

No Other Gospel

COMMUNITY GROUP GUIDE

This guide explores the unfathomable beauty of the gospel of Jesus Christ. By no means can these 8 weeks even begin to cover everything that is beautiful about the gospel, but it offers the reader a glimpse. Our prayer is that this series would ignite a passion in us such that we cannot help but share this gospel with others. Take time to carefully read each verse provided, read the commentary, and respond to the personal reflection questions before coming to group.

The Gospel is God's Story

Read the following scriptures: **Genesis 1:1, Genesis 3:6-7, John 19:30, Revelation 21:1-6**

God creates man. Man rejects God. God redeems man through Jesus Christ. God makes all things new.

These four sentences summarize the story of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and it is the story of the gospel: that God saves sinners through Jesus. Every Bible story, every proverb, every psalm, every prophecy, and every letter points to God's redemptive work on the cross. Adam and Eve in the garden, Noah and the flood, the law of Moses, the prophecies of Isaiah, the psalms of David, the proverbs of Solomon, Nehemiah and the rebuilding of the wall, the life and teaching of Jesus, the letters of Paul, the revelation of John, and every other narrative in between interweave together to form the "metanarrative" or "story of stories" of the Bible. And that metanarrative is the gospel. Throughout the scriptures, you see God restoring what is broken, redeeming what is fallen, and bringing chaos to order.

Granted, the individual parts of the Bible are valuable in themselves, but they have value because of the gospel. For example, when God gives Moses the Ten Commandments, the first command he gives is "You shall have no other gods before me" (Exodus 20:3). We can read this verse by itself and find joy in it. If we simply read it and obey it that would be a very good thing because God is a much better god than anything else that we could put before him. But it is only good for us because of the gospel (that we are saved by Jesus' works not our own works). Without the gospel this would be a troubling verse because we would have to keep this commandment at all times in order to meet God's standard. Without the gospel we are required to never have other gods before God or we endure his wrath, and it ends there. It is the first commandment from God, and each of us fails at it. Each of us places something before God all the time: ourselves, our spouses, our kids, our jobs, our stuff, etc. If our righteousness were determined by our own efforts we can't even get past commandment #1. I'm surprised Moses didn't say, "God, you can just stop there. We're already in negative territory here. Don't even bother with 2 through 10. Let me just take this one tablet with the one commandment on it down the mountain." But the beauty of the gospel is that it doesn't end there. It doesn't end

with our failure. Our righteousness is determined not by our own failing efforts but by the perfect efforts of Jesus Christ who died for our failure of commandment #1 (along with all of our other failures). We constantly put gods before God, but Jesus never put any gods before God. We deserve to die, and he deserved to live. Instead, he died so that we might live! How beautiful! And because of this we obey commandment #1 in response to the gospel. We obey because we want to not because we have to.

And this is only one example in the bible. The same truth applies to every part of the Bible. Every story in the bible is incredibly beautiful in light of the story of stories (i.e. the gospel). Starting from the fall of man in the book of Genesis, God unravels his plan of redemption and draws people to himself climaxing with Jesus Christ on the cross, and finalizing everything in Revelation when Jesus returns and God forms the New Heavens and the New Earth and makes all things new.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. What are some things that stood out to you while reading the verses provided? Write out your observations.*
- 2. How do the four verses provided connect together into one continuous narrative? Write it out in your own words.*
- 3. How does your life play into God's story?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1. How do the four verses provided connect together into one continuous narrative?*
- 2. What are some examples of specific stories in the bible that are interwoven within the "story of stories" (the Gospel). Explain.*

3. *How does this affect how we read our Bibles?*
4. *How does this affect our individual lives? How is our story part of the “story of stories”?*
5. *How does this affect how we share the gospel with other people?*

PRAYER

Pray that each of us would be given new eyes to see the truth of the gospel throughout the Bible and throughout our lives. Pray that the eyes of individuals we know would be given eyes to see this as well.

God is the Gospel

Read the following scriptures: **Psalm 73:25-26, Psalm 16:11, John 17:3**

God is passionate about his glory; in fact, the Bible says he shares it with no one. God does everything so that the fullness of his character can be seen and enjoyed. But because of sin mankind's relationship with God has been broken. The good news is God made a way for our sins to be forgiven, in order that we might have a right relationship with God. This is why we were created, to enjoy God. That's why fellowship with God is the ultimate good of the gospel.

Here is the way Dr. John Piper speaks of the true goodness of forgiveness and life accomplished for us in the gospel of Jesus in a section of an article entitled, [God is the Gospel](#)¹.

