

Pandemic Plan for the Church

Ministering to the Community in a Time of Crisis

Sharing the Hope of Jesus

The ultimate purpose of writing this plan was to enable the Church prepare for a disaster event such as a pandemic in order to be positioned to minister to the community during the crisis. This positioning thus allows the Church to share the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ with those who are hurting. The sharing of Jesus in the event of a disaster has been at the forefront of this entire endeavor.

There are many examples throughout the history of Christians ministering in a time of crisis and sharing the gospel. As stated earlier in the section “The Role of the Church,” there are many illustrations in the Bible of people who through acts of sacrificial love furthered the Kingdom for the sake of the gospel; the Good Samaritan, Epaphroditus, and Luke the physician to name just a few. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage, who during a great plague, encouraged Christians to care for the sick, and bury the dead, including those who were nonbelievers. He encouraged them to not lose hope, but to show the reason for their faith. In the second half of the third century, in response to a plague, a brotherhood called the Parabolani were formed to voluntarily care for the sick for the sake of the gospel.

During the 1918 Influenza Pandemic, archives show survivors telling stories of their Christian neighbors who cared for the sick in their communities. In our present day there are many ministries reaching out to minister to the physical needs of communities. One such example is the ministry of Samaritan’s Purse; a well-known international group who, for the sake of the gospel, go into disaster zones to care for the sick and injured.

All these are examples of those ministering to the hurting during a time of crisis and bringing with their care the good news of our Savior. This section will present the gospel using scripture to give a clear understanding of God’s plan of salvation. The next section will give tips and suggestions for setting up a ministry for the purpose of sharing the Gospel with the hurting.

The Gospel

A good starting point for the gospel is the truth that God is love. He loves us as creator, He loves us more than a mother loves her child. His love is faithful and unchangeable. His very nature is love.

1 John 4:4

“The one who does not know love does not know God, for God is love.”

1 John 4:16

“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abide in love abides in God, and God abide in him.”

Isaiah 30:18

“Therefore, the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. for the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.”

Psalm 86:15

“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness and truth.”

The Bible also shows us that God is also a God of truth, righteousness, and justice. He is holy; pure and separate from any sin. Just like love, holiness is an integral part of God’s being. It is simply part of who He is. This very nature of God means that He cannot excuse or ignore injustice, sins, or transgressions; He must at some point exercise judgement on transgressions.

Isaiah 6:3

“And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’”

Psalm 7:11

“God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day.”

2 Peter 3:7

“But by His Word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgement and destruction of ungodly men.”

The Bible also speaks of man. It explains the reason for the pain, suffering, and tragedies that are so common in the world. It also explains the reason for destructive behaviors which we exhibit towards ourselves and each other. We were originally created by God (body, soul, and spirit) to live in perfect (and eternal) relation with Him and each other. We were created with an innocent and pure nature – in a right relationship with God. God also created man with a degree of autonomy. He was expected to reign over creation and even more so, He created them (Adam and Eve), with a free will. When Adam and Eve chose to disobey God’s moral law, their transgression permanently changed their state (condition) and status (relationship) with God. Their disobedience resulted in the following consequences:

- Their status was changed in that they were no longer innocent and guilt free before God. They were guilty of breaking God’s moral law, and God had a moral responsibility to judge this guilt. This disobedience severed man’s direct relationship with God.
- This severance in their relationship with God also affected the nature of man. In this separated state, it became corrupted; morally, spiritually, and even physically. Through this act of disobedience, the Bible states that sin and death entered the human race. And because we are all the offspring of Adam and Eve, it changed the condition for the entire human race.

According to the Bible, we are all born in this corrupted spiritual/moral/physical state. This is often referred to as the “Fall of Man” and/or “Man’s Sinful State”. We are not sinners because we have sinned - fallen short in some moral standard at some point in our life. We sin because we are born in this fallen state as sinners, and our behavior is a product of this nature. This explains the self-centered, destructive, and even evil attitudes and behaviors we exhibit towards God, ourselves and others. Along with this corruption, death also entered, and reigns, over the human race. We cannot escape it – we are not immortal. We grow old, we deteriorate, and we will all (excepting we are present for the second coming of Jesus Christ) someday die.

