

6 – The Gospel: What is the Gospel?

Relational Leadership Training

Developing Disciple Making Leaders

Session Six

With Others – *During* Group Instruction

Step 1 (In Triads) – Pray together, asking God to graciously provide His direction, protection, and presence during the group instruction time.

Step 2 (In Triads) – Share experiences, outcomes, and “Aha Moments” from the personal application activities from the last sessions.

Step 3 (In Triads) – Read the article “What is the Gospel?”

As you read:

- A. Place the letter “N” in the margin near information that is “New” to you.
- B. Underline what strikes you as very significant.
- C. Circle terms or ideas you might need to have clarified.
- D. Write down any questions you might have in your Learning Journal for this session.

Step 4 (In Triads) – Take some time to think about the following aspects of the article you read for this session.

- A. Which of the three frameworks used to outline the message of the gospel is least familiar to you? In what ways did it provide you with better understanding into the gospel?
- B. Take 20 minutes to write out an answer that you could give if someone asked you, “What is the gospel?”

Step 5 (With the Whole Group) – Have one person from each table share how they would share the Gospel in 5 minutes of less to a non-believer.

Step 6 (On Your Own) – Summarize what you have learned from this training session (so far). Record your personal summary in your Learning Journal.

What is the Gospel?

The Term “Gospel”

The term “gospel” is used frequently by Christians, but often inaccurately. We will first define what the “gospel” is and then what it is not.

What the Gospel Is

The word “gospel” means “good news.” It is the announcement of what God has done, specifically in and through Jesus Christ. The gospel is the announcement or declaration of historical events that happened according to the plan of God. As Peter preached on the day of Pentecost:

- *Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through him in your midst, as you yourselves know—this 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 (Acts 2:22-24).*

The gospel message includes both the proclamation of what Christ has done and a call for people to respond to that proclamation. Those who heard Peter’s proclamation (above) were required to respond.

- *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. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:37-39).*

What the Gospel Is NOT

To help understand what the gospel is, we need to be clear what it is NOT. We will see that the gospel is not simply a concept, something people do, or just a ticket into heaven.

The Gospel Is NOT Simply a Concept

The gospel is not simply a philosophical concept that has been made up by men to explain a particular point of view. It is the announcement of actual events that took place in a specific time and place. Therefore it is historical.

- *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Corinthians 15:3-8).*

- *Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ (Colossians 2:6-8).*

The Gospel Is NOT Something People “Do”

Sometimes people speak of the gospel as if it is something they can do themselves. They say things such as, “We need to live the gospel,” or, “We need to be the gospel to our neighbors,” or, “We should gospel our communities.” These types of phrases may come from either careless speaking or from a misunderstanding of what the gospel is.

Because the gospel is an announcement of what God has done in and through Christ on our behalf, we cannot “do” the gospel as if our actions are the good news of redemption for others. What we can “do” is live in a way that reflects or demonstrates the truths of the gospel (see Galatians 2:14; Ephesians 2:10).

The Gospel is NOT Just a Ticket to Get into Heaven

Sometimes the gospel is presented to be the ticket we need to believe in order to get into heaven. Some people teach that the gospel message is to be believed “in order to be saved,” but after that a person who believes needs to work hard in order to keep God happy. (Although they might not say this directly, this is often taught.) Or, some may teach that after believing in the gospel message, a person is “saved” and doesn’t have to worry about how he lives his life because he is going to heaven no matter what. Both views are wrong.

The gospel message must be believed for one to be saved, AND it must influence, impact, and direct every aspect of a Christian’s life.

- *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20).*
- *Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life (Romans 6:3-4).*

The Gospel in the Whole Bible

The gospel is the storyline (theme, main point) of the whole Bible. Jesus himself directly affirms that all the Bible points to himself.

- *And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he [Jesus] interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself* (Luke 24:27).
- *Then he [Jesus] said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled”* (Luke 24:44).
- *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life* (John 5:39-40).

The Old Testament has a “gospel message” of divine deliverance and points to the gospel in Jesus Christ. For example:

- *For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”* (Romans 4:3; see also Genesis 15:6).
- *I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery* (Exodus 20:2; the opening of the Ten Commandments).
- *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).

(NOTE – For more insight in how the Old Testament demonstrates the salvation of God in Christ, see article “History of Salvation in the Old Testament” in the back of the ESV Study Bible. This is a brief summary that goes through every book of the Old Testament, listing specific references from almost every chapter of each book of the Old Testament, with related New Testament passages, that point to salvation through Jesus Christ. You can also find this information online at www.esvstudybible.org.)

