

I Gospel Fluency: Session 1 I

“Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.”

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

The Gospel

The gospel is the centerpiece of Christianity; the apex of God’s self-revelation to us through the Bible. Erik Thoennes explains it this way: “The main message of the Bible is that the one true God is displaying his glory primarily in redeeming and restoring his fallen creation by fulfilling his covenant promises and commands through the glorious person and atoning work of Christ.” Jesus took the place of humanity by living a perfect, sinless life and dying on the cross, taking upon Himself the penalty for our sins. Jesus rose from the grave victorious over sin, death, hell, and Satan. The good news of the gospel is that we are saved by Jesus’ work on our behalf.

In Romans 1:16-17, Paul writes: *“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the **power of God for salvation** to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, ‘The righteous shall live by faith.’”* The gospel is the power of God for salvation, and this salvation is not simply a one time thing. It is an active, all-of-life process.

In Colossians 1, Paul says, “Him we proclaim warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.” - You do not ever outgrow your need for the gospel: “everyone” needs to be reminded of who Jesus is and what he has done in order that we might grow to maturity. As 1 Corinthians 15 quoted above says, “Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel...” often that is what we need, a reminder of what we already know to be true but are failing to fully believe, apply, obey, and rest in. As 1 Corinthians 2:2 says, “For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” We point to Jesus above all else because he’s better than everything else.

Gospel-Centered: Good News Before Good Advice

The Gospel is the good news of what Jesus has accomplished on behalf of his people. Like a king who wins a battle on behalf of his citizens, Jesus has won the victory over sin on behalf of the church. We now live in light of the good news of God’s salvation on our behalf. The call in the gospel is a call to believe. The gospel is not advice on how we *ought to live in order to make Jesus love us* but rather is the news of what Jesus has done on our behalf because of his great love for us. This changes everything about how we approach growth and maturity as a church.

While advice may be helpful, it certainly isn't the goal. People do not simply need better advice - they need Jesus. In our groups, we give good news before good advice. We apply the good news to ourselves which allows us to move from a self-centered, sinful lifestyle to a life that is fully surrendered to Jesus. All of our internal thoughts, desires, dreams, struggles, and beliefs are now consistently impacted by the truth of the gospel. Our lives are now for Jesus alone. We also give this good news to others, allowing us to view the world through the lens of the gospel. In other words, work, marriage, sin, social justice --- all of life --- is filtered and processed through one's understanding of how the finished work of Jesus applies to it. Wisdom and godly advice are helpful and often needed, but they are not the fix to our soul level sin and brokenness. We give good news before good advice. Here is a comparison of some distinguishing features of advice versus good news.

Advice	Good News
Typically starts with some version of "You just need to..."	Typically starts with some version of "In Christ you are..." (Righteous, justified, made new, clean, loved, adopted, etc.)
Primarily focuses on behavior modification and accountability.	Does not neglect accountability, but does not stop there—it digs deeper and focuses on the heart change that will lead to behavior change.
About what you should do.	About what Jesus has done on your behalf.
Makes people feel increased pressure.	Makes people feel relieved from pressure.
Often makes ourselves and our work/ability the hero	Shows how Jesus is the hero.

Gospel Fluency: Jesus is the Answer

If the gospel transforms every aspect of our personal story, it will naturally become a part of the way we speak. And since the gospel is news, at some point, it must be verbally shared. The concept of Gospel Fluency is based on the premise that the elements of Jesus' life, death and resurrection would become as natural a part of our speech as our native language. It shows up as we converse with people, view their life circumstances through the lens of the gospel, and seamlessly share how the gospel is good news to their specific situation. In helping the church at Ephesus understand what growing into spiritual maturity looks like, Paul says: "...speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ..." (Ephesians 4:15). Paul's understanding of Christian growth is that we would

Speak the truth in love to each other. He then clarifies in verse 21 that the *truth* is in Jesus. Christians should speak the gospel to each other - it is our new native tongue.

Application

Tom is in love with Michelle, but she treats him terribly. His whole life seems to ebb and flow with how their relationship is going. When things are good - he's on top of the world. When things are bad - he can hardly get out of bed.

Write out some good advice for Tom:

Now, how would you share good news with Tom:

While it may be easier at first to give good advice, the good news of the gospel has the ability to effect long-lasting change on how Tom views his relationship. Tom's worth and value ultimately come from the fact that Jesus gave his life for him on the cross. Tom is now free from making his relationship with Michelle the determining factor for how well his life is going. This is evidence of how the gospel is good news for all of life.

