
Chapter 1 The Good News

The word gospel means good news. It is an announcement before it is an assignment. Advice tells you what you should do; news tells you what has happened. The Gospel announces what God has done through Jesus Christ to save sinners (Romans 1:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

The Gospel calls for a response, but it does not begin with our promise to become better people. It begins with God: He made us, we rebelled against Him, Jesus died for our sins and rose from the dead, and God now commands people everywhere to repent and believe (Genesis 1:1, 26-27; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 17:30-31).

Why call this message good news? Because the Gospel addresses our deepest problem and offers what we could never produce for ourselves. It does not merely help good people become better. It announces that God saves people who are guilty, spiritually dead, and unable to make themselves right with Him (Romans 3:19-24; Ephesians 2:1-5).

The Gospel can be summarized, but it should not be reduced to a slogan. To understand it, we must know who God is,

what has gone wrong with humanity, who Jesus is, what He accomplished, and how God calls us to respond (Acts 17:22-31; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

How can we know these things with confidence? Creation shows that God exists and displays His power, but creation alone does not tell us the Gospel. We need God to speak. In Scripture, God tells us who He is, names our sin truthfully, and announces what He has done in Christ (Psalm 19:1-11; Romans 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 3:15-17). The Gospel is therefore received from God's Word; it is not a message we are free to redesign around the desires of our culture or our own imagination.

God Made Us for Himself

The Bible begins, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Human beings are made in God's image, so every person has God-given dignity, value, and moral responsibility (Genesis 1:26-27; James 3:9). We were made to know God, love Him, reflect His character, and live under His good rule (Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Matthew 22:37-38; Colossians 3:10).

God is not a supporting character in our story. We are creatures living in His world and depending on Him for life and breath

(Acts 17:24-28). Because He is Creator, He has authority to define what is good; because He is good, His commands express His holy character rather than arbitrary restriction (Psalm 19:7-11; 1 Peter 1:15-16).

Being made in God's image also explains why every human life matters. Human worth does not depend on age, ability, usefulness, race, wealth, or social standing. Every person bears God-given dignity and must be treated accordingly (Genesis 9:6; James 3:9-10). Sin damages how we reflect God, but it does not erase the fact that human beings are His image-bearers (Genesis 1:26-27).

Sin and Trespasses: Our Real Problem

Scripture describes sin in several connected ways: lawlessness (1 John 3:4), falling short of God's glory (Romans 3:23), failing to do known good (James 4:17), violating the law of love (Matthew 22:37-40), and acting apart from faith (Romans 14:23). The definition below summarizes these biblical descriptions rather than quoting only one verse.

In this book, sin means any thought, desire, attitude, word, action, or failure to act that falls short of God's holy character and commands (Romans 3:23; James

4:17). Sin includes both what we do and what we leave undone (Matthew 23:23; James 4:17). It is more than a harmless mistake because it places us morally at odds with the God who made us (Isaiah 59:2; Colossians 1:21).

A trespass is a specific violation of a boundary God has established. The picture is of stepping across a line or wandering from the right path. Ephesians says that apart from Christ we were “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Sin emphasizes our failure and rebellion; trespass emphasizes crossing God’s boundary. The terms overlap, and together they show that our problem is not merely bad circumstances but spiritual death and guilt before God (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13).

All people have sinned and therefore stand in need of grace (Romans 3:9-12, 23). Comparing ourselves with someone who appears worse cannot make us righteous, because God’s holiness—not another sinner—is the standard (Isaiah 6:1-5; Romans 2:1-3). Sin earns death, and judgment follows death (Romans 6:23; Hebrews 9:27).

Humanity’s condition is therefore both legal and spiritual. We are guilty because we have violated God’s commands, separated from God because of sin, enslaved

under sin's power, and spiritually dead apart from His life (John 8:34; Romans 3:19; 6:16-17; Ephesians 2:1-3). Education, moral effort, religious activity, and good intentions cannot create spiritual life or erase guilt (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:20; Titus 3:5). We do not merely need improvement; we need rescue.

God Has Acted to Save

God did not abandon sinners. The Father sent His eternal Son, Jesus Christ, who became truly human without ceasing to be God (John 1:1-3, 14; Galatians 4:4-5). Jesus lived without sin and willingly died for our sins (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22-24). He was buried and bodily raised on the third day (Luke 24:36-43; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. **1 Corinthians 15:3b-4 NKJV**

Through Christ, God offers forgiveness, reconciliation, and eternal life (Romans 5:8-11; Ephesians 1:7; 1 John 5:11-12). Jesus is not one spiritual option among many. He is the only Savior and the only mediator between God and humanity (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:5-6).