Gospel Frameworks (Message)

Although there is one gospel message, that message may be told using different descriptive frameworks. These frameworks are organizational structures that assist us to remember and communicate key aspects of the gospel message. Three of these frameworks are:

- The message of God’s creation and redemption of the world. This way provides the overarching work of God over the course of all human history and can be diagramed this way:
God > Creation > Fall > Redemption > Restoration
- The message of Jesus’ life and redemptive work. This way focuses on the life and work of Jesus, which is itself the core of the gospel message. This can be diagramed this way:
Birth > Life > Death > Resurrection > Ascension > Return

- The message of salvation to individuals. This is the good news directed to people to which they need to respond in faith and repentance. This can be diagrammed this way:

God > Sin > Christ > Faith

Now we are going to explain each of these three frameworks.

The Message of God’s Creation and Redemption of the World

The gospel message may be articulated as a description of God’s creation and redemption over the course of world history. In this way, it can be diagrammed like this:

God > Creation > Fall > Redemption > Restoration

God

The gospel message in this form begins with God himself. He is the eternal being who is completely holy, separated from sin, and all-powerful in exercising his sovereign will in all things.

- *Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, majestic in holiness, awesome in glorious deeds, doing wonders?* (Exodus 15:11).
- *Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end* (Psalm 102:25-27).

As we have already seen in this training, this triune God had at least two “conversations” in eternity past, the “conversation about creation” and the “conversation about redemption.” In these conversations, the persons of the Trinity decided to both create the world (physical and spiritual) and, knowing that sin would enter the world, to “save” the world they created.

- *Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”* (Genesis 1:26).
- *...even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him* (Ephesians 1:4).
- *...who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of his own purpose and grace, which he gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began* (2 Timothy 1:9).

The significance of these conversations is that God not only premeditatedly created the world with human beings, he also knew sin would enter creation and He would have to deal with it.

Creation

God chose to create the world, physical and spiritual. He did so not because of some lack or deficiency on his part, but to ultimately display his own glory.

- *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).*
- *For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Colossians 1:12-17).*

Fall

Everything changed when man (Adam) sinned, which is theologically referred to as “the fall” of man. With Adam’s disobedience, alienation and corruption and death became a reality of man’s existence. Sin became the pervasive problem of humanity. Sin not only impacts humanity but the whole created world as well (Romans 8:18-22).

- *He [Serpent] said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’”...So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden (Genesis 3:1, 6-7).*
- *Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man [Adam], and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned (Romans 5:12).*

Redemption

God does not abandon humanity in their sin. God himself proactively deals with sin. God identifies with humanity through the incarnation of the Son and absorbs the judgment of sin on the cross so that people can be set free from the penalty, power, and (ultimately) the presence of sin.

- *For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17).*
- *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (Romans 3:23-24).*

Restoration

The good news does not end with God dealing with man’s sin. God will also someday return creation to a condition not containing the corruption of sin. This is understood to be the coming of the “new heavens” and the “new earth” (Revelation 21).

- *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells (2 Peter 3:13).*

- *For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God (Romans 8:19-21).*

The Message of Jesus' Life and Redemptive Work

The life and death of Jesus Christ are the focus of God's kingdom and redemptive history.

Birth > Life > Death > Resurrection > Ascension > Return

- *The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (Mark 1:1).*
- *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:14-15).*

Jesus' Birth

God himself took on the form of a human in the person of Jesus Christ. This is theologically referred to as "the incarnation." Jesus was fully God and fully human at the same time.

- *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us) (Matthew 1:22-23).*
- *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14).*
- *...Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men (Philippians 2:6-7).*
- *...but in these last days he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power (Hebrews 1:2-3).*

Jesus' Life

Jesus lived a perfectly righteous life, in complete submission to the Father's will. He faced the enemies of death, the world, the flesh, and the devil, and overcame them all.

- *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).*
- *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15).*

- *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1).*
- *He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly (1 Peter 2:22-23).*

Jesus' Death

Ironically, a key event in Jesus' life was his death. Jesus was put to death by sinful men and yet, in his death, he satisfied the judgment of God against sinful men. His death was not a martyrdom resulting from events getting out of control, but was according to the plan of God.

- *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Matthew 16:21).*
- *...this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men (Acts 2:23).*
- *And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8).*
- *...but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*
- *For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).*
- *In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins (1 John 4:10).*

Jesus' Resurrection

Death was not the end of Jesus. He rose from death in victory over sin and evil. His physical body left the grave. Again, this was not a reaction by God to events gone badly, but was a part of his redemptive plan.

- *For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received:...that he [Christ] was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).*
- *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised (Matthew 16:21).*
- *For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This charge I have received from my Father (John 10:17-18).*
- *God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it (Acts 2:24).*

- *...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1:20-21).*
- *Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).*

Jesus' Ascension

Although Jesus rose from the dead, he is not physically present on earth because he ascended (went up) into heaven.

- *While he [Jesus] blessed them, he parted from them and was carried up into heaven (Luke 24:51).*
- *“And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed” (John 17:5).*
- *This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33).*
- *...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come (Ephesians 1:20-21).*

The Message of Salvation to Individuals

The gospel is a message that is to be communicated to, received by, and believed by individuals. This is the good news directed to people to which they need to respond in faith and repentance.

