

Our Gospel

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PREFACE

Everyone likes to hear about good news. I am always excited when someone comes to me and says, “I have good news for you.” My immediate response is usually, “Tell me!” When I was very young, I heard about the Gospel, the good news of God’s redeeming work to make all things new in Jesus Christ. The Gospel has changed my life. I found the love of God for me and wanted him in my life. Since then, I have a personal and close relationship with God in my life. I have a blessed and joyful life.

I hope this study will help you with a foundation of understanding the Gospel. It is *the good news*, the only one that really matters and deserves our full attention. I hope your life will be changed by the Gospel as it has changed mine. The core of the Gospel is the grace of God for us. We do not deserve God’s grace, but God gives it to us because he loves us. This is our Gospel, yours and mine.

Soli Deo Gloria
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Introduction

The *Gospel* means the *Good News*. It is the *Good News* about God's salvation for mankind through Jesus Christ. This *Good news* is our *Good News*, our Gospel.

Lesson 1 – God's Plan for My Salvation

Read Genesis 3:1-13

Genesis 1 and 2 tell us how God created the universe and the first man and woman. In other places of the Bible, there are records of God creating angels. The leader of the angels was Lucifer who wanted to be like God. Lucifer led some of the angels to rebel against God. God threw them out of Heaven and now they roam the earth. Lucifer is also called Satan (meaning "enemy") or the devil (meaning "slanderer"). His followers are called demons or evil spirits. They hate God and deceive people to reject and rebel against God. Satan and his evil spirits always try to corrupt people. Their ultimate goal is to prevent every person from being saved by God and from having a personal and loving relationship with him.

Satan entered into the serpent and tempted the woman, whose name was Eve—mentioned later in verse 20. He made Eve confused by creating doubt in God's word.

What did he say to Eve and what was her response (v.1-3)?

What did God say originally (2:16-17)?

What did Satan say to Eve about God's Word (v.4-5)?

Why do you think Satan mixes the truth with lies?

In the Bible, sin is disobeying or not conforming to God's law in any way. When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, they disobeyed and sinned against God.

What was the first result of their sin (v.7)?

They felt shame of their nakedness for the first time. They were naked without feeling shame before, just like the animals. They tried to make clothing from leaves. Then God looked for Adam and asked, "Where are you?" God surely knew where Adam was. Adam had never run from God before. God wants Adam to think about his *fallen state*—where he is now in his relationship with God. Even though Adam and Eve disobeyed God and broke their relationship with him, God still loved them. God looked for them because he wanted to save them from their sin. God did not leave them alone in their misery (v.9).

What were the further results of their sin (v.10, 12-13)?

Adam and Eve started to become self-centered in their thoughts, words, and actions. Sin had corrupted their good nature. All people, born from Adam and Eve, are born with this corrupted nature. There is always conflict in our relationship with one another. Sin has brought all sorts of self-centeredness in us—selfishness, pride, etc.

Read Genesis 3:14-24

God is a just God and must maintain justice. He must punish sin and all that is evil.

What was God's punishment to the serpent (v.14)?

What was God's punishment to Eve (v.16)?

The perfect loving relationship between Adam and Eve was broken. There would be more self-centered behaviors. Adam, because of his physical strength, would "rule over" Eve.

What was God's punishment to Adam (v.17-19)?

What did God make for Adam and Eve (v.21)?

Their self-made clothing from leaves was not good enough to cover their nakedness and shame. God had to kill an animal and make garments from the skin for Adam and Eve. God was teaching them that:

1. He still loved them, even though they had acted selfishly against him.
2. They received the new clothing from God as a gift. This is God's grace for them. Grace is an act of mercy and kindness to someone who does not deserve it.
3. He killed an animal instead of killing them. The ultimate consequence of their sin was death just as he had told them. An innocent animal was killed as a substitute for them.
4. The skin of an innocent animal covers their sinful body. This points to Jesus who sacrificed himself to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be covered by his righteousness when we put our faith in him, trusting our lives to him.

Sin continues to corrupt mankind. In Genesis 4, a man murdered his own brother. Not very long after mankind increased in number, "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5). God knew the terrible impact of sin on us and had already designed a plan to save us from sin.

What did God promise to do (v.15)?

This verse is the first revelation of the Gospel, the *Good News* about God's salvation for mankind through Jesus Christ, the male offspring of Eve would defeat Satan—"he shall bruise your head"—and free us from the curse of sin. Jesus is the promised Savior who has conquered sin and death for us. Jesus has also restored the perfect loving relationship that mankind once had with God. In Jesus, we can have a personal and loving relationship with God that brings perfect joy and peace to us.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is God's plan for our salvation. It is the grace and love of God, who promised a Savior to save us from the curse and power of sin.

Lesson 2 – Our Victory over the Devil’s Temptations

What kinds of temptations do we have?

What are the consequences when we give in to temptation?

Can we outsmart the devil on our own?

Read Genesis 3:1-7, 15

In Lesson 1, we learned how Adam and Eve fall into sin. The devil gave them three major areas of temptation (v.6): (1) the lust of the flesh—the fruit was good for food; (2) the lust of the eye—the fruit was pleasing to the eye; (3) the pride of life—the fruit was desirable for gaining wisdom or knowledge separately from God.

The devil led Adam and Eve to the road of temptation. Slowly, everything became foggy to them and they could not see the truth of God. They were following the road that led them away from God, and they fell into temptation and sin. Consequently, all mankind—born of Adam and Eve—has fallen into sin. However, God has a plan to save mankind. He has promised a Savior for us (v.15).

Read Matthew 4:1-11

Jesus was preparing himself to begin his ministry on earth. He was brought by the Spirit of God to the wilderness. He spent time alone with God, praying and fasting for forty days and nights. Then God let him be tempted by the devil. To be our Savior, Jesus needed to experience temptation and suffering as a man. He needed to become our model and hope to overcome temptation and suffering.