“Have you ever asked why God’s forgiveness is of any value? Or what about eternal life? Have you ever asked why a person would want to have eternal life? Why should we want to live forever? These questions matter because it is possible to want forgiveness and eternal life for reasons that prove you don’t have them.

Take forgiveness, for example. You might want God’s forgiveness because you are so miserable with guilt feelings. You just want relief. If you can believe that he forgives you, then you will have some relief, but not necessarily salvation. If you only want forgiveness because of emotional relief, you won’t have God’s forgiveness. He does not give it to those who use it only to get his gifts and not himself.

Or you might want to be healed from a disease or get a good job or find a spouse. Then you hear that God can help you get these things, but that first your sins would have to be forgiven. Someone tells you to believe that Christ died for your sins, and that if you believe this, your sins will be forgiven. So you believe it in order to remove the obstacle to health and job and spouse. Is that gospel salvation? I don’t think so.

¹ <http://www.desiringgod.org/articles/god-is-the-gospel>

In other words, it matters what you are hoping for through forgiveness. It matters why you want it. If you want forgiveness only for the sake of savoring the creation, then the Creator is not honored and you are not saved. Forgiveness is precious for one final reason: it enables you to enjoy fellowship with God. If you don't want forgiveness for that reason, you won't have it at all. God will not be used as currency for the purchase of idols.

Similarly, we ask: why do we want eternal life? One might say: because hell is the alternative and that's painful. Another might say: because there will be no sadness there. Another might say: my loved ones have gone there and I want to be with them. Others might dream of endless sex or food. Or more noble fortunes. In all these aims one thing is missing: God.

The saving motive for wanting eternal life is given in John 17:3: "This is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." If we do not want eternal life because it means joy in God, then we won't have eternal life. We simply kid ourselves that we are Christians, if we use the glorious gospel of Christ to get what we love more than Christ. The "good news" will not prove good to any for whom God is not the chief good."

There are many great things that happen as a result of Jesus's death and resurrection but they are work together toward one thing, fellowship with God. The goal of the gospel is that sinners would be restored to God, that they would glorify and enjoy him forever.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. What did you observe from reading the above scriptures?

2. What are these texts saying about the ultimate goal of eternal life?

3. As a result of what you have read how does this affect your thinking about the gospel? How does this affect how you live your life, and what can you change about it?

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. According to John 17:3, what does it mean to have eternal life?

2. What is the goal of the gospel?

3. Why is the ultimate good of the gospel fellowship with God?

4. How does loving the gifts of God (i.e. His love, mercy, forgiveness etc.) more than God himself distract us from the good news of the gospel?

5. According to Psalm 16:11, is there anything greater God could have offered us beside himself? Why do you think our lives often reflect the opposite?

PRAYER

Take time to pray that you and your group would daily see that knowing, loving, and enjoying God is the great news of the gospel.

The Gospel Provides Salvation Through Faith Alone

Read the following scriptures: **Galatians 1:6-10; Galatians 3:1-6; Romans 3:21-22**

In Galatians 1:6 Paul says he was “astonished” that the Christians in Galatia were so quickly turning from the gospel that had been preached. What was so particularly “astonishing” about what the church in Galatia had done? How had they so turned from the gospel so as to cause Paul in verse 8 to say “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed.” Accursed? What on Earth, Paul?

It was this: The Christians in Galatia had been told (and had believed) that faith in Jesus Christ alone was not sufficient and that they should adopt certain Jewish practices.

Here is why Paul felt this was worthy of amazement and accursedness: Having originally been told by Paul of the gospel of grace by faith, the Galatians had taken a step back towards life under the law. They presumably still held faith to be very important but they now believe it was not 100% sufficient for justification, perhaps they thought it was 99% sufficient and these Jewish customs would be the extra 1% needed. This leads Paul to ask: “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?” (Gal. 3:3) By accepting this notion that they should adopt certain Jewish practices to effectuate their righteous standing before God they were in essence stating (by their actions) that their faith in sacrificial work of Christ was insufficient. THAT is what Paul finds so amazing and worthy of accursedness.

The phrase “righteousness by faith alone” advocates that the sole basis by which we are declared righteous is the sacrifice of Christ and the resulting redemption found in him appropriated by faith.

Consider the opposite position: the moment you add a single “extra” thing to the gospel: whether circumcision, or the ten commandments, or tithing, or never missing a church service in 20 years. What you have done is say “I have done something worthy of merit” and therefore “I am a good person”. No...no...no!