“What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; as it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one; There is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; All have turned aside, together they have become useless; There is none who does good, there is not even one.’” Romans 3:9-12

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned – for until the Law, sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless, death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.” Romans 5:12-14

The Bible even states that creation itself is “fallen”; subjected to the curse of this original disobedience.

“For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly 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 also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now.” Romans 8:19-22

The reality is, what was meant to be a perfect and immortal existence in fellowship with our creator and God is now an existence separated from Him; tarnished by disease, immoral and destructive behaviors (sin), and ultimately physical death. The fundamental state of the human race is not in the original condition in which God created mankind.

But it gets worse! Our corrupted state is not only physical, it is spiritual. And the Bible states that no sin can ever dwell in the presence of God who is holy. Not only this, the righteous nature of God demands that He must judge and punish sin. The current state of the human race not results in physical death but eternal separation from God – ultimately eternal judgement.

God's Plan for Salvation

Some would say that Jesus came to be a “Good Example” for us all, and that all God wants us to do is love each other and treat each other better. This view is either ignorant of the Bible’s teaching on the fall of mankind or is rooted in a non-biblical “humanistic” world view. This view believes we are all basically “ok”; we are even getting better as we evolve physically and societally. We just need a helping hand – someone to show us the right way. This view ignores the strong biblical truths of God’s moral law, His holy and righteous nature, and the sinful state of man.

God cannot compromise His righteous nature and not condemn and judge sin. Yet God is also loving and merciful and grieves the judgement of man. God’s solution to this dilemma was to satisfy the righteous requirements of His moral laws for us *Himself*.

God entered the human race by being born as Jesus. This inception was different from ours in that Jesus was not “fallen”. He was sinless; without our sin nature. He was as God intended man to be, but He was more, He was God incarnate; God dwelling among us in the flesh.

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:5-7

Jesus’s mission was not to be a “Good Example”, but to satisfy God’s moral judgements against us.

“Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:28

“For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” 1 Timothy 2:5

When Jesus was crucified on the cross, He was not just dying in a physically horrific way. God was putting upon Him the judgement and punishment for the sins of mankind. Jesus was “standing in” as our substitute; enduring God’s judgement for sin that each one of us deserves. God reconciled His love and mercy with His moral holiness and righteousness by taking the judgement and punishment that we deserved upon Himself. Jesus paid the judgement for our sins through His death on the cross.

“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did; sending His Own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.”

Romans 8:3-4

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed; for the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.” Romans 3:23-26

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.” Romans 5:8-10

The sacrifice of Jesus for our sins is the greatest act of God’s love towards us.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” John 3:16,17

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

Jesus’ sacrifice is God’s pathway for the forgiveness of our sins and being reconciled (changing our status from guilty to innocent) with Himself. God’s forgiveness is not something we can earn or something we deserve. As stated in the book of Romans, it is a gift from God.

We can never restore our status through any “good works” we might try to perform. They would never atone for the sins we have committed, nor would they ever change our true condition (sinful).

It is through the sacrifice of Christ that our right-standing (status) before God is restored. This restoration; however, is offered by God on a person by person basis. It is an offer that we must **personally** accept. God’s forgiveness and salvation is a personal transaction between each person (yes, that means you) and God.

Accepting this offer of forgiveness, reconciliation and relationship with God is often broken down into the following parts:

- We agree with God’s appraisal of our condition as fallen and sinful. If we are being honest, we know we have sinned against Him and others. Often when people are on this threshold of faith, the Holy Spirit of God will be showing them their personal sins. This is not to condemn them, but to show them that from God’s perspective, they do need a Savior. We confess to God that we have sinned against Him and justly deserve His judgement for our sins. In short, we stand guilty before Him.

