

**abwe**

# How to Share the Gospel

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## **How to Share the Gospel**

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## Introduction

When you hear the word “evangelism,” lots of things probably come to mind.

Maybe the idea of evangelism makes you nervous. Talking to people can be scary. What if I say the wrong thing? What if people don’t come to believe in God when I try to share the faith? Maybe you think evangelism itself is an antiquated idea. The spirit of the age tells us that asking people to convert is offensive because we are imposing our views on other people. Instead, we should leave them alone—or so the reasoning goes.

Yet the Bible calls all of us to share our faith and give an answer for the hope we have (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Peter 3:15).

You’re likely reading this because on some level you believe this, and you want to share your faith with others. But you may still be wondering, What do I say? Where do I start? Sometimes we get so overwhelmed with these questions that we freeze and don’t even try to share our faith.



Don't put this booklet down in fear, thinking, I could never do that. Paul wrote to Timothy, a young man, and said, "God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord" (2 Timothy 1:7-8a). Don't be fearful or ashamed to share the faith. The gospel is the power of God—such that Paul can say, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16a).

**Sometimes in our zeal to send missionaries, even we forget that all around us are people who need to hear that same message.**

At ABWE (the Association of Baptists for World Evangelism), we have a long history of sending workers around the world to share the faith so people can know the living and true God. The world is big, and people everywhere need to hear the gospel and receive salvation in Christ. But sometimes in our zeal to send missionaries, even we forget that all around us are people who need to hear that same message. Every Christian is a witness to Jesus Christ—the only question is: are we a good witness or a bad one?

We have written this booklet to encourage and equip you to share the faith with others.

Our approach is simple. First, we must prepare our hearts before God and cultivate compassion for people who don't know Christ. These aren't magical tips, tricks, or techniques. Rather, we are coming humbly to God and asking him to change our hearts so that we care about the things he cares about.

Second, we will outline some phases in the evangelistic process. We want to encourage you to build relationships first to cultivate opportunities to share the gospel over time. We're not talking

about making people into project—rather, it’s about being faithful and loving others to communicate the gospel.

Finally, we will walk through the core of the gospel message and how the Bible itself provides the context and the language for communicating the gospel. The power is inherent in the Word of God. Still, we’ll need to think about the worldview of the unbeliever, so that the words we use faithfully convey the concepts Scripture intends. The goal is always communicating the truth, but we want to avoid saying true words in ways that the listener doesn’t understand. We want to meet people where they are so that we can speak the truth to them in clear, caring ways.

There are many great resources out there on evangelism. This little booklet is designed to simply get you started. After all, evangelism is not about this book or a method—it’s about God and his gospel. And we can be confident that the Spirit of God uses the Word of God to save his people.

Above all, we hope this booklet causes you to give praise and glory to God—that you’re reminded how wonderful and awesome he is, and that you’ll want others to come to know the awesome God who loved us and gave his Son for us and for our salvation.

Let’s get started.



## I. Knowing God

*And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. (John 17:3)*

Eternal life is knowing God. Did you catch that? Knowing God isn't how we get eternal life—knowing God is definitional of eternal life. In Jesus is life itself (John 1:4; 14:6). Knowing the Father and the Son is eternal life. Those who do not have life do not know God. Those who know God (which means being united with Christ in relationship, not just knowing about God) have the gift of true eternal life.

This is salvation in a nutshell. This is the message we seek to proclaim when we are sharing the gospel. We want others to know God—to truly know him. Salvation entails the forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, fellowship with God, a right standing before God, the gift of life in heaven after death, a resurrection unto life in the new heavens and new earth, and so much more.

But, at the core of all, this we come to know God—or, as Paul says, “rather are known by God” (Galatians 4:9).

Ask yourself two questions:

1. *Do I know God?* and
2. *Do I want others to know God?*

Let’s briefly talk about the first question. We’re not asking if you know about God. We’re not asking if you’ve read your Bible, gone to church, or could recite facts about God. All those things are good. But we’re asking something deeper: do you know God?

This distinction is like the difference between knowing about your spouse and knowing your spouse. Any good marriage partner knows things about their spouse. You know their likes, their dislikes, their physical traits, and much more. But in any healthy marriage, that knowledge goes deeper. You know them as a person. You’ve been intimate with them. You share life with them. You are with them in a covenant union.

**If you know God, you have experienced forgiveness of sins and enjoy peace with God. This is the message of the gospel.**

Knowing God is like the latter example. If you know God, you have experienced forgiveness of sins and enjoy peace with God. This is the message of the gospel. When we place our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we come to truly know God. We go from being an enemy of God in our sins to enjoying reconciliation with him, in which we are adopted into his family.

Do you know God? If you find yourself saying “no,” or “I don’t know,” will you take a minute and talk to God in prayer? Go skip ahead to chapter four and read a little more about the gospel and what you need to do to be saved. There really is no more



important question in life than if you know God. Settle this matter in your heart before you keep reading.

Assuming you've answered the first question, the next question is, "Do I want others to know God?" This question is not a simple yes or no. We might give a range of answers that reveal much about our heart for God and level of concern for those who don't know him.

It's likely that you who are reading this fall somewhere on the spectrum between "Yes, and I share the faith with others so they can know God" and "Yes, but I really have no clue what to do about it." You probably wish more people knew God—maybe you just don't know what to do about it. Another possibility is you know God and are content with your life, and you don't want to upset other people or challenge their beliefs and misconceptions. You're thinking to yourself, Who am I to tell others what is right or wrong for their life?

Motivating ourselves to care about the salvation of others is an age-old dilemma. It isn't easy to get over the hurdles of fear, timidity, and apathy in order to share the faith. Maybe you've had a moment where you had an opportunity to share the gospel and you froze like a deer in the headlights. Your adrenaline surged, and you choked and said nothing. Perhaps you mumbled something unnatural that the person didn't understand. Better to not risk it and get it wrong, you tell yourself now.

We have all had that experience. You're not alone.

Be encouraged: God honors even our worst efforts. God used Peter (who denied Jesus), Paul (who tried to kill Christians before his salvation), Moses (who likely had a speech impediment), and Jeremiah (a young boy sent to preach to kings)—God surely can and will use you.

In fact, God delights in using nobodies who aren't wise or noble or powerful by worldly standards (1 Corinthians 1:26-28). God delights in taking the weak and using us, so that we boast in our weakness and give God all the credit (1 Corinthians 1:29; 2

Corinthians 12:9). God's power is made perfect in our weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9).

You don't have to be the next Charles Spurgeon or Billy Graham. Whether you're a reserved introvert or gregarious extrovert, God can use you. You can continue to be the quiet, soft-spoken, shy person you are, and you can still be patiently faithful at sharing your faith. You can be the extrovert who loves to talk about everything but struggles to bring it back to the gospel. God can use you with all your strengths and weaknesses. You find God's power made perfect in your weakness, and Christ will give you words (2 Corinthians 12:9-10).

**You don't have to be the next Charles Spurgeon or Billy Graham. Whether you're a reserved introvert or gregarious extrovert, God can use you.**

If we find ourselves lacking a desire to be evangelistic, the first thing we need to do is get to know God better. When we know God, he actively transforms us to be more and more like him. "Therefore, be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" (Ephesians 5:1-2). Knowing God more is our motivation for evangelism. And when we find ourselves apathetic, unmotivated, and fearful about evangelism, the only true way to stoke the fires on our hearts is to seek God and let him transform the desires of our heart. The more we know God, the more we will want others to know him also.

More than that: God is making himself known. Throughout Scripture, God is a personal God who makes himself known. God's purpose in his creation is to make his name known and to display his glory to the nations (Psalm 46:10; Habakkuk 2:14). The sending of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, is simply the climax of a series of biblical events in which God is making himself known. Without

God making himself known in Christ, we would not be able to know God:

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)*

*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. (Hebrews 1:1-2)*

God delights in making himself known. He has made himself known to you and is continuing to make himself known to others. He is bringing people to a saving knowledge of himself throughout the world. Growing in our heart for God means we will look more like him and desire the things that he wills.

Consider, also, how God is holy and compassionate in love:

*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[.]" (Exodus 34:6)*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

When God reveals himself to Moses on Sinai in Exodus 34, two key attributes stand out. First, God is merciful and gracious. And second, God is holy and righteous. God tells Moses that human beings cannot see his face and live. God is above us, stands over us, and goes infinitely beyond us in his perfections. God says to Moses that, even though he is forgiving and loving, he will "not let the guilty go unpunished" (Exodus 34:7). Elsewhere we are told that as far as the heavens are above the earth, so God and his thoughts are above us (Isaiah 55:9). He is holy and cannot abide sin.

But that same God came down to the mountain to reveal himself to Moses. Even more, in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, God

comes down in the flesh. In the person of the Son, God's glory comes to dwell in our midst (John 1:14). God the Father sends God the Son to earth because of the immensity of his love for the world that lives in sin and rebellion against him. The gospel reveals the heart of God to us.

