

The GOSPEL for LIFE

Study Guide

INTRODUCTION

The Total Good News

These five lessons are concerned with the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. This news is indeed, for life; our entire life. But in order for us to see how this is so, we must first gain insight in what the Gospel is. Before you are primed by what follows, think through this question and write out your answer to it:

“What is the Gospel?”

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Did your mind go to **John 3:16**? “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” That’s the Gospel! Well, only partially.

Or did you think back to a gospel presentation you once learned: the Roman Road; the Bridge; Evangelism Explosion; the Four Spiritual Laws? “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Such presentations talk about the plan of salvation but aren’t the total Gospel.

Or perhaps you had to admit you just don’t know. Rest assured you are not alone in that admission.

“The English word ‘gospel’ (from the Anglo-Saxon *god-spell*, i.e., God-story) is the usual NT translation of the Greek *euangelion* [“good tidings”] . . .

The gospel is the joyous proclamation of God’s redemptive activity in Christ Jesus on behalf of man enslaved by sin.” (Robert H. Mounce in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Walter A. Elwell, Baker Book House, 1984, pg. 472)

Written by Dr. Dave Acree

According to William Tyndale, English reformer and Bible translator of the sixteenth century, the Gospel signified “good, merry, glad and joyful tidings that makes a man’s heart glad, and makes him sing, dance and leap for joy.” (Mounce, pg. 472)

“ . . . the word *gospel* was used in the world of Jews at the time of the apostles to *announce* something, to *declare* something as good news – the word *euangelion* always means good news. ‘To gospel’ is to herald, to proclaim, and to declare something about something. To put this together: the gospel is to announce good news about key events in the life of Jesus Christ. To gospel for Paul was to tell, announce, declare, and shout aloud the Story of Jesus Christ as the saving news of God.” (Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, Zondervan, 2011, pgs. 49-50)

The cross is part of the Gospel but the Gospel is about more than what happened on Good Friday, though we often stop there. The Gospel is a broader story of God’s plan to reclaim his broken world and set his rebellious people free.

The Gospel is also more than the “plan of salvation” or a gospel presentation. Expecting someone to follow a step-by-step explanation to a point of decision doesn’t really take into account the story of the person listening or the work of the Holy Spirit. Rather, we ought to engage in “conversations”, speaking and living God’s total story into the context of the listener’s story wherever they may be.

When was your first “brush” with the Gospel? How did it come to you? Was your initial response positive, negative or apathetic? How do you respond now?

1 Corinthians 15:1-26 will be “home base” for our study of the Gospel. Take some time to read these verses two or three times. From your initial readings, in Paul’s mind, what was the Gospel?

LESSON ONE

Story

The Plan

I have a story. Better yet, I **am** a story and so are you. That story is made up of things that have happened to me, what I have done, and the people involved in my life. It moves from my past to the present and looks forward to the future. You can know something about me without knowing my story but you can’t really know **me** apart from my story.

Briefly tell your story below in this way: identify two things that have happened to you, two things you have done, and two people in your life that have shaped who and what you are.

God has a story and can’t be known apart from that story. The Gospel is his story. It is not just a set of facts to believe but a story to enter. Before the New Testament was written; before the Gospels took shape; before the apostles began writing letters to churches; before Paul met Jesus on the Damascus road; before all of this was the Gospel.

The Gospel, through the Apostle Paul, finds definition in **1 Corinthians 15:1-26**. “Christ died for our sins” (vs. 3) is the central idea of this good news, but there is so much more to the Gospel.

Paul didn’t just pull the Gospel out of the air one day as he was praying. He received it from others as a “tradition” agreed upon to be passed on.

“ . . . this manner of telling the story, was apparently passed on to him (verse 3) and passed on by him to his churches. This is the kind of foundation-story with which a community is not at liberty to tamper. It was probably formulated within the first two or three years after Easter itself, since it was already in formulaic form when Paul ‘received’ it. We are here in touch with the earliest Christian tradition, with something that was being said two decades or more before Paul wrote this letter.” (N. T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, Fortress Press, 2003, pg. 319)

The Gospel, God’s story, doesn’t begin with the cross or even with Christ on earth. It was a broader plan beginning in eternity past (see **Ephesians 1:3-10**). In Christ God accomplished what humans had shown over and over they couldn’t.