What was his condition after fasting (v.2)?

What did the tempter [the devil] say to Jesus (v.3)?

Why do you think the devil said, “If you are the Son of God?”

Temptation usually starts with a suggestive, enticing, and tempting thought in our minds.

What was Jesus’ answer to him (v.4)?

The first temptation that Jesus received was to meet his physical hunger. Jesus did not discuss with the devil the tempting thought about what he could do as the Son of God. He rejected it. He replied by quoting Old Testament scripture in Deuteronomy 8:3. Bread or physical food sustains our physical lives, but God’s word is spiritual food that sustains our spiritual lives. Without God’s word, we cannot live and grow spiritually.

The devil then brought Jesus to the pinnacle of the great temple in the holy city—most likely Jerusalem (v.5).

What did the devil say to Jesus there? Why (v.6)?

The devil once again said, “If you are the Son of God.” The devil knows that Jesus is the Son of God. He said this to make Jesus to do his bidding. This time the devil even used Old Testament scripture and twisted the original meaning of Psalm 91:11-12.

What was Jesus’ answer to him (v.7)?

The devil wanted Jesus to fall into pride—the most dangerous sin. If people saw a spectacular performance of Jesus jumping and angels coming to catch him, they would accept him as God and worship him immediately. This was a great temptation for Jesus. He answered the devil by quoting Deuteronomy 6:16. God is not to be tested but trusted.

Where did the devil bring Jesus next? Why (v.8)?

What did the devil say to Jesus there (v.9)?

What was Jesus’ answer to him (v.10)?

The devil wanted Jesus to fall into greediness—another dangerous sin. The devil tried to direct Jesus’ focus on the glory of the world, offering him money, power, people’s attention and worship, etc. The devil wanted Jesus to sin and fail in his mission to save his people. The Bible describes the devil as the deceiver, the tempter, and the Father of lies. Jesus answered him by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13.

In the movie *The Lord of the Rings*, Sauron’s ring is the object of evil and temptation. Once people’s eyes look at the ring, they are tempted to possess it and are drawn to worship the ring as their idol—god (“my precious”)—as if without it, life lacks meaning and fulfillment.

Who came to Jesus after the devil left him? What did they do (v.11)?

The devil gave Jesus three major temptations: the lust of the flesh, the pride of life, and the lust of the eye. Three times Jesus was tempted, and three times he used the word of God to defeat the devil. Jesus’ ultimate battle with the devil is at the cross. Jesus’ mission was to sacrifice himself and to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. The devil tempted him to abandon his mission to save us, but Jesus did not abandon us. He died for us, bearing the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we can be saved from the penalty of our sins and the enslaving power of sin and have a new life in him.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus has defeated the devil for us. Jesus’ victory is our victory as well. He is our Savior. The devil leads us to his road of temptation, but Jesus leads us to his road of victory. We can walk on this road by putting our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him as our Savior and Guide.

Lesson 3 – God’s Compassion and Grace for Me

Have you ever been thankful to someone who does you a favor (help or kindness)?
What are some of the common purposes of people showing kindness to others?
Can people show kindness to others for selfish reasons?

Read Matthew 20:1-16

A parable is a simple story to illustrate a lesson. Parables are effective because they make the audience think as they relate themselves to the characters (people) in the story. Jesus is telling a parable about a compassionate master.

What is the topic that Jesus wants to teach in the parable (v.1)?

In the parable, there was a master of a house who went out to find workers to work in his vineyard (a land with grapevines). Maybe the work was picking grapes, or taking care of the plants—pruning, watering, etc. Ancient Jews used the sun as their time. The first hour is 6 a.m. our time.

How much money did he agree to pay the laborers for their wage (v.2)?

A denarius is an ancient Roman silver coin. It was a fair wage for a full day of work. The master had hired all the workers he needed for the day. However, he went back four times to give people a job—the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and the eleventh hour.

Why do you think he did that?

How much money did he say he would pay them? What would be the fair amount of wage to those workers respectively?

Imagine you were among the last workers who were hired at the eleventh hour. Imagine you had a wife and children at home waiting for you to bring food.

How were you feeling during those hours of waiting in the market to get a job? How would you feel if you were hired and knew that the wage of one hour of work would not be enough to buy food for your wife and children?

When evening came, the master asked his foreman (manager) to pay the workers. Notice something unusual. The master wanted to pay the last workers first. He gave a denarius to those who worked for about one hour and to the rest of the workers. The first workers who had worked since early in the morning received a fair wage according to the agreement. The last workers received a fair wage plus extra money. This extra money was an act of generosity from the master. He wanted the last workers to be able to buy food for their wives and children who were hungry and waiting at home.

Compare the two groups of workers	The first workers	The last workers
<p>What do they think about the master? Are they right?</p> <p>What kind of attitude would they go home with?</p> <p>What kind of impact would it have on them?</p> <p>What would they tell their wives and children about the master?</p>		

There were two groups of people among Jesus’ audience: (1) the community religious leaders (the Pharisees) represented by the first workers in the parable, and (2) the ordinary people represented by the last workers in the parable. Jesus was teaching that the Pharisees thought they were better people than the ordinary people because they worked very hard trying to keep their religious laws. Jesus said that they were no better than other people. Jesus was teaching that:

1. We cannot enter the kingdom of God by our own self-achievement or self-effort—by working hard to keep religious laws or simply by trying to be good people—but by the grace of God alone. The last workers received the master’s grace, but the first workers did not. The Pharisees thought a fair God would certainly return their hard work with a fair wage to them. The harder they tried to be “good” religiously, the more God would give them blessings—money, a good life, a credit to enter heaven, etc. They wanted only God’s blessings but not God himself.
2. Having a personal and loving relationship with God precedes entering God’s kingdom. God wants us to develop a personal and loving relationship with him, before living with him in his kingdom. God wants us to love him and not to want only what he can give us.