Inside the completed work of Christ, appropriated by faith, you and I are declared righteous...period.

A part from the completed work of Christ you and I are condemned and deserve death...period.

There is no in between. There is no measure of degrees. That is why Paul says in Galatians 5:3-4 “I testify again to every man who accepts circumcision...” [i.e. one small portion of the law] “...that he is obligated to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ, you would who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace.” These are terrifying words. He is saying that if you believe that keeping a single portion of the law makes you righteous or somehow adds to your righteousness then you have in effect rejected the grace of Jesus’s perfect and fully sufficient sacrifice, for you have believed that it is up to you to do something to supplement or fill in the gaps of righteousness that the work of Christ somehow missed. The reason Paul makes such a big deal out of this issue is this: When we try to add to the doctrine of “righteousness by faith alone” we are in essence saying two things: (1) I don’t think Christ’s work is enough to make ME righteous and (2) maybe I can do something to fix that. Both very dangerous and unbiblical notions.

Rather, our great hope and the rock on which we must stand is that Christ made a way through faith wholly apart from the law: “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it – the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.” Romans 3:21-25.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1) *What did you observe from reading the above scriptures?*

- 2) *What does the phrase “righteousness by faith alone” mean?*

3) *In your own words, why was Paul so passionate in the letter to the Galatians about their incorrect thinking?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. *Have you ever done something you perceived to be good and thought “God loves me more right now because of that”?*
2. *Conversely, have you ever sinned and afterward thought “God loves me less right now because of that”?*
3. *How does the doctrine of “justification by faith alone” guard us against both such works-based lines of thought?*
4. *If works do not save us what then is their proper role in the life of a Christian?*
5. *What in your life demonstrates that you believe this to be true? What in your life demonstrates that you do not believe this to be true?*

PRAYER

Pray that we would believe wholeheartedly that salvation comes solely from believing and trusting in Jesus’ work on the cross.

The Gospel Provides Salvation by Grace Alone

Read the following scriptures: **Romans 3:10-12** and **Ephesians 2:1-5**

Let's start at the beginning: there are different uses of the term "grace" but the commonly understood meaning when speaking of grace from God to men is "unmerited favor". I think we all understand why our salvation is "favor", but I think we very often do not fully comprehend the "unmerited" part. Because we do not fully understand the extent to which we do not deserve God's favor, we often are at risk of sliding into the false belief that some piece (however small) of our salvation is due to our ability, intellect, or willpower.

Man's depravity, as a result of the fall, is absolute. Consider the following descriptions of unregenerate man (i.e. man in his natural state):

- *Man is born spiritually dead: "The wicked are estranged from the womb; they go astray from birth, speaking lies," (Ps. 58:3) & "Behold I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Ps. 51:5).*
- *For the duration of our lives, we are "by nature children of wrath" (Eph. 2:3) and "following the prince of the power of the air" (Eph. 2:2).*

So total is the corruption of man that if left to himself he would never seek God, for natural man loves the darkness and would therefore never approach the light:

- *"No one is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God." (Rom. 3:10-11)*
- *"And this is judgement: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil." (John 3:19)*

THIS. *This is what we were, so dead in our sins, so delighted with darkness, with minds so enthralled by sin that we would never seek after God. THIS was our state, and all we deserved was for the judgement to fall. We stood condemned, on death row, and waiting for our execution date.*

BUT. – “But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved.” (Ephesians 2:4-5).

Some people struggle with the thought that their old dead man had to have done something to set that old dead man apart from all of the other unregenerate people dead in their sins. Because if not, and God breathed life into them in order to ascertain and appropriate by faith the truth of the Gospel why did God not do the same for others? Let me ask you this: “Why did God choose Israel?” Theirs was not a particularly virtuous history. Their history is full of idol worship, of murdering prophets, of rebelling against God. God was not surprised by this. He knew that they were a fallen people just like every other nation. Why then did God make such tremendous promises to them and not the Amorites or another tribe?

“Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.” (Deut. 9:5-7). He showed favor not because the Israelites were deserving of favor but in order to keep his Word (i.e. to maintain the honor and glory of his name). Likewise, today, we are shown the grace of God NOT because we deserve any of it, but in order to keep his Word and bring glory to his name. One could then ask why did he choose Abraham?

The bottom line is this “God is in the heavens, he does all that he pleases” (Ps. 115:3) and God says of himself “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:8-9) and “...I am God and there is no other; I am God and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying ‘My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose.’” (Isaiah 46:9-10).

