

Sharing the Great News Contextually

REDEEMER EQUIPPING CLASS
CLASS WORKBOOK

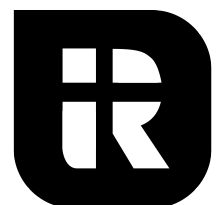


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Welcome to the Course!

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We're glad you're here and excited for what you are about to learn and practice. Here are some of the nuts and bolts of how this course will work.

Structure

The course is six weeks long and has two components: 1) individual learning in this course booklet and 2) in person gatherings for learning, discussing, and practicing together.

- You will complete **one lesson each week**. Each lesson is about one hour of content and practice that you will do individually. Lessons include:
 - ▶ Reading and/or watching content
 - ▶ Pausing to reflect on what you've learned (including through answering questions)
 - ▶ Going and doing: applying and practicing what you've learned
- You will meet in person with your learning group once a week to talk through what you've learned, practice together, and keep one another accountable.
- Your group facilitator will be in touch with you about scheduling these meetings

The course aims to do three things:

1. Give you a foundational understanding of the gospel
2. Teach you how to share the great news!
3. Help you practice starting conversations and sharing the great news to build a habit of regularly sharing it!

Let's get started!

Week 1: Why Do We Share the Great News?

See how God's love for us and our love for God and others compels us to share the gospel.

God's Love for Us

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The world more and more is telling us that we should not share the gospel. Instead, we should leave people alone to believe what they want to believe. We are told it is arrogant to assume that our religion is the only way to heaven. We are told that we are offending people. In some places we are told that it is illegal to share the gospel.

The peoples of the world are not seeking God. They are not asking us to tell them about Jesus. So why do we do it? Why are we compelled to share the greatest news we know?

God's love for us compels us to tell people about Him.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

—— **John 3:16–17**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

—— **Romans 3:23–26**

All of us have sinned. Every person in the world has sinned. We fall short of God's standard. But salvation is offered through Jesus. We are justified by His grace. “Justified” means that we are made right before God. We are made to conform to His standard. How does this happen? It happens through the propitiation of Christ's blood. It means that Christ covers the sins of those who believe with His sacrificial blood. As a result we get an image in Revelation 7:14 of the garments of believers being washed in the blood of the Lamb. We are cleansed and made pure by Christ's blood. One theologian writes that **propitiation** is “**a sacrifice that bears God's wrath to the end and in so doing changes God's wrath toward us into favor.**” Christ's blood on the cross was not just a sacrifice that **appeased** God's wrath. It was a sacrifice that also restored us in a favorable relationship with God.

We are unworthy. We deserve death. All of humankind throughout all of history deserves death. Yet God, our Creator, sent his Son into this broken and rebellious world. He didn't come in power but in humility. He lived the life we could not live. He was sinless. He was perfect and righteous. He loved. He healed. He taught, and He died.

He allowed us, wicked, evil people to persecute Him, torture Him, and humiliate Him as we killed Him on the cross. And that isn't all — God put on Him the weight and the wickedness of all our sin, our evil.

He died because of us, because of our sin. He died for us — to save us, to remove God’s wrath and restore our relationship with God. He died to restore the relationship with God of all who believe in Jesus. And it keeps getting better. He planned it before the ages ever began.

The end of Romans 3:25 says, “This was to show God’s righteousness because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins.” Righteousness in this verse refers to God’s character. God is righteous. He conforms to his standard. But it says he passed over former sins or he pardoned them. If God just pardoned sins (absolved them), then he would become unrighteous. If God just decided to forgive Adam of his sin without a propitiation God himself would be unrighteous. If God had simply passed over King David’s sin of adultery without requiring propitiation then God himself is no longer righteous. But that is not what God did. Adam and David’s sins were forgiven based on Christ’s propitiation. Christ’s act of substituting Himself for our sins goes all the way back to Adam and all the way forward until the day He returns for those who have faith in Him. God is glorious and worthy of all worship.

Because of what Christ has done on the cross, He is both just and justifier. He is our king and our judge, and He is also the justifier. He takes the penalty for our sin upon Himself. He is the one who restores our favorable relationship with God by removing the penalty of death. Is this truth not compelling? Christ did what we could not do to save us sinners from a death that we deserve. He took it upon himself and died for us.

God shows his righteousness through the gift He offers all of us in Jesus.

When God opens our eyes to the truth, and we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone, our heart is filled with love for God. We desire to serve Him. Our joy is found in worshipping God.

How do we do this?

Jesus teaches us that that we are to **love God** and **love others**.

Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

—— **Mark 12:29–31**

Jesus calls us to love God with all that we are. We are to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. And we are to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. We are to love others and care for them as we care for ourselves.

② How do we love God? How do we love others?

① **What does God sending Jesus to die for all who believe in Him teach us about God's love?**



Our Love for God

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.

—— Psalm 96:1–4

How Do We Love God?

We love God by worshipping and praising Him. We sing praises. We tell of His marvelous works because he is great and worthy to be praised by all the peoples of the earth.

We worship God by telling people the gospel, the greatest news we know! God's most marvelous work is sending Jesus to live a sinless life, die to save wicked sinners and then three days later rise from the dead. This is amazing news! It is worth rejoicing about day after day.

When someone close to us does something important like graduate from college or get married, what do we do? We celebrate! We tell our family and friends. We don't keep this news to ourselves, but in our joy we spread the good news to all who are around us.

This is how we should respond to the truth that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. We should be so happy, excited and thankful that we all the time are telling people we meet about our heavenly Father's amazing work. God's love compels us to love Him!

? How do you respond when someone you love accomplishes something important like graduating from college or getting married?

① How do you most often respond and celebrate the amazing work that God has done for you through Jesus' sacrifice?

Our Love for Others

Oh sing to the LORD a new song;
sing to the LORD, all the earth!
Sing to the LORD, bless his name;
tell of his salvation from day to day.
Declare his glory among the nations,
his marvelous works among all the peoples!
For great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised;
he is to be feared above all gods.

—— **Psalm 96:1–4**

And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

—— **Matthew 22:37–39**

How Do We Love Others?

In Psalm 96, we see that loving God leads us to worship through telling other people about His amazing works, about the Great News! In Matthew 22, we read that Jesus has called us to love our neighbor as we love ourselves. How do we do that?

There are two ways to look at this.

First, we love others as we love ourselves. This means that we care for them like we care for ourselves. Secondly, we can view it as we are to love others as we desire to be loved. We are to care for others as we desire for people to care for us.

If we know that Jesus is the source of life and that the greatest news we have ever heard is that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life, **why would we not tell others as soon as possible?**

We cannot say that we love others if we do not tell them about Jesus. We know that Jesus is the only way to a right relationship with God. We know that all people are dead without Christ.

The question is not, “Why should we share the great news with people?” It is, “Why would we not share?” When we choose not to share, we choose to not love that person as much as we possibly can.

This does not mean that every time we interact with someone who does not know Jesus that we must share the gospel. This does not mean that when we meet a beggar who is hungry and thirsty that we ignore his or her physical needs and only seek to address his or her spiritual need for Jesus.

It does mean that as we meet physical needs we also address spiritual needs and share the great news! It does mean that we are burdened for our family, friends, co-workers and neighbors to turn to follow Jesus. So, we respectfully seek opportunities to talk with them about Jesus.

I want to share a scenario with you. You move into a new neighborhood and begin building a relationship with your neighbor. You and your neighbor have a lot in common, and you are becoming good friends. However, you have not shared the great news with your neighbor. You have decided to wait until your friendship is established so that your friendship will survive if they are offended when you share.

After six months of building a strong friendship and doing life together, you decide it is now time to share. You begin trying to build up courage and find the right time. Weeks go by and you never find the right time. You feel awkward. You are worried and fearful. You keep putting it off.

After a year, you finally build up the courage and blurt out the gospel. He or she responds by saying, "What you believe is similar to what I believe. Both ways will get us to heaven." You respond, "Jesus is the only way. That is what I believe." At this your friend says, "If you believe Jesus is the only way, then why did you wait so long to tell me?"

How is it loving to not share the truth with someone? How is it loving to wait months for the right situation?

The gospel may offend your family member, friend, co-worker or neighbor. When they see how important God is to you, the love you have for God and for him or her, most people will understand why you shared with them. Some will thank you for sharing even though they do not believe it.

When we act out of love, most people are very gracious even when they disagree.

Pray for all your friends, family, co-workers and neighbors who do not know Jesus. Ask God to help you love them well. Ask Him to create opportunities for you to share the great news soon. **Ask God to save them!**

② **Who are some of the people God has placed in your life to love?**

② **How do we best love those people God places in our lives to love?**

Reasons We Do Not Share the Great News

Before we look at four fears that keep us from sharing, here is a video from three church members sharing why they are motivated to share the gospel. Recently, during the *Why Your Work Matters* equipping class Gerardo Zamora, John Bachan, and Jordan Belt shared with the class their motivations.

Please take five minutes and watch. To watch the video, scan the QR code or visit: https://youtu.be/oCjH7Sd6L_c



Four Reasons We Do Not Share

Four reasons or fears for why we do not share the great news. Please consider if any of these are a struggle for you. May we not allow any of these reasons to hinder us from pointing people to Jesus.

1. I don't know enough.

The first reason is a common fear. We are afraid that when we share the person will ask questions we cannot answer. We want to look smart. We want to be able to answer all the questions someone may have about the Bible.

Or, we don't understand someone's culture or religion well, so we wait. We read books. We learn. As we learn we find there is always more to learn. Cultures and religions are complicated.

It is important to understand there is much we do not know. We need to approach a conversation with **confidence and humility**.

If you believe Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life and that the only way to come to God is through Jesus, you know enough to share the great news. We can start sharing the gospel the day we start following Jesus. Yes, people will ask you questions you cannot answer. It is ok to say, "I do not know, but I will find the answer and come back."

It can be helpful to not have all the answers about a person's culture or religion. It encourages you to open with questions. Ask questions that will help you learn and understand what the individual thinks and believes. As you listen and learn, pray asking God to provide an opportunity to bridge to the great news.

Do not allow the fear of making mistakes or not knowing enough to keep you from sharing. You will learn the most through having conversations and sharing the gospel.

2. I am busy just being a friend.

It is common to believe that the best way to open the door to share the great news is to take time building a friendship and showing that you genuinely love someone. After you have proved your friendship is real, then you can share. This is often referred to as friendship evangelism.

The problem is that after 3–6 months when it is time to share the gospel new fears and questions arise:

- ▶ Will sharing the great news put a strain on the relationship that I have worked hard to build?
- ▶ Will my friend wonder why I waited so long to share with her?
- ▶ Will my friend be open to the great news when I share?

You have built a friendship in order to share the gospel. It is very possible your friend may realize you are only building the relationship so that they will turn to follow Jesus. However, if from the very beginning you share and even as they reject the gospel you continue building the friendship, what does that communicate? It communicates you care for them even when they disagree with you. It also communicates that for you following Jesus is most important in your life.

3. I do not want to offend or get in trouble.

The gospel is offensive. In some places in the world, it is illegal to share the gospel. People may get mad. You could lose your job. You could be deported. You could possibly go to jail. All of these are possible.

We can become afraid of what might happen. There is a cost to following Jesus. Persecution is real. We do not let our fears keep us from loving people by sharing the great news. In Acts 4:29 after Peter and John were told not to talk about Jesus, they along with the church prayed for boldness to keep sharing.

God is sovereign. We do need to be wise. We also should expect persecution. **Let us pray for God to fill us with wise courage.**

4. I live out the great news. Do I need to share it too?

Sometimes we find comfort in the idea that our light for Jesus shines bright enough through our actions, so we do not need to share. We believe people can see Christ in us. They can see how we are different. They can see why they should follow Jesus.

We do want to live for Jesus and to be different. We want to love in ways that non-believers do not love. Yet, when we choose not to speak the great news, we are placing the responsibility on the lost person to seek out why we are different.

Just because someone can see you are different does not mean that they realize it is because you believe in Jesus. We must tell them.

So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

—**Romans 10:17**

Faith comes from hearing the gospel. Let us live for Christ and tell others why we live for Him.

Let's not let these fears keep us from loving people well by sharing the great news! God's love for us and our love for Him compels us to declare His marvelous works to all the peoples around us. Let's joyfully share the greatest news we know!

① What fears keep you from sharing the Gospel?



Week 2: What Is the Gospel?

What exactly is this great news we are sharing?

Introduction

Watch as Pastor Dave shares with us what is the gospel. To watch the video, scan the QR code or visit: <https://youtu.be/-9mDbUNLW3k>



Before we discuss how to share the great news, we need to stop and consider what is the great news. What all is included? What exactly is this great news that we are proclaiming all over the world? What makes it great news?

In this lesson, we will look to the Bible for the answer. As we share the great news, we want to proclaim it using as much Scripture as possible.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

—2 Timothy 3:16–17

How Is the Great News Shared in Scripture?

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

—1 Corinthians 15:1–5

“But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out.”

—Acts 3:18–19

“And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

—Acts 10:39–43

“Let it be known to you therefore, brothers, that through this man forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you, and by him everyone who believes is freed from everything from which you could not be freed by the law of Moses.”

—Acts 13:38–39

② What stands out to you in these verses above as being key parts of the greatest news we know?

In this module, we are going to look at the four key parts of the gospel.

1. God
2. Man
3. Christ
4. Response

Greg Gilbert in his book *What is the Gospel?* gives the following overview:

- Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?
- What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble and why?
- What is God’s solution to that problem? How has he acted to save us from it?
- How do I—myself, right here, right now—how do I come to be included in that salvation? What makes this good news for me and not just for someone else?