Gospel Fluency: Basic Vocabulary

To speak the gospel, you must understand all that Jesus accomplishes through the cross. When asked the question, "What does Jesus' death on the cross do for you today?", most people respond that His sacrifice pays the penalty for our sin. While true, this is only one aspect of the many far-reaching implications of his death and resurrection. Here is a list of the effects that the gospel has on our daily lives. There may be some big words in this list, but they are biblical. Hopefully, the explanations will help you have a working understanding of how they might help you share the gospel. Remember, salvation is not just good news for our eternity, but for our marriages, jobs, grades, parenting - every aspect of our lives.

- **Salvation** (Acts 4:12, Romans 1:16)—Jesus' life, death, and resurrection save us from our sins. We are all working to fix our problems through work, relationships, success, etc. - trying to save ourselves, but only Jesus can make us complete.

- **Justification** (Romans 3:20-26, Galatians 2:16)—We are given the righteousness of Jesus and have his perfect standing with God. Our value doesn't come from who we are or what we do - it comes from Jesus.
- **Reconciliation** (Colossians 1:21-22)—We were once enemies of God through our sin, but Christ has brought us back into a right relationship with God. We can now mend broken relationships with those around us.
- **Adoption** (Romans 8:12-17)—We have been adopted as sons and heirs of God. We are now cherished members of God's eternal family - the church.
- **New Creation** (2 Corinthians 5:17-22)—We are made into a new creation: new heart, new mind, new desires. We are no longer controlled by our sinful desires or marked by our sinful past.
- **New Identity** (Romans 8:1, 15-17)—We have been given a new identity in Jesus. We are no longer labeled by what we have done or by what has been done to us.
- **Freedom** (Galatians 5:1, 13; Romans 8:1-4)—We were slaves to sin and idolatry, but by the grace of God, we've been completely freed. Jesus accomplished what the law, moralism, obedience, religion, and human effort could never do.
- **Eternity** (Philippians 3:12-21, Revelation 20-22)—We have been given eternal life with God. We can experience all of life, the good and the bad, with hope in the knowledge that our future is secure and eternal.
- **Works** (Ephesians 2:4-10)—We are saved by Jesus' work on the cross and not works of our own. This means that all of our actions can be motivated by having God's love rather than by trying to earn it.
- **Love** (John 3:16, 1 John 4:4-7)—We are fully loved because Jesus loved us first, so you can rest in his love. We can love other people out of the overflow of that gift, not based off of our similarities, interests, compatibility, etc.
- **Security** (Galatians 3:6-9)—Our salvation is held eternally secure because God promised that he would save us, and then Jesus accomplished that salvation on the cross. Salvation begins and ends with God. No amount of money, success, or titles on earth will provide that security.
- **Provision** (2 Corinthians 8:9)—Jesus provides our greatest need of rescue by dying on the cross. We can trust him all the more to provide for our basic needs of water, food, shelter, clothing, etc.
- **Propitiation** (Romans 3:21-26)—The wrath that God has toward sin and sinners was absorbed by Jesus on the cross. God is not mad at us when we sin. He is not punishing us for our mistakes.
- **Justice** (Romans 3:21-26)—God's ultimate justice is satisfied by Jesus on the cross - all sin is paid for. We never have to seek vengeance when we've been wronged. All sin will be paid for either by sinners or by Jesus.
- **Expiation** (Leviticus 16, Romans 8:1, Hebrews 12:1-2)—Jesus takes away all the shame and guilt of our sin and the sins committed against us. We can talk about our sins and struggles without fear.
- **Sacrifice** (Matthew 16:24)—Jesus gave his life as a ransom to save sinful people. In response to this gift, we can sacrificially give of our own lives for the good of others, knowing the certainty of our future.
- **Sanctification** (Romans 8:9-11, 12:1-2)—Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, He sends the Holy Spirit to indwell and lead believers. As we follow Jesus, He transforms us more and more into the image of Jesus.

- **Mission** (John 3:16, Matthew 28:18-20)—Jesus rescues a people from their sin and send them out to declare this good news as his church. The mission of Jesus gives purpose to every aspect of our lives as we seek to share this good news and make disciples.
- **Empowerment** (John 20:21-22, Acts 1:8, Acts 2, 1 Cor 12)—The Holy Spirit seals and empowers believers for the work of the ministry as missionaries to our world. We are equipped and empowered for all the work God has called us to.

As you can see, the good news of the gospel goes far beyond the simple statement that “Jesus died for my sin.” The gospel has the ability to bring truth and life into every aspect of our lives. This concept is addressed in book entitled *Death by Love* where it states, “One theologian has called the cross the great jewel of the Christian faith, and like every great jewel, it has many precious facets that are each worthy of examining for their brilliance and beauty. Therefore, you will be well served to see each side of this jewel shining together for the glory of God in complementary and not contradictory fashion.” We never outgrow the gospel as we seek to follow Jesus. We only grow deeper as we mine the depths of the riches of this good news.