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- We accept Jesus as our Savior. We embrace the truth that Jesus is God in the flesh, and although He was righteous and sinless, He died on the cross to take the punishment for our sins. In short, we accept His sacrifice, His atonement for our sins and that this is fully sufficient for our salvation.
- We acknowledge Jesus as Lord. We recognize who He is, and relinquish our own “lordship” of our lives and invite God’s Holy Spirit to dwell within us to be Lord over and in our lives. The presence of God’s Holy Spirit in us is what Jesus referred to as being “born from above” or “born again”.
- We may also want to take this time to thank God for having mercy on us, saving us; for what He has done, and what He will continue to do in our lives.

The belief we exhibit when we embrace and declare these things is what is referred to as “Saving Faith”. It is by this faith we are accepting God’s offer of salvation. God’s offer of salvation is the “Great Exchange”. We give God our (guilty) status by confessing our sin and bringing it to the cross of Christ our Savior, and He gives us Christ’s righteous status in return, and furthermore, He indwells us with His Spirit.

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, ‘Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed for whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’” Romans 10:9-13

In this new relationship with God we have peace with God.

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have obtained our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we exult in hope of the glory of God.”
Romans 5:1,2

“Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
Romans 8:1

And we have security with God.

“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:37,38

We have the hope of eternal life.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him.” John 3:16,17

“And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in paradise” Luke 23:42

Sharing Jesus

All Christians should be living a lifestyle of sharing our faith; however, many of us leave the work of evangelism to that of the pastor. However, in a crisis, many people will be hurting and searching for answers and comfort from God as well as questioning Him as to why it happened. Many in their grief and anger will find reason to blame God, and many, at this time may even begin questioning the very existence of God. Becoming prepared now as to how you may answer some questions will prove valuable in the time of calamity.

“Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence.” 1 Peter 3:15

Truly it is our love for the Lord and our love for His people that the pouring of our hearts into sharing Him with others is a work of His Holy Spirit. This section is only meant as an aide providing some guidelines in sharing Jesus in a ministry set up such as that described earlier in this book. Since this objective of this book is to enable the Church to minister to the community in a time of a crisis, this section is written with that scenario in mind.

Choosing Ministers of the Gospel

While working on your pandemic plan, consider training a group of people to be ministers of the gospel in such a situation. You may consider encouraging your entire congregation to take part in the training. We are all called to live as ambassadors of Christ for the sake of the gospel.

“And He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.” Mark 16:15

The people serving in this area should be patient and good listeners as well as able to share the plan of salvation concisely. Those serving should be mature believers who spend time in the Word able to answer questions and meet objections with the Word and not opinion and conjecture.

Some people may need grief counseling during such a time, choosing ministers who can counsel in brief sessions, and even follow up will be beneficial to this portion of the ministry.

Importance of Prayer

I personally have discovered the power of prayer. I have learned that God moves mightily through prayer, and the faith of the one praying. So many books are written on prayer in an attempt to define it, and describe the necessity of prayer, and even how to pray. I have found that faith is increased along with power when I pray according to God's will using His Word. This section is not to teach on prayer, or even encourage one to pray; it is meant to remind those who will participate that this element of the ministry will be just as important, or perhaps more important than any other. Even the apostle Paul, the greatest evangelist, requested prayer for the sake of the gospel.

“And pray on my behalf, that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in proclaiming it, I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.” Ephesians 6:19, 20

“Praying at the same time for us as well, that God will open up to us a door for the word, so that we may speak forth the mystery of Christ.” Colossians 4:3

It will be this segment of the ministry that will be under the greatest opposition by the enemy. Prayer will be our greatest defense, as well as our greatest offense.

“For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.” Ephesians 6:12

Ministering in a Time of Crisis

When ministering to someone during a tragedy such as the described pandemic event, people will be hurting and seeking answers. Many in their grief and anger will find reason to blame God. Be sure to remain calm and loving, no one was ever scared or argued into heaven, but all have been loved into the kingdom.

Before we can begin to share the gospel, we must show the person that we truly care. By ministering to their physical needs through the medical help that was provided, we can now reach out spiritually by sharing the gospel.

Stabilize the Situation

First, arrange for a quiet place away from the fray of the situation to allow the person to sit and discuss their spiritual needs. A room or designated area away from the treatment area would be preferable; an area that would be more appropriate to allow the person to cry, or even vent. Many will decline the offer to sit and be ministered to; however, there will also be many who will be questioning God, and at a loss for their new found difficulties. If a person declines, offer to pray for them, or you may even simply ask them for their prayer requests.