Those are the four questions we need to answer when we share the great news. In some situations, depending on a person’s knowledge of Scripture, the great news can be shared in a few sentences. With others with little Bible knowledge and years of following a false religion, a longer conversation or even multiple conversations are needed.

What is the Gospel? by Greg Gilbert is a great, short book that clearly explains the gospel. It is a helpful book to read as you walk through this course.

First the bad news: God is your Judge, and you have sinned against him. And then the gospel: but Jesus has died so that sinners may be forgiven of their sins if they will repent and believe in him.

—Greg Gilbert

Who is God?

The Bible is the story of God's counteroffensive against sin. It is the grand narrative of how God made it right, how he is making it right, and how he will one day make it right finally and forever.

—Greg Gilbert

Read Genesis 1:1—2:3

? What does Genesis 1:1 — 2:3 teach us about God?

? What does Genesis 1:1 — 2:3 teach us about man's relationship to God?

God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. He created the heavens and the earth and all that inhabits them. He created man in His own image.

God is Creator. God is holy and righteous.

The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children, to the third and the fourth generation."

—Exodus 34:6–7

The LORD appeared before Moses and proclaimed the name of the LORD to Moses. He described himself.

- Merciful
- Gracious
- Slow to anger
- Abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness
- Keeping steadfast love
- Forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin

God is compassionate. This is the description of God that the world loves and is comfortable hearing. But we cannot leave out the end. God's righteousness includes the truth that He is just. He punishes those who commit evil. He does not leave the guilty unpunished.

God is the creator of the universe, and He is holy and righteous. He is the most important in all existence. He sets the standard for what is right.

Furthermore, we can say that God is king of His creation. He did not just create the universe and then sit back and passively watch. He actively reigns over all of creation.

② In Genesis 1:28-30 what commands did God give humankind?

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

—Genesis 2:15–17

② Why did God place man in the garden of Eden?

② What command did God give man concerning the trees in the garden? What about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil? Why?

Summary:

- God is Creator.
- God is holy and righteous.
- God is King.

Man

God Provides a Way

We have seen that God is Creator and King. He is holy and righteous. He is worthy to be praised and worshipped. What about humankind? How do we relate to God?

And God blessed them. And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” And God said, “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the heavens and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.” And it was so.

—Genesis 1:28–30

Humans are commanded to multiple, fill the earth and rule over it and all the animals and fish found on the earth. Adam and Eve were commanded to have babies and to rule over God’s creation. They were representatives of the King.

They were subjects of the King, not equal with Him. They were citizens in God’s kingdom.

The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.”

—Genesis 2:15–17

Adam received great freedom and authority from God, but God did give him a command of one thing he could not do. Adam was not to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God is King and Creator. It is absolutely His right to command humankind not to eat of a tree.

Read Genesis 3

② How did the serpent tempt Eve?

① Why did Eve eat the fruit?

① What happened when they ate the fruit?

① How did God punish the serpent?

① How did God punish Eve?

① How did God punish Adam?

When Adam and Eve ate the fruit, they were rejecting God's authority over them. God was their king. Their king commanded them not to eat, but they ate. **They committed treason!** All because they wanted to be like God.

They were already friends and representatives of God on earth. God would walk with them in the garden. That was not enough. They traded their relationship with God for pursuit of their own pleasure and glory. They sinned. They chose to disobey God's command, break relationship with Him and reject Him as rightful Lord.

Their fellowship with God was broken, and their spiritual life ended immediately.

None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God.

—**Romans 3:10–11**

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

—**Romans 3:23**

All have sinned and fall short of God's glory. We all have missed God's mark, his standard. That is hard for human hearts and minds to accept. Most of us believe we are good, but we have broken God's law.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

—**Deuteronomy 6:4–5**

“It is the LORD your God you shall fear. Him you shall serve and by his name you shall swear. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are around you— for the LORD your God in your midst is a jealous God—lest the anger of the LORD your God be kindled against you, and he destroy you from off the face of the earth.”

—**Deuteronomy 6:13–15**

The king of all creation commands us to love him with all our heart, soul and might. We are to fear and worship Him alone. If we do not, we will be destroyed off the face of the earth. The relationship between God and each person is broken because of our sin. It is broken because of the thousands, millions of times that we have loved ourselves or something else more than God. Our relationship to our Lord and King is broken. We have rejected his majesty. Like Adam and Eve all of us have committed treason.

You will notice that the emphasis is on our hearts not what is on the outside, what the world sees. People feel good about themselves and believe they are going to heaven because they don't steal, don't kill, don't commit adultery. They pray sometimes. They believe in a creator. They are a good person. On the outside they appear to be ok, but sin is found in their hearts.

For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

—**Matthew 15:19**

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

—**Ephesians 2:1–3**

For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God's law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

—**Romans 8:7–8**

② What is the truth concerning our hearts and lives without Jesus?

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

—**Romans 3:19**

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—**Romans 6:23**

② What is the punishment for sin?

② Who will be held accountable?

Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

—**Revelation 6:15–17**

And the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

—**Revelation 20:10**

Judgment is coming. All will be held accountable. We are not making this up! The Bible teaches us.

What is the problem of every man and woman on earth? We have rebelled against God, our Creator and King. The punishment for our rebellion is death and eternal separation from God.

But...

Jesus

God Provides a Way

We learned in the last section that all people have turned against God, our King, and that the punishment for our disobedience is death and eternal separation from God.

The problem is clear. It is impossible for us to pay the penalty for our disobedience. It appears hopeless.

But God...

God provides a way.

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.”

—**John 3:16–17**

God has acted to save sinners just like you and me! God sends Jesus.

And the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.”

And Mary said to the angel, “How will this be, since I am a virgin?”

And the angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.

—**Luke 1:30–35**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

—**John 1:1**

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

—**John 1:14**

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

—**Hebrews 4:15**

We see that Jesus is completely human to the point that he has been tempted in every way just like all of us. He also is completely God.

And Jesus said, “I am, and you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.”

—**Mark 14:62**

Jesus answered, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world—to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice.”

—**John 18:36–3**

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

—**Isaiah 9:6–7**

Jesus is King. Furthermore, he is the Lamb of God.

The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

—**John 1:29**

First century Jews who heard John the Baptist declare that Jesus was the Lamb of God would have immediately understood the significance. They would have been reminded of the Passover.

Read Exodus 12:1–13

② How did the blood of the lamb protect the Israelites?

“For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

—**Mark 10:45**

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:26–28

“I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

—**John 10:14–15**

Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us— for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree”— so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

—**Galatians 3:13–14**

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

—**2 Corinthians 5:21 ESV**

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

—**1 Peter 2:24**

① **What has Jesus done for sinners? Why?**

As you share the great news, do not forget it includes the resurrection. **Jesus conquered death!**

Read Romans 8:31–39

Jesus died. He was raised. He is sitting at the right hand of God interceding for us!!!

① **Who can separate us from the love of Jesus?**

① **What is God's solution to the problem that humans have rebelled against Him? How has he acted to save us from the punishment that we deserve?**

Response: Faith and Repentance

How Do We Respond to Jesus Christ?

We have learned that God is our Creator and King and that all of humankind has rebelled and committed treason against God. The punishment for this defiance is eternal separation from God. But God sent Jesus to die as a substitute for all who believe in Jesus. Jesus is King, the Crucified King. He is the Savior of all who turn to Him.

The last part is our response. **How do we respond to the gift that Jesus offers all of us?**

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

Mark 1:14–15

And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:38

Testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 20:21

To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.’

Acts 26:18 ESV

② **How are we called to respond to God's gift of salvation?**

We often respond, “We are to have faith in Jesus.” **What does faith mean?**

Greg Gilbert writes that biblically speaking it is reliance. It is “a rock-solid, truth-grounded, promise-founded trust in the risen Jesus to save you from sin.” It is a trust that we depend on for our lives.

Read Romans 4:13–25

② Why was Abraham's faith counted to him as righteousness?

Jesus was delivered up for death because of our sins, and he was raised for our justification. We are able to be declared righteous in God's sight (instead of guilty) because Jesus took our punishment on Himself. He is our substitute before God.

If we say that we put our faith in Jesus, we are relying on Jesus to stand as our substitute before God. We are trusting that his blood washes away our sins. We are trusting that we are washed clean and declared righteous because of Jesus' sacrificial act of love.

The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

—Romans 3:22

And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness...

—Romans 4:5

"Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin."

—Romans 4:7–8

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

—Galatians 2:16

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, O Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" Now Joshua was standing before the angel, clothed with filthy garments. And the angel said to those who were standing before him, "Remove the filthy garments from him." And to him he said, "Behold, I have taken your iniquity away from you, and I will clothe you with pure vestments." And I said, "Let them put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD was standing by.

—Zechariah 3:1–5

We are to have faith in Jesus as our Savior, our Redeemer. We are also **called to repent**.

Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out...

—**Acts 3:19**

But declared first to those in Damascus, then in Jerusalem and throughout all the region of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds in keeping with their repentance.

—**Acts 26:20**

No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

—**Luke 13:3**

For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

—**2 Corinthians 7:10**

Repentance is not optional. It is necessary for salvation. We must confess our sins and turn from them. This is about our heart's attitude toward sin. It requires an understanding and confession that we have not loved God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. It is turning from the ways of this world and the idolatry we have been following to Jesus and fixing our eyes on Him. Loving Him with all that we are.

② **How do we respond to the solution that God provides through Jesus?**

Conclusion and Quiz

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

—Ephesians 2:1–10

Isn't the Great News truly amazing?

In the introduction to this lesson, we learned there are four important parts to the gospel.

1. God
2. Man
3. Christ
4. Response

We have reviewed all four parts. Now for a little quiz.

Quiz

① Who made us, and to whom are we accountable?

② What is our problem? In other words, are we in trouble and why?

② **What is God's solution to that problem? How has He acted to save us from it?**

② **How do I—myself, right here, right now—how do I come to be included in that salvation? What makes this good news for me and not just for someone else?**

All four parts are important pieces of the great news. Often people leave out the response. We choose not to tell people how they can respond to the amazing news we have just shared. It isn't the example we see through Scripture. The apostles called people to repent and believe in Jesus. That is our calling as well.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high."

—**Luke 24:44–49**

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!"

—**Romans 10:13–15**

God intends to bring about His purposes in the world through us. He has called us to proclaim the great news that we believe.

In the next lesson, we will begin to look at a simple way to share. But remember, you understand and believe the gospel. You already know enough to share the great news. **Start praying and asking God for opportunities!**

Week 3: Sharing the Great News — Part 1

What are the best words to use when sharing? Learn simple words and phrases to use and see how Jesus shared with the woman at the well.

Introduction

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In the previous two lessons, we looked first at why we share and then we reviewed the gospel (the great news). Now we are going to transition into discussing how to share the great news.

In Part 1, we will study:

- simplifying our language to help people understand what we are sharing
- a short, simplified great news story
- an example of Jesus sharing in John 4

Each lesson on sharing builds on one another and the homework for each lesson does as well. Please do not skip lessons. Please do not skip the homework. It will make future lessons and homework more difficult.

The goal is to develop a habit of sharing the great news with the people that God places in your life regardless of their cultural background or religion.

It is important to state upfront that gospel proclamation with Muslims and Hindus is rarely ONE conversation. **They need to hear the gospel multiple times.** It likely will take several conversations for them to understand what you are saying about the great news.

In a conversation regarding sharing with Hindus, Dr. TJ Smith shared three important takeaways that apply when sharing the gospel with anyone:

- 1. Go Slower, Not Faster.** We don't need to shortchange or summarize the gospel too much, because we're going to share it several times over several meetings. We encourage you to have **3–4 different "paragraphs"** ready...
 - a. One that is mainly about God the Creator.
 - b. One that is mainly about humans as proud/broken/impure/shameful.
 - c. And one that is about Jesus Christ.
- 2. Don't Sweat Missing Stuff:** We don't need to worry if we **"miss"** something, because we're going to sit with them again (hopefully tomorrow). This is a significant hindrance for many conservative Christians because they are afraid they might miss something in a one-off conversation. Let's lighten the burden. For example, "If you miss something, don't worry. Call them up later that day and invite them to chai." That's a WAAAAY better approach than trying to cram 2,000 years of redemptive history into a 2-minute conversation. I would rather explain one component of the Gospel in greater detail, then summarize the whole thing so vaguely that the Hindu is now inoculated to Christian truth.
- 3. Finally, when we DO "miss" something and we cannot meet them again remember God's promise concerning His Word (Romans 10:17).** This takes us back to #1 above, for us to share ONE central gospel truth in great detail, so that the Hindu has actually heard God's Word and not just an elevator summary.

Simplifying Our Language

Why Do We Need To Simplify Our Language?

How long have you been a follower of Christ? If you did not grow up in the church, you probably at some point found some of the words and concepts that Christians use as strange. You likely did not know what they meant the first time you heard them.

For others of us who grew up in the church, we often do not consider that we use words in our church family that few people use in daily life. How often does incarnation, righteousness, propitiation, disciples, gospel and repentance come up in workplace conversations? I am assuming probably never unless you bring them up.

We do not want our language, our word choices, to be a hindrance to people hearing the great news. By making a few adjustments to the words we use, it is easier for people without Bible knowledge to follow the conversation and story.

Below is a simplified thesaurus/dictionary. Review the words and consider why it may be helpful to use the phrase or word on the right when sharing versus the word on the left. Some of these examples are specifically related to sharing with Muslims. The ones just for Muslims will include an asterisk next to the word*.

