

The Story of the Bible is Good News

....the good news of salvation in Jesus

Your Notes

Why the gospel is GOOD NEWS

- “The gospel” is a term Christians often use, but what does that mean?
- “Good news” is the dictionary definition of the word “gospel”.
- The next logical question of course is: “Good news about what?”
- The good news is that God didn’t sit up in heaven, watching humanity make a mess of their lives and their world and do nothing.
- He did something about it with extraordinarily important implications for people both now and for eternity. John 3:16 summarizes it in this way *“God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life.”*
- To explore this good news in more detail, let’s look at why we need God’s good news and how to respond to it.

Without God, making a mess of our lives is pretty much what we do.

- It doesn’t take unique insight to know our world is a mess right now. For a few minutes, let’s look away from the world.
- Let’s look at ourselves.
- We might look OK on the outside, we may have escaped some of the worse tragedies, but inside, in our quiet moments, when we’re alone, we suspect we’re missing out on something we can’t define, that we don’t measure up, that something is wrong.
- I believe we have this ache inside because we know—

This world and all the chaos in it will someday end, but we won’t

- Inside, in our heart of hearts, I believe we know we were created to live forever. Also, I think *we know* there is a place where all dreams can come true, where we will find forever, perfect love, where we will live for the purpose we were created for.
- Somehow, I think we also know we can’t ever get there on our own.
- But we try—we try to build a heaven on this earth with money and stuff and toys—but the toys grow old, and the dreams sometimes turn to nightmares. We try to make ourselves look perfect thinking that will create a perfect relationship, but satisfying romantic relationships or friendships, let alone perfect ones, are hard to find.
- We also know at the end of this life, if we face death without God, eternity is frightening.

What do we do then?

- We might try to reach up to God, but just being a good person and trying to do all the right things never feels like enough.
- Simply being nice sometimes and feeling proud of ourselves when we avoid big sins always feels like it falls short—because it does.
- The problem is that we can’t ever do enough good because the problem isn’t primarily with what we do on the outside.
- *The big problem is inside us—it’s our inner core that wants our way and not God’s.*

That is the core definition of sin

- Sin at its core is wanting our way instead of God’s way.

- It's saying no to God and yes to me. Adam and Eve did that in a perfect paradise and we keep doing it.
- Every sin, from a selfish lie to save our reputation, to theft or murder to get what we want, to a relationship we know isn't right—all results from doing it my way and not God's.
- No matter how hard we try to do better, the problem is we were born with this desire to go our way, and as we grow, we get constant messages of "do your own thing," "be the master of your destiny," and similar platitudes that reinforce our selfish innate desires.
- The sayings sound great but following them has gotten us individuals and our world into all kinds of messes.

What does sin really mean?

- We often limit the idea of sin to things like lies, murder, cheating on your partner, and though those actions do qualify as sins, they come from the same heart in all of us that thinks we know better than our Creator what is best for us and so we do what we want to do.
- Again, that going our way (blatant moral failure or not) is what defines sin, and we can't make this bent towards sin inside go away on our own. Most of us can barely avoid chocolate for 24 hours or exercise regularly, or any other resolution we make, let alone stop sinning.
- It gets even worse because God takes sin, this attitude of preferring our way over God's way and living without Him very personally. God does not force his presence or His will on people. If we want to go our way, God allows us to do that. What many people don't realize or want to think about is that this going our way not only separates people from God in this life, but if left unchecked, it will for all eternity.

The hard part

- There is one part of the gospel story that is very hard to understand, and I can't pretend to explain why, but God tells us that sin, that this deciding to go our way isn't something He will ignore forever. When we've lived for ourselves, only doing what we want, paying no attention to him, when we die, and face Him, He can't say, "Oh, it's all right. . . I know you had a hard time on earth, or a dysfunctional family, or whatever other excuses we might use, let's just forget it all the years you ignored me, and how I wanted you to live—welcome to heaven anyway."
- He isn't going to do that.
- When you think about it, it only makes sense. If you have actively ignored someone who said they loved you, did things you knew they didn't want you to do, turned your back on them, perhaps even mocked them, like we do with God, would you expect them to welcome you into their home, if you had nowhere else to go?
- Of course not—we wouldn't want a person who hated us around.

It's equally self-deceiving

- For people to think they can live however they want, with no recognition of God as God and expect when they die to be welcomed into heaven, which is His home.
- Sometimes I wish God wasn't like that, but He is. Our turning away from God, even if our lives didn't include substantial moral failures, has consequences. When people say all during their earthly life, "My will be done." God says, OK. "For all eternity, you don't have to have anything to do with me."

- The consequences are pretty grim: on earth, a life never genuinely fulfilling, though it may be filled with lots of stuff. Unsatisfied longings, fears and frustrations.