Have bottled water on hand, crackers or snacks. Providing a person with a simple gesture seems to stabilize the situation. Having boxes of tissues available will also provide a measure of comfort. This meets the person's immediate physical needs allowing them to be more relaxed and share their spiritual needs.

Always begin your conversation in a kind, gentle manner. A simple "Good morning," "How are you?" Or even more to the point for the disaster type situation, "How are you holding up?" There may be dire circumstances where we should go directly into sharing a person's need for Jesus, in most cases; however, its beneficial to establish a relationship, as well as determining the immediate needs of the listener.

Listening as a Ministry

Let them speak and tell you their concerns without jumping straight into a rehearsed plan of salvation. Or perhaps they may not wish to speak. Allow them to sit in silence as they contemplate and process the horrific circumstances they are facing. Sometimes, just sitting in silence will speak volumes of love and care to a person who is hurting. Pray silently asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom and guidance as to how to respond to their needs.

Actively listen to the one who is speaking, always being aware of your body language and your facial response, as well as eye contact. Be aware of your responses as they share their story. Examine your heart and be receptive, don't judge someone who has come from a different background.

List of Resources and Referrals

Some form of counseling is always a part of witnessing and sharing the gospel; however, this is not a time for extended counseling. If you are ministering during a time of a pandemic, it is predicted that possibly six out of ten people will die. The depth of such a catastrophe cannot be reached and fixed in a meeting of a few minutes. Remember the ultimate goal is to share the hope of Jesus with the hurting individual. Consider following up with the person, or even referring them to another who is better equipped to handle trauma counseling.

This type of counseling is better performed by trained personnel. Perhaps while working on your pandemic plan, prior to an event, contact those in your community in and outside of the church, who would be able to contribute in this area of care. Remember, this will be a time of great tragedy; society may come to a staggering halt, and many offices will be closed. Preparing a list in advance for arranged referrals will aid in the process of helping care for the hurting. Have a list of contacts typed up as handouts.

If the person you are ministering to shows signs that they may hurt themselves or others due to their grief, you must contact the correct authorities. Discuss this with your health department official or hospital staff on how to handle such a situation. Knowing what to do in advance will make a difficult situation much easier to handle.

Tracts, Bibles, and Other Resources

Have Bibles and tracts readily available. Even if the person is not receptive to discuss spiritual matters or to pray, they may be open to reading material another time. In addition to Bibles and tracts, there are many books available by popular authors that may encourage one to read about the hope they may find in Jesus.

Partnering with Neighboring Churches

Partnering with other churches and ministries in your area to pool resources may be a way that smaller churches can participate in such a large endeavor. A smaller church may not have the capacity to sponsor an alternative care facility; however, you may have the people who are willing and quite able to share the gospel in a loving and effective way. Or perhaps you are a large church in your area, this may be your opportunity to reach out to other community leaders and even cross denominational lines.

In your partnering, consider setting up a network of people who are willing to make follow up calls or visits to those who have shown interest in the gospel. This may be helpful geographically, as well as for those who identify with a particular denomination. Always be aware that visiting someone in their home that has experienced a positive case of the flu is a risk to the ministering person. Proper precautions must be taken by all persons planning to have any exposure to sick people. Before attempting home visits, please see the sections on “Infection Control” and “Proper Protection Equipment”, and “Caring for the Sick”.

Be Ready to Give an Answer

Know the spiritual environment in which your church is planted. In addition, try to be aware of any cultural differences of those who may need help. If you are in a section of the community that is steeped in New Age, then make it a goal to research and understand the tenets of this belief system. Knowing other beliefs and their false teachings will help in your answers to their questions. There are many apologetic books available, as well as information on the internet. Paul the apostle said,

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law though not being myself under the Law, so that I might win those who are under the Law; to those who are without law, as without law, though not being without the law of God but under the law of Christ, so that I might win those who are without law. To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.” 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Find a Common Ground

During this time, as your church is reaching out to your community. It may be that some workers have also experienced loss due to the pandemic or disaster. Even if not this disaster, the worker could share from their own personal history of heartbreak or loss. Having this similar heartbreak is a way to connect to the person needing ministry. Sharing how you are dealing with the event as well as why you still have hope is a way to stake your common ground in order to relate.