Therefore, God can bluntly say “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” Thus we are robbed of the ability to ever say in the face of blessing “I earned that” or “I deserve this” all you can say is “Thank you God what amazing grace!”

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *What did you observe from reading the above scriptures?*
2. *What does it mean to be “dead in our trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2)? Obviously we are not physically dead, so why is this terminology used?*
3. *Ephesians 2:8-9 says “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing.” Does the fact that your salvation has nothing to do with “your own doing” make you uncomfortable?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. *What does it mean that we are saved by grace alone?*
2. *Ephesians 2:8-9 says “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing.” Does the fact that your salvation has nothing to do with “your own doing” make you uncomfortable?*
3. *Most people are used to earning their merit through studying in school or working hard at their job. Why are people more comfortable with earning merit, and why doesn't it work in salvation?*

PRAYER

Pray that we would understand and believe that we are saved by unmerited favor from God.

The Gospel Provides Salvation Through Christ Alone

Read the following scripture: **Acts 4:8-12**

“This man has minutes left to live, and there’s only one thing that can cure his disease.”

“What is it, doctor? I’ll do whatever I can to find it.”

“It’s extract from an extremely rare flower that can only be found in the mountains of Zimbabwe.”

“Oh. . . well I have some peanut butter. That should work right?”

This response is ridiculous. It is something you might see in a slapstick comedy, but this sort of irrational thinking about salvation is rampant in the world, even among professing Christians. The gospel of the Bible very clearly states that Jesus Christ is the only one who can cure our disease of sin, but a desire to claim other things as another means of salvation is quick to seep into our thoughts. These other things, though, are powerless to save us (just as peanut butter had zero power to save the dying man in the analogy). We have defamed God’s name in our sin, and the only thing He allows to make recompense for our sin and restore glory to his name is the death of His Son. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).”

When people claim there are many ways to God, they have a small view of sin, thinking their own state of sin or other’s sin state is not as bad as the Bible says it is. They think that a loving God would allow as many people into his Kingdom as possible. The problem with that view is that the God of the Universe does not turn a blind eye to the sin that strips him of glory. He will not allow unholiness caused by sin to enter his presence and de-glorify him. It seems nice on the surface to claim other religions and other pathways as sufficient because that means God allows more people into his kingdom, but such a claim makes a mockery of Jesus’ death for us. If I claim that my own good deeds can save me or that Buddha can save a Buddhist, I’m essentially saying, “Thanks, Jesus, for what you did there, but you dying wasn’t all that necessary. Sin is not as bad as

you say it is, and there are plenty of other less costly solutions to the sin problem that I could have gone with.” Jesus Christ is the only one able to be an all-sufficient Savior, the only who offers a big enough solution to this enormous problem. Neither Buddha nor Muhammed nor any other religious leader died for anyone’s sins in order to satisfy God the Father. They only provided a set of teachings or beliefs to live by. Even if they did claim to die for someone’s sins, their death would not have satisfied God because God could only be satisfied by the perfect death with the perfect amount of suffering from the perfectly obedient person who absorbed the fullest extent of God’s wrath. No one else and nothing else offers a sufficient solution. Salvation is in the person of Jesus Christ alone.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. What did you observe from reading Acts 4:1-12?*
- 2. Why does Peter specifically claim “the name” of Jesus as the only thing given to save us rather than Christian values, a Christian worldview, or the teachings of Jesus?*
- 3. How is your situation in this world different than Peter’s?*
- 4. What other things have you believed or do you have the tendency to believe can save you?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1. Aside from Jesus, what else have you believed can save you? Why are those beliefs false?*

2. *Why do people have the tendency to believe there are many ways to God? What is wrong with this view?*

3. *How do you think God feels towards the worldview that there are many ways to Him outside of Jesus?*

4. *How can you communicate to someone in love that there is no salvation apart from Jesus?*

PRAYER

Pray that we would worship Jesus for being the only one able to be an all-sufficient savior.

The Gospel Restores

Read the following scriptures: **Gen 3:17-19; Revelation 21:1-5**

Like a super-volcano of death, sin erupted onto the scene through our first parents, obliterating everything in its path. Nothing on earth was left untouched and unscathed by its wake of destruction. It destroyed and continues to destroy all of man's relationships. It destroyed man's relationship with God by man saying, "I refuse to listen to you. I completely reject you and your sovereignty, and I'm going to make my own way." It destroyed man's relationship with man because God allows us to persist in our state of depravity where our thoughts and intentions toward our fellow man are only selfish and evil instead of generous and loving. It even destroyed our relationship with creation, as the problem of sin also introduced weeds, disease, famine, and death.