Where is your heart for sinners? Does it align with the heart of God? Ask yourself: Am I loving and compassionate like God? Am I slow to anger? Do I understand that I am a sinner saved only by the immensity of God's grace? I don't deserve the salvation that God has given me; am I willing to share it with others? Do I want to share God with others, or would I rather hoard the privileges of grace that God gave to me? And do I delight in the greatness of God and desire to make his name known?

## **The gospel reveals the heart of God to us.**

Ask God to work in your heart. Try these few activities to reflect on the greatness of God with an eye towards cultivating an evangelistic heart.

1. Write a list of the attributes of God. List as many as you can think of and keep the list with you so you can add to it when you read your Bible. Now, pick one attribute from that list and begin a prayer to God thanking him for who he is.
2. Write out your own testimony. How did God save you? What did God do specifically in your life to bring you to know him? Spend a few minutes in prayer thanking God for the specific actions he took in your life to bring you to him.
3. Spend 15 minutes listening to your favorite worship songs. Pull out your favorite playlist, album, or even look up some favorite songs on YouTube. After your worship time, ask yourself this question: if I am knowing God and enjoying spending this time with him, what will it be like if more people came to experience this with me? Why would God want me to be a part of helping more people come to worship him?

Prayer: Dear Lord, may you be my highest delight and joy in all of life. You have saved me from my sins and made yourself known to me. In Jesus Christ's work in his death and resurrection, I see what you have done to save me. Truly you are great and mighty! There is no limit to your power, majesty, and awesomeness. I am so privileged to know you. Move in my heart, Lord Jesus. Create in me a desire to make your fame known. Create in me a willing spirit that will seek to share the gospel with those who don't know you. Make me more like you in your love and compassion. Thank you for being my Lord and Savior. I give all the praise and glory to you! Amen.





## 2. Having a Heart for People

*“When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”  
(Matthew 9:36)*

*“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”  
(Luke 19:10)*

Our first and highest motivation for evangelism is God himself. Our second motivation for evangelism should come from our compassion and care for people.

These priorities need to come in the proper order. The first should lead to the second. God cares and has compassion upon the lost. The person who does not know God is dead in their sins (Ephesians 2:1-3). But God, in his rich mercy, makes sinners alive in Jesus Christ based upon the work of Jesus’ death and resurrection (Ephesians 2:4-6). God has compassion upon men and women in their lostness.

Do I have compassion on people who need to hear about Jesus? Repeatedly in the gospels, we see Jesus showing compassion for the lost sinner. He loves and ministers to the whole person. As they come to him, they find forgiveness of sins and new life.

We too are to have compassion for our neighbors and seek to reach them with the gospel. In our heart, we need to see these individuals as people—not just projects to “get saved.” We must recognize that they are men and women made in the image of God. Their sins have separated them from God, and yet they are still human beings who are precious as image-bearers. To love our neighbor as ourselves means we should care about the whole person, their families, their lives, their interests, and their joys.

In Luke 10:29-37, Jesus is asked by a lawyer, “Who is my neighbor?” Thinking he was a generally good person, the man sought to justify himself. He was proud of his life and figured he could show off a little. He probably expected that Jesus would define “neighbor” in such a way that he’d be able to pat himself on the back and reply, “Yes, Lord, I already do that.” The lawyer was in for a shock when Jesus’s answer came.

**To love our neighbor as ourselves means we should care about the whole person, their families, their lives, their interests, and their joys.**

Jesus shared the parable of the Good Samaritan, in which a man going from Jerusalem to Jericho is attacked, robbed, beaten, and left for dead on the side of the road (Luke 10:30). The first person to come across this nearly dead man on the side of the road was a priest. When he sees the man, he crosses to the other side of the road and passes by. Likewise, a Levite comes and passes by on the other side.

Consider why these two men would do that. Priests and Levites were zealous to follow the Law. Numbers 19:11 and 16 tell us that

if a person touches a dead body, they were to be considered unclean for seven days. That would mean one cannot participate in temple worship or duties during that time. Coming upon an almost-dead man—one who is likely to die in your arms if you help him—would hinder them from their other duties of worship.

Before we are too hard on the priest and the Levite, let's consider our own hearts. Would I be willing to stop what I'm doing and get down in the mud, dirt, and bloody mess of a near-dead man if I was in my church clothes, on my way to preach an important sermon, teach Sunday school, or serve little children in the nursery?

Sometimes our own activities keep us from helping those in need. How often have we passed by an opportunity to help someone because we were busy and had a schedule to keep? We think I have a schedule to keep, people are depending on it.

Fear of how we'll be perceived can keep us from loving our neighbors. How many of us would be unwilling to be seen in the "wrong neighborhood" or with the "wrong type of person" because it might damage our "Christian testimony"? Sometimes in the church, we isolate ourselves to make sure we don't associate with sinners, as if their reputation could rub off on us and make us unclean.

Jesus was a friend to sinners. Jesus was mocked by the religious for eating with (an act of community, fellowship, and connection) prostitutes and tax collectors. A tax collector in the ancient world was more like a mafia loan shark and extortionist than a simple civil servant. Who am I willing to be friends with because I want them to meet Jesus?

Back to the parable of the Good Samaritan. Luke 10:33 says, "But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion." The Samaritan was moved by love for the stranger. The Samaritan binds up the man's wounds, puts ointment and wine on them to treat them and prevent infection, and then puts him up at a local inn at his own expense.

He sacrifices his time, money, and personal cleanliness to help the man—all because of his compassion. This is the true neighbor.

The most shocking part of the story is that the person doing this was a Samaritan. Samaritans were themselves considered ungodly, unclean, and spiritual compromisers. Their ancestors were Israelites who remained in the land when the northern tribes of Israel were destroyed in 722 BC. The Assyrians had destroyed Samaria and the surrounding regions, then resettled it with pagans from other nations. The Samaritans had compromised and married people from these nations, continuing in their idolatry (2 Kings 17:29-33). Some continued to worship the Lord, but they made their own religious system. They didn't believe in going to the true temple in Jerusalem to worship. Because of this background, Jews in Jesus' day had long felt animosity, hostility, and perhaps racism towards Samaritans.

Imagine being Jewish in Jesus' day. You can trace your family heritage all the way back to faithful Jewish exiles like Daniel and his friends. Your family suffered persecution from the Greek and later the Romans. Just to your north live these Samaritan compromisers. Even when your family was worshiping God at great risk to themselves, your Samaritan neighbors married pagans and corrupted the faith, taking the easy way out. You'd probably warn your kids, "Don't associate with those people, or you too might compromise with the ways of the world."

But here's the twist: the Samaritan in the parable was the one who loved his neighbor. He had compassion. The priest and the Levite were so fastidious in keeping the Law that they failed to love others. But Jesus tells us loving our neighbor is the second greatest commandment in the Law (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31). We too can go to church, know our Bibles, memorize Scripture, have family devotions every day, and do all those good things, and still miss the weighty matter of loving our neighbors as ourselves.

Ask: Do I have compassion on my neighbor like the Good Samaritan? Consider your neighbors around you. I'm sure you

know people around you who do not believe in God or know Jesus as their Savior. Do you have compassion on them? Do you love them as a neighbor? Maybe they are a “normal,” friendly, suburban family that just doesn’t go to church. Maybe they vote differently from you. Maybe they throw parties with too much alcohol. Maybe they are living sexual lifestyles contrary to God’s Word. Maybe your neighbors are a gay or lesbian couple. They are still your neighbors. They are people made in the image of God, with dignity and humanity—sinners alienated from God, whom God desires to know him. Will you cross the street to meet them, befriend them, and show compassion towards them? Will you be a “good Samaritan”?

*[B]ut God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

**[Your neighbors] are people made in the image of God, with dignity and humanity...Will you be a “good Samaritan”?**

There is another type of neighbor we have in America: the neighbor from a different culture. The US is a melting pot of cultures, with immigrants from all over the world. In his Great Commission, Christ commanded us to take the gospel to the nations (Matthew 28:19-20). Now, in the twenty-first century, with the ease of global travel and with a rise in migration, God has done something amazing: he has brought the world to our own backyard. People from all sorts of nations, speak all sorts of languages, live right here. Some are Christians have fled their country to find a better life or provide for their family, just like you want to provide well for your family. Others have come to America for a better life, but they’ve never heard of the Lord Jesus.

In the United States, in our political moment, how many of us treat the immigrant like a Jewish person treated a Samaritan?



Stay away from us. Don't ruin our country. Don't take our jobs and corrupt our culture. Regardless of our convictions concerning public policy, this attitude is selfish. If God has given good gifts to us, should we not also share them out of compassion and love that models Christ? God has made these people our neighbors, and yet we often swerve to the other side of the street, lest we become unclean. It is shameful. Jesus is asking us today: who is your neighbor?