Be Receptive and Tactful

Be sensitive to the receptiveness of the person with whom you are speaking. If they are clearly belligerent and argumentative, then it may be best to simply let them move on without antagonizing them further. Be careful not to engage in frivolous arguments.

You may find that all your efforts meeting physical needs have now availed to nothing, only a disrespectful rejection. Always answer with kindness.

“Conduct yourselves with wisdom toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.” Colossians 4:5,6

Remember to always answer rejection in love. Love covers a multitude of sins, and best of all, love never fails.

Wielding the Sword of the Spirit

Keep in mind that God’s Word alone is the key to salvation. It is not necessary to add or take away from His Word to convince someone. Allow the Holy Spirit of our living God to do the work that only He can do. Fancy words, stories, and good persuasive arguments may be helpful in some situations, but they may also distract or dilute the simplicity of the gospel; Christ crucified for the propitiation for our sins and eternal life through Him.

“So will My word be which goes forth from My mouth it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:11

And when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.” 1Corinthians 2:1-5

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:12,13

Memorize Verses

Now would be a good time to commit verses to memory. Consider your favorite verses, or especially the ones that worked in your own heart to help you come to the Lord. It is important to not only hide these words in your heart, but be able to share them naturally without the use of scriptural aids.

Mark Your Bible

If you are one to use your Bible while sharing, you may consider marking the reference verses you use in sequential order to help you turn quickly without pausing to consider the next text. For example, if you start with John 3:16, write beside it the verse you wish to reference next in order to remind you. This will save time and effort in turning pages, and prompt you to the next verse. You may even consider using different colored pens for different subjects such as grace, Jesus being our propitiation, and the path to salvation among others.

Regarding Rejection

Before sharing, pray for the Holy Spirit to speak through you and bring those who are ready to hear. However, do not be discouraged if your efforts are rejected, we all have a role to play; even Paul the apostle recognized this.

“I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building.” 1 Corinthians 3:6-9

Nothing is in vain in the kingdom of heaven, remember that if someone comes to the Lord through your prayers, words, or efforts, you may be reaping the fruit from seeds that were planted long ago by another faithful worker. In the same way, if you are rejected, you have planted a seed that someone else may water, and the Lord will cause the growth.

Share Your Testimony

Your testimony is a vital element in sharing the gospel. Even the apostle Paul shared his testimony when standing before King Agrippa in Acts 26. Following Paul’s example:

- Give a brief history of your life before you received Jesus as your Savior
- Explain how you came to know of salvation and His saving grace

- Share how your life has changed since becoming saved

Although sharing your testimony, feelings, and perspective may be a part of engaging your counselee, it will be the Word of God that will bring them to the true salvation knowledge of Jesus Christ. Be careful not to give the impression that once you are saved, it will be a life filled with blessings. The gospel is not about the things that God will do for you if you become saved, but that the person is a sinner in need of a Savior. The blessing is now that while you walk through difficulties, He will be with you, and will never leave you. He will be your refuge, and your deliverer. And most importantly, they will have eternal life, and enter into the presence of God their Father. This will prevent a false profession of faith, for the sake of obtaining God's blessings.

Include the Message of Grace

Many of our forefathers have died in the name of Christ, carrying the message of grace. Be absolutely sure that grace is stressed in your sharing of Jesus. There is nothing they can do to earn their way into heaven, and once they are saved, there is nothing they can do to lose their salvation. The work is completed by Christ alone. In His dying on the cross, and His shed blood alone, can we come into the presence of a Holy God. It is a free gift, and not to earned, but simply to be received.