Simplified Thesaurus/Dictionary

- Gospel = Great News
- Bible = The Holy Book
- The Scriptures = The Holy Book
- I believe = The Holy Book says (quote verses or tell Bible stories)
- Incarnational = Become just like my people
- Sin = my bad works = the things we do that don't please God
- Righteousness = right living before God
- Propitiation = take punishment for our bad works and restore relationship with God
- Repentance = turning from bad works to God in Christ
- Faith in Christ = Full belief (reliance) in Jesus as Christ, as my Finisher
- Resurrection = coming back from the dead
- Forefathers = the people before the Christ
- John the Baptist = Prophet Yahya*
- Jesus = Il Massih* or the Christ
- Jesus' disciples = Jesus' followers
- Eve = Hawa*
- Heaven = Paradise

As you can see it is not a long thesaurus. Making these small changes in your language can help with understanding as you talk with people and share the great news.

Begin trying to adjust your vocabulary so that it becomes natural to use the simplified phrases and words.

Simplified Great News Story

Now that we have simplified language to use, we will share a simplified great news story. Below you will find two simplified stories. One is designed for Muslims and the other is for non-Muslims. You are not encouraged to memorize these stories. These stories are a guide to helping you internalize key pieces of the great news story. Again, as was mentioned in the introduction to this section, one conversation rarely leads to a clear understand of the gospel and a person turning to repent. It is better to share deeply about one aspect of the gospel to bring clarity than to quickly cover all four parts we have discussed and leave someone confused.

Simplified Great News Story for Muslims

We all have a BIG, BIG problem—according to the Holy Book our bad works make us the enemies of God. How can we pay for our bad works to make us the faithful servants and friends of God He wants us to be? He made a way with blood. Since Adam and Hawa, and all the prophets before The Christ, there was the killing of animals. This blood only covered the bad works. When Prophet Yahya saw The Christ, he declared Him, “the Lamb of God who takes away the bad works of the world”. According to the Holy Book the death, the shedding of His blood, and coming back from the dead by The Christ has paid for all YOUR bad works and allows you to come into a right relationship with God. The Holy Book also says this is a gift of God that allows your spirit to live forever at peace with God. You can receive this gift.

① Of the four parts of the great news that we learned, which part does this story assume Muslims understand? (Circle the correct answer)

- ☐ God
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Jesus
- ☐ Response

② Which of the four parts of the great news is this story missing?

- ☐ God
- ☐ Man
- ☐ Jesus
- ☐ Response

(Continue to next page →)

Simplified Great News Story for non-Muslims

We all have a BIG, BIG problem—according to the Holy Book our bad works make us the enemies of God. God is the Creator and King of the universe. The Holy Books says the penalty for our bad works is death. How can we pay for our bad works to make us the faithful servants and friends of God He wants us to be? We can't, but God made a way with blood. When The Christ came, it was declared about Him, "the Lamb of God who takes away the bad works of the world". According to the Holy Book the death, the shedding of His blood, and coming back from the dead by The Christ has paid for all YOUR bad works and allows you to come into a right relationship with God. The Holy Book also says this is a gift of God that allows your spirit to live forever at peace with God. You can receive this gift by admitting you have disobeyed God and done bad works and turning from them to the Christ and relying on Him to take the punishment for your bad works and restore your relationship to God. Have you heard about the Christ before?

② **Are any of the four parts of the great news unclear or missing? If so, how?**

② Think of someone in your life who has never heard the great news. This person could be a co-worker, neighbor, shopkeeper, waiter at your favorite restaurant, etc. **Write a short, simple great news story to share with this person.**

John 4: Example of Jesus Sharing

Jesus Sharing With the Woman at the Well

John 4 provides the most complete example of Jesus sharing the great news with an individual. It also shows Jesus sharing the great news cross-culturally. The woman at the well is a Samaritan. She is of mixed race. Jesus was a Jew. As we see in John 4, Jews and Samaritans had different beliefs and there was hostility between them.

The woman at the well also had a reputation for immorality. She had previously had many husbands. At when she met Jesus she was living with someone who was not her husband.

She was a Samaritan. She lived an immoral lifestyle. She was also a woman. In the culture in which Jesus lived, Jewish teachers and leaders did not speak to or teach women.

Jesus is breaking down barriers and assumptions in John 4. First, most Jews went around Samaria instead of passing through it. Jesus planned this encounter. He planned to meet and share with Samaritans. He also planned to encounter a woman who was living a life of immorality.

Read John 4:1–45. Read it as a student learning from your Lord and Savior how to interact and love the people God places in your life.

There are five steps¹ that we can identify in this story related to how Jesus pointed the woman to the truth that He is the Messiah.

1. **Get Connected** — Jesus connected with the woman at the well.
2. **Get to a Spiritual Conversation** — Jesus transitioned the conversation to spiritual matters
3. **Get to Lostness** — Jesus led her to see her own lostness
4. **Get to the Great News** — Jesus proclaimed himself as the Messiah
5. **Get to a Response** — Jesus led the woman and many of the townspeople to believe

② How did Jesus connect with the woman (verse 7)?

¹ These five steps were taken from Mike Shipman in his book *Any 3: Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime* (2013).

JESUS FOUND COMMON GROUND WITH THE WOMAN. JESUS AND THE WOMAN CAME FROM TWO DIFFERENT CULTURES AND GENDERS. AS SHE SAID, THEY WERE NOT SUPPOSED TO TALK TO EACH OTHER, BUT HE REACHED OUT AND ASKED HER FOR HELP. HOW OFTEN DO YOU THINK JEWS ASKED SAMARITANS FOR HELP? I WOULD ASSUME RARELY IF EVER. JESUS WAS THIRSTY AS WAS SHE. HE USED THAT COMMONALITY TO START THE CONVERSATION.

? How does Jesus transition the conversation to spiritual matters (verse 10)?

JESUS ASKS FOR WATER. THE WOMAN RESPONDS ASKING WHY A JEW IS ASKING HER FOR WATER. JESUS IMMEDIATELY TURNS THE CONVERSATION TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS. IN TWO SENTENCES HE HAS CONNECTED TO THE WOMAN AND THEN TRANSITIONED A CONVERSATION ABOUT WATER TO TALKING ABOUT GOD.

? How did Jesus get to lostness (verses 16–18)?

JESUS POINTED OUT THE WOMAN'S SIN. HE WAS NOT GIVING HER LIVING WATER WITHOUT FIRST ADDRESSING HER SIN. FOR MANY OF US THIS PART IS UNCOMFORTABLE. PEOPLE DO NOT LIKE BEING TOLD THEY ARE DOING BAD WORKS.

WE ARE AFRAID THAT IF WE TELL SOMEONE THEY HAVE DONE BAD WORKS THAT THEY WILL STOP LISTENING OR GET MAD. JESUS RECOUNTED THIS WOMAN'S MARITAL HISTORY, BUT SHE DID NOT GET MAD. SHE WAS IN AWE OF HIM.

WE ARE NOT JESUS. WE DO NOT KNOW PEOPLE'S HISTORY OFTEN. WE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO POINT OUT SPECIFIC SINS IN DETAIL AS JESUS DID. BUT WE CAN SHOW PEOPLE THEY STAND SEPARATED FROM GOD BECAUSE OF THEIR BAD WORKS. WE CAN TELL THEM IN A WAY THAT IS NOT JUDGMENTAL BUT LOVING SHOWING THEM WE ARE BRINGING THIS ISSUE UP NOT BECAUSE WE DESIRE TO SHAME THEM BUT BECAUSE WE DESIRE TO SEE THEM SAVED.

? How did Jesus get to the Great News (verses 21–26)?

JESUS ADDRESSED THE WOMAN'S FELT NEED. SHE BELIEVED WHAT MATTERED MOST WAS WHERE SOMEONE WORSHIPPED. JESUS CORRECTED THAT FALSE BELIEF AND TAUGHT HER THAT WHAT MATTERED WAS WORSHIP FOUNDED UPON THE TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT, BECAUSE GOD IS SPIRIT.

JESUS THEN POINTED HER TO HIM. HE TOLD THE WOMAN THAT HE WAS THE CHRIST.

TODAY WE ARE SURROUNDED BY PEOPLE WHO FOLLOW A VARIETY OF RELIGIONS THAT ALL TEACH THAT YOU MUST DO CERTAIN THINGS TO BE SAVED. YOU MUST WORK FOR YOUR SALVATION. WHEN WE SHARE THE GREAT NEWS, WE ARE SHOWING PEOPLE THE CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FALSE BELIEF THAT WORKS SAVE US AND THE TRUTH THAT WE ARE SAVED BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH IN CHRIST ALONE.

IN OUR CONVERSATIONS, WE MEET PEOPLE WHERE THEY ARE AND WE THEN TAKE THEM TO THE TRUTH, TO THE GREAT NEWS.

? How did Jesus get to a response (verses 28–30, 39–42)?

THE WOMAN RAN BACK TO THE TOWN. SHE CALLED THE TOWNSPEOPLE TO COME AND MEET THE CHRIST. SHE WAS ALREADY CONNECTED TO THE TOWNSPEOPLE. SHE IMMEDIATELY STARTED WITH A SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION AND A CALLING TO COME MEET THE CHRIST.

MANY BELIEVED FROM HER TESTIMONY. JESUS STAYED TWO DAYS AND TAUGHT AND DURING THAT TIME EVEN MORE BELIEVED. WE DO NOT SEE WHAT WORDS JESUS USED, BUT WE SEE THE RESPONSE. HIS TEACHING LED PEOPLE TO BELIEVE IN HIM.

Our desire is not just to share the great news but to see people respond by turning from bad works and relying on the Christ to save them. We call people to follow Jesus. We need to ask. Do you want to follow Jesus? Do you believe this story I just shared? Do you want to study the Holy Book and see how Jesus saves?

This is the greatest news. The greatest story in the world. We do not share it just so that many know the story. We share it because we long for everyone to believe in the Christ and follow Him.

Make it your goal to ask every person after you share the great news, **“Do you believe this is true?”**

Sometimes the Spirit may lead you not to ask or to leave a detail out for a follow up conversation. Every time we share we need to listen for the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

In Acts 17:22–34, Paul is asked to share in public about God. He clearly shares about who God is, the problem man has and the response that man should have to the salvation God provides. But from what Luke records it does not appear that Paul mentioned the name of Jesus or exactly how he saves us. In verse 32, they tell Paul they will hear him again on the matter. He leaves their midst. Some join Paul and believe. It appears that some came up to him and seek to understand more, and he finished sharing the great news.

When you share, do not be afraid to lead people to respond.

Get Connected

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To Do: Start Conversations

We saw in John 4 how Jesus connected with the woman at the well. It is helpful to practice connecting with people and starting conversations. There are millions of ways we can connect with people. Look for natural ways to connect.

Examples:

- In a local neighborhood park — “Hi. This is a nice park, isn’t it? Do you come here often?”
- On the metro — “Hi. Do you ride this line often? I take it every day to and from work.”
- To a waitress — “Thank you for serving us. My name is _____. What is yours?”
- To a taxi driver — “Where are you from?” Or “How long have you been working in Dubai?”
- To a cashier — “How are you today?” (Listen to the response and give a meaningful answer in reply or ask a follow up question)

To Do:

- Get connected with five people this week. Start five conversations with people you do not know.

Week 4: Sharing the Great News — Part 2

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How do you transition from social to spiritual conversations? Learn questions you can use and see how Paul bridged to a spiritual conversation in Athens.

Introduction

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How is it going starting conversations? Have you started five yet? At this point, the goal is not getting to the gospel but building a habit of starting conversations with people that God places in our lives. Every day we interact with cashiers, waiters, security guards, co-workers, and many others that we do not take the time to talk with. Let's be intentional to choose to notice and speak to people.

In the last lesson we saw that it is helpful to simplify our language so that people who do not have Bible knowledge will understand what we are talking about. We also talked about getting connected and starting conversations.

In this lesson, we will take one more step. We will look at:

- Acts 17:16–34 where Paul shares the gospel with the people of Athens.
- How do we transition from a social conversation to a spiritual one?

Our goal in this lesson is to become comfortable transitioning conversations to spiritual matters.

Acts 17: Example of Paul Sharing

Sharing the Great News at the Areopagus

Acts 17:16-34 is a great example of Paul sharing the great news by starting where the people are and then taking them to the truth. Paul is in Athens waiting on Silas and Timothy who were still teaching in Thessalonica.

As Paul waited and walked around the city, he felt compelled to share the great news. We are told that the city was full of idols (verse 16). These idols were made of gold, silver and wood and crafted by the hands of men.

Paul follows his normal strategy of starting to teach in the synagogues. He starts with those who should be most open to the truth, but he also teaches in the marketplace every day (verse 17).

People began to take notice of him and take interest in his message. It was a teaching they had not heard before (verse 19). They wanted to hear so they brought him to the Areopagus. This was a rocky hill in Athens where it was easy for many to hear as someone taught. Likely the city wanted to hear what Paul had to say because they were wondering if they needed to add another god to the list of gods (idols) that they worshipped. Paul agreed and taught them.

Read through this encounter below and study how Paul taught the people of Athens. Where did he begin? How did he transition to the gospel? Did he leave any part of the gospel out?

Read Acts 17:16–34

① How did Paul start his teaching (verses 22-23)?

HE STARTED WHERE THEY WERE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THEY WERE RELIGIOUS. HE ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD BEEN STUDYING WHAT THEY WORSHIPPED. THEN HE USED AN ALTAR IN THE CITY TO TRANSITION TO THE GOSPEL. HE TOLD THEM ABOUT THE ALTAR "TO THE UNKNOWN GOD."

② What can we learn from this spiritual encounter about how to start spiritual conversations?

WE LEARN THAT IT IS HELPFUL TO UNDERSTAND WHAT PEOPLE BELIEVE. IT IS HELPFUL TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHERE THEY ARE AND WHAT MATTERS TO THEM. IT LIKELY WILL PRESENT A GREAT BRIDGE TO THE GOSPEL.

? How did Paul describe God (verses 24-28, 31)?

