how to make this news truly appealing. But how do we do that?

1. The Truth of the gospel is appealing

- Demonstrate that Christian worldview is intellectually sound and can withstand scrutiny from various disciplines like philosophy, anthropology, and literature. The gospel engages the mind and the intellect.

2. The Goodness of the gospel is appealing

- Demonstrate that the Christian worldview provides a foundation for a coherent moral framework. The gospel provides a foundation for justice and morality that secularism cannot reproduce. The gospel fosters genuine human flourishing and grounds a better way to live in the big things and the small things. The gospel engages our real-life world.

3. The Beauty of the gospel is appealing

- Demonstrate that the Christian worldview resonates with our deepest desires. The gospel engages the affections and melts the heart.

Be Creative

How does art, beauty, story, nature, etc. tell the story of the gospel in a compelling way? How might you utilize stories from the culture (movies, shows, art, culture) to relate the gospel message to them?

Be Relational

You are sharing the gospel because you care about that person, not because they are a project. Some of the most fruitful evangelism takes place in the midst of normal conversation and normal relationships and the stuff of real-life. You must start looking at all of life and every relationship as a place where the gospel's message should come to bear.

Be Authentic

Be yourself! We all struggle, so don't be afraid to let the person in on your struggles, failures, or pain. If a tool doesn't come across authentically, don't use it!

Be Invitational

Ultimately, we are inviting people to believe in Jesus as King and follow him to find joy. Do not be scared to invite them to do just that. You are not being offensive! You have water that quenches their deepest thirst, but you must offer it to them clearly.

Be Prayerful

Lewis Chafer once said, "You should talk to God about men before you talk to men about God."

Prayer Exercise

How can you make the gospel appealing in each of these three ways?

Appendix

Tools for Evangelism

Transition Conversation to the Gospel

There are many ways to bring gospel implications to the forefront in normal conversation. We just need to listen to gospel themes (articulated below) or opportunities to discuss what we believe and why. In many cases, people are willing to talk about important issues of the day and things that are going on around the world. All of these are opportunities to bring gospel themes to bear. Maybe they're sharing something personal that is going on in their life, another opportunity to either connect with some part of your story and how Jesus has changed you for the better or brought you hope and strength.

The Romans Road

Romans 1:18-32

Romans 3:23

Romans 5:8

Romans 6:23

Romans 8:1

Romans 8:37-38

Romans 12:1

These verses help articulate a significant piece of the gospel's story, utilizing a single book of the Bible written to the ancient Roman world.

Invitation to join community

One simple way to share the gospel, especially in the Bible-belt where 'going to church' still has social capital, is to invite people into your community. Bringing people to a gospel-believing and gospel-preaching church may be a great way to expose them to the message of the gospel. Bringing them into a healthy small group would be another. Invite them into your world, and let them see how a relationship with Jesus changes everything.

Utilizing Content & Resourcing

Often, it can be helpful to bring an 'expert' or another 3rd party voice to the conversation. The beauty of this tool is that in the present day and age technology has enabled almost endless content to be right at our fingertips. Perhaps there is a podcast series, a YouTube video, a book, or a song that would help you share the message of Jesus with the person you're evangelizing. Maybe they've got really serious doubts about Christianity and its validity and you need to remove some of that debris but don't know how... there are several podcasts or books that can help you with that. How can you utilize the resources and material around you to bring the gospel message?

Use the Bible

The Bible is filled with amazing stories of God's deliverance, faithfulness, and love for his people. Many of these stories are beautiful in and of themselves, and all of them ultimately point to Jesus as the great Hero of the biblical story. For some people, the story of Jesus and the Woman at the well paints a vivid and brilliant portrait of the love of Jesus...share this story! The deliverance of the three men from the blazing furnace in Daniel 3 is awesome. Jesus' parable about the prodigal son carries an amazing message. Share away!

Direct Offer

At some point, you will need to be explicit. The level of explicitness may be differ from person to person, but don't be afraid to ask the person you are evangelizing if they want to start following Jesus. This can be done in many ways, but recognize that you are offering them a new King and at some point you will have to summon them to follow that King.

Parabolic Stories

What stories from either our culture or from other pieces of literature mirror the gospel themes found in the Bible. Obviously C.S. Lewis in the *Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe* has gospel parallels, but look for these elsewhere. You may be surprised how many things in life point to gospel themes that people find compelling.

Listening for Gospel Themes

The gospel theme is probably the most familiar way Christians think of the gospel of Jesus and how to share it in conversation with not-yet believers. God is holy and the rightful king of the universe and our lives. But Romans 1:18-32 teaches us that humans have chosen to worship not the good Creator God, but instead, installed idols on the throne of our hearts and as a result these idols dominate our culture and dehumanize people. In much of human history, the idols of money, sex, power, and politics have been especially pervasive. These lead to a whole host of injustice, pain, brokenness, selfishness, greed, and hostility in our world.