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith.” Romans 3:23-25

“For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification.” Romans 5:15,16

Responding to Questions

Many questions will be raised such as “Why does God allow innocent people to suffer?” or “Why did God allow such an event to take place?” or “Where was God when my loved one died?” These questions have plagued mankind since the beginning of time. Human nature and its general tendency is to blame God for evil and suffering. Be prepared to answer such questions in a calm and loving way. It is also important to not try to answer these questions with your own interpretation or explanation, let the Word of God speak for itself. Below are some common protests made by people when they are confronted with their sin and the good news of the Gospel. This is not meant to be a comprehensive list of objections, simply a starting point for preparation of your ministry.

Why Evil is in the World

We must explain that God did not intend this world to be filled with sin and suffering. He created the Garden of Eden and man to be perfect without such evil. However, by man, making his own decision, he brought sin and its consequences upon himself.

- When sin entered the world, the curse of sin has come as a result.

“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.” Romans 5:12

- Man is responsible for sin, not God. When asked “Why didn’t God make man so he wouldn’t sin?” explain that God wanted us to love Him freely of our own will, and that He made us in His image with the ability to choose.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.’” Genesis 2:16,17

- Explain that God’s ways are higher than ours, and not necessarily for us to figure out. He has a plan and a purpose.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor 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

God is a Loving God

Many people reconcile their own sins to their view that “God is a loving God, and He won’t allow punishment for our sins.” Yes, God is a loving God; the fact is He loves us so much He sent His Son Jesus, to die in our place and take the punishment for our sins. It is because He is a holy and just God that we can only come into His presence by the blood shed by Jesus.

The Truth and Validity of the Bible

Numerous people will use the excuse that they do not believe that the Bible is a true and reliable source. This has become a pervasive belief in society today, and has even permeated some Christian denominations. Your response may include some of the following approaches:

- Discuss the evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures. That the Bible is made up of sixty-six books with forty contributors. Although its’ writing spans many centuries with forty writers, its’ theme and the revelation of God and Who He is, and His plan for the world is very prevalent in all the books.
- List prophecies written in the Old Testament foretelling of the coming Messiah, and Jesus’ fulfillment of these in the New Testament.

- List prophecies in the Bible that have been fulfilled in modern times. The reinstatement of Israel as a nation is certainly one to be mentioned.

Methods for Sharing the Gospel

There are many presentations and techniques for sharing the Gospel; however, the one factor that all have in common is the use of scripture.

“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Hebrews 12:4

Below are some methods you may consider to incorporate when explaining the way of salvation. These are only a few, but have proven effective. Be sure to use a way in which you are comfortable in order to ensure a more relaxed atmosphere when engaging in conversation with someone in need.

The Romans Road

The Romans Road is a popular method used taking verses from the book of Romans. These verses lay out the plan of salvation in a systematic way.

1. Romans 3:10: *“As it is written, ‘There is none righteous, not even one.’”*
2. Romans 3:23: *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*
3. Romans 5:12: *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.”*
4. Romans 6:23: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*
5. Romans 5:8: *“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*
6. Romans 10:9-10: *“That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved, for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*
7. Romans 10:13: *“For ‘Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.’”*

I have heard it suggested that instead of flipping through your Bible, you may consider underlining Romans 3:10 then writing next to it Romans 3:23, then next to this verse write Romans 5:12, and so on. This will aid in your flow of conversation.

The Four Spiritual Laws

Another popular method used in sharing the Gospel is the booklet titled “The Four Spiritual Laws.” This booklet written by the late Bill Bright and is available through Campus Crusade for Christ. These may give guidance in leading someone through God’s plan of salvation and how they may come to invite Jesus into their hearts as Savior. For more information, please visit the website, <http://crustore.org/four-laws-english/>.