HE DESCRIBES GOD AS CREATOR AND LORD OF THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT. HE STATES THAT GOD DOES NOT LIVE IN TEMPLES MADE BY MAN, AND HE IS NOT SERVED BY HUMANS EITHER. PAUL DIRECTLY CONTRADICTS THE FALSE TEACHING AND BELIEFS THAT HE HAS WITNESSED IN ATHENS. HE TOLD THEM THAT GOD MADE ALL THE NATIONS AND THE BOUNDARIES OF NATIONS. GOD MADE MAN TO SEEK HIM NOT WORSHIP IDOLS. ALSO POINTS OUT GOD WILL JUDGE THE WORLD.

? How does Paul describe man (verses 27-30)?

HUMANS ARE MADE BY GOD AND ARE GOD'S OFFSPRING. HE MADE MAN TO SEEK HIM AND FIND HIM. MENTIONS THE NEED TO REPENT AND THAT MAN SHOULDN'T BE WORSHIPPING IDOLS BUT GOD. IMPLIES THAT THEY NEED TO REPENT BECAUSE THEY HAVE BEEN WORSHIPPING IDOLS.

? How does Paul describe Jesus, the Christ (verse 31)?

HE DOES NOT PROVIDE A LOT OF DETAIL. HE DOESN'T MENTION JESUS' NAME (OR AT LEAST LUKE DOESN'T RECORD IT). HE TELLS THEM THE WORLD WILL BE JUDGED IN RIGHTEOUSNESS BY A MAN GOD HAS APPOINTED. WE HAVE ASSURANCE OF THIS BECAUSE THIS MAN WAS RAISED FROM THE DEAD.

② How does Paul describe the need for the people to respond (verse 30)?

PAUL TELLS THEM THAT GOD COMMANDS PEOPLE EVERYWHERE TO REPENT.

② How do the people respond (verses 32–34)?

WHEN PAUL MENTIONED THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD, IT IS LIKELY EVERYONE STARTED TALKING. IT WAS PROBABLY NOT POSSIBLE FOR HIM TO KEEP TEACHING BECAUSE IT WAS TOO LOUD. SOME WERE MOCKING. OTHERS WANTED TO KNOW MORE. SOME IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO FOLLOW HIM AND BELIEVED.

We do not know if Paul said more than is recorded in Acts 17. It is likely his teaching was longer. Did he or did he not more clearly tell them about Jesus? We do not know. There is much though in this passage that should encourage us and guide us.

First, it is helpful to **start where people are**. We do not need to be experts on what someone believes to share the great news with them but taking the time to notice what matters to them is helpful for starting a gospel conversation.

Second, we do not have to force out all four parts of the gospel. Yes, our preference is to clearly share the gospel with a call to respond every time. But that is not going to happen if we are truly having a conversation and not just sharing a memorized speech. We need to be aware as Paul was of how people are responding and **address them where they are**. Some people will mock, but others will want to hear more.

How To Get To Spiritual Conversations

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How Do We Bridge To Spiritual Conversations?

We often make it harder than necessary to transition to a spiritual conversation. There are simple ways we can bridge to a spiritual conversation especially if it is your first conversation with someone.

Questions are a great way to bridge.

Examples:

- “Are you a Muslim, Hindu, Christian or Buddhist?” (Even if you think you know the answer to this question, you can still ask it)
- “Living in the UAE, I have learned that it is a very tolerant place and there are people from all over the world and all different religious backgrounds. Where are you from? What religion do you follow?”
- “Can I ask you a question? I enjoy hearing what matters most to people because everyone’s answers are so diverse! What do you live for? What is most important to you in this world?”
- “This morning as I read the Holy Book I learned _____. Have you heard this before? Do you believe in God?”

Examples for someone you already know:

- “I’m sorry I have not asked this early, ‘Are you a Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist?’”
- “I was praying yesterday for my colleagues, and I prayed for you. I realized I didn’t know what you believed. I follow the Christ. What do you believe?”
- Person shares about a difficult situation. “Can I pray for you in Jesus’ name?”

There are many more possibilities of how we can transition to a spiritual conversation. When you are engaged in a conversation, internally pray asking the Holy Spirit for guidance on how to transition to a spiritual conversation.

Once you have bridged to a spiritual conversation, you want to learn a little about what the person believes and if possible, get them to admit they are lost.

Followers of Jesus are the only ones who can state with certainty that we know what will happen when we die. Why? Because we are saved by grace through faith in Christ alone. We are not saved by our works. All other religions teach that salvation comes through works.

It is preferable to get people to admit as you ask questions that they do not know what will happen to them when they die. It is helpful if they admit they have a problem, and they are not sure if their religion will solve their problem. Then you can share that what the Holy Book teaches is different. We can know what will happen when we die because salvation is not based on works but the grace of God.

For most people it is **hard for them to admit lostness** and that they do not know what will happen when they die. Do not try and force the issue. Ask a few questions. Listen to their responses and potentially ask follow up questions. **Be respectful. Be a learner.** Learn what they believe. Just because someone says they are a Muslim doesn’t mean they believe what most Muslims believe. Just because someone tells you they are a Christian does not mean they know Jesus.

Examples of questions to ask a Muslim to try and get to lostness:

- “As a Muslim, are you trying to please God? Why? Is it because we have all done bad works before God?”
- “How are you trying to please God and pay for your bad works? Can you give some examples of what you do?”
 - ▶ Pray 5 times a day
 - ▶ Give alms
 - ▶ ...
- “Do you do all these things?”
- “Are your bad works paid for?”
- “Will your bad works be paid for by time you die?”
- “On Judgement Day, will your bad works be paid for?”

Listen well as they answer your questions. Let their answers direct you to the next question to ask or to when you should bridge to the great news. Do not interrogate the person. If you do, they likely will point you to the mosque they attend to learn more.

The goal is not to become an expert on Islam through asking questions but to understand what that person believes. They may not believe Islam at all. They may be a cultural Muslim who follows all the rituals because that is what he or she was taught to do. That is helpful to know as you share.

Examples of questions to ask non-Muslims to get to lostness:

- “What is the purpose of your religion? Is it to please a god?”
- “How do you please your god(s)?”
- “What do you believe happens when you die?”
- “What is your reason for living?”
- “Do you worry about what will happen when you die?”

Listen well as the questions are answered. Seek to understand what the person believes and show them you are listening. The answers will reveal to you what you need to share about God, man, Jesus and response. This time of allowing the person to share and learning from him often helps open the door to bridge to the great news.

Reminder: Don't worry about how you are going to share the great news as the person is answering your questions. Fully engage in listening and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide you.

? Please share examples of questions that can be used to help someone identify they are lost?

① What questions can you ask that will help them identify they are separated from God and need help?

Practice: How To Describe God

It is helpful to prepare for great news conversations. We trust the Holy Spirit to guide us but that does not mean we cannot prepare. We can memorize Bible verses. We can practice writing out what we want to say. We can practice sharing with one another.

In this activity, take time to think of a specific person or type of person in your life that you want to share the great news with. Then walk through the following questions as you begin preparing and building confidence to share with them.

① Who do you want to share with? What religion do they follow? (Share a few descriptive details that describe the individual.)

② What questions can you ask to transition to a spiritual conversation and try to get to lostness? (Write in a series of questions that you will ask.)

③ Share how you will describe God to this person in 2-3 sentences. (Keep it short!)

? **Share how you will describe God to this person in 1–2 paragraphs.** (Expound on the truths you stated in the short answer above.)

To Do: Get To Spiritual Conversations

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We saw in Acts 17 how Paul connected with the people of Athens and then transitioned to a spiritual conversation before getting to the great news. In this lesson we have learned ways to bridge to a spiritual conversation.

This week our goal is to take one more step towards sharing the great news. Our goal is to get to a spiritual conversation with at least five people this week. That means you will get connected with a least five people and then bridge to get to a spiritual conversation. You may need to talk to more than five people because some may not give you an opportunity to transition the conversation.

To Do:

- Get to a spiritual conversation with five people this week.

Week 5: Sharing the Great News — Part 3

How do you transition from spiritual to gospel conversations? Learn how to use your story as a bridge to God's story and see how Paul bridged to a gospel conversation in front of King Agrippa.

Introduction

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Is your confidence growing in your ability to start conversations and get to a spiritual conversation?

Building confidence is a process. Part of the process is developing habits of starting conversations that we intentionally turn to spiritual matters. Part of the process is opening our eyes to see all the people around us who do not know Jesus. Less than 1% of the people of Dubai follow Jesus as their Lord and Savior. That means most of the people we encounter each week do not know Jesus.

As you study the Bible daily and pray, **ask God to give you confidence and boldness to speak up and declare His great news to people in your life.** Reach out and ask for help if you need it. Are you finding that you need a partner? Ask a classmate and go with someone together.

In the last lesson we learn the importance of getting to a spiritual conversation and getting to lostness. We saw how Paul studied the beliefs in Athens and used their beliefs to transition to proclaiming the gospel.

In this lesson, we will take one more step. We will look at:

- Acts 26 where Paul shares the gospel with King Agrippa.
- How do we transition from a spiritual conversation to a gospel one?

Our goal in this lesson is to become comfortable transitioning conversations to the great news.

Acts 26: Example of Paul Sharing

Sharing the Great News Before King Agrippa

In Acts 26 Paul is in chains and the Jews are determined to kill him. They know he has not done anything deserving of death, so they ask Festus to bring him back to Jerusalem for trial. Paul knowing that they wish to kill him on the journey appeals to be tried in Rome before Caesar.

Festus brings Paul before King Agrippa so that the king can help Festus determine what charges to write up and send to Caesar concerning Paul. Paul comes before the king to make his defense.

Read through this encounter below and study how Paul shared the great news with the king using his personal story. **Where did he begin? How did he transition to the gospel? Did he leave any part of the gospel out?**

Read Acts 26

① How did Paul start his defense before King Agrippa (verses 2–3)?

HE ACKNOWLEDGED WHO HE WAS STANDING BEFORE AND THE KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING THAT KING AGRIPPA POSSESSED. HE THEN BEGGED FOR PATIENCE AS HE MADE HIS DEFENSE.

② What can we learn from his opening that helps us consider how to bridge to the gospel?

WE LEARN THAT WE NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHERE PEOPLE ARE AND WHAT THEY UNDERSTAND. IF WE HAVE LISTENED AS SOMEONE HAS SHARED WHAT THEY BELIEVE, WE NEED TO TAKE A MINUTE TO SHARE WHAT WE LEARNED FROM THEIR SHARING. THEN POSSIBLY THE BEST OPTION IS TO ASK IF THEY WILL LISTEN AS YOU BRIEFLY SHARE WHAT THE HOLY BOOK TEACHES.

? Paul does not begin by describing God in this passage. Where does he start after opening (verses 4–11)?

HE SHARED ABOUT HIS LIFE BEFORE HE FOLLOWED JESUS. HE SHARED WHAT HE DID TO FOLLOWERS OF JESUS BEFORE BELIEVING. HE SHARED HIS REPUTATION AND STANDING AS WELL AS THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM.

? After describing his life before knowing Jesus, what does Paul describe next (verses 12–18)?

HE DESCRIBES HIS CONVERSION, HOW HE CAME TO FOLLOW JESUS. HE DESCRIBES HOW HE CAME TO FOLLOW JESUS. HE DESCRIBES HOW JESUS APPEARED TO HIM AND HOW ONE IS TO RESPOND TO JESUS.

? What does Paul share about his life after his encounter with Jesus (verses 19–23)?

HE SHARES THAT HE OBEYED THE VISION AND BEGAN PROCLAIMING THE GREAT NEWS. HE DECLARES THAT GOD HELPS HIM AND THAT ALL THAT HE TEACHES AND SHARES IS FOUND IN THE HOLY BOOK. HE DESCRIBES HIS LIFE AFTER TURNING TO FOLLOW JESUS AND HE AGAIN SHARES HOW ONE STARTS FOLLOWING JESUS.

? What is the response of Festus and King Agrippa (verses 24–28)? What is Paul's response to King Agrippa (verse 29)?

FESTUS THINKS PAUL IS CRAZY. HIS RESPONSE DOES NOT DETER PAUL. PAUL CONTINUES SPEAKING TO KING AGRIPPA WITH THE ASSUMPTION THAT HE DOES UNDERSTAND. KING AGRIPPA BELIEVES PAUL IS TRYING TO PERSUADE HIM TO BELIEVE WHICH PAUL CONFIRMS.

② **Paul is on trial for his life, yet he is still seeking to persuade even the king to believe. Is this encouraging to you? Why or why not?**

The confidence displayed by Paul is a confidence that all of us can possess. All of us who follow Jesus and are filled with the Holy Spirit can stand before rulers, authorities, family, colleagues, friends, and neighbors and with wise courage proclaim the truth (Matthew 10:19).

Paul's example is helpful. Paul knew that the king was likely aware of his past and his story, so he chose to use his personal story to display the power of Christ and the great news. There are times when our best option may be to follow a similar approach.

Paul started by sharing about **his life before following Jesus**. He stated facts that all the religious leaders could verify. These statements were also contradictory to his way of life after turning to Jesus. He provided evidence of the power of the gospel.

Then Paul shared **how he came to follow Jesus**. He told the story of how this happened. He used statements again and presented the evidence as fact.

Last Paul shared **how he lived after turning to follow Jesus**. He shared the great news in this section clearly and stated how it fulfilled the teaching of the Holy Book. Paul was not trying to get into an argument over different beliefs but instead focused on stating what happened to him and then how his teaching fulfilled the teaching of the Bible, the Holy Book.