The good news is that God sent His Son Jesus to break the power these idols have on us, rescue us from our rebellion and sin, and forgive us through his work on the cross and subsequent resurrection.

The categories in the gospel theme can also be used to get more specific and particular in your conversations and relationships with not-yet believers.

Faith in Jesus is a reality of the heart, but it also shows up in practical ways in everyday life choices. That is something to consider in conversations with not-yet believers. Let's take the examples above. If those people do put their faith in Jesus and worship the One True God instead of their idol, it will show up in life change. Faith in Jesus may look like not overworking but working as unto the Lord in a way that cares for personal and family health, even forgoing a promotion opportunity. Faith in Jesus may show up in someone no longer over-drinking or over-eating and learning how to live out pleasing God and learning to cope with stress through prayer and Christian community. Faith in Jesus may look like letting the love of God satisfy in a life of singleness or sharing the love of God in a Christian marriage relationship.

Here are some things to listen for in conversation and consider as you speak the truth of Jesus in everyday conversations with not-yet believers:

God | what is the idol underneath this person's lifestyle? The idols of money, sex, power, and politics dominate the landscape of the modern American culture. What hope is this person placing in an idol of culture, or a system of the world that ultimately will fail them? How is God better?

Sin | the heart of sin is rejecting God's rightful place of good King in our life and instead establishing something else to worship. Where do you see this manifesting in this person's life? How is it not working?

Jesus | How is Jesus better than this idol? Are there specific passages of Scripture to bring up in conversation?

Faith | What does turning from this particular sin and following Jesus by faith look like practically?

Regardless of the tools you use in evangelism—whether the gospel framework, story, theme, or some other tool—Christians are all called to **speak the truth of Jesus in love in everyday life with life-changing effect**. Let's be faithful

to that calling by having the good news of Jesus on the tip of our tongues and let our everyday lives show the life changing effects of faith in Jesus in relationships with not-yet believers.

Gospel Friendship

You must be close enough with someone to know their story, know their wounds, know their questions, and be someone they seek out when the chips are down. Much of our evangelism will take place in the context of real relationships. Put simply, it's hard to share Jesus with people you don't know. So get to know them; as people. Learn to listen to them. Show up for them. Be OK *not* saying anything when they go through grief. (There will be time enough later for theologizing!) Put simply, lean in as a friend. Find things in common, and enjoy those things together.

Gospel Demonstration

Larry Hurtado, in *Destroyer of the Gods*, mentions five things that the early Christians did that made huge impact on the ancient Roman culture:

- Passionately pro-life
- Rigorously monogamous
- Civil in discourse and response
- Multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-socio-economic
- Committed to caring for the poor and marginalized

1 Peter 3:15 ^{NIV}

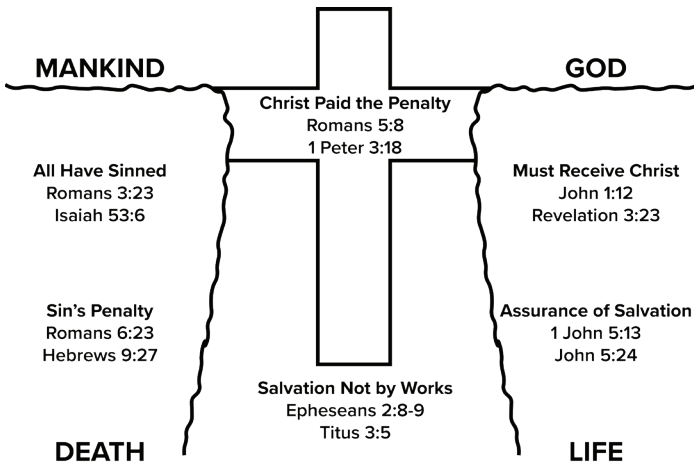
But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Gospel Credibility

Helping people question their answers before answering their questions.

- Humans must have plausible and credible answers to the big questions of life:
- How do I find meaning in life that suffering can't take away?
- How do I find happiness that isn't just circumstance-based?
- How do I find freedom (autonomy) that doesn't reduce community and relationships to thin transactions?
- What is my identity and what keeps it from being fragile or performance-based?
- How do I deal with forgiveness and guilt?
- How do I face death with peace?
- Is there a basis for true justice that doesn't turn us into oppressors ourselves?
- How do I explain the transcendent sense of love and beauty that I experience?

The Bridge to Life



Process is Never Over

Know this, evangelism is merely a part of seeing a person become truly alive. Life is found in following Jesus as King, trusting his provision, and experiencing freedom in Him. If someone places their trust in Jesus, this is an amazing thing to celebrate. Now, they begin the process of coming alive in surrendering their life to him. We call this discipleship, and it's a life-calling. If someone is refusing the gospel's call, keep praying and keep listening and keep sharing!