But God is rich in mercy! He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He offered grace from the beginning. Ever since that moment in the garden, God has been unraveling his plan of restoration through the gospel of Jesus Christ. He set aside a group of people who would be his people (the Israelites), and it was through them that the people of the world would be blessed. He provided them with the Law as a guide to return them to a state of dependence on him and obedience to him in order to please Him. He gave them priests and judges and kings and prophets to lead them and show them the way of righteousness. He passed over their former sins, looking to the crucial death of His son as the fundamental lynch pin to his plan of restoration. And it is through Jesus' death and resurrection that those who trust in him are regenerated and given a new heart and given His Spirit so that they can relate to God as originally intended. And it is from that regenerated heart and restored relationship with God that Christians desire to restore all other relationships. Their heart becomes his heart as they look to become a part of his restoring work in the world. They look to mend relationships. They are enabled and compelled to forgive because He has forgiven them. They desire to be good stewards of his creation, working and cultivating it to produce fruit and provide jobs and build up communities.

And when Jesus returns he will make all things new, restoring all creation to its state of former glory. He will provide a New Heaven and a New Earth and give his children glorified bodies, where there will be no more suffering, no more brokenness, no more disease, no more decay, and no more death. There is no other gospel message that offers the perfect and complete restoration of all things but the gospel of Jesus Christ.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

1. *What did you observe from reading the above scriptures?*
2. *God tells Adam “cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you”. This is where man’s relationship with creation was broken, where working the land and subsequently all work became difficult and burdensome. What kind of “thorns and thistles” (i.e. obstacles and difficulties) do you encounter in your vocation?*
3. *How does the message of the gospel help you to endure these “thorns and thistles”?*
4. *How does the message of the gospel mend your relationships with others?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. *How does the gospel restore all things?*
2. *Do you believe that you are a part of God’s restorative work on this Earth? If so, how? If not, why not?*

3. *Where have you seen gospel restoration in your own life?*

4. *Where do you need gospel restoration of relationships with others in your own life?*

5. *Where do you need gospel restoration of your relationship with God?*

PRAYER

Pray for gospel restoration in specific areas of your lives where there is brokenness.

The Gospel Is Good News

Read the following scriptures: **1 Corinthians 15:1-22; Isaiah 61; Revelation 21:1-4**

What happens inside of you when you hear good news?

That joyful feeling in your chest when you hear really good news – where does it come from?

What makes good news good?

The central message of the Bible is the story of God reconciling sinful and broken people to Himself through Jesus (2 Corinthians 15:17-19). You don't have to look very long or very far to discover again that we live in a world where almost nothing is as it should be. You know this – we bear witness to sin and its effects every day. And it isn't just in the world around us that we see it; we see it in ourselves as well.

Every major religion and any thoughtful worldview has an explanation for why pain and suffering exist. They all seek to provide a reason for why people hurt other people. Some worldviews simply resign themselves to the fact that this is just how the world is and offer some sort of vague hope that mankind will eventually grow out of this state through education and learning to tolerate others and somehow coming to care for one another. Most religions offer some sort of instruction for how we ought to treat one another and how we can pay for the wrongs we have done, with the general promise of some better future for ourselves in a life to come if our good deeds turned out to be good enough.

The Bible comes with its own explanation for sin and suffering, and it certainly contains instructions regarding our conduct and behavior. The Bible arrives at a gloomy conclusion – that we are hopeless in our sin and completely incapable of living a perfect life that measures up to God's standards. If that's where the Bible ended, all of life would be futile tragedy. The best we could hope for would be to find some small pleasures in life and enjoy those things as much and as often as possible before we die.

Fortunately, the Bible does not end with meaninglessness and sadness. It finds its climax in the coming of Jesus, who died and rose again to pay the penalty of our sin, so that we might be forgiven and reconciled to God.

We had nothing to do with anything that Jesus did. He secures our forgiveness. He adopts us as His beloved children. He gives us His Spirit.

This means that the Gospel is news. The Greek word for gospel, euaggelion (yoo-ang-ghel'-ee-on) literally means good news. It's not a good system or a good project. It's not a good worldview or a good philosophy. It's not just a better set of instructions than other religions or worldviews, because it's not instructions at all. It's simply news.