“But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights as sons.” (**Galatians 4:4-5**)

In **1 Corinthians 15:3-4** Paul uses a phrase in conjunction with the crucifixion and resurrection that we usually overlook or see as superfluous: “according to the Scriptures.” Those words are not an add-on to be ignored but a connective-indicator to show they are part of a larger plan, a larger story; God’s story.

First, look at three sermons by three different men from the early days of the Church that were, in their contexts, gospel presentations. There’s a lot to read so don’t become bogged down in the details. In each case answer these questions:

1. To whom is the Gospel being presented? What is the context?
2. Where is the central idea – the cross and resurrection – in the sermon?
3. What are the elements of the “back story” in which it is placed?

Peter (Acts 2:14-41)

Stephen (Acts 7:1-59)

Paul (Acts 17:16-34)

Now, think through the following two sections of scripture.

What do you learn about the Gospel and its place in the broader picture of God’s story?

I Peter 1:10-12

Building the Gospel

This exercise will appear at the end of each lesson and is designed to help you personally enter into what you are learning. For now, think of the cross and resurrection in the context of God's bigger story. That story moves from Eden to the Tower of Babel, from Abraham to Moses and the Exodus, from the prophets to the kings of Israel, and finally to Jesus Christ. The story is a story of control. Who is in control, God or his creatures?

Write out below how you might speak the Gospel to someone, placing the cross and resurrection into that larger context. What points should be emphasized? What Old Testament stories could be told? How would you summarize the life of Jesus? What would you say about life now and in the future?

LESSON TWO

Sin

The Problem

As we have seen, the larger story is as much a part of the Gospel as the crucifixion and resurrection. Both of these happened "according to the Scriptures." There was a plan. In **1 Corinthians 15:3**, Paul immediately turns to the cross. Christ's death is central to the Gospel. Yet, as with the previous phrasing about the scriptures, there is a phrase attached to his death that is sometimes neglected or even overlooked. Christ died "for our sins." Sin is the problem.

The word "sin" is out of favor in culture, certainly outside the Church and sometimes even in the Church. We often use other terms. What are some of those words?

Why do you think people are reluctant to use the word "sin"?

The Gospel has no meaning if the sin problem is not addressed.

What Is Sin?

The most common Old Testament term for sin, used hundreds of times, means missing the mark, or erring. Another word used carries the "sense of active rebellion, a trespass or transgression of God's will." Still another word points to the idea of going astray. The major New Testament word for sin used here in our text also has the force of missing the mark or falling short. It covers "failure, fault and concrete wrongdoing." (Bruce Milne, *Know the Truth*, IVP Academic, 2009, pg. 139)

Sin must not to be taken lightly; it is no easy taskmaster. It is an affront to God's holiness, separates us from God, and must be dealt with either through forgiveness or judgment.

Gary A. Anderson speaks to other biblical pictures of sin:

"Sin is not just a thing, however, but a certain kind of thing. When one sins, something concrete happens: one's hands may become stained, one's back may become burdened, or one may fall into debt. And the verbal expressions that render the idea of forgiveness follow suit: stained hands are *cleansed*, burdens are *lifted*, and debts are either *paid off* or *remitted*. It is as though a stain, weight, or bond of indebtedness is created ex nihilo when one offends against God. And that thing that sin has created will continue to haunt the offenders until it has been engaged and dealt with."
(*Sin: A History*, Yale University Press, 2009, pg. 4)

"Sin refers to any attitude or action that fails to radiate God's own character." (Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community*, Baker Academic, 1998, pg. 90)

What is the connection between Jesus Christ, us and sin? See **Matthew 1:20-21; 26:28; John 1:29; 3:17; Acts 5:30-31.**

How Are We Sinners?

Since the Garden of Eden and the sin of Adam and Eve we have lived in a sinful and broken world.

What does that do to us? Think through **Romans 1:18-25.**

How has sin infected us? See **Psalm 58:3; 51:5; Romans 5:12.**

How has sin affected us? See **Romans 3:23; 5:12; John 8:34.**

How Does Sin Work?