Will you have compassion on your neighbors? We were just like our unbelieving neighbors, lost in darkness, until God saved us (Ephesians 2:1-3). You and I were once strangers and aliens to God's family and promises, having no hope (Ephesians 2:12). God loved you. And God loves your neighbor. God desires for you to love them too and show compassion towards them. Compassion stems from knowing God, being humble about myself, and loving others.

When I was a child in Sunday school, we used to sing a song called "J.O.Y." Perhaps you know it. The song went: "Jesus and others and you; what a wonderful way to spell joy." Depending on the version you sang, the last line would either be "Put Jesus first and spell joy" or "Put yourself last and spell joy." The lesson is still true today for us, even as adults.

**Compassion stems from knowing God, being humble about myself, and loving others.**

We started with knowing God. We've talked about having compassion on others. Let us also consider what it means to put ourselves last and put others before ourselves.

*Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2:4-5)*

Having compassion on others doesn't mean we think we are better than others. We aren't smugly implying something like, I'm better because I have something you don't. Rather, we are trying to share with others the same grace we ourselves have received. We don't know God because we are stronger, smarter, or better—we have come to know God because, although we were sinners deserving eternal condemnation, God showed us mercy, grace, and love that we didn't deserve.

The key word is humility. I need to be humble in my sharing the love of God with others. We can be confident in the truth of the gospel and the power of the message and stay humble, especially in how we present ourselves to those we're reaching. We have taken the same medicine to heal that we are sharing with others. It is humbling to recognize that I am a debtor to the grace of God. Now I am inviting others to experience this grace from God. Continue to walk in humility in light of the grace you have received. Let grace and humility shape your demeanor and actions as you interact with those whom you hope will receive this grace.

In sum: to put Jesus first, put others second, and put ourselves last—setting aside selfishness—is the path to developing a heart for people and a desire for evangelism.

Pause here for a moment and prayerfully reflect on a few things:

- Confess in prayer where you've lacked compassion for people. Ask for Christ-like compassion.
- Who is a "neighbor" (literally or figuratively) that I need to have more compassion for? Ask God to allow you to see them as he sees them. Ask the Lord to renew your love for this neighbor.
- Write down the name of that neighbor. Under their name, jot down a few details about them—maybe their kids, job, hobbies, or other interests. Take a moment and pray for them. Pray that God would bless their life. Prayer for their family, their relationships, and so forth. If you're not sure how to pray

for them, ask yourself this: how would I want someone to pray for me?

- Cultivate humility. Take a moment and read Romans 5:1-11. Make a list of all the things the Lord did for you in saving you. Notice all the gifts that you have that are from God alone. Thank the Lord for these gifts.

Prayer: Dear Lord, I see the love and compassion that you have for people who are made in your image. Help me to have a heart of compassion for people like you have for people. You have called me to love you first and foremost and then second to love my neighbor as myself. Help me to love my neighbor. Help me to seek to build relationships with my neighbor, care for them in tangible ways, and share the gospel with them.



## 3. Building Relationships

For most of us, sharing the gospel with someone takes place in the context of a relationship. We most often know the person to whom we're speaking and have some connection with them before we ever have an opportunity to share the gospel. With this in mind, we need to be intentional about building relationships.

Why? Because we want to love people who bear the image of God. People are not projects. Let me repeat: people are not projects.

Have you ever heard of a bait and switch? It's a tactic in sales where you get someone to come in for one thing (the bait) and, once you've reeled them in, you switch out the bait for what you really want to sell them, give them, or have them see. But that is not what we're talking about here. Relationship building is not a mere bait and switch leading to the gospel message.

Years ago, a friend from high school reached out to see how I was doing. We had been casual acquaintances, not close friends,

so I thought it was a little out of the ordinary. Nevertheless, I was touched. Wow, you thought enough of me to reach out, I thought. We made some arrangements to get together and catch up. I believe my wife and I even invited them over to our house.

The day came. They arrived. We sat down to enjoy some food. Out of the blue, in the middle of the meal, came the question, “Can I interest you in a business opportunity that I’ve gotten in on and tell you about the extra income I’ve made through it?” Wham! I had been baited, and there was the switch. My “friend” went on to pitch their multi-level marketing scheme. I went from feeling touched to feeling used.

But sharing the gospel in the context of a relationship is not the same as leveraging a “friendship” to rope an innocent victim into a multi-level marketing scheme.

**God calls us to love people — full stop.**

Having a relationship with a person is always a privilege, not just a means to an end. If I have a relationship with someone, I want to share the gospel with them because I love them and value them. I want that other person to know that they are loved and valued.

God calls us to love people—full stop. And so, as we love people and share our lives with them, we naturally want to show them what is most important to us: the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel. We want them to experience the same hope, joy, and salvation because we care about them. Not only do we want them to know that we love them—we want them to know that God loves them more than we ever will.

Imagine a foreign country that has never had any contact with the outside world. Then, imagine that for the first time, the president appoints an ambassador to that country—and it’s you. Your task is to communicate to them about your country and strike a peace treaty. You’re the only messenger. How would you do it?



For starters, an ambassador in a foreign country needs to learn about the host country's people, culture, and laws. Likewise, in evangelism, we must get to know the friend, neighbor, or individual with whom we desire to share the gospel. You may learn they grew up going to church, that they are an atheist, or that they are "spiritual." Regardless of a person's background, bridging the gap of communicating with them typically means taking time to get to know the person.

I say "typically" because there are occasions in which the Lord is preparing a person even before you meet them, and when you meet them, you can jump right into a gospel presentation. Think of Philip meeting the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26-40. The angel of the Lord directed Philip down to the road to follow a man reading the scroll of Isaiah. Philip asks if he understands what he is reading. The Ethiopian eunuch says no and that he needs someone to explain it. He then invites Philip up into his chariot to explain. Philip explains the gospel, and the Ethiopian receives Christ. God still works in amazing ways when he puts someone in your path, and in one conversation, they receive Christ. Never discount the working of God—if he provides the opportunity, share the gospel right away.

However, it's more common the believer must take their time, build trust, show love, have multiple gospel-related conversations, listen, hear the person's hurts, and point them to God's love over a period of time. We often call this "relational evangelism."

In relational evangelism, you are like the ambassador building a personal relationship in a foreign nation as you represent your country. You want to do everything in your ability to be a faithful ambassador who is known for caring, loving, and representing his home country well.

*All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ, God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal*

*through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-20)*

The relationships we build with our neighbors should be grounded in grace and truth. An ambassador must be gracious and kind in his demeanor. You don't have to be an extrovert to engage in relational evangelism, but you can't be cold and scowling. A warm smile and a nice greeting can go a long way. Be gracious and warm.

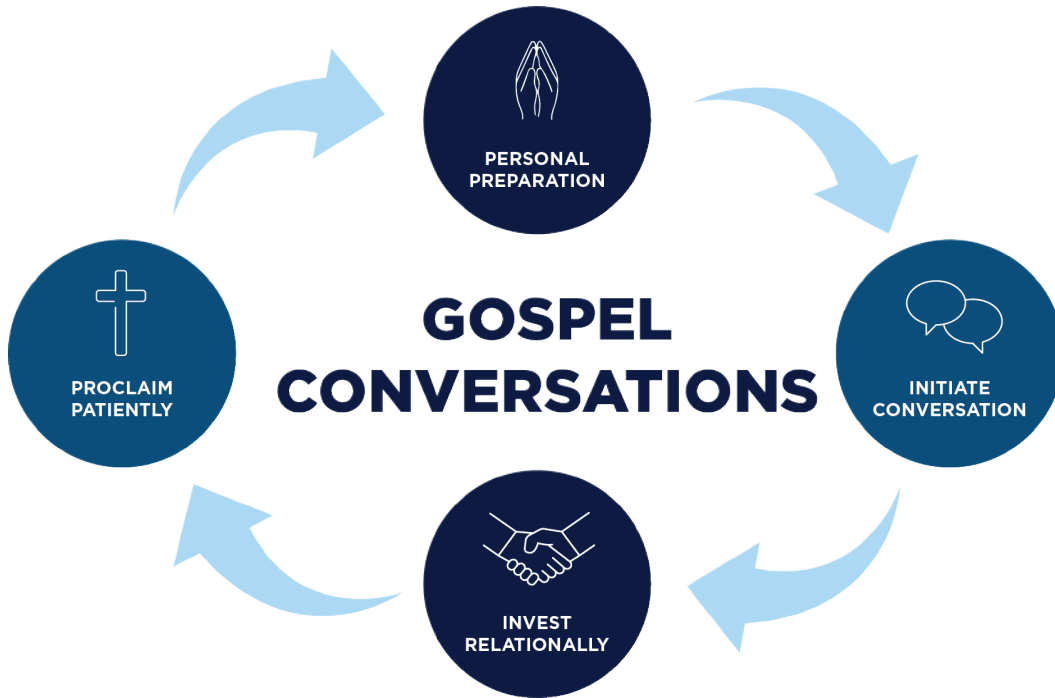
An ambassador also needs to tell the truth. You represent Jesus, your King. You can't make stuff up, compromise, or lie when it comes to sin, the gospel, salvation, and condemnation for the unbeliever. You also can't just drop the truth like a grenade and walk away. The Bible calls us to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Some people misapply this verse so that they figure they can say the cold hard truth however they want because speaking truth is a loving act. However, I would submit that there is a specific manner or demeanor with which we speak the truth: a loving one. You can say hard things to people, and they will still feel loved if you have invested time in a relationship and demonstrated compassion, care, genuineness, and sincere interest in who they are.