In the parable, Jesus put the character of God in the person of the master. Even though he did not need more workers, he gave people a job and graciously paid them, so they could bring food home for their wives and children. He was gracious and compassionate. He was also a hard-working person, going back and forth to help people in the hot sun.

What is the Gospel?

Jesus is God who came down and became a man like us to save us from our sin and misery. Being a follower of Jesus is not about religion, but about a personal and loving relationship with God through Jesus. It is not about what we can offer to God to get his blessings or to enter his heaven but about God’s grace and mercy for us in Jesus. What will make us right with God is not our performance, but our faith in Jesus by trusting and surrendering our lives to him. Jesus is God’s ultimate grace for us. Having a personal and loving relationship with Jesus precedes entering his kingdom and living with him eternally.

Lesson 4 – God Gives Me a New Identity

What would be your answers to these common questions about identity: (1) Who am I? (2) What is the purpose of my life? (3) What or who can make my life meaningful? (4) Do I wish to be different than what I am now?

Read Luke 15:10-24

Jesus is teaching a lesson using a parable. The younger son asked his father for an inheritance—a share of property—before the father died. In that culture, an older son received two thirds of his father’s inheritance, and the younger son received one third of it. The father needed to sell one-third of his land and give the money to his younger son.

Where did the younger son go and what did he do there? What kind of person do you think he wanted to be (v.13)?

What happened to him later on? Why (v.14)?

After looking for a job, he finally got a job to feed pigs, a job that most people did not want to do.

What happened to him and what does “he came to himself” mean (v.16-17)?

What was he thinking to do? Was there a change in his attitude (v.18-19)?

This younger son was a run-away son to his family. He was a person who brought shame to his family and to the neighborhood community. He knew there was no guarantee that everyone, including his older brother, would forgive him. Regardless of these troubling thoughts, he decided to go home anyway, because he knew his father’s character.

What can we guess about his father’s character (v.17)?

What did the father do when he saw his younger son at a distance (v.20)?

How did the son express his regret (v.21)?

Did the father rebuke his son for his wrongdoing? What did the father do next (v.22-24)?

What do you think about the father’s act toward his son?

The father had been waiting for his son to return home. When the father saw his son, he ran—fathers usually do not run, only children. He then embraced and kissed his son. He expressed his compassion and forgiveness before the son said any words. He put the best robe—an expensive piece of clothing—he had on his son. He assured his son that not only was he welcomed, but he was also forgiven. His return was celebrated. In that culture, only a big celebration had a fattened calf. It means the people in the neighborhood community were invited to celebrate. The father restored the social status of his son, not only to his family, but also to the community. Jesus put the character of God in this father. This story points to the grace and forgiveness of God for us, when we return to him with repentance.

Read Luke 15:25-32

How did the older brother react to this celebration (v.28)?

How did the father reach out to him and what was his answer to the father (v.29-30)?

What did the father say to him (v.31-32)?

The father asked his older son to forgive his younger brother, but he refused. When the father sold one-third of his property and gave it to the younger son, the remaining property and wealth became the older son's inheritance. All the living expenses for the younger son would need to come from this. The older son did not want to take his brother back and sacrifice any of his property.

The older brother was just as lost as his younger brother. The older brother did *not come to himself* and repent, but the younger brother did. The older brother wanted only his father's property, just as the younger son did in the beginning of the parable. Now the younger son wanted a loving relationship with his father, but the older son did not want that. He did not even want to forgive his brother.

Jesus concluded the parable with spiritual implication that the younger brother "was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found." This points to us. We are all dead in our sins and lost. We could be made spiritually alive, when we believe and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news for us that God has a good "older brother" for us. Jesus was willing to leave his home in heaven and to search for us at all costs. He brings us to our Father's home, even though it cost him his life. Jesus has sacrificed everything to bring us home. He gives us his best robe—his righteousness—to cover our sin and shame. Jesus restores our identity as God's children. He makes us a new person and gives us a new life in him. When we repent and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives our sins, credits us the righteousness of Jesus, and makes us his children.

Lesson 5 – God Fills My Emptiness

Why do people feel lonely?

What do you do to overcome your loneliness?

Read John 4:1-26

In Old Testament days, Samaria was the capital of the northern kingdom of Israel. It fell to the Assyrian army during the war. The Assyrian king deported many Jews from Samaria to Assyria and brought many foreigners to live in Samaria. These people eventually intermarried with the Jews who remained in the land and formed a mixed race of people who became known as Samaritans. The Jews outside Samaria hated them because they were not pure Jews. The Jewish religious leaders even made a law that if a Jew touched a Samaritan, he would become religiously “unclean.” The Jews considered Samaritans as “unclean” people. When the Jews traveled from Judea (south of Samaria) to Galilee (north of Samaria), they took a route around Samaria, even though it took more time to travel.

How did Jesus travel from Judea to Galilee and what kind of questions do you think Jesus’ disciples would ask him on the road (v.4)?

Jesus was tired and thirsty. He sat beside a well. Ancient Jews used the sun as their time. The first hour is 6 a.m. our time. The sixth hour is 12 p.m. our time. It was noon time, the hottest time of the day. In those days, women went to the well to get water early in the morning or before sunset when the temperature was cooler. A woman came to get water alone at noon, when there were no other women.

What did Jesus ask of her? How did she respond to Jesus’ request (v.7-9)?

What was Jesus’ answer for her (v.10)?

There are four things in Jesus’ statement: (1) what the gift of God is, (2) what living water is, (3) who he is, and (4) how she could receive the gift of God and the living water.

What did she say to Jesus (v.11-12)?

The woman questioned the identity of Jesus, asking him if he was greater than Jacob, who was the great ancestor of the Jews and who dug the well for his family. Jesus kindly replied to her. He started to reveal his identity to her and to explain more about the living water.

