

Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Salvation -- Lesson 3 "What is the Good News of the Gospel?"

Introduction:

The word "gospel" means good news of salvation. Last week we looked at what the good news of the gospel actually is – It is the proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This week we look at how do we make this good news ours?

Read this passage at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

NKJ 1 Corinthians 15:1 Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you-- unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. 8 Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time. (1Co 15:1-8 NKJ)

12 Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. 14 And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. 15 Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. 16 For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. 17 And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. 19 If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. (1 Cor 15:12-19)

Is the Gospel found by looking inside ourselves or outside ourselves? Explain

According to verse 2, what does the gospel do for us?

According to verse 2 how are we saved by the gospel?

What does it mean to "hold fast" in the gospel?

According to 1 Cor 15:12-19, what are some of the consequences for us if the resurrection of Christ did not happen?

According to 1 Cor 12-19, what are some of the realities for us since Christ has risen from the dead?

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Is the Gospel found by looking inside ourselves or outside ourselves? Explain

We cannot find “good news” by looking inside ourselves. If we are honest, when we look inside ourselves, we find sin. Even if we look inside and see many good things such as more Bible reading and more prayer we should not look there for hope. We must realize that salvation is of God and the changes that we see when we look inside are due to God’s work in us not an inherent righteousness that comes from within us. To look inside for hope is a form of self-righteous religion, a form of works-righteousness. The Gospel is objective. Objective means that it is true for all people and has the same standard for all people. It is outside of us. The gospel is not something we do, but something God did for us. The good news is the work of Christ dying for our sins on the cross, being buried where he died the death our sins deserve and rising on the third day from the grave conquering Sin, death, and the devil for us. God acted in history. We are to look to that and believe. The better we do that, the better we will see an objective righteousness that comes from God alone. If we look inside our hearts for assurance that God is with us, we will find that our heart wanders. Our love for God is not perfect. We still see the sin that is in our heart and we only can find despair and have no comfort. When we look outside of ourselves to the work of Christ, there we can find assurance. Christ’s work for us is perfect. And

since it is outside of us, it means we cannot mess it up. If we look to Christ, we have hope. If we look inside for hope, we can only find doubt and despair.

According to verse 2, what does the gospel do for us?

The gospel saves us. And what does it save us from? Verse 3 tells us that Christ died for our sins. The gospel saves us from our sins. The gospel is not a guarantee for a healthy, wealthy, or prosperous life. The gospel saves sinners from sin. Removes the wrath that a good, loving, and holy God must have towards sinners, and grants us everlasting life with Jesus. We come to the gospel because we know we are sinners, and we need Jesus. And that salvation fills us with love for Jesus and we long to be with him.

According to verse 2 how are we saved by the gospel?

We “hold fast the word Paul preached to them” And we believe that word.

What does it mean to “hold fast” in the gospel?

Hold fast is another word for faith. Faith is trusting in and resting in something. The Westminster Shorter Catechism question 86 gives a simple and helpful definition of faith, “Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation, as he is offered to us in the gospel.” Faith is receiving the Christ as the gospel is preached to us. And not looking to our works to save us but resting in him and on his works to save us alone.

The world often uses the word “faith” in a way that the bible does not. For the world, faith is something you believe in without any evidence. But that is not at all how the bible uses the word “faith.” Faith in the bible is something that is based in objective fact. We receive the gospel and rest in Jesus’ work for us in the gospel because it is objectively true and can be proved as historical fact. Faith in the Christian life is based on concrete evidence.

Saving faith has three elements. First, faith is based on knowledge. We must know that something is. Paul preached to them the gospel. They had knowledge that the gospel is so. Second, they had to have assent or belief that the gospel is true. Not only did they hear the preaching of Paul, but they believed that it is true. Paul helped them as he helps us by pointing out all the witnesses to the resurrection. It is not a leap in the dark or believing something without evidence to believe the resurrection is true, you simply need to look at the facts.

But, James 2:19 tells us, “You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe-- and shudder!” Even demons believe that the facts of the gospel are true. In fact, they know the facts and know the truth of them deeper than we do. Why then do the demons not have faith? It is because the demons lack the final essential thing that makes saving faith, trust. Trust receives the truth and rests in it as their hope and joy in Christ.

According to 1 Cor 12-19, what are some of the consequences for us if the resurrection of Christ did not happen?

(v. 14) our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty

(v. 15) we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up

(v. 17) And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!

(v. 18) Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. (perished is bible talk especially in Paul's letters for dying. So in this case there is no eternal life with God for them)

(v. 19) If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.

According to 1 Cor 12-19, what are some of the realities for us since Christ has risen from the dead?

In order to see the benefits, then we can take these five points from the previous question and turn them into positive statements. For clarity we could combine the points into three powerful takeaways!

First, it means that we can be sure of the gospel knowing that it came to us from a trustworthy source. Because Christ has risen from the dead, the preaching of the gospel is full of power and truth. And our faith has concrete evidence to hold on to which is stronger than our hearts that are often so untrustworthy. It means that the preaching of the apostles that we have in the bible are true witnesses as eyewitnesses to the things they saw and heard as well as a true witness to us in the bible.

Second, it means that the power of the Gospel to save us is true. If Christ has risen from the dead it also means that our faith is alive and our sins are forgiven through his work for us! It also means that we have eternal life with Jesus. Our sins that keep us away from the loving presence of our holy God has been removed. We now, by faith in Christ have full forgiveness of sins and eternal life with Jesus forever.

And third, it means that this world is not where we find our hope. If we are only looking to this world to satisfy us, we will never be satisfied. But Jesus promises us eternal life with him. Sin does not have the final word! Death does not have the final word! Satan does not have the final word! Christ has the final word for us!

Now would be a good time to ask if you have placed your trust in the work of Christ for you. Do you see your sin and your need for the gospel? Do you hear how good the good news of the gospel is? If you haven't placed your trust in Christ, now is the time to do so! What are you waiting for? Trust in Christ now and all who do will find Christ a perfect savior!