As ambassadors, we want our lives to represent our loving Savior (John 13:35) and our speech to be proclaiming the gospel because faith comes through hearing (Romans 10:14).

With that established, let's dive into some of the how of relational evangelism.

**The relationships we build with our neighbors should be grounded in grace and truth. An ambassador must be gracious and kind in his demeanor.**

For simplicity, we will break relational evangelism into four phases or elements. They aren't rigid steps but general ways of conceptualizing the process:



### **Personal Preparation**

The first two sections of this booklet have focused on personal preparation. We want to make sure our own hearts are prepared for evangelism. We begin this by making sure that we understand God's character and heart. Then, we want to make sure that we have a growing heart for our neighbor. The first reason we do evangelism is because we love the Lord, the second reason is because we love people.

Preparation continues by seeking the Lord. Like Paul, we can ask the Lord to open doors for the gospel:

*At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which*

*I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. (Colossians 4:3-4)*

You can personalize this prayer in a lot of different ways. Perhaps you are praying for an opportunity with a specific person. Perhaps you're asking God to bring someone across our path. We might ask God to open our eyes to see opportunities with the people already around us. The primary focus is about opening our heart and stepping forward in obedience.

Because first step in obedience can be scary, sometimes we put so much pressure on ourselves that we look to cram everything into a single conversation. A friend of mine calls this the gospel ambush. It's like a soldier waiting in the bushes for someone to attack. We wait, then we ambush them with a barrage of Bible verses, dominate the conversation, and then feel relief when we've gotten all the words out. The person tunes us out, not necessarily because their heart was hard to the gospel but because of our behavior. The gospel is confrontational, but we don't need to be jerks about it. Let's remove ourselves as a source of offense as much as possible.

As I said above, there are times, like with the story of Philip meeting the Ethiopian eunuch, where you have an immediate clear and open door and you absolutely should walk through. However, most of the time, we must initiate conversations. We aren't setting an ambush but are extending a warm, friendly hand as an ambassador. The first conversation should lay a foundation for a loving relationship filled with grace, truth, compassion, and authenticity of speech.

### **Initiate Conversation**

Initiating a conversation is just what it sounds like: starting to talk to people. Not only is what you say important—so is how you say it. People often welcome a friendly face who engages in light conversation.

Here, we don't have any secret techniques or silver bullets. Ask yourself this: how do you typically begin a friendship? Except

in rare circumstances, most of us don't begin friendships by initiating a heavy, hard conversation. Imagine walking up to a person and saying, "What is your political opinion on the bill recently introduced in congress and its potential impact on trade?" For most of us, that kind of question raises a red flag. Who are you? Why do you want to know? What's your agenda in asking? Similarly, we should avoid naïvely raising issues that are likely to shut down the conversation.

The ways to initiate a conversation are as varied and unique as the situation you are in and the individual to whom you're speaking. You may talk to the neighbor by asking, "How long have you lived here?" You might compliment their lawn. You may know enough about them to ask how their kids or job are going.

**There is no magic set of questions. Simply show a genuine interest in others.**

The goal is simply to engage and get to know them. You may have something in common. Be observant and be curious—without being nosy. You might see they have a new car or that they've been doing a lot of work outside lately. Engage them in conversation about it. Be curious enough to ask some non-threatening question—one that doesn't require a lot of relational intimacy to answer. "That's a nice car. Is it new?" Ask a follow up question. "How does it handle?"

Or, imagine you see notice a new young mom with her children waiting at the bus stop. You might ask, "Are you new to the neighborhood?" This might lead to conversation about the school, the ages of your kids, or favorite teachers. There is no magic set of questions. Simply show a genuine interest in others.

People enjoy talking about themselves, and not always because they are selfish. Being asked to share about ourselves makes us feel valued and seen. As a Christian modeling Christ, be sure that

you are asking because you do care. Remember: people loved by God are not merely projects.

Let's consider an example from Jesus when he meets Zacchaeus:

*He entered Jericho and was passing through. And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. So, he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." So, he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." (Luke 19:1-7)*

ABWE produced a series of trainings called Heart, Mind, and Soul to help you reach out to your neighbors. Each workshop is designed to help Christians boldly and lovingly get to know and share Christ with Muslims, Hindus, LGBTQ individuals, and others. In one seminar, we specifically use this passage in Luke 19 to show how Jesus engaged with an individual whom others rejected as a sinner. "Oh, he's a sinner. How could Jesus go and be a guest at his house?" others scoffed. In other words, they said, "Do you know the kind of person you're building a relationship with, Jesus?" This is how much Jesus loves sinners.

It's possible you too will be judged for associating with "that type of person." That's okay. Jesus received that criticism, too.

Note that Zacchaeus was a rich tax collector. As mentioned earlier, in the ancient world, tax collectors were typically dishonest, swindlers, and bullies who used government power to exhort others. They were much like mafia members whom everyone in town knew they had to pay off to stay safe. Zacchaeus was the kind of person with whom people wouldn't associate. Sometimes, as Christians, this is how we treat unbelievers. We treat them as though they were unclean with



some disease that might infect us if we show too much love. This is not Jesus' response.

Notice also how Jesus looks up at Zacchaeus in the tree. He sees Zacchaeus—a man of small stature, ignored and avoided both because of his stature and his corrupt occupation. We'll never know for sure, but you must wonder if Zacchaeus became a tax collector to compensate for his stature. Was he trying to feel powerful or get even with those who had bullied or ignored him? Either way, Jesus noticed him.

Second, Jesus calls Zacchaeus down and announces that he is going to his house. In our culture, inviting yourself to someone else's house for dinner is presumptuous and considered rude. But in this ancient culture, this is Jesus seeing and affirming Zacchaeus: You are a person. You have value. Table fellowship conveyed intimacy. Allowing Zacchaeus to show hospitality to Jesus put Zacchaeus in a position of great honor. In many cultures today, hospitality is everything. Your life and reputation were staked on the hospitality you can show.

You may have heard of the story from the US war with Afghanistan about the lone survivor of a Navy Seal team who was taken into a Pashtun village. This true story was popularized in the book and later, the film, *Lone Survivor*. The Pashtun villagers' honor code, which necessitates hospitality, led them to defend the soldier against the Taliban, even though loyalty might otherwise have been to the Taliban. If they failed to maintain hospitality by turning over the American soldier, they would have brought shame upon their village. This shows the dramatic importance of hospitality in Near Eastern cultures.

Jesus was imbuing significant honor on Zacchaeus by choosing to eat with him, saying, in effect "Zacchaeus: I am coming to your house and would delight in your hospitality."

Most of us don't live in an honor/shame culture, but we do know how good it feels to be seen and cared for. Jesus was able to show Zacchaeus honor without condoning his sin, and it led Zacchaeus to repent. Likewise, we can show honor and build trust

without partaking in others' sins. In our culture, inviting someone over for a barbeque might be a way of saying, "I like you—you're alright," which can pave the way for more relationship.

In our evangelistic efforts, we need to initiate conversation in ways that value the person. We need to see them and show honor to them because we care. Jesus' method is our model.

### **Invest Relationally**

While there is no strict formula for the process, it's still true that after you initiate conversation with a person, the next step is to strengthen that relationship through investment. We want to progress in a genuine relationship and so that the relationship can potentially sustain the weight of the truth we want to communicate.

**Our goal is not to minimize the offense of the gospel. Our priority as ambassadors is to faithfully represent our Lord.**

Our goal is not to minimize the offense of the gospel. Our priority as ambassadors is to faithfully represent our Lord (2 Corinthians 4:2). The Bible tells us that the message of the cross of Christ is foolishness to people who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). But the cross is also the power of God, which God uses to open and change people's hearts (1 Corinthians 1:18, 2:14; 2 Corinthians 4:4, 6). The Word of God—specifically the gospel—has inherent power because it is the means through which the Holy Spirit works. And unless the Holy Spirit is at work, people will always reject the message—no matter how strong the relationship. Hence, ambassadors must be as faithful to the message as possible so as not to dilute its power.

At the same time, when we communicate the gospel, it should be consistent with how we are already demonstrating genuine care and love for the person as we've gotten to know them. Investing

relationally in someone is not a gimmick—it's an act of love, like sharing the gospel itself is an act of love. Paul modelled for us a ministry that not only shared the gospel but shared his life with those he was reaching:

*But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children. So, being affectionately desirous of you, we were ready to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us. (1 Thessalonians 2:7-8)*

Think of it this way. Imagine a close friend pulls you aside and says, "I've really noticed you've been on edge lately. I saw that you really overreacted yesterday with your kids when they didn't clean up their toys in the yard. We both know how wrong that was. I also know you have a lot of stress right now. Let me help you, but if you don't get your anger under control, you are going to alienate your kids and not have a good relationship with them." These words from a trusted friend, though confrontational, communicate that the friend loves me and wants what is best for me and my kids.