What will happen to a person who receives Jesus’ living water (v.13-14)?

Before, she questioned Jesus about how he would get the living water, but now she started to believe that Jesus actually had it. She asked Jesus to give her the living water (v.15).

What did Jesus ask her to do and what was her answer (v.16-17)?

How did Jesus reveal his knowledge about her life and what might be the reasons she went alone to get water at noon (v.17-18)?

Jesus was revealing the true problem of her life. She was an outcast. She was lonely. She had already had five broken relationships. Each broken relationship had caused her pain and depression. She began to understand that Jesus was not an ordinary man.

Who did she think Jesus might be (v.19)?

Understanding that Jesus might be a prophet, she tested Jesus on a religious subject She asked Jesus if the Jews were correct in their claim and if there was anything wrong with the way Samaritans worshipped God (v.20-21).

How does a true worshipper worship God (v.23-24)?

Jesus told her that both the Jews and the Samaritans had limited knowledge about the proper way to worship God. God is spirit. We cannot limit God and worship him only in certain locations. Jesus told her that she could now worship God in spirit and in truth—in a personal and loving relationship with God through him. This was the living water that Jesus offered her. Jesus wanted her to believe in him and she did. She asked Jesus a final question to affirm his identity as the Messiah (the Christ)?

What was Jesus' response to her (v.26)?

Jesus assured her that he was the Messiah. Without any more doubts, she believed in Jesus and began to have the living water—a loving relationship with God through him. Jesus filled her heart's emptiness and made her a new person.

Read John 4:27-30, 39-42

How did she begin to become “a spring of water” for others (v.14, 28-29)?

How did many other Samaritans receive the living water from Jesus (v.39, 41)?

What did they say to her about their belief in Jesus (v.42)?

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the gift of God—the living water—a personal and loving relationship with Jesus that fills our emptiness. In Jesus, we become a new person and have a new life to begin. The love of Christ will overflow in us and make us a channel of blessings for others.

Lesson 6 – God Saves Me

Why is it hard to help a stranger?

Have you ever received a big help from someone?

Read Luke 10-25-37

There was a lawyer—an expert of the Jewish law—who tried to test Jesus. The lawyer understood well the Jewish religious ceremonial law, civil law, and moral law.

What did the lawyer ask Jesus (v.25)?

“To inherit eternal life” means to live in heaven eternally. The lawyer asked about how he could get what he wanted from God. He wanted God’s heaven but not God himself. He did not want a personal and close relationship with God but want only what God can give him.

What is written in the law of God (v.26-27)?

This law is written in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. It is the summary of all God’s moral laws.

What did Jesus tell him to do (v.28)? Will anyone be able to do this perfectly?

Because we have a sinful nature, we are incapable of pleasing God and meeting his perfect standard. The lawyer knew he could not love God with all his heart, soul, strength, and mind. He could not even love other people like he loved himself. He felt guilty and tried to justify himself. He asked Jesus, “Who is my neighbor?” (v.29). He wanted to know “Who is *not* my neighbor?” Jesus gave him an answer by telling a parable. He told a story of a man going down from Jerusalem to Jericho—about 17 miles walk.

What happened to the man while he was going down to Jericho (v.30)?

Who was the first person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.31)?

Who was the second person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.32)?

A priest was a religious leader of the community. A Levite was a religious person who helped the work of priests in the temple of God. The priest and the Levite did not help the man for several possible reasons. Perhaps they were afraid to help a stranger, or had a lot of work to do, or did not want to be involved in any kind of troubles. They also had a religious law that would declare them *unclean*—spiritually dirty—if they touched a dead person. They would be required to do specific religious rituals to make themselves *clean* again. This could make them unable to do their work in the temple.

Who was the third person who saw the man and what did the person do (v.33-35)?

Samaritans were mixed raced people who lived in the northern part of Israel. They were Jews who had intermarried with foreigners. They were a minority group in the Jewish land. The Samaritans and the Jews hated each other. The Jewish religious leaders made a law that if a Jew touched a Samaritan, he would become religiously unclean.

Jesus illustrated that the Samaritan had compassion, took pity on, and rescued the wounded man. He bound up his wounds, possibly using part of his clothes. He used his oil and wine to disinfect the wounds. Oil and wine were very expensive at that time. Then he carried the wounded man, put him on his donkey, and brought him to an inn. He had to walk, leading the donkey. At the inn, he took care of the wounded man. The next day, he gave money to the innkeeper and asked him to take care of the wounded man. He promised to return and pay back any extra money needed to take care of him.

What did Jesus ask the lawyer (v.36)?

What was the lawyer's answer? Why did he not directly say "the Samaritan" (v.37)?

What did Jesus say to him (v.37)?

Jesus taught him that knowing what God wanted him to do—to love God and to love other people—was not enough. He must do what he knew to do. Knowing without doing will make someone a hypocrite—a person who pretends to have moral or religious virtue but does not actually possess that virtue.

There are three great lessons Jesus teaches through this parable. First, if we have a personal and loving relationship with God, we can show mercy to others with love and joy as an act of love for God. Second, showing true love and mercy to others will make us realize that we also need God's love and mercy for ourselves. It will make us humble. We have many weaknesses and ugliness. We need God's grace to forgive all our sins and failures and to grant us his mercy. Third, Jesus saves us when "we are dying on the road." Jesus points *the Good Samaritan* to himself. We sin against God in many ways and deserve to be punished. Jesus came from heaven, as if he were a stranger for us, and rescued us from God's judgment and death.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus has come to save us. We sin against God in many ways, but God gives us his grace and mercy which we do not deserve. God has sent Jesus Christ to rescue us. He carried us on his shoulders, spiritually speaking. He carried our cross and died for the punishment of our sins as our substitute. By believing in Jesus by faith, God forgives and saves us from the penalty of our sins. Jesus is inviting us to have a personal and loving relationship with him that will enable us to love God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind, and to love others as ourselves.