Read **Isaiah 14:12-14**. Is this a good description of how sin works? Why or why not? In what ways is this also true of us?

One of the most blatant descriptions of acted out sin in the Bible is found in **2 Samuel 11:1-27**. What do these verses reveal of how sin works in our lives?

Building the Gospel

Our first lesson focused on God's story. This lesson deals with our story. Those stories intersect in the Gospel. We are sinners by nature and choice.

1. Prayerfully think through this *Litany of Penitence* for Ash Wednesday from the *Book of Common Prayer* (1979) as a thoughtful and honest response to sin in our life in light of God's wrath and mercy. Circle and underline parts that resonate with you.

*We confess to you and to one another, and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth, that we have sinned by our own fault in thought, word, and deed; by what we have done, and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart, and mind, and strength. We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We have not forgiven others, as we have been forgiven. **Have mercy on us, Lord.** We have been deaf to your call to serve, as Christ served us. We have not been true to the mind of Christ. We have grieved your Holy Spirit. **Have mercy on us, Lord.***

We confess to you, Lord** all our past unfaithfulness: the pride, hypocrisy, and impatience of our lives, **we confess to you Lord.** Our self-indulgent appetites and ways, and our exploitation of other people, **we confess to you, Lord.** Our anger at our own frustration, and our envy of those more fortunate than ourselves, **we confess to you, Lord.** Our intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and our dishonesty in daily life and work, **we confess to you, Lord.** Our negligence in prayer and worship, and our failure to commend the faith that is in us, **we confess to you, Lord.

Accept our repentance, Lord,** for the wrongs we have done: for our blindness to human need and suffering, and our indifference to injustice and cruelty, **accept our repentance, Lord.** For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward our neighbors, and for our prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from us, **accept our repentance, Lord.** For our waste and pollution of your creation, and our lack of concern for those who come after us, **accept our repentance, Lord.

Restore us, good Lord, and let your anger depart from us; favorably hear us, for your mercy is great.

Accomplish in us the work of your salvation that we may show forth your glory in the world. By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord, bring us with all your saints to the joy of his resurrection. Amen!

2. On separate paper, for your eyes only, write out how sin has played a role in your life. Have those sins been forgiven? If not, they can be. Follow through with the rest of the lessons to see how. Hint: read **1 John 1:8-10**. If they are forgiven, take time to express your gratitude to God for his forgiveness and mercy.

LESSON THREE

The Cross The Remedy

Now we come to the cross, the central idea of the Gospel. It's not that God's story of how he worked through Abraham, Moses, Israel, prophets and kings to fix his broken world and deal with sin isn't important. That story is crucial, but now we see Jesus Christ as the resolution to it. What failed to happen then happens now. He is the remedy.

Nor is sin unimportant. In 1959 Nikita Khrushchev, leader of the USSR and Joseph Stalin's successor, visited the United States. In a speech in Washington, he delivered a potent indictment with corroborating evidence of Stalin's horrible crimes against humanity. A reporter asked Khrushchev what he as Stalin's right hand man during most of this was doing.

"Who said that?" he bellowed and glowered at the audience. Again he asked "Who said that?" but this time menacingly low and quiet.

Everyone looked at their shoes!

"That's what I was doing," Khrushchev replied.

(Mark Buchanan, *Hidden in Plain Sight*, Thomas Nelson, 2007, pg. 41-42)

When we stop "looking at our shoes" in regards to our own sin we see the significance of Christ's death. Christ succeeds where we failed, dealing with our sin.

1 Corinthians 15:3 is short and stark: Christ died, and if you want proof of that here it is, he was buried. That he died is vital but why he died is even more important. He died for us, for our sins.

Who Put Christ on the Cross?

These verses answer this question. Don't miss the God/Christ/us progression.

Acts 2:23; 4:27-28

Philippians 2:6-8; John 10:11, 17-18

2 Corinthians 5:20-21; 1 Corinthians 15:3

Scottish hymn-writer, Horatius Bonar wrote: "Twas I that shed the sacred blood; I nailed him to the tree; I crucified the Christ of God; I joined the mockery. Of all that shouting multitude I feel that I am one; and in that din of voices rude I recognize my own. Around the cross the throng I see, mocking the Sufferer's gown; yet still my voice it seems to be, as if I mocked alone." (Cited in John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ*, InterVarsity Press, 1986, pg. 60)

What Did His Death Accomplish?