Now imagine a similar statement from a stranger: "I was walking by your house yesterday. You were yelling at your kids. That was so wrong! Your kids are going to end up hating you." In both cases, the person spoke true words. But which person are you going to trust to listen to? Not the second person!

In like fashion, Paul was certain to adorn his gospel message with love and service to others. Consider his missionary methods:

*For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some. I do it all for the*

*sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)*

**As you build a relationship with someone, think about “door openers” and “door closers.”**

The Book of Acts records many times Paul proclaimed the gospel publicly. He was often rejected because the gospel contains hard truths rejected by hardened men. But in 1 Corinthians 9, Paul also shows his tender spirit that purposed not needlessly be offensive. We can't stop the gospel from offending people, but we can stop ourselves from being needlessly offensive.

Paul did this by adapting himself to the culture he was in, whether Jewish or Gentile. Paul accommodated himself as much as he could without compromising the gospel or condoning sin. He was not only a powerful public proclaimer of the gospel but was also relational, and he did much to engage with people privately outside of his public preaching ministry recorded in the book of Acts.

You may or may not be called to a ministry of public proclamation like Paul. Today, there are still people who go into public spaces, like a university lecture hall, and proclaim the gospel or debate unbelievers for the benefit of an audience. But all of us are called to share the gospel, and in the majority of cases, this means being culturally sensitive in our relationships.

Invest in people relationally by spending time with them. Get to know them. Do things together. Show you care. One example would be to invite people over to your house. My kids love to make s'mores around a campfire. My kids' friends love it too. Why not invite the neighbor family over? Summertime in the backyard is warm, friendly, and inviting. It is also usually perceived as a safe, relational space.

As you build a relationship with someone, think about “door openers” and “door closers.” A door closer is something that

shuts down conversation. For example, asking something too personal too soon is a door closer. Door openers lead to more relationship and build trust. A door closer doesn't mean that question should never be asked, it just means it should not be asked at this level of the relationship. (Note: We unpack this more in ABWE's Heart, Mind, and Soul seminars. Learn more at [abwe.org/heartmindsoul](http://abwe.org/heartmindsoul)).

I once lived down the street from a husband and wife who were from Central America and a Caribbean nation. They were warm and friendly, and our kids played together. The husband several times helped me fix some things on my house. He was a handyman, and I was not. I can conjugate Greek verbs, but I can't fix a leaky pipe under my crawlspace to save my life. We got to know each other pretty well—being crammed under a crawlspace together has that effect, although I don't recommend breaking some pipes under your house as an evangelism technique.

As we talked, we obviously had things in common—our kids went to the same schools, and we both wanted our kids to have opportunity and succeed in life. We built a friendship. After a while, we finally got to a level where I could ask him about his Roman Catholic background, and he opened up to me. Both the husband and the wife shared what it was like to be first- and second-generation immigrants respectively.

But imagine if I had started off, “Do you have a green card? Are you legal?” There are a hundred different ways I could have closed the relational door and not loved my neighbor as myself. But because I was patient, over time, I made relational inroads. I learned that one side of this family had fled their country because of communism, and they cherished America as a land of freedom and opportunity. When they arrived, they opened their own small business, a sandwich shop. Their entrepreneurial story was inspiring. As our friendship grew, one day, as a gift, my neighbor made me one of the best sandwiches I'd ever had. It was the family recipe from her days in that old sandwich shop. Relationship building has its benefits!

Cultivating relationships is about caring, being authentic, opening up your life to others, and letting them do the same. Along the way, you'll often find shared values and concerns. These relationships allow you to live for Jesus in front of other people. Hopefully, people will see the genuineness of your faith, which sets the stage for you to share the faith and demonstrate you care for them in other ways, too.

Even unbelievers' values and concerns will overlap with ours. Theologians call this common grace. Common grace means, that even though unbelievers reject God, God has still given them blessings that they recognize as good, despite them not always seeing them as gifts from God. Common grace means that although they reject God and are dead in their sins, they still have the gift of a conscience and are image bearers of God, though sinful and corrupted.

Unbelieving parents still love their kids because of common grace. It is a shared value. It is a mark of the image of God that remains despite sin's corruption. Unbelievers, particularly in non-Western cultures, can also excel in hospitality. Showing hospitality is another remnant of the image of God. Unbelievers may also cherish relationships because God made them, as image bearers, to live in community.

These common graces are areas where we can build relationships. Even the "worst" of sinners are image-bearers whom God has given some good gift in life. We can celebrate these gifts and point people to the Giver.

We are not saying to agree with or endorse the sin you see in the lives of your unbelieving friends. Rather, recognize and see what good things God has placed in their lives—talents, skills, abilities, positions, values, or intelligence. Affirm what is good since every good gift comes from the Father above (James 1:17; Philippians 4:8). Investing relationally means finding out more about who they are and what makes them "tick."



## **Proclaim Patiently**

If we truly love someone, we should want them to come to know God and his Son Jesus Christ in the same way we know God and his Son. We value not just the who they are, but who they can become: a person in eternal fellowship with God. Human beings were originally meant for fellowship with God in his presence, and this is the destiny awaiting believers. We share the gospel because we want others to experience this hope. Sin and judgment are tragic, in part, because they separate us from this ultimate end.

In the next section, we'll talk about the core elements of the gospel needed in a gospel proclamation. But for now, consider this: in today's world, many people have little or no understanding of the biblical concepts that we speak about when we share the faith. Even a simple statement like "Jesus died for sins," which we might take for granted, assumes a lot of background knowledge. Who or what is "Christ"? What is sin? Why is it so bad? Why would he die for sins? How did he die? Does this mean he died for his own sins? What does dying have to do with sins, isn't death just a natural part of life?

We must not only proclaim but patiently proclaim, you may not always get to share the entire gospel in one conversation. Sometimes, of course, you share the gospel and the person immediately believes—we praise God when that happens, and we never want to shy away from doing our part when that opportunity arises. But more often, our evangelism with a person involves a series of conversations.

You may share the gospel on numerous occasions. The person may flatly reject the gospel. Don't take it personally. They may even get angry or frustrated with you. Be kind and winsome. Your role is to be the faithful ambassador and continue to pursue peace with them, as much as it depends upon you (Romans 12:18).

Sometimes, Christians think that if we share the gospel with someone one time and the person rejects it, then we should walk away and never say anything again. It is true that there are times

to shake the proverbial dust from our feet. But we can't pass a final verdict on a person's soul and assume God is done with them. Thankfully, the Lord is more patient with us than we are with others.

First, you never know what seeds you are planting when you share the gospel—even if someone rejects it. People often reject the gospel the first time they hear it. But the Word of God is powerful, and the Holy Spirit begins to use it in their hearts. Sometimes, a person's strong reaction is a way they hide, feeling convicted.

**Remember that faithfulness counts — both in continual witness and continual extension of love and friendship.**

Second, evangelism is often a labor. Evangelism is not a once-and-done thing but continual. You are not like a pilot dropping gospel bombs over the target only to turn away and fly back to the home base thinking 'the job is done; on to the next target.' Once you've shared, ask the person what they think. Let them ask you questions. You don't have to have all the answers. You can always take the time to find an answer and get back to them. People will often respect a humble response: "That's a good question. Let me think about it and get back to you." Or maybe you even have an open door to say, "Would you like to study the Bible together to find the answer?"

Third, remember that faithfulness counts—both in continual witness and continual extension of love and friendship. Let them see that your life is changed by Jesus. No matter their response to him, you want to love them. Remember my friend with the multi-level marketing scheme? We've never heard from them again. Don't repeat my friend's mistake where they gave it a shot and walked out of our lives. Behaving in this way with the gospel does not make Jesus look more attractive to an unbeliever.

Fourth, you may need to take the time to pull the weeds. In the Parable of the Sower, spreading the gospel is likened to sowing seeds. But part of that task means uprooting the weeds—that is, false ideas or beliefs—choking out the gospel seeds in a person’s heart. We must take the time to show how God’s Word addresses and reframes a person’s worldview. Be patient and pray that God would bring fruit in their life.

Fifth, pray. Pray and ask others to pray. At the end of the day, God alone saves people—not us. God opens their heart to see the glory of God on the face of Christ from hearing the Word (2 Corinthians 4:4-6). Results from evangelism only come from God. Imagine if we spent as much time praying for the person as we spent trying to build a relationship and talk to them. If we aren’t prayerfully dependent on God in our work, our labor is in vain.

There are lots of things you can pray for. Most importantly, pray for their salvation. But you can also pray for an opportunity to share the gospel (Colossians 4:3). Pray for a divine appointment. Pray that their heart would be open. Pray that you would have the right words. Pray that the Holy Spirit would be at work. After your first opportunity, pray for follow up conversations. Enlist others in your praying.