In a broken world, full of people who know life isn't as it is supposed to be, Jesus offers good news. He is the one who forgives sins (Mark 2:10). He is the one who says, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). There is nothing we can add to His work, for He has already proclaimed, "It is finished!" (John 19:30)

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. What do you see in the Bible verses? Write down what stands out to you.*
- 2. How big is the good news? Though Paul sums it up in two verses in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, it expands far beyond that. Think about all of the areas of life that the Gospel touches. Spend some time reflecting on this.*
- 3. Why is it significant that the message of the cross is primarily news, and not something else?*
- 4. If the Gospel is news, where do our works fit in?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

- 1. A good story deserves to be told well. Practice telling the good news to someone in your group tonight.*
- 2. How big is the good news? Discuss all the areas of life that the Gospel touches.*
- 3. How does seeing the Gospel as news impact the way you share it with others?*
- 4. What steps can you take to share the good news with someone?*

PRAYER

Pray for someone you know to see the goodness in the gospel and trust in Jesus to save them.

The Gospel Must Be Preached

Read the following scriptures: **Romans 10:5-17; Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 1:16**

A quote often attributed to St Francis of Assisi reads – “Preach the gospel, and if necessary, use words.” It’s a beautiful saying, but it is difficult to imagine how one might accomplish that task. How do you describe the love and righteousness of our Creator without words? How do you communicate Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection with actions alone? And how can you explain our participation in salvation by grace through faith without opening your mouth?*

In the Bible, we find that Paul has a different take on preaching the Gospel.

“How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!”

-Romans 10:14-15

*Jesus is the true center of the Gospel, and there cannot be a Gospel apart from Him. A partial gospel that does not include Jesus is no gospel at all, because it isn’t good news without His finished work on the cross (as we explored last week). A gospel that leaves out God’s righteousness or our sin or a call to follow Christ is an incomplete gospel. All of those things need to be spoken with our words. Not only that, but we are called to go to where people have not heard.***

It is worth taking a brief moment to pause and reflect again on the sentiment expressed in the opening quote. It is true that unless our lives reflect Christ and His Gospel, our words will mean very little. A lost and dying world has no use for hypocrites, who say one thing with their words and a very different thing with their lives. But our neighbors will also not benefit from seeing us live out righteous lives without also hearing about the One who gives sight to the blind and raises the dead to life.

There is no good news without proclaiming the Gospel. There is no better way to communicate the Gospel than through the word of God. This is how we avoid

the pitfall of adding anything to the Gospel. During the Reformation, Christians seeking a more faithful Christianity called for a return to the authority of the Bible above all other things. They put their confidence in Scripture alone - Sola Scriptura. The reformers wanted to do away with the excess baggage of Catholic Church traditions, similar to the way Jesus did away with the excess commands placed on the Jewish people by the religious scholars in his time (Matthew 23). We run the same risk today – it is hard to not add to the Gospel, especially when we have a tendency to appreciate our own traditions and find them quite valuable and helpful.

“The whole counsel of God, concerning all things necessary for his own glory, man’s salvation, faith, and life, is either expressly set down in scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men.” – Westminster Confession of Faith

When you preach the Gospel, remember it is good news. Remind yourself that your neighbor needs to hear it. Share the Gospel with faithfulness, neither adding anything to it, nor leaving anything out. Remember who sends you – it is Jesus who has already done the work. You are simply a witness (Acts 1:8). Share the news with joy!

**There is no record of St. Francis ever saying this, by the way. It seems to have been made up sometime in the 1990s. The 90s were a weird time for all of us.*

***I think it is also worth saying here that we don’t always get the opportunity to share the entirety of the Gospel message with every person every single time, and that’s ok. We are often just one of many people that God uses to draw a person to Himself.*

PERSONAL REFLECTION

- 1. What do you notice about the provided texts?*

- 2. What does the doctrine of “Sola Scriptura” (by scripture alone) mean in your own words?*

3. *How does the doctrine of Sola Scriptura affect how we view Romans 10:5-17?*

4. *Is it your job to tell others the good news?*

5. *Who is one person in your life that needs to hear you share the good news?*

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. *What exactly do the words sola scriptura mean? Is Scripture the only way to know about God? What do we do when the Bible doesn't specifically address the questions we have?*

2. *How does our belief in Sola Scriptura affect how we view Romans 10:5-17?*

3. *How much Scripture should we incorporate when we share the Gospel? What's too little? Too much? How do we use the Bible well when sharing the Gospel?*

4. *What traditions do we have a tendency to elevate higher than we ought?*

PRAYER

Pray that we would be given new Holy Spirit conviction and joy to be obedient to the Scriptures and preach the gospel.