Christ died for our sins. He died *with* us (identification). He "entered fully into the human condition" and not just our sinfulness. He died *instead of*

us (representation and substitution). He "stood in our place and shouldered the punishment due us for our sins." He died *for* us (incorporation into the life of God). "His death did something *for our good*." (Scot McKnight, *The King Jesus Gospel*, pgs. 51-52)

In the following verses, identify and explain what happens as a result of Christ's death.

Romans 3:25; 5:9; Hebrews 2:17; 9:27-28; 1 John 4:10

Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:13-14; Galatians 4:5

Romans 3:24; 4:22-25; 5:1, 9 18; 8:30

Romans 5:10-11; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

How Should We Respond?

An apocryphal story is sometimes told of a man who falls from a cliff and manages to catch hold of a branch, stopping his plunge to death. He won't be able to hold on for long and sees no way to climb to safety.

Seeing an angel above he begins to scream, "Help! Save me!" The angel asks if he believes he *can* save him. Noting the angel's strong wings and mighty arms he says, "Yes, I believe you can save me." Now the angel asks if he believes he *will* save him. Looking at the angel's face he sees only compassion and mercy and says, "Yes, yes, I believe!"

So the angel says, "Then, LET GO!" and the man yells, "Is there anybody else up there?"

When faced with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins our response should be one of faith and trust. "Yes, I believe."

In **1 Corinthians 15:1-2, 11, 14, 17** what words are used by Paul of the response of the Corinthians to the Gospel? What do you understand the terms to mean?

Is there more to the response than believing?

In the nineteenth century we stopped calling people who went on trips travelers and started calling them tourists. A traveler is "one who travels." That person enters into the life and culture of the place visited and comes back changed. A tourist is "one who goes in circles" sampling bits and pieces of the place visited, only coming back with mementos.

"We've made a similar shift in the church. At some point we stopped calling Christians disciples and started calling them believers. A disciple is one who follows and imitates Jesus. She loses her life in order to find it.

She steeped in the language and culture of Christ until his Word and his world reshape hers, redefine her, change her inside out how she sees and thinks and dreams and, finally lives.

A believer, not so. She holds certain beliefs, but how deep down these go depends on the weather or her mood. She can get defensive, sometimes bristlingly so, about her beliefs, but in her honest moments she wonders why they've made such scant difference. . . .

You can't be a disciple without being a believer. But – here's the rub – you can be a believer and not a disciple The kingdom of God is made up of travelers [travelers], but our churches are largely populated with tourists. The kingdom is full of disciples, but our churches are filled with believers." (Mark Buchanan, *Your Church Is Too Safe*, Zondervan, 2012, excerpted in *Christianity Today*, Volume 56, Number 3, March, 2012, pg. 50)

Building the Gospel

How have you responded to the Gospel? Still considering? Don't give up! If you've believed, great. Consider, though, are you just a believer or are you a disciple?

Read and think through **Luke 14:25-33**. What do you think Jesus means? Compared with the Gospel as we find it in **1 Corinthians 15**, what are the similarities and differences?

LESSON FOUR

Resurrection

The Promise

“Sin is a culpable and personal affront to a personal God God hates sin not just because it violates his law but, more substantively, because it violates shalom, because it breaks the peace, because it interferes with the way things are supposed to be. God is for shalom and *therefore* against sin.” (Cornelius Plantinga, Jr., *Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: A Breviary of Sin*, Eerdmans, 1996, pg. 13)

The plan: God’s story; The problem: sin; The remedy: the cross. But there is more to the Gospel. It is more than just personal salvation from sin and death. It doesn’t end at the cross. Things are still not the way they’re supposed to be.

Work through **Romans 8:18-27**. There you will find three “groaners.”

Why the groaning?