Finally, trust God. He can and will bring fruit according to his perfect plan. His timing is always perfect. The gospel is foolish to the person without the Holy Spirit. But the gospel is also the power of God to save. When you share the gospel with someone, even if they reject it, you have unleashed God’s power. When you have faithfully used a Bible verse, you have taken out a sword that is sharper than any double-edged human weapon. God will use it. Let people reject it all they want—God will draw people to himself. Many people have rejected the gospel only to have the Lord work in their heart and surprise them, so that down the road, they find themselves suddenly wholeheartedly believing the very thing they rejected. Depend upon him as you patiently proclaim.



## 4. Proclaiming the Gospel

If we are going to be faithful ambassadors, we need to know the message we are called to share and proclaim to others. An ambassador doesn't get to make up or compromise the message that he is bringing from the country he represents. He is commissioned to communicate something on behalf of his country. The ambassador must know whom he represents.

Gospel (euangelion in Greek) means “good news.” In the Greco-Roman world, the word “gospel” was specifically good news regarding the proclamation concerning a king—perhaps his birth, his enthronement, or a great victory of the king in a battle. While in your mind it might be “good news” that there is a fresh baked pie waiting for you to eat when you get home, this wasn't the kind of thing that was communicated with the word “gospel.” It was largely kingly or royal “good news.”

When the Book of Isaiah was translated into Greek before the time of Jesus, they used the word euangelion to communicate

the good news that God reigned. It was particularly used in Isaiah about the Messiah establishing his reign:

*Go on up to a high mountain, O Zion, herald of good news; lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good news; lift it up, fear not; say to the cities of Judah, "Behold your God!" (Isaiah 40:9)*

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who publishes peace, who brings good news of happiness, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." (Isaiah 52:7; note that this passage is right before the prophecy of Jesus the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53)*

*The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound[.] (Isaiah 61:1; cf. 41:27, 60:6)*

The good news is tied to concrete historical events. God, the King, has done or will do something. The event is proclaimed and announced. Messengers are sent to say "Listen! Good news! The King has done what he said!" The messenger is a herald of the gospel. This is why the gospel is a message that can only be communicated with words and not just deeds or feelings (see Romans 10:9-14). The gospel is an announcement and a particularly royal one at that.

**The gospel is the announcement that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has (1) defeated sin in his death on the cross paying its penalty, (2) has risen bodily from the death ensuring sin and death's defeat, and (3) that this Jesus is reigning as Lord!** That's the announcement. That's the good news.

**The good news also has a call for us to respond.** Believe and confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord! Look at what Jesus has done! Because of that, you and I can receive the forgiveness of sins.

**The good news has an invitation.** Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ?

**The gospel has a promise.** Those who receive him will be saved from sin, enjoy peace with God, and receive everlasting life in resurrection bodies which no longer have the effects of sin.

Let's pause and remember: if you are talking to an unbeliever, there are a whole lot of concepts and words that you might need to unpack here. They might have no concept of God, sin, substitution for sin, death because of sin, etc. I'm assuming that you, the reader of this book, already understand some of these things because you're reading a book about how to share the faith. For our purposes here, we're highlighting core truths assuming you already have the conceptual framework of language to understand. When you share with an unbeliever, they may have little or none of this conceptual framework. Put another way: just because you say a truthful phrase, "God loves you," doesn't mean everyone has the same thing in mind with the word "God" let alone the word "love."

**To be evangelistic with your neighbors means you're going to have to think more and more like a missionary.**

We'll talk about this in the next section of this booklet, but for now, recognize that concepts like God, sin, forgiveness, death for sins, etc. are rooted in the entire biblical story. The Bible itself shows us how to understand it and defines the terms and concept across the storyline of the whole Old Testament. You may have to take the time with someone to introduce the concepts and lay the foundation for understanding patiently and slowly.

ABWE missionaries do this very thing when they step into cross-cultural settings. But what many Christians don't realize that once-common concepts in our culture used to provide a framework for the gospel are no longer commonly understood.



So, to be evangelistic with your neighbors means you're going to have to think more and more like a missionary, because the common religious underpinnings are lost in an increasingly secular culture.

Returning to the content of the gospel, let's unpack our above three-part definition of the gospel starting with 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

*Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures[.] (1 Corinthians 15:1-4)*

In this passage, Paul gives us the elements that are of “first importance” regarding the gospel. In other words, while there are many things that can be said about the gospel, these elements are the most important.

1. First, Christ died for sins according to the Scriptures. There is a lot bound up in this statement. The Christ—that is, the Messiah, promised in the Old Testament—is asserted to be Jesus. This Messiah Jesus died for sins. Sin deserves the punishment of death and eternal separation from God. However, Jesus Christ died for sins, meaning he substituted himself for sinners to bear their punishment for sins. As an innocent man took upon himself the punishment we deserve. He stood in our place and a representative substitute. Our only hope of forgiveness of sins is that Jesus took upon himself the penalty you and I deserve.

*For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

*Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (Hebrews 9:22)*

*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)*

*[B]ut God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)*

2. Christ was buried. He truly died. His body was put in the grave. There was no question or debate about whether he was dead.
3. Jesus Christ was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. Jesus Christ died on a Friday. His body was buried on Friday (day one) before sundown, when the Jews started the Sabbath. His body was in the grave all through the Sabbath (day two). On Sunday morning (day three), Jesus Christ rose from the dead in a bodily resurrection. His body received new life, a life that had defeated sin and death and could not die again. He came out of the grave, and many witnesses saw him and testified that he was truly alive. The resurrection from the dead of Jesus Christ assures us that he paid the penalty for sin and has conquered sin and death. This resurrection is a fulfillment of many Old Testament Scriptures.

We see all these elements in Peter's first preaching of the gospel in Acts 2:23-27, including a quotation from the Old Testament that was fulfilled in Jesus' resurrection:

*[T]his Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it. For David says concerning him, "I saw the Lord always before me, for he is at my right hand that I may not be shaken; therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced; my flesh also will dwell in hope. For you will not abandon my soul to Hades, or let your Holy One see corruption. You have made known to me the paths of life; you will make me full of gladness with your presence." "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn*

*with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. (Acts 2:23-27)*

The gospel is a **royal announcement** of all these things. In the proclamation of the gospel, we are saying “Jesus is Lord.” We are inviting people to believe that Jesus is the Savior and Lord. If you put your trust in him, you will be saved.

Consider Paul’s straightforward answer when the Philippian jailer asks, “What must I do to be saved?” “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31).

Or consider Peter’s invitation after preaching the gospel in Acts 2:

*Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?” 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 2:36-38)*

Paul also provides a summation of what someone must do to be saved:

*[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. For the Scripture says, “Everyone who believes in him will not be put to shame.” (Romans 10:9-11)*

Secondly, returning to our three points, **the good news also has a call for us to respond**. We must believe and confess that Jesus is Savior and Lord! Look at what Jesus has done! Because of that you, and I can receive the forgiveness of sins.

Just as in Isaiah the “gospel” was the announcement that “your God reigns,” in the New Testament, the apostles proclaim that “Jesus is Lord,” and this is to be believed on the basis of his death and resurrection. Jesus cannot save, after all, if he is not the Lord who has conquered sin and death. So, as Peter preaches the gospel, he tells the crowd Jesus is exalted to the right hand of the Father in his bodily ascension:

**When we are proclaiming the good news, we are announcing that Jesus reigns as Lord, and that he died and rose again from the dead to save people from sins and grant eternal salvation.**

*Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he himself says, “The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.” Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:33-36)*

When we are proclaiming the good news, we are announcing that Jesus reigns as Lord, and that he died and rose again from the dead to save people from sins and grant eternal salvation. Paul tells us that in salvation people are confessing Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9) and that the person bringing this message has the beautiful feet described in Isaiah 52:7 (Romans 10:14).

Similarly in Romans 1:1-6, Paul says that he has been set apart to proclaim the gospel of God, which is centered on the Son and his resurrection in power:

*Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through*

*his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord[.]*  
(Romans 1:1-4)

What are the elements of the gospel in Paul's greeting? They are, simply:

1. God promised the gospel beforehand in the Old Testament: "which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures."
2. The gospel is about the Son: "concerning his Son." The gospel is good news about God the Son.
3. The Son became human as a descendent of David: "who was descended from David according to the flesh." This again ties it to the Old Testament and the promises made to King David regarding a descendant who will be the highest of all the kings of the earth and rule over all creation. So, Jesus is truly God and truly man.
4. In his resurrection, Jesus is appointed in power by the Holy Spirit: "was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead." The gospel is news of a royal enthronement. This is what makes it such good news! The king has triumphed over sin and death. He offers salvation and resurrection life to all who trust in him. Note a few things:
  - a. First, the overwhelming majority of New Testament commentaries and Greek dictionaries acknowledge the word translated "declared" should better be translated "appointed." The idea is the installation of a king. Jesus was already God the Son, but he wins a new sort of kingship in his resurrection.
  - b. Second, he is declared/appointed Son of God in power. So, the human king who died now lives in the power of the resurrected body. The Son of God suffered, but he was

raised up and, in his humanity, crowned with power by the Holy Spirit.

c. Third, the Spirit of God is upon him: “according to the Spirit of holiness.”