It is easy for people to dismiss what we believe. It is easy for people to say, "What you believe is great for you, and what I believe is great for me." We want people to be forced to dismiss Scripture not us. We want to intentionally speak of what the Holy Book teaches versus focusing on what we believe. We can still tell our personal story as we share the teachings of the Bible.

How To Get to Great News Conversations

How Do We Bridge to Gospel Conversations?

Just like with bridging to spiritual conversations, we often make it harder than necessary to transition to a gospel conversation. In our mind we have put up roadblocks. We often are assuming that the person will stop the conversation and reject the great news. They may reject it. They may end the conversation. They may change the subject. But, none of those possibilities should hinder us from bridging to the great news.

When we are in a conversation, we must remember that we are God's representative, and He has given us a message that He wants all peoples in the world to hear. Furthermore, Romans 10:15 states, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!" Sharing the great news is our calling. It is our responsibility.

Yes, it is possible the conversation can end badly if we bridge to the gospel. It is guaranteed that if no one ever shares the gospel with that person that they will spend eternity separated from God. It is worth whatever worldly risks we face to share the great news.

How do we bridge to the great news?

Questions are a great way to bridge to spiritual conversations but usually not the best way to bridge to the gospel. Asking questions makes it easy for the person to deflect or change the subject. If you do want to ask permission to share with them, first take a moment to grab their attention so that they are more likely to want to hear more.

Examples:

- "Thank you for helping me to understand what you believe. The Holy Book teaches that God provides a way for us to have our bad works paid for and our relationship with Him restored. And it isn't through doing more good works than bad works."
- "I once thought and believed something very similar to what you are describing. I was trying to do as many good works as possible. I was afraid that I was not meeting God's standard. Then someone showed me in the Holy Book how God provides a way. Let me share with you in 3 minutes what I learned."
- "It sounds hard not knowing where you will go when you die. Did you know that the Holy Book teaches we can know what happens? Let me share with you what it says."

There are many more possibilities of how we can transition to a gospel conversation. Pray as you are talking with someone asking God for wisdom and guidance. Be bold and don't hesitate to make the transition.

Often the best way to transition is directly from a statement made by the person with whom you are talking. They may be describing their understanding of God or paradise or bad works, and you see an opportunity to respectfully share what the Holy Book teaches about that topic.

Our goal is not to get to the point where someone allows us to preach at them for 5–10 minutes as they just listen as we talk. Instead, we desire to have a conversation and walk through the four key parts of the gospel in a dialogue. It is possible to share the gospel without someone even realizing that is what is happening. Instead, they think they are just having a conversation about religion; yet, at the end of the conversation they understand what the Holy Book teaches about the great news and how to respond and follow the Christ.

How do we best prepare to bridge to the great news and share it?

There are four key parts:

1. **We spend time daily studying God's word.** As we learn more about God and our love for God grows, our desire to share what we are learning about God grows. We are compelled to share it with others. Daily spend significant time reading God's word and praying.
2. **We memorize God's word.** Hiding God's word in our heart makes it possible for us to directly quote Scripture as we share. It makes it easier for us to be able to respond specifically to what someone is sharing and to say, "The Holy Book says in..."
3. **We practice bridging to the great news and sharing.** The best way to share is not by memorizing a gospel presentation. It is by practicing with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We help one another clarify the message we are sharing and develop confidence to share.
4. **We bridge to the great news and share often.** The best way to prepare is by doing it. The more we share the more our confidence will build. The more we share the more clearly we will be able to share the truth. The more we share the easier it will be to answer questions as you learn from each experience. The more we share the more we will grow near to Christ. Sharing the gospel is part of our own discipleship, our own sanctification process. God uses it to teach us more about Him and to love Him more.

Reminder: The Holy Spirit fills you and will guide you as you dialogue with someone about Jesus. Trust Him to guide you and speak through you.

② Please share examples of how you can bridge from a spiritual to a gospel conversation?

Practice: Telling God's Story Through Your Story

There are times when sharing your testimony, your story of how you came to follow Jesus, is helpful. It can be very effective when sharing with people who knew you before you knew Jesus like family and friends.

It is important to remember to make it all about God. Your story should not exalt you or make you look good. It should exalt God and make Him look worthy of all worship. Paul never exalted himself when he shared his story. He also clearly shared how he was the worst of sinners and unworthy to be saved. Yet, God chose to save Paul for His great purposes.

Below are questions to help you consider how to share your story and exalt God in the process. **Weave the great news throughout your story.** You want someone to hear the gospel as they hear you telling your story of turning to follow Jesus.

Sharing your testimony is not always the most helpful approach. Don't assume each time that you should share your story. Listen as the person shares about themselves and their beliefs to see if there is a point of connection that makes your story a helpful way to share the truth.

Before following Jesus, this is how I lived...

Share a few sentences about your life before turning to Jesus.

I first began to understand my need for Jesus when...

What made me most interested in following Jesus was...

This is a great place to quote a Scripture that points to the truth.

I turned to follow Jesus when I finally understood...

This is a great place to share the great news and how we respond to the great news.

Since turning to follow and live for Jesus, I have changed...

Provide some examples of how God has changed you from...to...

Then you can ask the person you are talking to, "Have you ever considered turning to follow Jesus?"

To Do: Get to Great News Conversations

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We saw in Acts 26 how Paul used his story to try and persuade King Agrippa to turn and follow Jesus. We have taken time to write out our story and think through how to clearly share the great news as we tell our story of turning to Jesus. We have also discussed briefly how to bridge from spiritual to gospel conversations.

Bridging to the great news requires practice. Practice helps us to build confidence and trust that the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us. So it is important for us to start practicing and doing it. This next week, share your story that points to Jesus with two fellow church members or members of this class. Let them provide feedback and encouragement. Then also continue starting spiritual conversations. This week seek to bridge to the gospel in at least two of those conversations.

To Do:

- Share your story that points to Jesus with two church members this week.
- Get to a spiritual conversation with five people this week.
- Get to a great news conversation with two people this week.

Week 6: Sharing the Great News — Part 4

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Learning to bridge from the gospel to a response

Introduction

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How many conversations have you started? How many times have you shared the gospel in the last month? Is your confidence growing?

Remember you are building habits. You want to develop a habit of starting social conversations. Then once in a conversation you want to learn to naturally bridge to a spiritual conversation, then gospel conversation and finally to a response. It will not be possible to take every conversation to the great news but that should be your goal. Always be looking for the opportunity to point people to Jesus.

In the last lesson, we saw how Paul shared the great news with King Agrippa, we learned how to transition to a gospel conversation and how to share our personal story (testimony).

In this lesson, we will take one more step. We will look at:

- Acts 8 — Philip sharing the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch.
- How to bridge from the gospel to a response.
- Simplified story that tells how the prophets point us to Jesus.

Our goal in this lesson is to become comfortable transitioning conversations to a response as well as learning how to use different stories in Scripture to point people to Jesus.

Acts 8: Example of Philip Sharing

After Stephen was stoned in Acts 7, a great persecution arose against the church and the followers of Jesus were scattered across Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1). We are told that those who were scattered went about preaching the word (Acts 8:4). The persecution did not stop them from spreading the great news. The persecution helped the gospel spread faster across the region.

In Acts 8:26–40 Luke tells the story of Philip following the instructions of an angel of the Lord and meeting an Ethiopian eunuch who was reading Isaiah. Read through the passage. **What does this passage teach us about sharing the great news?**

Read Acts 8:26–40

① **How did Philip come to find himself on a desert road sitting in the chariot of an Ethiopian eunuch?**

HE LISTENED TO AN ANGEL OF THE LORD AND THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WENT WHERE HE WAS DIRECTED. THEN WHEN HE ARRIVED, HE SPOKE UP. THIS EUNUCH WAS POWERFUL AND IMPORTANT. SOMEONE LIKE PHILIP WOULD NOT NORMALLY WALK UP TO A CHARIOT AND START A CONVERSATION WITH THIS MAN, BUT PHILIP BOLDLY OBEYED THE SPIRIT.

② **How did Philip begin sharing the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch (verse 35)?**

HE STARTED WHERE THE MAN WAS READING IN ISAIAH AND PRECEDED TO SHARE THE GREAT NEWS. THIS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF STARTING WHERE SOMEONE IS AND THEN TAKING THEM TO JESUS.

② How does the man respond to the gospel (verses 36–39)?

BASED ON HIS DESIRE TO IMMEDIATELY BE BAPTIZED, HE BELIEVED.

This passage is not teaching us to wait on an angel of the Lord to tell us where to go share the great news. Philip was already proclaiming the great news. In Acts 8:5, Philip is proclaiming the Christ in the city of Samaria. Then after his encounter with the eunuch, he continued faithfully proclaiming the great news (Acts 8:40).

The example we have from Philip is one of continual, daily great news proclamation with one instance of God providing very specific instructions and guidance for where to go and who to share with. There may be times that you receive specific instructions. There may be times that you meet someone that has been told to come find a Christ follower who will share the gospel with them like Cornelius in Acts 10.

Regardless of whether we receive specific direction or not, we still have a **calling to point people to Jesus**. As we faithfully share and disciple, we will find that God may lead some to us who are ready to hear.

The other lesson is to listen to where people are. Philip did not walk up and start sharing a memorized story about Jesus. He listened and saw where the man was and then from that place, he shared the gospel. As we have been learning, it is important to **listen to where people are**. What do they believe? What are their felt needs? What or who do they live for? Start where they are and take them to Jesus.

How To Get to a Response?

How Do We Bridge to a Response to the Gospel?

Many of us when we finish sharing the great news just stop. We don't ask if they have heard the story before. We don't ask if they believe it. We just stop and there is an awkward silence. Often what then happens is the person changes the subject. **Why are we afraid to bridge to a response to the great news?**

We do not like to be rejected. We do not know what the person might say. There are many excuses that we give ourselves. None of them are valid reasons not to seek a response. If we are having a conversation with someone (versus preaching at them), it is natural to ask a follow up question after telling the story.

How do we bridge to a response?

We bridge to a response to the great news with questions. A great initial question is, "Have you heard about the Christ before?" You do not have to begin with, "Do you believe Jesus is your Lord and Savior?" Start by seeking to hear what the person understood. Then with discernment from the Holy Spirit determine what follow up questions to ask.

Examples:

- "Have you heard this story about the Christ before?"
- "Did you understand what I shared about how the Christ takes the punishment for our sins and restores our relationship with God? What did you not understand?"
- "Do you believe this story about Jesus?"
- "Do you want to know how to trust and follow Jesus?"
- "The Holy Book teaches that Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and that He is the only way to God. We can all turn to follow Jesus. Do you want to follow Him?"
- "Do you want to study the Bible and see how it points to Jesus?"

There are many possibilities of how we can transition to a response. Pray as you are talking with someone asking God for wisdom and guidance. Be bold and don't hesitate to make the transition.

Remember that faith and repentance are both necessary responses to the great news. Even if a person shares that they do not want to follow Jesus or they do not believe, seek to tell them how they can follow Jesus. They may not believe that day or even the next day but equip them with a clear understanding for how to follow so that if they are convicted at some point in the future they know how to respond.

Reminder: The Holy Spirit fills you and will guide you as you dialogue with someone about Jesus. Trust Him to guide you as you direct someone to respond to Jesus.

? Please share examples of how you can bridge from the gospel to a response?

Simplified Great News Story — Prophets Point to Christ

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In Sharing the Great News — Part 1, you were introduced to a simplified dictionary and great news story. The following story below expands on that story.

You do not know how long you will have to talk to someone. Sometimes you only have 2–3 minutes. Sometimes you have 30 minutes or longer. The longer you have the more you can share, but even if it is only 2–3 minutes you can be intentional with what you share.

Have you considered how to tell the story of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son in 3–5 sentences? It is possible. I encourage you to study Genesis 22. Then consider how to summarize the story in 1 minute. Then if you have 5 minutes consider key points to add.

It is important to take the time to prepare to be an intentional, gospel proclaimer who is pointing people to the Bible. Genesis 1, 3 and 22 are all passages to study and consider how to clearly share the truths in those passages with those who do not know Jesus.

The story below is a guide. It is not recommended for you to memorize it. It is an example of how to simplify language and what to emphasize. This story starts and ends with Christ. Consider how you can share in a similar manner. Can you introduce Christ upfront and then tell a prophet story or parable before going back to Christ and sharing the great news again?

The following example is helpful when sharing with Muslims. Next, we will share a story that can be used with Hindus.

Who was Christ: You've heard of the Christ, the Word of God. He was in paradise with God from the very beginning, then He came to the earth and was born of a virgin. He never had a single bad work. He had the purest heart. The Christ once fasted 40 days and 40 nights, he didn't eat anything, he was tempted by the Satan, yet he never did anything wrong. The Christ could control his desires as a human being. He chose not to marry.

What did Christ do: The Christ did great miracles. He removed demons. He healed lots of sick people, including people who were blind from birth. He raised the dead. Although the Christ wasn't old yet, he began prophesying. In the Holy Book, the Christ explained to people that He must die to fulfill the Torah. He did this because of His divine power.

What did Adam do: God created Adam and Hawa perfect and placed them in the perfect garden. Sadly, they disobeyed God. Immediately, Adam and Hawa were ashamed as they knew they were naked. God even killed some animals to make clothes for them. This was the first shedding of blood. Adam and Hawa were forced out of the Garden.

What did Ibrahim do: You know the story of Ibrahim and his son. God told Ibrahim to sacrifice his son. God required blood. Because Ibrahim was faithful he obeyed God. At the last minute, God sent a sheep to take the place of Ibrahim's son. That day there was blood, but the blood of the sheep God provided.

What did Moses do: God sent a death angel to judge. The first-born male of every family must die. God instructed Moses and his people that whoever put the blood of a perfect lamb on their door the death angel would pass over them. Again, God used the blood of an animal to replace the blood of the human.