God > Sin > Christ > Faith

- *Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him (John 3:36).*

God

There is one God, who is my creator and worthy to be honored and worshiped by me.

- *And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him (Hebrews 11:6).*
- *For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened (Romans 1:20-21).*
- *The fool says in his heart, “There is no God” (Psalm 14:1).*

Sin

I am a born sinner who sins (i.e. a sinner by nature), separated from God, deserving God's righteous judgment, in bondage to the desires of the flesh, the devil, and the world.

- *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).*
- *For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23).*
- *And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:1-3).*

Christ

Jesus Christ provides the only way to deal with my sin, thereby being reconciled to God and overcoming the power and consequences of sin in my life.

- *We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:20-21).*
- *...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 3:23-25).*
- *But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:4-7).*
- *He 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).*
- *For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time (1 Timothy 2:5-6).*

Faith

Faith is my response to God's love, Christ's provision (death for my sin), and the Holy Spirit's working of regeneration in my life.

- *...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 3:23-25).

- *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).*
- *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God (John 3:16-18).*

The Gospel Message Must Be Proclaimed

The gospel message is the announcement of the person and work of Jesus Christ that must be communicated to others, primarily through words spoken or written.

- *And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned (Mark 16:15-16).*
- *...and {Jesus} said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, [47] and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. [48] You are witnesses of these things. [49] And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:46-49)*
- *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)*
- *For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, bestowing his riches on all who call on him. For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Romans 10:12-15).*
- *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; [19] 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. [20] Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:18-21).*

Our Response to the Gospel – Repentance and Faith

The only proper personal response to the gospel is repentance and faith.

- *Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel” (Mark 1:14-15).*
- *...and [Jesus] said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).*
- *You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:18-21).*

Repentance

We all must respond to the gospel in repentance.

Repentance Is NOT

- Beating ourselves in frustration over our sin.
- Cleaning up our act or getting “better” on our own. It is not doing more, being better, or trying harder.
- Punishing ourselves for our sins. We deserve the punishment but we cannot pay the price for our own sins apart from an eternal punishment (hell).
- Sadness, sorrow, or depression over our sin or its consequences.

Repentance Is

- Changing my mind and will; turning and going in the opposite direction.
- Confessing my wrong actions, thoughts, intentions, including “sins of commission” (wrong things I do), “sins of omission” (right things I don’t do), and “sins of substitution” (valuing other things more than God).
- Acknowledging my sinful nature of rebellion, pride, and selfishness.
- Renouncing the idols my heart values more than God.

Scripture

- *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).*

- *...and [Jesus] said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sin should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem (Luke 24:46-47).*
- *And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).*
- *“...delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles—to whom I am sending you to open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me” (Acts 26:17-18).*
- *You shall have no other gods before [besides] me (Exodus 20:3).*
- *When Jesus heard this, he said to him, “One thing you still lack. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.” But when he heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich (Luke 18:22-23). (Note: The man refused to “repent” of his idol of wealth.)*
- *And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, “Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.” And Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house” (Luke 19:8-9). (Note: The man did “repent” from his idol of wealth.)*

Faith

We all must respond to the gospel in trusting faith.

Faith Is NOT

- Just the belief in the existence of God. ○ *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! (James 2:19). (How many demons are saved and going to heaven? None, even though they believe in God.)*
- Just the belief that facts or statements in the Bible are true. ○ *You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life (John 5:39-40).*

Faith Is

- Personal “confident trust” in the person and work of Jesus Christ.
- Reliance on the sufficiency of the work of Christ.
- Acknowledging the sovereign Lordship (authority, rule) of Jesus Christ.
- Setting your affections on Christ.

Scripture

- For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- ...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 3:23-24).
- ...if 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 (Romans 10:9-10).
- 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).
- According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time (1 Peter 1:3-5).

Repentance AND Faith Are Always Together

When it comes to responding to the gospel repentance and faith always go together. To have forgiveness, a person must not only repent of sin, but must also express faith (confident trust) in the work of Christ. Repentance without faith is ultimately the pursuit of good works to please God. A person must not only have saving faith in the work of Christ, but must also demonstrate that faith through repentance from sin. To use an analogy, repentance and faith are “two sides to the same coin.”

Repentance AND Faith are for Both Conversion AND Sanctification

Repentance and faith are required for both conversion (responding to the gospel to be saved) and for sanctification (growing in our personal holiness and maturity). Many people understand repentance and faith to be a part of the conversion “process,” but they often don't understand that both are integral parts of spiritual growth. When a person becomes aware of their sinful actions and attitudes, their proper response is to repent of that sin and trust in the forgiveness provided in Christ.

- *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us (1 John 1:8-10).*
- *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works (Titus 2:11-14).*