Lesson 7 – God Justifies Us in Jesus Christ

Why do people often look down on others?
What makes us respect each other?

Read Luke 18:9-14

In Israel's community, there were people who considered themselves righteous. These people were usually the religious leaders of the community—the Pharisees. They often looked down on people whom they considered as sinners or religious-law breakers. Jesus wanted to teach them a lesson through a parable.

Who were the two characters in the parable? What were they going to do (v.10)?

Tax collectors were Jewish people who worked for the Roman government to collect taxes from their own people. They often cheated people when they collected taxes. They took more money by force and would keep the extra money for themselves. The Pharisees considered them to be very bad sinners.

To whom did the Pharisee compare himself in his prayer (v.11)?

How did the Pharisee justify himself as a righteous person? What do you think his attitude towards God might have been (v.12)?

What did the tax collector say in his prayer? Why did he stand far off, not dare to look up, and beat his breast? What do you think his attitude towards God might have been (v.13)?

The tax collector knew that he was a bad person—a robber, a cheater, and selfish—and had committed many sins. He knew he was not worthy to stand before God in a holy temple. He understood God's divine justice. He acknowledged that he was a sinner and God must punish his sins. He asked God with a heart of humility and repentance to be merciful to him and to forgive his sins. Repentance means a sinner, having truly become aware of his sinfulness and grieving for his sins, turns to God for mercy and forgiveness and makes a new life commitment to obey God.

What did Jesus say about the tax collector and the Pharisee (v.14)?

God judges our minds and hearts and the intention or motivation of our actions. The Pharisee kept his religious rules as a means for his own benefit—to earn God's blessings but not to simply please God out of love for him. God loves those who are humble and not prideful. Those who come to him with a heart of humility and repentance will be exalted by him. We are all sinners and equally sinful before God. However, we can be justified by God by repenting from our sins, believing in Jesus, and trusting our lives to him by faith.

Read 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

What did God the Father do to Jesus? Why (v.21)?

Jesus Christ knew no sin—had no sin. He was the only person without sin. However, God the Father treated him as legally guilty of our sins, crediting our sins to him. Jesus was willing to sacrifice himself and die for us, bearing the punishment of our sins, so that we can receive his righteousness by believing in what he has done for us. When we put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives us and credits the righteousness of Jesus to us. God treats us as legally righteous, not because of our own righteousness, but because of the righteousness of Jesus credited to us. In Jesus, we are saved and justified.

What do those who are in union with Jesus Christ become—those who repent from their sins, put their faith in Jesus, and receive God’s forgiveness and Jesus’ righteousness (v.17)?

God makes each of us a new person and gives us a new life in Jesus. God does all of this for us, because he wants us to be reconciled to him and to have a loving relationship with him. God’s work of saving us from our sins and reconciling us to himself requires a great sacrifice on God’s part. Jesus had to die as our substitute, bearing the wrath and justice of God for the punishment of our sins (v.18-19).

What do followers of Jesus Christ become for him in this world? What is their duty accordingly (v.20)?

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the message of our salvation and reconciliation with God in Jesus Christ. The Gospel shows us our sins and need of God’s forgiveness. It makes us humbly repent and put our faith in Jesus Christ alone. On our behalf, Jesus has taken what we deserve—our death and the justice of God for our sins—in order that by having faith in him, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we may receive his righteousness and be justified by God. In Jesus, we receive what we do not deserve, God’s forgiveness and grace. God invites us to have a loving relationship with him in Jesus. This is our Gospel, our Good News.

Lesson 8 – We Love because God First Loved Us

What is love according to what most people say?

Whom should we love and how much do you think we need to love them?

Read 1 John 4:7-12

What does John encourage his readers to do? Where does love come from (v.7)?

The popular concept of love is that we need to love those who love us and hate those who hate us. This is exactly what we tend to do driven by our sinful nature. Our love for others is often self-centered in nature—for our own benefits. However, the concept of love according to the Bible is much deeper. Love is a choice of action, including sacrificing or suffering for the sake of the other person and not expecting anything in return.

What is the nature of God (v.8)?

In the Bible, God describes himself as one God in three persons. We call this the Trinity. The three persons of God are in unity. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit love each other perfectly—giving and receiving. Each person of the Trinity centers his love on the others, not self. This kind of love is holy and pure. Love is the nature of God, and he is the source of true love. That is why we say that true love is not self-centered but God-centered. We can only demonstrate true love to other people out of love for God.

How did God demonstrate his true love for us? What is the purpose for (v.9-10)?

God the Father loves us by sending his Son to bear the punishment of our sins and to be the propitiation (satisfying the wrath and justice of God) for our sins. The Son of God loves us by his willingness to come down and be born as a man. Jesus willingly sacrificed himself to die for the punishment of our sins as our substitute, so that we might live through him. When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, our sins are forgiven. We are given a new life in him—a personal and loving relationship with God through Jesus. This is what it means by being spiritually born again.

What is the basis for loving one another (v.11)?

How do people see the love of God through us (v.12)?

When we love one another out of our love for God, his love is perfected in us. God's love is demonstrated by God's children—those who have been spiritually born again in Jesus Christ. When we are born of God, we receive his characteristics and resemble him as his children. People cannot see God, but they can see his love demonstrated through his children—love that is God-centered and not self-centered.

Read 1 John 4:13-21

How do we know that we abide in God and God abides in us (v.13)?

When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, we are reconciled with God. We become his children and are united with him. We live in him and he in us. God the Holy Spirit lives in us and guides our lives. He raises us as his children, taking care of us.

What is the purpose of God the Father sending Jesus Christ, his Son (v.14)?

What is the result of having faith in Jesus (v.15)?