What did the Jews do: Since the time of Moses the Jews were commanded by God to slaughter young sheep. Why? This blood covered their bad works.

What did the Christ do—revisit: Without blood it is impossible to pay for even our smallest bad work. Prophet Yahya, when he saw the Christ proclaimed, “This is Lamb of God who TAKES AWAY the penalty for our bad works.” HE pays for and clears the bad works from our account! Amazingly, the Christ also said He would come back from the dead, which the Holy Book verifies. The Christ was stronger than death!!

What has God done: God has always loved us, the sons of Adam. Like He had always done, He provided. The Christ was the perfect, final provision. No more animal blood over and over again. The Christ’s blood paid for you and me and that ended the need for blood. No shed blood—No payment for our bad works. It is God’s way. God himself made the way. The death, burial, and rising of the Christ is God’s special gift for you and me.

Simplified Great News Story – Sharing With Hindus

The story below is a guide. It is not recommended for you to memorize it. It is an example of how to simplify language and theological concepts and what to emphasize when sharing with Hindus.

We all have a BIG, BIG problem: The Most Holy God is the Creator and King of the universe. The Creator God is absolutely perfect and holy—He is like One Sun in the sky, burning away anything that comes too close to Him. We cannot approach him! Worse yet, he is coming to judge all human beings for their pride, impurity, shame, and guilt. The penalty for these bad works is death—being separated from Him forever! This is why we don't have peace and joy. How can we be cleansed of our impurities? How can we be forgiven our wrongs? How can we have peace with God and not be separated from Him?

The Creator God revealed Himself in this (show the Bible) Holy Book. The Creator God says that we all live very far away from him—in darkness and shadow. Our very soul is stained. Our soul-stain must be washed away, cleansed. Our pride and shame cling to us like car oil on our hands. We need someone to remove it; we need someone to replace our shame and pride with honor and purity. The Creator God says that only a pure blood-sacrifice can cleanse someone, forgive us, make peace with us. The death of a pure-blood sacrifice removes our stain, pride, impurity.

No one can offer sacrifice for themselves, with tainted hands (because then the sacrifice is also defiled!). We needed someone to come down to us. The Lord Jesus came down to us. He knew that we needed a deliverer. He knew we lived in shadow and darkness, that we could not heal our spiritual sickness. So, he entered into this dark world where he alone lived perfectly, with no shame, no impurity, no guilt. He had all power over darkness and shadow.

After many years of power and perfection and purity, he willingly chose to be our pure-blood sacrifice. He willingly drank our shame and impurity and guilt. Because the Lord Jesus loves us, he took all of the poison into himself. He died physically, fully entering into darkness. Yet after 3 days, he came back to life in his body. The poison could not keep him. The darkness could not hold him. He overcame death. He overcame shame and impurity and guilt. He rose from death as the King and Victor.

The Creator God says that anyone who trusts in and follows the Lord Jesus will live forever with him. The Creator God makes peace with anyone who turns to the Lord Jesus. He will give us an unstained soul and undying life and unbreakable light. Today, you can receive this gift from God. Turn to the Lord Jesus and ask him to take away your soul-stain. Ask him to drink your sin-poison. You must give him your darkness, and he will give you his unconquerable light. Ask him to remove your shame and he will give you his undying glory. What prevents you from asking for his help even today?

To Do: Get to a Response

This week we looked at how Philip shared the great news with the Ethiopian eunuch. We have seen the importance of getting to a response. Once we share the great news, we want to extend the dialogue into a discussion about how to respond to the greatest news we have ever heard. Now let's practice. This week our goal is to start social conversations that we bridge to spiritual and then gospel conversations before bridging to a response.

To Do:

- Share your story that points to Jesus with two church members.
- Get to a spiritual conversation with five people.
- Get to a great news conversation and a response with one person this week.

Conclusion

As we finish up this week, there is one exhortation for all of us—**love God and love people through sharing the great news!** May people not wonder who we are or what we believe, but may our love compel us to talk about Jesus all the time.

Pray daily asking God to give you opportunities to share the great news. Pray specifically for family, friends, colleagues, and neighbors asking God to save them.

Plan intentional times where you will go out and pray for the lost and seek to point them to Jesus. And, lead others to join you in sharing the great news. Find or start a group in your church that holds one another accountable to share the gospel regularly. Find people who will go out with you 2x2.

God has given us a mission to go and make disciples of all nations. Making disciples starts with sharing the great news. **Let's all be intentional gospel proclaimers for the glory of God!**

Appendix

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Resources for further study

What Is Not Sharing the Gospel?

But thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere. For we are the aroma of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God's word, but as men of sincerity, as commissioned by God, in the sight of God we speak in Christ.

—2 Corinthians 2:14–17

The following points are taken from *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever.

In this class we have spent several weeks discussing how to share the great news contextually. Let's briefly discuss what is not evangelism.

1. Closing the Sale (the Results)

God does not call us to do whatever it takes to get people to pray a prayer and confess that they believe in Jesus. If we focus on conversion, we will be strongly tempted to change the message of the gospel to get more people to convert.

Conversion is not our responsibility. The Spirit convicts. The Spirit converts, not us.

We preach or announce the great news, and we seek to persuade. The gospel is the greatest news that we have ever heard, so yes we are persuasive when we tell it. But, as we are persuasive we understand we can't convert anyone. Only God turns people to follow Him. We proclaim the truth. We then stand back and trust God to use His powers to convict and turn sinners to Him.

The gospel is powerful. We must remember that and proclaim it!

We don't fail in our evangelism if we faithfully tell the gospel to someone who is not converted; we fail only if we don't faithfully tell the gospel at all. Evangelism itself isn't converting people; it's telling them that they need to be converted and telling them how they can be.

—Mark Dever

2. Imposing Our Beliefs on Others

Evangelism is simply telling the good news found in the Bible. We tell the truth according to Scripture. It is not coercing people to turn to Christianity. It is not giving money to converts. It is not threatening people who refuse to convert.

The Bible presents the human problem as one that can never be solved by coercive force or imposition. Therefore, all I can do is present the good news accurately, live a life of love towards unbelievers, and pray for God to convict them of their sins and give them the gifts of repentance and faith.

—**Mark Dever**

Is this truth not freeing for all of us? We are not held responsible for who believes and who does not. Our calling is to share the great news clearly, love unbelievers well and pray for God to open their eyes to turn and follow Him.

3. Personal Testimony

Our life story before following Jesus and after turning to Jesus is not the gospel. It will not save anyone. It is crucial that when we share our story that we intentionally insert a clear presentation of the gospel into our story. It is only God's story that matters. We must not make evangelism about us but about Him.

It can be helpful to share your personal testimony but only when the gospel and the power of the gospel is clearly explained as you tell your story.

4. Loving Our Neighbors and Our Cities

Sometimes we get the idea that it is ok to just live out the gospel and never speak the truth of the gospel. Yes, it is important to live out the great news. It is important to love our neighbors and love our city. Getting involved in social organizations to help the poor and the oppressed is great. However, it does not save anyone.

For many it is helpful for them to not just hear the gospel but also see it lived out. They need to see how followers of Jesus are different. If they never hear the gospel though, they never understand why we are different. If they don't know why, they are unable to turn to follow Jesus.

Let's love our family, neighbors and cities well by proclaiming the great news and living lives that have been transformed by the gospel.

5. Apologetics

Answering the questions that people have about God and the Bible is not wrong. It can be very helpful for some people. We just must understand that it isn't evangelism. If the gospel is not be presented, then we are not sharing the great news.

Apologetics can lead to evangelism. Apologetics can also distract and hinder the ability to share the great news. Do not let apologetics distract you from the gospel. You will never argue or debate anyone into turning to follow Jesus. Remember, our responsibility is not to convert. Our role is to proclaim the greatest news we know.

How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they

are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed what he has heard from us?” So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.

—**Romans 10:14–17**

Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God

How Does God's Sovereignty Impact Evangelism

This page is a summary from J.I. Packer's book, *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God*. In 126 pages he clearly explains why we should focus on evangelism even knowing that God is sovereign. There are several long quotes from Packer below. Contemplate what he is sharing as you consider why to share the gospel and how to go about it.

We are not all called to be preachers; we are not all given equal opportunities or comparable abilities for personal dealing with men and women who need Christ. But we all have some evangelistic responsibility which we cannot shirk without failing in love both to our God and to our neighbor. To start with, we all can and should be **praying for the salvation** of unconverted people, particularly in our family, and among our friends and every day associates. And then we must learn to **see what possibilities of evangelism our everyday situation** holds, and to be enterprising in our use of them. It is the nature of love to be enterprising. If you love someone, you are constantly trying to think out what is the best you can do for him, and how best you can please him, and it is your pleasure to give him pleasure by the things you devise for him. If, then, we love God—Father, Son, and Spirit—for all that They have done for us, we shall muster all our initiative and enterprise to make the most that we can of every situation for Their glory—and **one chief way** of doing this is to seek out ways and means of **spreading the gospel**, and obeying the divine command to make disciples everywhere. Similarly, if we love our neighbor, we shall muster all our initiative and enterprise to find ways and means of doing him good. And **one chief way** of doing him good is to **share with him our knowledge of Christ**. Thus, **if we love God and our neighbor, we shall evangelize**, and we shall be enterprising in our evangelism. We shall not ask with reluctance how much we have to do in this realm, as if evangelizing were a distasteful and burdensome task. We shall not enquire anxiously after the minimum outlay of effort in evangelism that will satisfy God. But we shall ask eagerly, and pray earnestly to be shown, just how much it is in our power to do to spread the knowledge of Christ among men; and once we see what the possibilities are, we shall give ourselves wholeheartedly to the task.

—J.I. Packer

Packer reminds us of what we learned in week one of our class. Why do we share the gospel? We share because it is one chief way that we display our love for God and our love for people. It is an important way to bring glory to God.

Packer also discusses what our mindset should be as we share the gospel and how we approach gospel proclamation.

First, we must admit that we were silly ever to think that any evangelistic technique, however skillful, could of itself guarantee conversions; second, we must recognize that, because man's heart is impervious to the word of God, it is no cause for surprise if at any time our evangelism fails to result in conversions; third, we must remember that the terms of our calling are that we should be faithful, not that we should be successful; fourth we must learn to rest our hopes of fruit in evangelism upon the omnipotent grace of God.

For God does what man cannot do. God works by His Spirit through His Word in the hearts of sinful men to bring them to repentance and faith. Faith is a gift of God.

—**J.I. Packer**

Key points to remember about evangelism from the above quote:

1. Evangelism methods or techniques do not guarantee conversions.
2. We should not be surprised if our gospel proclamation fails to convert because people are blind to the truth.
3. Our calling is to be faithful, not successful.
4. We must rest our hopes of fruit in evangelism upon the omnipotent grace of God.

God saves. We do not. We must remember this. Our calling is to share the great news not convert anyone.

We may not trust in our methods of personal dealing or running evangelistic services, however excellent we may think them. There is no magic in methods, not even in theologically impeccable methods. When we evangelize, our trust must be in God who raises the dead. He is the almighty Lord who turns men's hearts, and He will give conversions in His own time. Meanwhile, our part is to be faithful in making the gospel known, sure that such labor will never be in vain. This is how the truth of the sovereignty of God's grace bears upon evangelism.

—**J.I. Packer**

Packer says the truth of the sovereignty of God's grace should lead to three things when it comes to gospel proclamation:

1. Boldness

We should not be surprised or discouraged when people are uninterested in or reject the gospel. They are in bondage to sin. We should expect this. We should also believe that no heart is too hard for God's grace.

Christ's ability to save us should convince us of his ability to save anyone. We should not be ashamed of the gospel. We should not feel like we are wasting people's time. We should never assume that anyone is beyond the reach of God.

Instead, we should boldly declare the gospel remembering that God is sovereign and working. Our calling is to boldly and faithfully proclaim the gospel.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

—Ephesians 2:1–10

2. Patience

God saves in His timing not ours. We must not suppose He is in the same hurry that we are. We design our world to be efficient. We focus on saving time and reducing resources. This is not how loving a lost person works. This is not our calling to faithfulness. Patience comes from dwelling on God's sovereignty. His grace and word do not return to Him void.

We need patience, then, if we are to do our part in helping others towards faith. And the way for us to develop that patience is to learn to live in terms of our knowledge of the free and gracious sovereignty of God.

—J.I. Packer

3. Prayerful

Through prayer we acknowledge our dependence on God to save. Our witness is ineffective without God making it effective.

The knowledge, then, that God is sovereign in grace, and that we are impotent to win souls, should make us pray, and keep us praying. What should be the burden of our prayers? We should pray for those whom we seek to win, that the Holy Spirit will open their hearts; and we should pray for ourselves in our own witness, and for all who preach the gospel, that the power and authority of the Holy Spirit may rest upon them. 'Pray for us,' writes Paul to the Thessalonians, 'that the word of the Lord may run and be glorified.' Paul was a great evangelist who had seen much fruit, but Paul knew that every particle of it had come from God, and that unless God continued to work both in him and in those to whom he preached he would never convert another soul. So he pleads for prayer, that his evangelism might still prove fruitful.

Preaching and prayer must go together; our evangelism will not be according to knowledge, nor will it be blessed, unless they do. We are to preach,

because without knowledge of the gospel no man can be saved. We are to pray, because only the sovereign Holy Spirit in us and in men's hearts can make our preaching effective to men's salvation, and God will not send His Spirit where there is no prayer.

—**J.I. Packer**

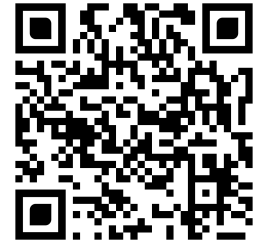
Praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

—**Ephesians 6:18–20**

The Culture Map Introduction

Diving into *The Culture Map* resources can be very helpful to you. Erin Meyers, the author of *The Culture Map*, explores the diversity of cultures and how they affect business relationships and work.