1 Corinthians 15:4-23 covers the fourth element of the Gospel, the raising of Jesus on the third day. Resurrection is about hope, about promise. The word “hope” is buried away in **verse 18**, so don’t miss it. Look also at the way it is used in **Romans 8:24-25**:

“For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.”

Did the Resurrection Really Happen? **(1 Corinthians 15:4-11)**

Don’t forget that this Gospel tradition Paul passes on was formulated within a couple of years after the resurrection and some twenty years before this letter to Corinth was written.

Read these verses and use a Study Bible or other resources to find out as much as you can about these after resurrection appearances. What do you come away with from their stories? Why do you think Paul takes up so much time recounting them?

What If Christ Wasn’t Resurrected? **(1 Corinthians 15:12-19)**

Some in Corinth (**vs. 12-13**) were saying that resurrections don’t happen at all, whether Jesus Christ or anybody. Most still believe that today. If that’s true then Jesus was not resurrected.

Think through **1 Corinthians 15:14-19** and the implications Paul suggests if Jesus was not raised from the dead. There are at least three implications.

What do these mean for us today? Would the Gospel still have meaning?

**Since Christ *Was* Resurrected
(1 Corinthians 15:20-23)**

What is the promise, the hope that comes from Christ’s resurrection? Who else will be resurrected? How will they be resurrected? What does this mean to our living out of the Gospel? Answer in relation to the following passages.

1 Corinthians 15:20-23; 6:14

Romans 8:11

2 Corinthians 4:14-18

1 Thessalonians 4:13-14

Next read **Romans 1:1-4**.

What did the resurrection reveal about Jesus Christ?

What is the relationship between the resurrection and justification, the applying of Christ’s righteousness to us? See **Romans 4:22-25**.

What is the relationship between the resurrection and sin? See **Romans 6:4-5, 8, 11**.

Building the Gospel

Of the four elements of the Gospel now covered, we are usually most incredulous about the resurrection. It is so far removed from our human experience. Of the post-resurrection appearances mentioned by Paul in **1 Corinthians 15**, one is to the Twelve, which was actually a two-part appearance that didn’t go smoothly. The “Thomas factor” may be part of your experience.

Read through **John 20:19-31**.

Why wasn’t the testimony of the other disciples about Christ’s appearance to them enough for Thomas?

What did he think he needed in order to believe?

What caused him to believe? How did that differ from what he thought he would need? What did he come to believe about Jesus?

What was Christ’s rebuke to him?

Write out your personal response to the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

LESSON FIVE
Kingdom
The Program

“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Jesus taught his disciples to pray this. We pray it but don’t readily connect “kingdom” with the Gospel. Yet Paul does in **1 Corinthians 15:24-26**. It comes at the end of his statement of the Gospel passed on to him, which he in turn passes on to others. Paul says of Jesus Christ:

“Then the end will come when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death.”

The Gospel is about rescue *and* restoration. Rescue is needed because of sin and is possible through the cross. Restoration takes place in resurrection, both Christ’s and ours, and in the established kingdom of God.

“But when we reintegrate what should never have been separated – the kingdom-inaugurating public work of Jesus and his redemptive death and resurrection – we find that the gospels tell a different story. . . . It is the story of God’s kingdom being launched on earth as in heaven, generating a new state of affairs in which the power of evil has been decisively defeated, the new creation has been decisively launched, and Jesus’ followers have been commissioned and equipped to put that victory and that inaugurated new world into practice. Atonement, redemption, and salvation are what happen on the way because engaging in this work demands that people themselves be rescued from the powers that enslave the world in order that they can in turn be rescuers. To put it another way, if you want to help inaugurate God’s kingdom, you must follow in the way of the cross, and if you want to benefit from Jesus’ saving death, you must become part of his kingdom project.” (N. T. Wright, *Surprised By Hope*, HarperOne, 2008, pgs. 204-205)

Kingdom Beginning

With Jesus Christ, the final chapter of God’s story begins. The total Gospel embraces the kingdom. We have tried to rule God’s kingdom with disastrous results. A new king, a Messiah, is needed.

What do you learn of this beginning from the following scriptures?