Jesus will return on the Day of Judgment to judge all people for their sins. At this day, God's children will be rewarded and spend eternity with God. In Jesus, our sins have been forgiven and our salvation has been secured. There is no more condemnation for those who are in Jesus (Romans 8:1). There is nothing that can separate us from the love of God in Jesus (Romans 8:39). We live our lives day-to-day with confidence and have no fear knowing that we are God's children and he loves us (v.16-18).

What enables us to love God (v.19)?

The motivation for us to love God is from his love that has touched and changed our hearts. Without God first loving us, without Jesus demonstrating his love for us by sacrificing himself to die for our sins as our substitute, we would not be able to understand what true love is. God's love for us changes our hearts and enables us to love him back. When we are spiritually born of God, God gives us a new nature—a godly nature. We can love God and other people with a God-centered love, though not in a perfect way because we still have our sinful nature.

How do we know whether or not someone loves God (v.20-21)?

“Brother” means other Christians (God's children). A true Christian is someone who has been spiritually born of God. When a Christian loves his brothers, it proves he is a true Christian and has been spiritually born of God. When we love one another, our love reaches out to people who do not know Jesus yet. It draws them to Jesus and to see God's love for them.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that God the Father loves us and has sent his Son to bear the punishment of our sins as our substitute. In Jesus, our salvation is secured. When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, we are saved from sin. God makes us his children and gives us a new nature. God enables us to love him and others with a godly love. The Holy Spirit lives in us and raises us up as God's children.

Lesson 9 – God Protects Me and Gives Me Peace Daily

What kinds of things do you worry about?
How do you handle your worry?

Read Matthew 6:25-34

What matters are more important and what matters are less important (v.25)? Why?

Worrying about material matters is common in our lives. Jesus teaches us that spiritual matters are more important than material matters. Material matters can only give us external comfort, while the root of worry is inside us. We need peace that comforts us from the inside. God is the only one who can give us peace in our hearts.

How does Jesus teach us that we are more important to God than animals and plants and that God will take care of us (v.26-31)?

There are three points that Jesus teaches about why we should not worry:

1. Worry is useless. Being worried will not add time to our lives. It usually wastes our time. We do not even need to worry about tomorrow. Just live one day at a time. This does not mean that we do not need to make plans for the future. It means that we do not need to worry about the future, because our future is in God's hands (v.27, 34).
2. We are valuable to God. We are God's own children. We are more important than birds and plants (v.26).
3. God knows our needs. He will take care of our food and clothes. If God feeds the birds and clothes the plants, he will surely provide food and clothes for his own children. Jesus says that Gentiles (people who do not have a personal and loving relationship with God) worry about material matters—food, drink, and clothing. But because we have a heavenly Father who loves us, he knows our needs and will provide us with those things (v.32).

Instead of being worried, what is the one thing that Jesus tells us to do (v.33)?

The most important thing about life is to seek God's kingdom and righteousness. As our heavenly Father, God promises us that he will take care of our needs. "To seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" means that we put God as the center and the most important subject of our lives. God should be our daily priority. It means spending time daily with God in prayer and studying the Bible. It means that growing our loving relationship with him and our understanding about his will for us should be the primary focus of our lives. When we do this, God will give us peace in our hearts. God's love and peace take away our worry. We worry about material matters when we make them too important to us, but when we make God as the center focus of our lives, we have no worry.

Read John 10:11-15

Jesus used an illustration about sheep, shepherds, and wolves to help people understand his teaching. Many of them owned sheep and worked as shepherds.

What did Jesus say about himself (v.11)?

There are two words in Greek that mean good: *agathos* and *kalos*. *Agathos* is commonly used to describe something good in general. *Kalos* means good in the sense of beautiful and perfect. Jesus used the word *kalos*. He was saying, "I am a *kalos* shepherd." He was saying that he was beautiful and excellent as a shepherd in his work and character. He demonstrated this excellent work and character to his sheep.

How did Jesus demonstrate and prove that (v.11)?

How does a hired hand differ than the shepherd of the sheep (v.12)? Why (v.13)?

Sheep are defenseless animals. They need security and peace and need to be protected from danger. In Jesus' illustration, the sheep were his people who needed protection and care from their true shepherd. Here Jesus pointed to the community religious leaders as the hired hands, who were supposed to take care of God's people (the sheep). However, many of them only cared about themselves and about the money or benefits they could get from their position as religious leaders. They did not love the sheep and would run away if there was danger (wolves). Jesus teaches that each of us is like a sheep. We have a lot of worry in our lives. We need a true shepherd who will guide our lives and take care of our needs. Jesus says to us, "I am your good shepherd."

How close is the relationship between Jesus and his sheep and what does Jesus compare that relationship with (v.14-15)?

Jesus says in verse 15, "I lay down my life for the sheep". In verse 11, Jesus uses the third person "he"—"the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." Here in verse 15, he points to himself "I lay down my life for the sheep." He talks about his sacrifice on the cross for the sheep. He came to bear the punishment of our sins on the cross as our substitute.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that we have a good Father who knows and provides our needs. Our ultimate need is a Savior who will rescue us from sin and evil. God has provided his Son for us. Jesus has come to this world and sacrificed himself to die for us, bearing the punishment of our sins on the cross as our substitute, so that we can have a new life in him. If Jesus did not choose to run away from our cross, we can know he will never abandon us in every situation of our lives. He is our Good Shepherd who will protect us from all evils. Jesus wants us to make him the center of our lives, developing a personal and loving relationship with him just like a sheep and its Shepherd.

Lesson 10 – God Protects Us and Helps Us to Produce Much Fruit in Our Lives

What difficult situations have you experienced?

What happens if you let your fear dominate your thoughts?

Read Mark 4:35-41

After a day of teaching people, Jesus was tired and wanted to rest and spend time alone with his disciples. They got into a boat and went across the Sea of Galilee to the other side.