5. *Who is this Son of God who is now as truly crowned/appointed in resurrection power? “Jesus Christ our Lord,” Paul is saying the same thing that Peter said in his preaching of the gospel. Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ, and is the person now crowned as Lord: “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).*

That message isn’t just for Jewish individuals of “the house of Israel.” When Paul preaches to Gentiles in Athens, he says something very similar. The resurrection of Jesus lets us know that Jesus has been appointed to judge the world. That’s what kings do over all that is under their rule. Paul tells his Gentile audience:

*[B]ecause he [God] has fixed a day on which he [God] will judge the world in righteousness by a man [Jesus] whom he has appointed; and of this he [God] has given assurance to all by raising him [Jesus] from the dead. (Acts 17:31)*

In sum: the good news announced is the enthronement of a king who will save all who come to him because he died and rose again. Or, even more simply, the gospel is good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. He is God’s Son who came to earth. He died in our place for sins. He was buried. He rose again from the dead in victory over sin and death. He has accomplished the forgiveness of sins and secured eternal resurrected life for all who will put their faith and trust in him. He is Savior and Lord and invites everyone everywhere to believe this and receive forgiveness of sins and enjoy peace with God.

Third, **the good news has an invitation:** Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and receive salvation from him? He offers this as a gift. When you are sharing the gospel, you are an



**“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” - John 1:12**

ambassador. You bring the message. You invite people to enjoy this peace with God and experience the forgiveness of sins by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ. You must lay out the content of the message. And having laid out the message, you are inviting others to respond.

Imagine what kind of poor ambassador a person would be if they told everyone about their home country but never told the people in the foreign nation where they serve how they can enjoy peaceful friendly relations with their home country. This would be dereliction of duty. It would be like telling a group of hungry beggars how delicious a certain meal is but never offering a bite.

To come to a saving faith in Jesus is to join a new kingdom and receiving the forgiveness of sins the king grants. “He [God] has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:13-14).

Finally, **the gospel has a promise.** If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive him as Savior and Lord, then you will be saved. If you come to him and ask to be forgiven, acknowledging who he is and what he has done, you will be saved. God comes to you and dwells with you. You will belong to him and join his family.

Consider these promises for those who believe in the gospel:

*But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God[.] (John 1:12)*

*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)*

*[I]f you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.  
(Romans 10:9)*

*For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”  
(Romans 10:13)*

Is this a message you have believed? Have you received the forgiveness of sins by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, his death, and his resurrection? We often refer to this belief as “having a relationship with him” because we aren’t just talking about having head knowledge—rather, it means having a personal, saving faith.

What is saving faith? First, you have knowledge. You are saying, “Yes, I see that this is what the Bible says about Jesus.” Saving faith also affirms these things. Your heart and mind know and acknowledge “yes, this is true.” Finally, saving faith entails trust. “Yes, Jesus is my Savior and my Lord. He is the only hope I have for salvation, and I believe his word that he will save me.” We look to Jesus and rely on him to save us. “Lord, save me, I see what you’ve done on the cross to forgive the sins I know that I have. Grant this forgiveness to me and come into my life.”

When we share the gospel, we are sharing the truth of what God has done in Jesus. We are asking people to recognize the truth and acknowledge it as true. We are asking them to believe in the person that he alone saves.

In sharing the gospel, you must tell the message. But in sharing the gospel, you also have the privilege of asking people to trust in Jesus. We are asking them to surrender to him and receive a free gift. The person can’t do anything to win God’s favor, win salvation, or make God love them. God has already displayed his love and freely offers them salvation in Jesus Christ based upon his work. Invite them to receive the gift and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In this section, we’ve walked through an overview of the gospel that needs to be proclaimed. We’ve focused on the core of the message. This is not just your faith or my faith but the faith. It is

the core of what all true Christians believe, and what one must believe to be saved.

As already mentioned, you might share this message all in one shot with a person. You might also share bits and pieces over time. You may have to return to elements of it and explain it. You might have to explain your terms. You might have to answer questions or listen to objections. There may be times where you share part of your story and how God worked in your life. But at the end of the day, these things are the core non-negotiables—matters “of first importance.”

In the next section, we are going to back up and talk about building a conceptual framework for helping people understand the gospel. Someone who has never encountered the Bible or its teachings may technically know the English words “God,” “sin,” “resurrection,” and “forgiveness,” but not be able to attach the right meaning. Even words like “faith” and “believe” often are associated with different concepts that aren’t the biblical ideas.



## 5. Painting the Bigger Picture

Words are tricky sometimes. Depending upon how I use them, I might mean different things. Let me give you two examples.

If I say, “I have a trunk,” what do I mean? Do I mean I have a suitcase-like box in the garage where I pack my winter clothes? Do I mean that I have a trunk in my car where I can load it? (My British friends would say, “Oh, you mean a boot,” to which Americans reply, “What do shoes have to do with anything?”) Or maybe I’m reading a book to my children speaking on behalf of an elephant. The word “trunk” can mean several things.

Here’s another example. Suppose you hear me say, “I believe in Republican principles. They are important to America and her continued stability as a nation. Republican values should continue to be upheld by all Americans.” What do I mean by “Republican” principles and values? In the United States, I could mean the specific platform of today’s Republican political party. But “republican” could also mean the values we have as a republic—

that is, that we are ruled by laws created by legislators—as opposed to aristocracy, monarchy, or a pure democracy. I need to provide more context for what I mean if you are going to understand me.

The Bible is a book of context. It is a record of history of God’s acts of redemption and revelations of himself. Not only is it a collection of stories; it also forms one overarching story of God’s mission to save his people and creation. The account of historical events tells us how we got here, what the problems are, and why Jesus is the solution.

The gospel is the climax of the story. That means that, like any story, we need to know the setting, cast, rising action, and conflict before the climax will make any sense. As with any story, we might ask: who is the hero? Who is the victim? Who is the enemy? How is the enemy defeated? And what is the end of all things after the defeat?

**The Bible is a book of context. It is a record of history of God’s acts of redemption and revelations of himself.**

To effectively communicate the gospel, we must lay this same foundation. Just as you can use the words “trunk” or “Republican” and be easily misunderstood, you can use all the right gospel words (sin, death, salvation, etc.) without correctly conveying the meaning. You may mean it in all the right ways but, without grasping the context, the listener is either clueless or they may import their current incorrect understanding. Without sufficient context, misunderstanding will occur.

Some missionaries use a method called Bible storying to accomplish the task of laying down sufficient context. Missionaries build relationships, develop trust, lay down the conceptual framework for the gospel, and convey the whole gospel message. They do this through presenting in chronological order the major events of biblical history that establish the point of the story and

our need for a Savior. Sometimes all this initial work, including Bible storying, is called “pre-evangelism.”

Missionaries aren’t the only ones who think this way. Theologians call this method biblical theology. Biblical theology is a specific type of theology that reads the biblical story as one metanarrative or story that explains everything.

Of course, no one is saved simply because they know all the stories of the Bible and can connect the dots. The goal is to help them connect enough dots in order for them to understand what we mean when we describe who Jesus is and what he accomplished.

Many ABWE missionaries use a tool The Story of Hope to accomplish this. The Story of Hope is a chronological Bible study booklet designed to present God’s redemptive story in as few as fifteen minutes, or as long as twenty or more hours (available through [goodsoil.com/resources](http://goodsoil.com/resources)). There are lots of tools that do something similar. In a quick overview, let’s think about Scripture’s metanarrative and break down the story into its four most basic parts.

## **1. Creation**

The Bible teaches us that God created all things. This gives us a clear picture of who God is. God is not a part of his creation. He is distinct from it. In fact, he is eternal before creation, above it, and beyond it in his power and might. God is perfect and holy, or set apart. And he created all things to be good.

God also created human beings as his image bearers (Genesis 1:26-27). Human beings have dignity and value because they bear his image. He established them as male and female to represent him. God created human beings in a state of innocence. They existed to know God and enjoy a relationship with him. God also placed human beings over all his creation—to rule it, care for it, and enjoy it.



## **2. Rebellion**

Human beings in Genesis 3 rebelled against God. God gave them a very simple command because he loved them and cared for them. They choose to disobey him. This is called sin. Sin is a rebellion against God and a disobedience to his good command that was for our benefit and thriving.

God had promised the consequence of sin was death. Why? To sin is to make war against God. Death is not only physical cessation from life but also leads to eternal separation from God. So, while God created man and woman in a garden in relationship with him, he removed them from this garden because they rebelled against him.