Mark 1:14-15

Matthew 12:25-28

Luke 4:18-21; 7:22-23

“For Jesus the word *kingdom* meant ‘God’s dream for this world come true. . . . When Jesus used the word *kingdom* and connected it to the words *now* and *arrived*, a whole story was coming to the concluding chapter. . . . By kingdom, Jesus means: *God’s Dream Society on earth, spreading out from the land of Israel to encompass the whole world.*” (Scot McKnight, *One.Life: Jesus Calls We Follow*, Zondervan, 2010, pgs. 28-31)

Kingdom Now

After the resurrection and appearances, Christ returned to the Father to sit at his right hand. Rescue has been provided for; restoration has begun. Evil has been defeated and the king rules from heaven. Total restoration is on the way but until then the church has been charged to help in the rescue of others and to bring some of God’s society now to this earth, kingdom now.

What do you learn form the following passages about our role in the kingdom today?

Acts 1:4-11; Matthew 28:16-20

Luke 10:9; 17:20-21

Ephesians 1:18-23

1 Peter 2:9-12; Revelation 5:9-10

Kingdom Come

Jesus Christ will return to this earth, resurrect his people and establish the kingdom of God in its fullness. A new heavens and earth will come to be. One story will end and another begins. What do these verses tell you about that kingdom?

1 Corinthians 15:24-28

Revelation 20:1-6

Revelation 21:1-8; 22:1-6

Building the Gospel

From **1 Corinthians 15:1-26** we have been taught by the Apostle Paul the Gospel: story, sin, cross, resurrection and kingdom. All of this is God’s story of rescue and restoration of a rebellious people and a broken world.

What should we do with the Gospel? First we must decide whether we believe it or not. Do you? Then we have to decide whether we will live and speak it in our “conversations” of life. Will you? Will you not just be a believer but also a disciple?

Martin Luther offers some counsel on the Gospel and the need to be contemporary with it.

“If you preach the gospel in all aspects with the exception of the issues which deal specifically with your time, you are not preaching the gospel at all.” (Cited in James Huston & Michael Parker, *A Vision for the Aging Church*, IVP Academic, 2011, pg. 23)

As we finish our study think through this further counsel on the Gospel from Paul in **1 Corinthians 9:19-27**.

What do you learn about presenting the Gospel in life and conversation?

APPENDIX A
Gospel Presentation
An Example

What if, as you talk about Jesus and His life with someone, they stop you and say something like: “This makes sense to me now that I see the whole story. So what do I do? How do I respond?”

While it important that we set the death and resurrection of Jesus in context as opposed to expecting someone to get it all in just a short presentation, at some point a presentation is appropriate.

Here is one example, often referred as “The Romans Road.” The Romans Road is a way of explaining the heart of the Gospel using verses from Romans. It explains why we need salvation, how God provided salvation, and what are the results of salvation. Memorize these verses and that way you are always ready (with or without a Bible) to share these principles.

Romans 3:23 "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"

We all have sin in our hearts. We all were born with sin. We were born under the power of sin's control.

Romans 6:23a "For the wages of sin is death,"

The result of sin is death. We all face physical death, which is a result of sin. But a worse death is spiritual death that alienates us from God, and will last for all eternity.

Romans 6:23b "but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Salvation is a free gift from God to you! You can't earn this gift, but you must reach out and receive it.

Romans 5:8 "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

When Jesus died on the cross He paid sin's penalty. He paid the price for all sin, and when He took all the sins of the world on Himself on the cross, He bought us out of slavery to sin and death! The only condition is that we believe in Him and what He has done for us, understanding that we are now joined with Him, and that He is our life. He did all this because He loved us and gave Himself for us!

Romans 10:9, 10 "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved."

It means to admit that Jesus is God (just like He said He was), and that He has the right of authority in your life, and that you will give Him that authority.

It means to believe that Jesus was who He said He was (God) and that He will do what He has said He will do (forgive you and save you).

The Bible never says that you are saved by being a good person, by joining a church or by doing good deeds. In fact, the Bible directly tells us that we cannot be saved by our own good works (see Ephesians 2:8-9). It's not what you do; it's who you believe.

Romans 8:1 "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,"

Salvation, as a gift, is as good as the giver. Since God is sovereign, His gift is trustworthy. We can therefore have confidence that since He has presented the gift and we have responded, we have peace with God through Christ.