What happened to them on the sea? Where was Jesus and what was he doing (v.37-38)?

What did his disciples do when they saw him sleeping? What did they ask of him (v.38)?

What did Jesus do after he awoke? What happened to the wind and the sea (v.39)?

What did Jesus say to his disciples (v.40)?

This was probably the first time Jesus' disciples had ever seen someone speak to nature and nature obey. Jesus was the Son of God through whom God the Father created the world and nature. When Jesus said, "Have you still no faith," he was challenging his disciples to think about whether or not they had faith in him, and if so, to what degree? Jesus wanted them to think about whether or not they trusted him as someone who held their lives and souls.

How did the disciples react? What did they say to one another (v.41)?

During the great storm, they were terrified that they would die. Now the storm had gone, and the sea was completely calm, they marveled and were filled with great fear. The first fear was the fear of dying. The second fear was different. They realized three things.

First, they realized that Jesus was God. Who could give a command to nature and nature obey, but God himself? They saw Jesus' authority over nature and comprehended his identity. Second, they realized that God was with them in the boat. Jesus, the Son of God, came down from heaven to the world not only to live among his people, but also to be in the midst of their suffering. Third, although God was with them, they realized that he allowed a great storm—great suffering—to come into their lives. Jesus could prevent the great storm from coming and did not explain to them why he allowed it. He simply asked them to have faith in him, trusting their lives to him.

God oftentimes does not explain why he lets us face difficulties in life. Jesus asks us to simply put our faith in him, trusting him as our Savior who holds our lives in his hands. This is what faith in Jesus means.

Read John 15:1-11

What is the relationship between God the Father, Jesus, and his followers in the vine illustration (v.1, 5)?

What will the vinedresser (gardener) do to the branches (v.2)?

When Jesus spoke about removing dead branches, he was speaking of those who claim to be his followers but fail to produce the fruit of obedience. These are false followers who will never produce fruit. No branch that remains fruitless truly belongs to Jesus, and no branch that truly belongs to Jesus will remain fruitless. True followers of Jesus will produce fruit in their lives, though in varying degrees. They are “clean” branches because they believe in Jesus and their sins have been forgiven (v.2-3)

What does Jesus ask his followers to do? Why (v.4)?

The fruit of the Christian life produced by the Holy Spirit in us is “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23).

How can followers of Jesus bear much fruit in their lives (v.5)?

How does Jesus compare people who do not have a personal and loving relationship with him to dead branches (v.6)?

What is a promise Jesus gives to his followers (v.7)?

When we abide in Jesus, we will want to glorify God with everything we do. Our prayer requests will not be for selfish desires, but for the glory of God and for our fruitfulness as God’s children (v.8). The love between God the Father and Jesus the Son of God is an eternal and unchanging love. It is without measure. Similarly, Jesus’ love for us is without measure, eternal, and unchanging. He demonstrates his love for us by laying down his life for us. He emphasizes that we need to abide in his love (v.9-10).

How do we abide in Jesus’ love and what is the result of it (v.10-11)?

God has revealed his will and commands in his word—the Bible, the Word of God. By being obedient to God’s Word, we abide in God’s love and produce much fruit in our lives.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that Jesus, who has come to rescue us from our sins, will give us strength and joy for daily life as we abide in him. God does not explain the reasons for everything we experience in our lives. God’s ultimate purpose for our lives is to grow us in knowing him, in developing our love for him, and in producing much fruit in our lives. Jesus wants all of his people to have his joy that can make our joy full.

Lesson 11 – God Frees Us from Spiritual Slavery

How do people define freedom?

Are we free and able to be good all the time in our thoughts, words, and actions? Why?

Read Romans 7:14-25

The law refers to God's law as written in the Bible.

What did Paul say about the law and himself (v.14)?

Every person is born with a sinful nature. We all have a tendency to do evil and are incapable of being righteous before God. Paul said that he was a slave sold to sin—spiritual slavery. Sin had been his master since he was born. He could not totally obey God's law.

What did he say about his actions (v.15)? What was the cause of his sinful actions (v.17)?

What did he understand about his sinful nature and what did he keep on doing (v.18-19)?

What did he find to be a law or reality and how did he explain that (v.21-23)?

What was his conclusion about himself (v.24)?

Wretched means a condition of being very unfortunate, miserable, or pitiful. Paul expressed his despair of the control of sin over him. He wanted to be delivered and set free from this slavery. His body only brought him to death. However, Paul rejoiced because God had delivered him from the slavery of sin (v.25).

God has sent Jesus Christ to free us from sin, so that we can have the ability to do what is good and righteous before God. When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God forgives our sins and credits Jesus' perfect righteousness to us. When God sees us, he sees us as holy and righteous, because we are covered by Jesus' righteousness. God makes each of us a new person in Jesus.

Even though we still have our sinful nature in our bodies, God gives us daily strength to overcome sin. As we remain in a personal and loving relationship with Jesus, God's grace will protect us from sin. God also makes us to be more and more righteous from the inside out. God has promised to completely deliver us from sin and our sinful bodies.

Read Romans 6:12-14

Having received the grace of God—the forgiveness of our sins—and having been made as a new person in Jesus Christ, what should we do?

Read Romans 8:1-11

In a courtroom, a criminal is condemned because of his crime or wrongdoing. In God's court room, every person is guilty and condemned because of his wrongdoing.

What is the status of those who have put their faith in Jesus Christ (v.1)?

When we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God unites us with Jesus and makes each of us a new person in him. God no longer condemns us for our sins. He has justified us in Jesus, declaring us as holy and righteous people by crediting Jesus' perfection and righteousness to us.

What has the Spirit of life (the Holy Spirit) done for us (v.2)?

God has given his law for people to obey, but the law cannot save us from our sins (v.3). The law only reveals our sins and condemns us. Therefore, God sent Jesus, his own Son, born as a man like us, to bear the punishment for our sins. God has credited our sins to Jesus and condemned him. Jesus suffered and died on the cross as our substitute.