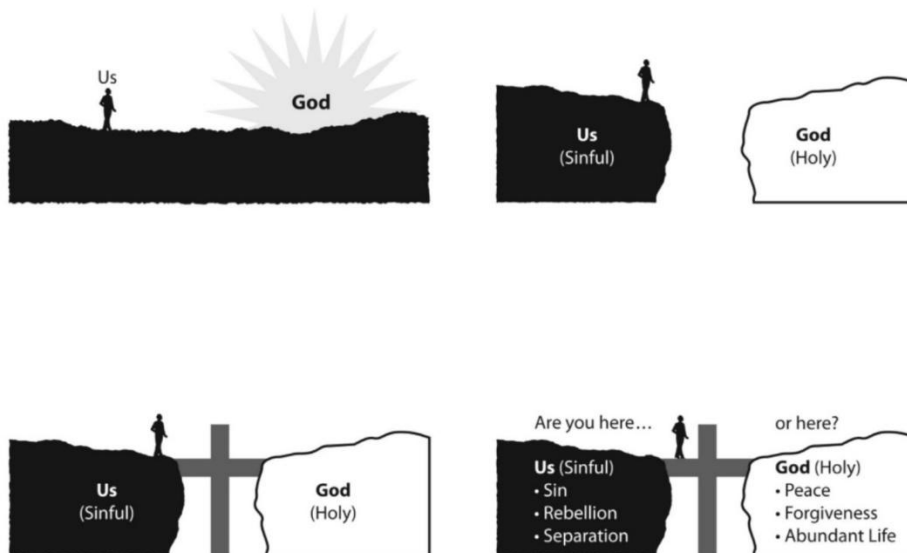
Using Illustrations

As an instructor, I have learned that adult students learn more effectively through various methods. Many will understand with simple verbal explanation, and others may need more. Using illustrations may aid in your efforts to get the message across to your listener.

The Bridge to Life

“The Bridge to Life” is an illustration from the Navigators and is a simple but effective way to explain the work of Jesus and the cross. By using the verses listed above, at the same time illustrating man’s separation from God, and the work of the cross bridging the gap, may aid in your explanation.

You can find this illustration with further instruction on the Navigators website at: <https://www.navigators.org/Tools/Evangelism%20Resources/Tools/The%20Bridge%20to%20Life>



The Bridge to Lifeⁱ
by the Navigators

One Verse Evangelism

This method uses only the one verse, Romans 6:23: *“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”*

After writing the verse out, circle the words that you plan to expound upon. Using the above bridge illustration, continue to explain the plan of salvation using only these highlighted words. The completed illustration can be found at:

<http://www.navigators.org/Tools/Evangelism%20Resources/Tools/One-Verse%20Evangelism-%20How%20to%20Share%20Christ-s%20Love%20C>.

There are many methods and resources available in written form and on the internet. These were just meant as a guide. Use a method that best suits your needs and comfort in sharing.

Praying with a New Believer

Praying what many call the sinner’s prayer will establish in the heart of the one being saved their salvation. This prayer is one of repentance and acknowledging the sinner’s need for a Savior. By inviting Jesus into their hearts they begin, or renew, a relationship with Jesus. You can lead them in a prayer that you may have written in advance, or you may choose to allow the person to pray a personal prayer as the Spirit may lead.

A sample prayer may be as follows:

“Dear Lord, I confess that I am a sinner and ask for Your forgiveness. I realize that I cannot come into the presence of a holy God except by the blood that Jesus shed on the cross; thank you Jesus for dying on the cross in my place. I declare with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart that God raised You from the dead. I give You my life, and invite You into my heart. In the name of Jesus, I pray, amen.”

Following Up with New Believers

Proper follow up is essential with a new believer. Encourage the new believer to read the book of John, and if possible give them a Bible. If one is not available, give them a tract that has the verses printed. Encourage them to read the Bible and to pray every day. Also encourage them to attend a good Bible believing church. And above all, pray for those with whom you have shared the Lord.

If your church has taken your pandemic and disaster planning this far, then you are obviously serious about furthering the Kingdom during a time of crisis. Keep a list of those who have professed a new faith in Jesus, and make telephone calls to check on them. Obtain their

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mailing and email addresses. Since churches will not be holding services in a time of a pandemic due to social distancing, emails and phone calls are the best ways to follow up. Be very aware that the enemy would like nothing less than to squash this new believer's faith in the face of a crisis.

¹ “The Bridge to Life”, The Navigators, <https://www.navigators.org/Tools/Evangelism%20Resources/Tools/The%20Bridge%20to%20Life>. January 31, 2006, Accessed May 13, 2016