Here's a brief explanation of *The Culture Map*: To watch the video, scan the QR code or visit https://youtu.be/qf1ZI-O_9tU



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The Culture Map is a great guide in understanding how cultural differences can affect communication. Meyer takes standard cultural categories like direct and indirect communication or whether cultures are people-focused or task-focused and maps them in layers of business situations.

She provides a multi-layer, 8-scale continuum map of basic cultural categories and how they overlap in different contexts and national cultures:

1. **Communicating**—simple, direct and clear, or high context with rich meaning subtly or indirectly communicated
2. **Evaluating**—negative feedback given directly, or indirectly and discreetly
3. **Persuading**—specific data and cases, or big picture
4. **Leading**—egalitarian flat structure or hierarchical
5. **Deciding**—build consensus, or use top-down directive
6. **Trusting**—relational or results based
7. **Disagreeing**—avoid confrontations, or deal with them quickly and directly
8. **Scheduling**—is time a clearly defined point, or is time more a flexible range

It's a more nuanced explanation of cultural differences than most. As Meyer states often, culture is too complex to be explained or accurately understood in just one or two dimensions. It is layered and cultural preferences or defaults may change in the SAME culture when there is conflict. Ordinarily direct communicators may choose indirect communication when faced with a serious disagreement at work and vice versa. How that disagreement is communicated may depend on levels of trust and the culturally preferable leadership dynamics between the parties in disagreement. When you throw in cultural defaults and modes of persuasion, you can see how basic cultural categories can get complex fast in the context of a serious disagreement.

Meyer provides a basic profile of “national cultures” mapping them in her layered approach. The key, she said, is to compare profiles and use multiple perspectives in seeking to understand. What matters is not a single profile but how close that profile maps to your own default cultural profile. The closer they map, the more likely you will understand one another's communication, verbal and non-verbal. What matters is where various “national cultures” fall on the map in relation to one another. In business environments, there may be 4 or 5 or more cultures perceiving one another all very differently. This is where having the

basic culture map Meyer provides in her book and being aware of multiple perspectives can really help sort out complex interactions and potential misunderstandings.

In *The Culture Map*, Meyer reminds us that in most situations at home and abroad, national cultural preferences will trump organizational culture. That is to say: people, even leaders, are likely to default to national cultural styles no matter what the stated organizational culture is supposed to be. The more we interact with different cultures, the more we need the awareness of these layers and the various perspectives on cultural differences. According to Meyer, globalization does not seem to be eliminating these layers and differences, though the national maps are changing. Young Chinese are more direct communicators of disagreement than their parents but American youth are less direct in their disagreement. So there is cultural movement but not toward some mono-cultural standard. The one exception would be in international business communication where low context communication seems to be the standard more and more. When some international businessmen leave the workplace, however, they are likely to switch back to the high context cultural communication outside the international workplace.

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This video discusses what it looks like to make an agreement across cultures.
To watch the video, scan the QR code or visit <https://youtu.be/iSPeLrKJLYo>



Resources

A list of resources that are helpful for understanding cultures and religions and developing confidence to begin gospel conversations. It is not recommended for you to try and read or watch all of them. Instead, pick out a resource or two that will help you as you engage your family, friends, colleagues and neighbors with the great news.

Books

- *Evangelism and the Sovereignty of God* by J.I. Packer
- *What is the Gospel?* by Greg Gilbert
- *The Gospel and Personal Evangelism* by Mark Dever
- *Evangelism* by Mack Stiles

Websites

- Jesus Film — In multiple languages
<https://www.jesusfilm.org/watch.html>
- Bible.is — Listen and watch the Bible in many languages



Summary Sheets

On the following pages you will find brief 1–2 page introductions to different religions and views of the world.

Remember: Every person's understanding of their religion is different. Do not assume someone believes what these summaries state they should believe. Ask questions and let them share what they really believe.

Meet Animists

Animists have an unusually wide-ranging set of beliefs and ideas focused on the power of the spiritual world. They believe everything in nature and the elements contain spirits, and they also believe they interact with the spirits of their deceased relatives. Any number of gods may exist, and unseen forces or spirits are the connection to those gods. Spirits can have either helpful or harmful intentions toward people, and animists' lifestyles are centered around either appeasing or worshiping the various spirits.

Most animists would not consider their beliefs a religion but rather a way of managing a fearful and unpredictable reality. As such, animistic beliefs and practices are often incorporated into various religions. This is syncretism: the mixing of different religious doctrines or rituals. Most animistic traditions have no holy text and rely on their spiritual strong people, or shaman, to guide their lifestyles and spiritual interactions. Rather than an ethical code or moral law, animists have developed magic tools to manipulate the spirits surrounding them and direct their lives. Most animistic groups have strong superstitions, traditions, and tokens to protect their values and loved ones.

Core Values

Secret knowledge, spiritual power, careful lifestyles, respect for nature and the environment.

According to Animists

Because there are so many spirits and gods, there are many ways to achieve a good life and a positive afterlife. Some animists consider Christians arrogant or dangerous because they claim a monopoly on truth about life and God. Others might find Christians' focus on worshipping a single God far too narrow and risky. If there is a God, he is far too distant and disengaged to have any impact on people's lives. It would be foolish to stop any form of spirit management because that could be personally disastrous or end in a family tragedy. Animists are not necessarily looking for the truth or a knowledge of God; rather, they are hoping to limit the bad things that happen to them and manage spiritual forces to their personal advantage.

Connecting with Animists

Your new friends are trying to control the impact of evil on their lives and have taken the matter into their own hands. While some may have been born into animistic families or cultures, others may have been drawn in after indulging an interest in evil spiritual beings. Either way, your role is to create a safe relational space into which Jesus can come as the God-man with ultimate power and true peace. This will require open ears and careful framing of your own spiritual narrative. Pray for God's protection and insight as you interact with animists who need to be set free from bondage to spiritual practices that are forbidden in Scripture.

Notice if your new friends have any tokens or spiritual items they keep with them and ask about those. Animistic lifestyles are often incredibly fearful, so recognize that talking about their spiritual experiences could be very uncomfortable. Try to reciprocate disclosure and offer to pray in Jesus' name when your friends are disturbed or spiritually uneasy.

Engage Animists with Questions Like...

- If you could have anything in life right now, what would it be?
- Do you ever sense that there could be a personal but supreme God?
- Tell me a story of the most spiritual experience you have ever had. May I share one of mine also? Jesus is very important to me. What do you know of Him?
- Did you know that Jesus had perfect power over spirits and left the most Holy Spirit to help anyone who chooses to follow Him?

Meet Buddhists

The second group of people you might encounter are those who follow Buddhism. The leader/founder was Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, from Nepal. He lived around 600 BC. “Buddha” means “awakened one” or “enlightened one.”

There are some 500 million Buddhists worldwide, and the religion is growing quickly in the West. It’s more a set of philosophies and practices than it is a true religion; it has no god figures (not even the Buddha).

There are two main types of Buddhism: Theravada and Mahayana, each established as a self-denying path to control desires. Buddhism focuses on karma and managing karma (the impact of your actions), and it features four key truths about the nature and causes of suffering and how to overcome it. Buddhists use karma to mean our actions and also speak of the effects of our actions. Buddhism is committed to meditation and achieving enlightened perspectives on reality, but nothing is fixed or permanent. Buddhists also have deep environmental and humanitarian concerns.

Buddhism developed as a response to suffering and a need for peace. It outlines a purpose to life, explains apparent injustice and inequality around the world, and teaches a peaceful way of life that pursues real happiness by seeking to downplay or deny suffering and certain aspects of reality.

Core Values

Peace, mindfulness, tolerance, self-awareness, non-violence, and personal responsibility for peace and happiness.

According to Buddhists

Some Buddhists will see clear commonalities of value with Christians, such as charity, generosity, self-sacrifice and self-acceptance, and peace as Buddhists would define it. But much like with Muslims, Christ followers will also have some misconceptions to overcome in connecting with Buddhist neighbors. Many Buddhists consider Christians dogmatic, rigid, or oppressive. They think Christian “myths” prevent them from seeing the world clearly and distract them from practical, real questions.

As serious Buddhists are non-argumentative and looking for commonality and peace, they can be suspicious of Christians who seem to have conversion as a goal. Most Buddhists reject the idea of supreme beings or a Creator God. They see the concept of sin as unhelpful. Jesus was a good teacher with some enlightened ideas, but people should not worship him or any other teachers as divine.

Connecting With Buddhists

Remember that your religious language will be foreign to new Buddhist friends. Remember that there are many different Buddhists and not just one kind of Buddhism.² Find new ways to articulate truths about what Jesus brings (for example, “freedom from evil/suffering,” “achieving eternal peace,” and breaking the cycle of “bad karma”). Confrontation and apologetics will not be effective, so instead look for opportunities to share simple teachings of Jesus that are appropriate to the circumstances. Jesus’ words carry ultimate, divine authority and can completely transform your new friends’ perception of reality.

² <https://radical.net/articles/sharing-the-gospel-with-a-buddhist/> last accessed 2/20/2020

But first it's okay to seek to understand your new friend's personal Buddhism. Pray for God's protective care as you interact with them, since false worldviews can be spiritually tempting at times.

Engage Buddhists with Questions Like...

- How do you think people can individually achieve true peace? How would you define peace?
- What has most influenced your ideas about life and the world?
- Who would you consider the most enlightened/awakened person you know? May I share mine?
- May I share about Someone who opened my spiritual eyes in a transformative way?

Meet Catholics or Orthodox Christians

Other faiths you may encounter with your neighbors are Catholicism or Orthodoxy. Like the other worldviews, there are many kinds of Catholics and their beliefs and worldviews differ. While some Catholics are genuinely converted, as in any denomination, not all truly understand the gospel. Some expect religious rituals and good works to tip the scales in their eternal favor. Like many Protestants, Catholics are often not familiar with the official teachings or history of their church. They may not know the Bible well. There are likely substantial differences between the official Vatican theology and what your Catholic neighbor believes. Many immigrants are from predominantly Catholic countries, but their beliefs can vary from those of your Catholic schoolmates or coworkers. Many ex-Catholics are strongly anti-Catholic, but there may be some natural bridges that might lead to deeper gospel conversations.

There are two main traditions in Catholicism—Eastern Orthodox and Western Catholic. Catholics believe in One God and Father of all creation and in Jesus as God, and they accept the Trinity. They venerate the Bible, including the books of the Apocrypha, which are not part of the accepted books of the Protestant Bible. They believe all people are sinful and need saving, but they also believe people must be baptized into the one Catholic institutional church to ensure eternal life with God. They believe the Catholic church's leaders are from a long heritage of apostles that trace back to Jesus. The Church institution, the various sacraments, and the Virgin Mary (Mother of Jesus) can connect a person to salvation.

Catholics hold that rituals of baptism, confirmation (learning a set of teachings), and communion bring a person closer to God. Some Catholics are committed to community prayer and worship, fasting, offerings, taking communion, and last rites by the priest prior to death.

Core Values

Family, authority, prayer, worship, morality, obedience to the Catholic traditions and understanding of the Bible.

Catholics hold many teachings in common with evangelical Christians but often base their relationship with God on their rituals and depend on historical saints or institutional leaders to relate to God for them. Church traditions support faith, and connection to organizational church lineage is essential for connection to God. Praying to Mary and other dead saints and relatives is valuable for direction and protection to live a good life. Though Catholics believe they are saved by Jesus' work, they also believe they should be purified by works and prayers before they can see God. Some Catholics are very familiar with the Bible and read it every day. Others are familiar only with church rituals. Others practice a mixture of Catholicism and superstition or animistic Catholicism.

According to Catholics

Officially, evangelical Protestant believers are not part of the true faith. Some Catholics also see them as unnecessarily exclusive and divisive, failing to recognize Catholics as the true and original Christians. Catholics have difficulty accepting justification by faith and view conversion differently since salvation is a lifelong process. They believe evangelical believers are missing the fullness of God's revelations by rejecting Papal teachings, church doctrines, and the extra writings that have been added to the Bible. Evangelicals should have more respect for the long heritage and tradition of the Catholic church. Whether Orthodox or Roman Catholic, the Apostolic Catholic is the only true church where genuine unity can be found.

Connecting with Catholics

So how do you start the conversation? Recognize that your new Catholic friends already identify as Christians (maybe even don't consider you a real Christian), so trying to distinguish between your two types of Christianity (or not) will likely prove unfruitful. Because of the worldview and theological similarities, it could be more tempting with Catholics than any others to try apologetic methods and theological debate. But since your new friends already accept the Bible as true, Jesus can open their hearts through his Word. Find ways to pray and read the Bible together, inviting the Holy Spirit to guide your time. Again, remember that your new friends have their own brands and takes on their faith and have personal stories you should seek to understand.

Engage Catholics with Questions Like...

- When have you felt most close to God/what do you expect would bring you closest? Can I share what has brought me close to God?
- What currently makes you most fearful/hopeful in life?
- What have you learned being Catholic about Jesus and who he is? How does a person have a right relationship with God?
- What does it take to live a truly good and meaningful life?
- Could I share how God gave me new purpose in life?

Meet Hindus

Have you met someone who says they are a Hindu? The nearly 1 billion Hindus strive for perfectly good lives to achieve a kind of other worldly spiritual existence, an escape from our physical existence. In Hinduism, following a personal guru (leader/teacher) helps a person to be freed from darkness and the evils of life. Many Hindus are looking for true peace, so all life decisions (food, friends, clothes, body) are weighed for their spiritual impact. Key ways to pursue a higher spiritual life include personal purity, external cleansing, mystic disembodiment, and specific devotion to a chosen god or goddess.