And then you die.

- That isn't a joke or a punch line, but a reality facing us all. The pandemic has brought it much closer to our consciousness than is comfortable.
- But comfortable or not, death is a certainty we all face, perhaps sooner if we catch the virus, unexpectedly in an accident or heart attack, or quietly years from now as we quietly close our eyes surrounded by loving families.
- But sooner or later, death will come. The Bible describes existence after death without God as a place of never-ending regret and suffering. It's not a party with the other guys who raised hell together in life. In the real hell, you are utterly alone with regrets that can never be resolved.
- But it doesn't have to be like that.

That's what makes the gospel GOOD NEWS

- Here is where the good news starts. In our situation, where we can't do anything to save ourselves, where the future looks bleak without God, the good news in the Bible says that God loves us and didn't abandon humanity when we turned our backs on Him.
- Immediately after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden and went their way from God, God first stated their punishment, and then immediately said that He would provide a Savior to bear that punishment.

The Bible is all about the fulfillment of that promise.

- It sometimes seems (from a human perspective) that God takes an awfully long time to work things out, and the good news of the gospel is one of those things.
- The story of that outworking is the story of the Christian Bible—the Old Testament is about looking forward to the day that Jesus would come, and the preparation for it through the nation of Israel.
- The Old Testament taught humanity what God requires and tells the story of what happens when God's people don't follow his commands.
- Through all of it God did not abandon His people. He sent prophets to warn and encourage them and remind them of the coming Savior.
- New Testament tells the story of Jesus life, death, resurrection, and the start of the Christian church.

All the Bible stories at their core are about Jesus' death, resurrection, and return

- To understand all God did and why, the entire gospel story is one of the reasons that it's important to read your Bible.
- And not just pieces here and there, but...
- All the Bible in chronological order and why in Bible805 I've created schedules, podcasts, videos and lessons to help you through it. That is the only way you will get the complete story.
- But back to what this good news means to people personally

Because of the death of Jesus on the cross,

- The Bible tells us that all the sin of humanity past, present, and future was poured out on Jesus when he died on the cross and God the Father accepted that sacrifice.
- We can't save ourselves, but if we accept what Jesus did for us, for our sin, we can be forgiven.
- I don't understand why Jesus' death is what it took for our salvation and why it

is a free gift to us, but that's what the Bible tells us.

It is hard to understand

- How accepting what Jesus did for us can make us right with God doesn't seem to make sense. Though it is good news, it is hard to comprehend.
- I'm not alone in thinking this—C.S. Lewis also said that to him the gospel does not make human sense and that that was one of the reasons he believed it was from God.
- He says humanity would never have come up with a system like that. He said humans want to take credit for everything; we want to be the authors of our salvation.
- But it doesn't work that way.

A summary of the good news

- We are born wanting to go our own way and from childhood on we do. God calls that sin, choosing our way instead of God's way.
- God required a penalty be paid for sin—that of a sinless sacrifice. It may not make sense why that it is; we may not like that calculation of our universe, but we don't make the rules.
- And we couldn't pay the price.
- Jesus, who personally never sinned, was willing to take on the horror of all the sins of humanity, past, present, and future, and to endure them for us.
- As someone said, "He lived the life we couldn't live and died the death we couldn't die."
- Think for a moment about a horrible sin, something that makes you sick to even consider. Imagine what it would be like if you were forced to bear the guilt and penalty of that sin multiplied a million times over throughout the history of humanity.
- That is what Jesus did for us and in the horror of it, God the Father with whom Jesus had unbroken fellowship from all eternity had to turn away.

How unfair! You'd respond, and that's true.

- No one deserves to pay for the sins of someone else. But that is what Jesus chose to do. He took our place on the cross and bore the penalty for our sin. It wasn't fair, but He did it because He loves us.
- I don't understand that either.
- And not only did He die for our sins, but He entrusted us with his message to share with others and to work with Him to share His love and redemptive purposes for this earth.
- Even more, He promises us an eternity with Him where we will truly live in the freedom, joy, and fulfillment we were created for.

The next move is up to us

- After the pain and hurt our sins caused Jesus; it's even more amazing that God doesn't force anything on us.
- He's given humanity free will, freedom to choose or reject this good news.
- It is our choice. There are several options for your response.

One, you can choose to reject it all.

- If so, that is your choice, but I would urge you to keep an open mind, to keep checking out the Christian faith.
- Know that Jesus is always there; always waiting; always welcoming if you take the smallest step towards Him.

Two, you feel you need more information.

- That is a great place to be in.