Now, because we all descend from those first humans whose represented the entire human race in their standing before God, all human beings are born already trapped in a state of sin and misery.

Another result was that, because man was at the pinnacle of creation, the curse on man's sin affected all the rest of creation. Today, creation is not always good the way it was originally. God has allowed disease, death, and decay to spread through creation. Death is not just part of the "circle of life" but is the curse for sin.

## **3. Redemption**

As soon as human beings rebelled against God and God punished them, God also launched his plan to rescue and restore. He had made everything and still cared for it, after all. He doesn't abandon the works that he had made.

In Genesis 3:15, he promised a Savior. In the following chapters of Genesis, we see how wicked people became as they rebelled and became yet more wicked, until finally God chose the family of a single man, Abraham, as the conduit of blessing for the whole world.

From Abraham comes the nation of Israel, which found itself in Egypt in bondage and slavery. But God heard their cries, showed his love, and delivered them in the exodus (Exodus 3:7-8). Here, we see what the coming redemption will look like: being set free from bondage. After rescuing his people, God created a meeting place, the Tabernacle, in which to dwell with his people. He also created a system of sacrifices to condition his people to understand the need for cleaning from their sin.

As biblical history progresses, God's people keep rebelling. God rescues them, but they continue to turn from him. It becomes clear that humanity's greatest need is a change of heart.

Finally, God sends his one and only Son who is eternally God. The Son becomes man. He dies on the cross to pay the penalty for sin. Suddenly, we see the fulfillment of promises from the Old Testament. His departure in death is even called an exodus (Luke 9:31 uses the word exodus which we translate "departure"). We see Jesus as the ultimate sacrificial Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7; cf. Leviticus 16; Hebrews 9). We also discover that, through Christ, God wants to dwell with his people: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us [in Greek, literally "tabernacled"], and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

After his death, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. It means he died, but death did not win. The curse was reversed by Jesus. His body took the curse on, and he died. But the curse didn't win. He had the power to reverse it in new life. Jesus could never die again because he won.

#### **4. Restoration**

Jesus is working today to make the creation new again. Romans 8:18-24 tells us that all creation groans right now waiting for the redemption of believers. There is hope. Jesus conquered death, and he promises that we will conquer death. One day, Jesus will put an end to sin and death, cast the

wicked into eternal punishment, and make a new heavens and a new earth. And he will once again dwell with his people.

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.” (Revelation 21:1-3)*

The story of all history ends where it began: God dwelling with his people. But it ends in a better state than that in which it began. The creation will not only be good again—it will be better. There will be no possibility of rebellion against disrupting man’s relationship with God. God will commune directly with human beings. Everyone who believes in Jesus will enjoy the ultimate life and glorified bodies that can never be affected by corruption. Death will be gone. All because Jesus Christ won the victory on the cross and in resurrection.

## **The story of all history ends where it began: God dwelling with his people.**

There are a lot more details of the story that we could tell—Moses, the judges, David, the kings, the prophets, the exile—but in evangelism, you don’t have to (and usually can’t) get to all these stories. But you will have to share the big story. Grasping a general outline of the story, like ours above, might be enough to help someone see just how important Jesus is. They likely won’t see the beauty of the gospel without knowing how it all started and how it all ends.

Every person has a worldview, or a set of answers to questions like: “Who are we?” “How did we get here?” “What condition are

we in?” “Where are we going?” The overarching story of Scripture provides true answers to all these questions.

Pause for a moment. Think about those four worldview questions. How would an atheist answer each one? Those answers form their worldview. Now, try it again, this time through the lens of another religion. How might they answer those questions?

Now, think about your neighbor. How would he or she likely answer each question? What would happen if we asked? Even if they answer, “I don’t know, I never thought about it,” that’s still an answer that can invite further inquiry. Would they like to know the answer? To hear what the Bible says? Everyone starts somewhere, from some worldview.

In the ABWE’s Good Soil evangelism training, we call the communication barriers between believers in contradictory worldviews “worldview noise.” Think of the cloud of contradictory definitions of a word like “trunk” as static on the phone line interfering with our ability to understand each other. A person’s preexisting worldview and beliefs create “noise” that prevent the gospel from being understood.

This is why we have stressed relationship building. Learn the unbeliever’s worldview. Take the time to show them how the Bible has real answers for everyone everywhere. Doing so with sincerity may earn you a hearing.

By way of illustration, remember Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 9:20-22—his willingness to be “all things” to all people. He is seeking to remove worldview noise. Without compromising to sin or watering down his message, he adapts his life and behavior to his audience so that there isn’t unnecessary distraction that keep people from hearing the gospel. Let’s communicate the gospel in such a way that we remove ourselves as distractions. If people are offended, let them be offended at the message of the cross because they understood it, not because they misunderstood us.

In Athens, Paul even went so far as to quote Greek poets and reference philosophical concepts they could understand (Acts

17:24-28). That didn't stop him from announcing the resurrection, which he knew would offend his audience (vv. 31-32). Yet Paul still took the time to articulate biblical worldview concepts clearly for those of a pagan worldview. He also cited those poets in philosophers in ways that made clear how the biblical worldview differed greatly from Greek assumptions. Paul's gospel preaching ends with a head on collision of worldviews when he declares there is a resurrection while preaching in the very spot where, according to tradition, the god Apollos stood and stated, 'there is no resurrection.' It is little wonder that some who heard were offended. Clarity and faithful contextualization doesn't remove the offense of the gospel (1 Corinthians 1:18, 22-23).

There is a warning here. Our efforts to clearly communicate or contextualize to our friends' worldviews will not save them. Evangelism is sharing the gospel—and it is only that gospel that is the power of God to free the whole person (1 Corinthians 1:18). When we preach the gospel, God will open people's hearts and transform lives (1 Corinthians 1:24; 2 Corinthians 3:16-18; 4:6). Our responsibility is to make sure that the words we are using are clearly communicating the truth.

We must also, again, remember to be patient. There may be times where you find yourself in a situation like Philip did with the Ethiopian. God is working in that person's life, they are reading the Bible, and they ask, "Explain this to me." If God opens that door, share the gospel. But in many times and places, sharing the gospel happens through many conversations. So don't be afraid to stay engaged in people's lives.

Let us return to where we started. Our motive to continue our effort is because we know God and we love our neighbors. Our love for God compels us to continue in faithfulness. And our love for people drives us to demonstrate and communicate the depths of God's love and joy of knowing him.



## 6. Conclusion

Let's close by walking through a passage from 2 Corinthians to encourage us in the task that the Lord has given us:

*Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)*



First, don't lose heart in your evangelism efforts. Maybe you're shy, timid, or fearful. Maybe you've taken risks to share the faith, and no one has believed. Don't be discouraged. God has entrusted the gospel to you and given you a ministry of mercy—the joyful task of sharing the message of his grace by which he is saving people. This is an inestimable honor, not a reason to feel dejected.

Second, when we aren't getting the results, we may be tempted to water down the message. We might think, *Don't tell people about hell. That will scare them. Don't say too much about how Jesus died on the cross and bore the wrath of God—they'll think God is vindictive and bloodthirsty.* (He's not.) *Just tell them God loves them.* Stand guard. God is love, but the gospel message is more than that. Paul never changed his methods. Don't compromise your message.

Similarly, sometimes we think if we have flashy presentations, great PowerPoint slides, superb entertainment, and even a fog machine, people will listen more closely to the gospel. Paul says, "Don't seek after cunning methods, and definitely don't tamper with God's Word." God's Word is sufficient. The power is in the Word of God. Even when people don't believe in him, God is able to overcome their unbelief. His Word is a sword that can cut open the hardest of hearts so that they change (Hebrews 4:12). God's saving power along comes through the message. Faith comes through hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ (Romans 10:17). If that verse is true, and it is, then people don't need our fancy methods, tricks, and gimmicks. They need Jesus.

Third, realize that the gospel is veiled to the unbeliever. We should expect resistance. It is foolishness to those who are perishing (1 Corinthians 1:18). A person without God's Spirit at work in them isn't going to accept the message (1 Corinthians 2:14). People are blind. But take heart: God is stronger.

Finally, *God saves*. God saves by his power. Remember how God created the universe? He, in his awesome power, simply said, "Let there be light." And there was light. What a miracle. And yet,

when you preach the gospel, God works in people's hearts the same way. He takes the message, says, "Let there be light," and a miracle of new life takes place by the power of the Spirit. Light shines in their heart. God has opened their eyes, and they believe. It is one of the most awesome miracles we can ever witness. Formerly, the person was dead in their sins, trapped and unable to free themselves with life—and in a moment, by God's own doing, they are made alive in Christ (Ephesians 2:1-9).

Don't you want to be a part of watching God do miracles? I do. How exciting is it? God does all the work. We are simply ambassadors with a message.

In this booklet, we've tried to outline a basic pattern for being evangelistic. But at the end of the day, we don't save anyone. We stick to the message because we have absolute trust that the gospel is the power of God, and God is still saving people—even us.

*"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1:16).*

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