Most Hindu spiritual and ritual practices emphasize the importance of cultivating ritual cleanliness and mental and spiritual purity. Prayer, worship, meditation, righteous conduct, yoga, or austerity are purification practices. Hindu practices aim to purify the person, his or her environment, the world, family, ancestors—getting rid of all that is impure in and around a person. In this way, he or she can become free from bad karma, transgressions, bondage, and suffering that are the result of being impure.

Brahman is the supreme being expressed in many gods and goddesses, each of which have unique virtues and vices. Jesus and Mary are acceptable to some modern Hindus as part of the pan-Indian pantheon. There are three major Hindu paths (Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and Shaktism) based on three different primary gods.

Many Hindus value hierarchies based on race and caste, believing that certain types of people are naturally purer and more holy. Some also are highly superstitious, skilled at animistic efforts to interact with the spirit world, and they put heavy stock in dreams and divination.

For many Hindus, spirituality is connected to social and class standing. Personal agency and positive life direction are extremely important, as is maintaining social respect. Most Hindus are born into their religious system and often both family threats and spiritual fear hold them to it.

Core Values

Knowledge, education, karma, respect for spiritual authority, support for spiritual values that are recognized by all authoritative religious traditions.

According to Hindus

Some Hindus will see Christianity as the West's colonizing missionary religion. For many, Jesus could be a good example of a guru who leads to one of many spiritual paths to transcendence. Parts of the Bible contain meaningful teachings, but other parts are too violent and manifest the evil things of the world. They don't see how Christians can be on the path to light while soaking in darkness. They might add Jesus to their collection of gods.

To Hindus, Christians do not take seriously enough the need for good deeds and a pure life, so they view Christian devotion to Jesus (as a guru or a god) as weak. Some Hindus see Christians as lower-caste people who have sold their long, rich identity heritage for money or handouts. That's because the gospel first came to lower caste Hindus and rarely crossed the boundaries of caste in India. Lower caste Hindus often worked menial jobs in Christian hospitals or schools.

Connect with Hindus

So how do you connect with Hindus? Respect their long tradition of spirituality, and agree, if necessary, about the colonizing, divisive nature of Christianity's history. Work to isolate conversations about Jesus rather than engaging in religious discussions, and focus on your shared need for peace (with God!, spiritual, personal, etc.). Jesus has the power to overcome all evil in the world. He has made clear the way to eternal life. When your Hindu friends are open, you can share how your life is being transformed through Christ by God's Spirit. Pray for God's shielding as you interact with them on these eternal matters.

When talking to Hindus, don't see yourself as a converter but as someone who has found the true Light and wants to share it. Find ways to share how Jesus identifies Himself: "Did you know that Jesus calls Himself the Light of the World?" Refer often to Jesus' Way. "Jesus' way has important teachings about peace, too!" or "Jesus' Way gave me hope for spiritual life when I was desperate." You might read with them or share how Jesus the Holy Son of God healed ritually impure people with a simple touch. He could not be made impure by contact with unclean people. Instead, He made them clean and acceptable to God. Explain to them that our whole being is unclean, especially our hearts and minds, and Christ has come to make people righteous and pure from the inside out. He has done this through his life, death, and resurrection.

Remember not to make assumptions about your new friends. Try to understand their personal and spiritual stories.

Engage Hindus with Questions Like...

- How do you know when you find a path/guru/teaching worth following? What's your deepest hope/fear in life right now?
- Who is the most perfect/best person you've personally known? What are/were they like?
- How does a person transform themselves? May I share how following Jesus changes me? How Jesus purified an unclean woman with just a touch?
- May I share why Jesus is different and better than any guru in history?

Meet Jewish People

The basic tenets of Judaism are well known to most Christians since they are drawn from parts of the Old Testament. The Torah (first five books of the Old Testament) remains the foundation of Judaism. Through the centuries, however, Judaism has taken on a number of forms, primarily Orthodox, Conservative, and Reformed.

Judaism is one of world's oldest religions and, along with Christianity and Islam, one of the major monotheistic religions. Judaism started with the Law given to Moses on Mount Sinai. Jewish people believe in a single, all-powerful Creator God. Their holy book, the Torah contains God's revealed will and commands.

Spiritual traditions and the religious family devotions are passed down through generations from Abraham. Devout Jews are committed to feasts and sacrifices to help them live a pure life.

Rabbis (religious leaders) interpret the Scriptures for life application. Some Jews may believe that Jesus was a historical rabbi while not believing in him as the Messiah.

Jews believe that the world is broken and people are suffering but that a messiah is coming to restore righteousness and full life to those who keep the Law. Based on Moses, there is a clear ethical law all should follow to stay right with God. Jewish people cannot actually practice Old Testament Law because there is no temple or place for Old Testament sacrifices, so the synagogue tradition is followed instead. Unlike any other people in the world, all Jews are connected in a global community.

Core Values

Ritual obedience, commitment, community, ethics, justice, spiritual responsibility, hope, faith.

According to Jewish People

Some Jewish people view Jesus as a good teacher, but only the Torah is from God. Jesus cannot be the Word of God. They may think Christians are violent to focus so heavily on the idea of hell. They also believe the Creator God could never and would never take on a human form.

Many Jewish people would consider blasphemous or at least impossible the idea that people can be saved simply by faith, without regard to law keeping or lifestyle. Similarly, many would consider it preposterous to place the weight of their whole existence on a single decision.

Connect with Jewish People

But even so, you have some things in common. You share a respect for God's Word and God's honor. You also agree that a right relationship with God is imperative. Be careful about your terminology when you mention your own faith—perhaps use the words “believer” or “follower of Jesus” rather than Christian, which carries weighty baggage for many Jewish people. Though your new friends don't know Him yet, Jesus proves to be the perfect Messiah and has a plan to bring a completely new world with perfect law and peace. Find ways to talk about life concerns and values, then bridge to how Jesus can relate to those areas.³

³ <https://www.dare2share.org/worldviews/jews/> last accessed 2.20.2020

Engage Jewish People with Questions Like...

- What's most troubling about the world we live in?
- Do you think it is possible that God is preparing a better, fuller life and world than this one?
- What's your perspective on suffering? Could God ever suffer? Has he?
- Could I share why learning about Jesus changed my whole view of God?
- Could I share how I believe Jesus has brought me into God's new family?

Meet Muslims

There are around 1.6 billion Muslims, and many of them have different interpretations of Islam. But one belief that holds them all together is this—they worship a single god, Allah (Arabic for “God”). Generally, they follow the teachings of their “final” prophet, Muhammad, who is also the religion’s founder. Muslims emphasize submission to their holy book, The Qur'an (also spelled Koran).

Muslims are committed to community prayer and fasting, prescribed daily rituals, tightly knit families, the Haj pilgrimage, and ritual sacrifices. There are two main types of Islam (Shia and Sunni) with deep divisions between them. The smaller branches are Ibadi, Ahmadiyya, and Sufism.

Islam often prescribes the culture, national or ethnic identity, and government as well as religion in countries where it is predominant. Those who follow folk Islam also turn to the spirit world for divination, healing, and cultural ceremonies.

Muslims share with Christians a belief in angels, heaven, hell, final judgment, and eternal life after death, though Muslim concepts are different in important ways. They have deep respect for prophets like Abraham, Moses, Elijah, John the Baptist, and Jesus as a prophet (not the Savior Lord).

Core Values

Religious rituals (five pillars of Islam), family, hospitality, friendship loyalty, quality time, and generosity.

According to Muslims

Muslims often don't see their similarities with Christians as much as they focus on their differences— and often not in a positive way. Christians may face some significant misconceptions about who Christ followers are and what they believe, especially if they are trying to have conversations with serious, more orthodox Muslims.

For example, serious Muslims may consider Christians to be pagan worshippers of three gods: the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. They may mistakenly believe something actually blasphemous: that Christians think God and Mary somehow engaged in sexual relations to produce a “son” we call Jesus. They believe Christians rightly respect many prophets, including Jesus, but that it is profane to worship a human man as a god. In their minds, Jesus either did not really die or did not rise from the dead.

In the eyes of serious Muslims, many Christians seem to have a cheap view of God's greatness, believing they will attain heaven despite shameful lifestyles. Because they believe many Christian women don't dress modestly—an important Islamic value— they think Christians have low respect for women and should be more vigilant about their families and social values. Some Muslims also think Christians are deceptive and will try anything to win converts.

The majority of Muslims strive to live a life pleasing to Allah. Their approach to Islam is one of reverence and, at times, fear of Allah. They treat the Qur'an, prayer, and all aspects of their religion with the utmost respect and often are appalled by the nonchalance with which Westerners regard God or treat the Christian's “holy book,” the Bible.

Connect with Muslims

So how do we connect well with Muslims? Focus on understanding them first. Show genuine interest—no accusing or confronting. Exchange stories or teachings about shared prophets, but don't debate theology. Refer to Jesus' words and God's stories often in conversation with comments like, "Jesus taught about that. He said ..." or "Praise God for (anything good that happened)," or "Jesus shows me He cares about (healing, providing, bringing peace, etc.)." This communicates true respect for God, which is very important to Muslims. Be purposeful when you mention your own faith, perhaps using the words "believer" or "follower of Jesus" rather than Christian, which carries weighty historical baggage dating back to the Crusades.

Expect to spend lots of relational time with new Muslim friends, to serve or eat food every time you meet, and to include whole families. The more quality time you spend listening and learning, the more open your friends will likely become to hearing about Jesus. Jesus has shown the true way to God, and you can point Muslims to His power and His teachings by sharing verses and stories from the Word while maintaining respect for what they share. God proves and defends his own word; your job is simply to share what he says and maintain right relationships. When needs arise, ask if you can pray for people in Jesus' name. Most Muslims will not refuse this.

Pray for God's spiritual protection and Christ's love as you interact with Muslims, fallen and fellow image-bearers in need of Jesus.

Always work first to understand the values, hopes, and fears of the person in front of you. That helps create peaceful spaces for spiritual conversations where you can introduce them to Jesus as the wonderful Savior Lord that He is.

Engage Muslims with Questions Like...

- What do you and your family believe is important for a good life?
- What makes a "true" or "good" Muslim? How do you know if/when you are one?
- What is your main concern in life right now?
- What do you think about Jesus? Could I share why I choose to follow Him?

Meet Secularists or Postmoderns or Post-Everythings

Another group you may encounter are secularists or postmoderns. Postmoderns are not identical to secularists, but there are some similarities in how we might begin conversations with secular types and postmoderns or even post-everythings.

To secularists, religion is mythical imagination and unimportant in understanding and living life. So, God may or may not exist, but he isn't necessary. Spiritual systems and organizations are irrelevant at best, destructive of humanity at worst. Postmoderns are subjectively agnostic about what we can know about any of these questions. They believe we all create our own narratives and create our own reality in some sense. According to them, there is no objective truth out there to discover.

For secularists, happiness is a goal, but people do not have a reliable way to find it. Individual authority and experience are supreme. There is no objective truth; ideas of morality, truth, and ethics are largely subjective and cultural. Institutional claims on truth or authority, like those of religion, are highly suspect. The absolutes claimed by them are oppressive and should be avoided; they are not binding. Although life's problems are highly complex, life is void of clear answers. Most believe people can live any way they choose as long as they don't hurt anyone else.

Postmoderns would largely agree, though they may show respect for those whose stories have a place for God and practice peaceful religion and don't try to convert others to any specific path.

Caleb Crider helps us find connections this way: "I talk a lot about my need for Jesus. Apart from Christ I'm confused, frustrated, angst-ridden, and disappointed. My faith in Him gives me clarity, peace, hope, and purpose that makes the world make sense."

Core Values

Do not judge, do not tell, do not prescribe, stay free/unattached, think rationally (secularists) or embrace your subjective side and don't worry about finding THE truth (postmoderns).

According to Secularists or Postmoderns

For most secularists, Christians are oppressively moralistic and hopelessly brainwashed by myths. Some postmoderns may also see Christians as patriarchal and discriminatory. Because so many religious institutions have gone terribly bad, they think it is best to give up on the system and trust one's individual instincts or logic. In their eyes, Christians are woefully irrational and have allowed various leaders to twist their minds. People are essentially good on their own. Christians are creating unnecessary problems with their stories of sin, heaven, and hell. Postmoderns would likely agree with much of this but begin with different assumptions, privileging the existential and subjective sides of knowledge and religious truth.

Connecting with Secularists or Postmoderns

Your new friends are likely proud they have had the self-respect to disassociate from any religious system (secularists) or proud that their narrative is religiously pluralistic and accepts all sorts of religious preferences (postmoderns), so be careful to associate with Jesus rather than a specific religious form. However, stories about your spiritual life with Christ will likely be welcomed once you have listened to their concerns, beliefs, and worries. Communicate how Jesus is real to you, not just a character in a

book or a tradition you inherited. Explain how the biblical story makes sense of our life and experience better than any other narrative.

Remember that you don't need to prove God's existence—you simply need to live and act like he is present in your life. Rather than arguments, your new friends are looking for evidence of the good life in your everyday life. You can develop a close friendship in which your changed life is easily a topic of discussion. Refuse to enter debates or answer challenges; you're not trying to argue. Share love and the light of truth. Pray for spiritual protection and wisdom as you listen and introduce others to Jesus.

Engage Secularists with Questions Like...

- How do you, or how can we, make sense of all the brokenness and hurt in the world?
- Do you ever have existential crises? How do you handle that? Can I share how I handle it?
- What gets you most excited about life? Why?
- What frustrates you most about _____ (their pet issue)?
- Can I share my story about how I found unexpected life purpose through Jesus?