- To become a Christian is a solemn commitment. You need to understand what it means and what your obligations and responsibilities will be.
- Listen to the podcasts, look at the videos, read the blogs on Bible 805 about it.
- Go to a Bible-teaching church to learn more.
- Ask questions; God welcomes serious seekers.
- The best resource is the Bible.
- Check out my book, *START HERE, a plan for curious people to begin reading the Bible*—it's available on amazon.com and will help you understand the basics of the Christian faith.

Third, if you feel that you understand this message

- ***And that you would like Jesus to become the Forgiver and Leader of your life, you can ask Him to do that.***
- I'll explain how to do that in more detail in a minute, but before you do that, you need to carefully consider what you are doing.
- Becoming a Christian is not merely a fire-insurance policy to escape the possibility of hell and then where you go on living your life any way you want. When you ask Jesus to forgive your sins, you are doing business with the Creator of the universe. It is not a step to be taken lightly. The Bible says that He gave His life for you, and if you want His salvation, you must give your life back to Him.
- The Bible talks about becoming Jesus' disciple and the definition of a disciple is someone who wants to become like their master.

Becoming Jesus' disciple means *you* are no longer in charge.

- That is what it means to truly repent of your sins (remember sin is going your own way).
- As a Christian, God is now in control of your life, not you.
- You need to talk to your Savior daily in prayer. You need to read the Bible every day to find out how He wants you to live.
- You need to find a good church where you can become involved with other members of the family of God and where you can grow in your faith. You will want to get baptized in a church as a sign that you are now a follower of Jesus.
- You will make mistakes, you'll stumble and fall, but when that happens, you can ask forgiveness, get up, and go on.

If you become a follower, a disciple of Jesus

- Your life will not suddenly become easy, wealthy, and trouble-free.
- The TV preachers or religious authors who promise this are not telling the truth.
- The Bible (which is the only source of truth) tells us that Jesus promised, *"In this world, you will have troubles,"* but he also said, *"Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world!"*
- Life is seldom easy as a Christian, but as a Christian, you are now assured that your troubles have a purpose and that someday they will be over, and you are assured of heaven where there will be "no more pain, tears, or death."

If you are ready to commit your life to Jesus, either out loud, or in your heart, you can pray something like this:

Dear Jesus,

I confess that I am a sinner and that I have chosen to live my life apart from you, to do what I wanted above all else. I don't want to do that anymore. I believe that Jesus was God and that He came to earth, died on a cross, and rose from the dead to pay the penalty for my sin, my going my own way. I am now committing my life to you and asking you to be my Forgiver and Leader. Help me

to learn to pray, to read your Bible, to find a good church, and to follow through on my commitment to you by publicly acknowledging my decision in baptism. Thank you for loving me and coming into my life. Amen.

If you have made that decision, *Welcome to the family of God!*

- The Bible tells us that when someone becomes a Christian, they have passed from death to life and that the angels in heaven are rejoicing. Just think—right now angels are singing because of you!
- To help you get started in your Christian life, please tell a Christian friend, start reading your Bible, and attending a church that will help you grow in your Christian life.
- Bible805.com has many resources for you, please help yourself to all of them. They were created to help you come to know Jesus and grow as His disciple.
- As you do these things, and you learn to be more like Jesus, ***your life will become a “gospel”—a living message of eternal good news for everyone around you.***

DISCUSSION GUIDE for The Story of the Bible is Good News *...the good news of salvation in Jesus*

Brief Lesson Summary

The lesson explains the gospel as God's good news of salvation through Jesus Christ. It describes humanity's problem of sin as choosing our own way instead of God's, explains why we cannot save ourselves, and shows how Jesus' death and resurrection provide forgiveness and eternal life. It concludes by encouraging thoughtful response, lifelong discipleship, and growth in the Christian faith.

Ice-breaker Question

What is the best piece of good news you have ever received, and why did it matter so much to you?

Discussion Questions for a Group; Journal Questions for Individual Study

1. Why does the lesson define sin primarily as choosing our own way instead of God's? How does that deepen your understanding of sin?
2. What reasons does the lesson give for why people cannot save themselves through good works?
3. How does the entire story of the Bible point to Jesus and God's plan of salvation?
4. What does Jesus' death on the cross accomplish according to this lesson, and why is it called 'good news'?

5. What does it really mean to accept Jesus as Forgiver and Leader instead of simply seeking 'fire insurance' from judgment?
6. What practical steps does the lesson recommend for someone beginning life as a disciple of Jesus?

Life Application Suggestions, consider and respond

- Thank God for His gift of salvation and reflect on what it means personally.
- Identify one area where you are still choosing your own way instead of God's and pray about surrendering it.
- Read one Gospel this week to better understand Jesus' life and mission.
- Encourage someone who has questions about faith by listening carefully and sharing the hope of the gospel.

Prayer Focus

Thank God for His love shown through Jesus. Pray for a heart that willingly follows Him, for growth as His disciple, and for opportunities to share the good news with others.