Other presentations include:

"The Bridge": http://www.discipleshipint.org/the_bridge

"The Four Spiritual Laws": <http://www.godlovestheworld.com/>

"Steps to Peace with God": <http://www.majesty.org/tract/tract2.html>

APPENDIX B

Tips for Small Group Leaders

How to Make the Most of this Study Guide

Pray (Phil 4.6-7)

This is vital. Taking the time to pray in anticipation of the meeting will help to focus you on the task of building disciples. The act of prayer helps to remind us that we are God's servants and that this entire project of leading a study is vitally dependent on God's presence and power. Do not take this activity lightly. Try to remember to pray throughout the week for each member by name that they would be open to God's work in their life and that they would be willing to let God make them more and more like Christ. Also, pray for yourself that you would have boldness to lead the study, confidence in the message and sensitivity to God's Spirit at work.

Preview the Material (1 Pet 4.10)

No study guide is perfect (unless of course, you write it). It was written by someone else who is most likely not part of your group and so does not know what you like when you lead, nor does the author know all the details of your group. That is your business. As a result, you have the opportunity to make this study your own. If you want to use this study effectively however, you need to become familiar with it. You will only get

frustrated if you review it an hour before people arrive and expect that everything will slide into place. Rather, read the entire thing as soon as you can. Use it as your own private devotional. Then think about your group and ask God to help you to interpret the guide for them. Determine which questions are helpful, which need more follow-up and which ones to avoid altogether. If you feel like you have to say something like, “I’m not sure what he meant by that question.” then don’t ask it. Ask a better question. You’ll only know what a better question looks like if you have an idea of the entire study. Figuring out how to use this study guide is a service to the members of your group. Furthermore, if you are using this guide as a part of E Free Lethbridge then you have the opportunity to interact directly with the author. Call the church office and find out how you can contact Dave Acree.

Promote Discussion (*Jas 1.19*)

As you know, sometimes we need to spend some time talking about a concept before we are able to begin to apply its truth. Discussion can be an important catalyst for this to take place. As you may also know, discussion can be easier introduced than actually achieved. There are some things that are out of your control that can make discussions difficult to get going (e.g., some people are naturally quiet; people might not have done the assigned preparation). Some things, however, are within your control when it comes to promoting good, healthy discussion. Here are a few:

1. Ask good questions

“Yes” or “No” questions can be good to test for a certain level of comprehension but they are not good at promoting discussion. “Why” questions tend to act better at evoking discussion. Other good sorts of questions include:

- a. Explain what you mean.
- b. Can you give us an example?
- c. How does work in your life?
- d. What do the rest of you think?

2. Be open and listen.

Don’t keep your head buried in the study guide jumping from question to question. Listen to the answers offered because there might be opportunity for follow-up questions to get at the heart of the matter. Listening also offers the opportunity for you as a leader to see if the Holy Spirit is guiding the meeting in a different direction. If a person brings up an issue or a heart-ache that seems to be significant, you are free to explore that as a group. Others in the group will pick up on a “heart” answer, don’t be left out because you are trying to find your spot in the guide and rehearsing the next question in your head already. Being familiar with the guide also helps free you to ask follow-up questions without losing sight of the main point.

3. Allow for silence

Don’t be quick to assume that just because nobody answers right away it means nobody wants to answer. It could be that someone is just digging deep for the courage to speak. If your group knows that you will jump in if nobody answers right away, they will rarely take advantage of the positive pressure that silence sometimes contains to offer their ideas. The discernment to know when to expand the silence becomes sharper the more you get to know your group.

4. Affirm (be an encourager)

Be ready with thanks for whenever anyone speaks up but be careful with endorsements. Determine how you will respond to statements made by group member that may or may not be true. In other words, do just jump to a casual comment like, “good” or “that’s right” unless you sincerely agree. There can be a tendency for leaders to overreact when someone speaks just because they are happy someone finally said something. We still need to make sure that we are responsible with our comments and our perspective. Regardless, always express gratitude for comments. One way to bridge a comment like this would be:

“Thanks so much for your comment. Does anyone have a different perspective on this matter?”