Why did Jesus sacrifice himself as our substitute (v.4)?

What is the difference between those who lives according to their sinful nature (flesh) and those who live according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (v.5)? Why (v.6-8)?

What is the significance of not having the Holy Spirit (v9)?

What is the significance of having the Holy Spirit dwells in us (v.10-11)?

Our physical bodies have been corrupted by sin. The ultimate penalty of sin is death. We will all die physically. However, if we are in union with Jesus and have a personal and loving relationship with him through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us, we have eternal life. The Holy Spirit, who has raised Jesus from the grave and will also raise us from the grave. God has promised us complete deliverance from sin and our sinful bodies. God has promised to give us new glorified bodies and to completely deliver us from sin and our sinful bodies. We will study this in Lesson 12.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that when we repent from our sins and put our faith in Jesus Christ, trusting and surrendering our lives to him, God justifies us in Jesus and frees us from the slavery of sin. All our sins—past, present, and future—have been forgiven. God declares us righteous and no longer condemns us, by crediting Jesus' righteousness to us. Furthermore, God gives the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, empowering us to defeat sin and to be more and more righteous as God's children day by day. The Holy Spirit sanctifies us from the inside out.

Lesson 12 – God Promises Our Resurrection and Glorification

How did you feel when someone who was close to you passed away?
If you knew you would die today, how would you feel and what would you do?

Read John 11:25-26

What did Jesus say about himself (v.25)?

What will happen to those who believe in Jesus (v.26)?

Our sin brings death to us, both physically and spiritually. Spiritual death means separation from God. All of us were born as sinners separated from God. If we are still separated from God when we die physically, we will experience eternal death—being completely separated from God and all his goodness. However, when we believe and put our faith in Jesus, God restores our relationship with him and gives us a new life in Jesus—a personal and loving relationship with God that goes on for eternity. We will not experience eternal death in hell but eternal life with God in heaven.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Paul reminded the Christians in Corinth about the Gospel they had received. They had been saved by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul emphasized the importance of the Gospel.

What is the Gospel about (v.3-4)?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Some of the Corinthian Christians did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and the resurrection body. It is also understandable that people question how a decayed body can be resurrected (v.12, 35). “But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised” (v.13). The resurrection of Christ is the basis of our resurrection. Paul describes several consequences if Jesus has not been resurrected.

What is the consequence stated in v.14?

It is useless to preach about a dead person and to ask people to believe and put their faith in that person. There is no hope we can get from a dead person.

What is the consequence stated in v.15-16?

If Jesus has not been resurrected, then all Christians are liars and tell false information about their God.

What is the consequence stated in v.17?

If God the Father left Jesus in the grave and had not resurrected him, then Jesus' death would have done nothing to accomplish our justification. Jesus' sacrifice would not have been accepted. This means no one could have received the forgiveness of God by believing in Jesus. We would still be dead in our sins. Faith in Jesus would be futile (useless).

What is the consequence stated in v.18?

Christians, who have died because of their faith in Jesus, would have died in vain. They would be lost and perishing forever. There would be no eternal life with God for them.

What is the consequence stated in v.19?

All follower of Jesus Christ would be the most pitiful people in the world. They would believe in a wrong God, have a wrong faith, and have no hope for life.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-26

The truth is that Jesus has been resurrected. Therefore, there are significant consequences.

What is the consequence stated in v.20?

Jesus being the firstfruits means he is the first person who is resurrected among the dead to live eternally. Jesus' resurrection is the model and projection of Christian resurrection.

How is Jesus compared to Adam (v.21-22)?

When will the resurrection of those who belong to Jesus be? What will happen then (v.23-25)?

What is the last enemy to be destroyed (v.26)?

Jesus will judge and destroy all evils including death on the day of his second return. Evil and death have an end. Jesus will end our suffering from evil and death.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:40-44

Paul speaks of the difference between our earthly bodies and our resurrected bodies. Our earthly bodies are corrupted with sin, but our resurrected bodies will be spiritual and heavenly.

How does Paul use an illustration in nature to contrast the two bodies (v.40-41)?

How does he further contrast them (v.42-44)?

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58

The natural, earthly, and perishable body cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is for the spiritual, heavenly, and imperishable body (v.50).

What is the mystery of the resurrection (v.51-52)?

The resurrection will happen so fast. It will be in the twinkling of an eye. The resurrected body is imperishable and immortal (v.53-54). It is holy in nature. It cannot sin, be corrupted, or suffer pain. It is a glorified body; a body with heavenly glory.

There is a prophecy in the book of Hosea, that death will be destroyed in the end (v.55). This will be fulfilled at the return of Jesus, when he will resurrect us and give us a new glorified body. God will judge all things and glorify his people.

What is the sting of death and what is the power of sin (v.56)?

From the beginning, God revealed to Adam that sin would bring death. Obeying the law will not save us. The law reveals our sins. The more we try to obey, the more we realize we break the law all the time. But thanks to God for his grace, who gives us victory over sin and death through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord (v.57).

What is the final encouragement Paul gives to all Christians (v.58)?

Even though we are in a spiritual war and suffer against the power of evil, we are strengthened by God's promise that he will end every evil and suffering, including death. Our hope is in Jesus. Therefore, until the end of our lives, we need to share the Gospel—the message of salvation to all people.

What is the Gospel?

The Gospel is the good news that God has a complete salvation plan for us. God has sent Jesus Christ to die bearing the punishment for our sins, in order that we could be forgiven and have a right relationship with God by putting our faith in Jesus. God, who has justified us in Jesus, will also resurrect and glorify us. The Holy Spirit who dwells in us is our deposit, guaranteeing our complete salvation.

“In him [Jesus] you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory” (Ephesians 1:13-14).

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