It helps to follow the movement of the Gospel. Our problem is sin, guilt, and spiritual death. God's provision is His Son, who died for our sins and rose again. The required response is repentance and faith. The saving result is not self-improvement but God's work of forgiving, justifying, giving new life, adopting, and beginning to make the believer holy. Keeping that movement clear protects us from replacing the Gospel with advice about becoming religious or successful (Romans 3:21-26; Titus 3:3-7).

Repent and Believe

Jesus summarized the proper response: "Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). Repentance turns from sin and self-rule toward God; faith trusts Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 20:21; Romans 10:9-13). Neither repentance nor faith purchases salvation. Salvation is God's gift of grace, received through faith rather than earned by works (Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7).

Jesus does not merely call people to agree that the Gospel is true. He calls them to turn from self-rule, trust Him, and follow Him. The same Lord who says, "Come to Me" also says, "Follow Me" (Matthew

11:28; Mark 1:17). Conversion is the beginning of life with Christ, not the end of a religious transaction.

The Good News Is Meant to Be Shared

The risen Jesus commanded His followers to make disciples among all nations by going, baptizing, and teaching them to obey everything He commanded (Matthew 28:18-20). The church therefore does more than collect decisions. It announces Christ, calls people to repentance and faith, receives believers through baptism, and teaches them to live as His disciples.

Evangelism is not salesmanship, pressure, or a contest for impressive numbers. Paul reasoned, explained, testified, and persuaded, but he refused manipulation and dishonesty (Acts 17:2-4; 18:4; 26:1-29; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2). We should speak clearly enough to be understood, listen carefully enough to answer the person in front of us, and care about people even when they do not immediately accept the message. A testimony can show what Christ has done in us, but the Gospel explains what Christ has done for sinners through His death and resurrection (John 9:25; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).¹

KNOW THE WORDS

WORD	PLAIN MEANING
Gospel	The good news that Jesus Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose bodily, and saves those who repent and believe (Mark 1:15; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4).
Sin	Any thought, desire, attitude, word, action, or omission that falls short of God's holy character and commands (Romans 3:23; 1 John 3:4; James 4:17).
Trespass	Crossing a boundary God has established or departing from His right path (Ephesians 2:1-3; Colossians 2:13).
Grace	God's undeserved favor and saving action toward sinners (Ephesians 2:4-9; Titus 2:11).
Salvation	God's rescue from sin, guilt, judgment, and bondage into forgiveness, new life, and fellowship with Him (Romans 5:9-11; Colossians 1:13-14).

THINK IT THROUGH

Q Is Christianity Mainly about Being Good?

No. Good works matter, but they are the result of salvation rather than its price (Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-14). If moral effort could make us right with God, Christ's death would have been unnecessary (Galatians 2:21).

Q Can Sincerity Save?

Sincerity cannot turn a false belief into truth. Jesus claimed to be the only way to the Father, and the apostles proclaimed salvation in His name alone (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). The question is not merely whether faith is sincere, but whether its object is the true Jesus and the true Gospel (2 Corinthians 11:3-4; Galatians 1:6-9).

Q Is It Arrogant to Tell Someone about Christ?

It would be arrogant to act as though we invented the truth or earned God's favor. Christian witness begins with the opposite confession: we were sinners who needed mercy, and salvation is a gift we did not deserve (1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Ephesians 2:8-9). If Jesus truly died and rose and is the only Savior, loving our neighbor includes speaking that truth with humility and respect (Acts 4:12; 1 Peter 3:15-16). We do not force conver-

sion; we bear faithful witness and trust the Holy Spirit to convict and draw people (John 16:8-11; Acts 17:32-34).

WATCH FOR COUNTERFEITS

A counterfeit gospel may promise wealth, health, influence, destiny, hidden knowledge, or spiritual power while moving Christ's saving work away from the center. Scripture warns against "a different gospel" and requires every message to agree with the apostolic Gospel already delivered (Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Jude 3). God may heal and provide, but those blessings must never replace reconciliation with God as the heart of the Gospel (Romans 5:1-11).

DECLARATION OF FAITH CONNECTION

This chapter supports these Church of God convictions:

- The verbal inspiration of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- All have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).
- Repentance is commanded by God and necessary for forgiveness (Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38).
- Justification, regeneration, and the new birth come through faith in Christ (Romans 5:1; Titus 3:5-7).

PUT IT INTO PRACTICE

Write the Gospel in two sentences: first, what Jesus has done; second, how God calls us to respond. Check your answer against 1 Corinthians 15:1-4 and Mark 1:14-15.

TALK IT THROUGH

1. Why does the Gospel begin with God rather than with us?
2. How does Scripture describe sin?
3. What does the word trespass help us understand about disobedience?
4. What are the central historical events of the Gospel?
5. How should a person respond to the Gospel?

FIVE DAYS IN THE BIBLE

Day 1: Created by God — Genesis 1:1-31

List what this passage teaches about God and human beings.

Day 2: The Human Problem — Romans 1:18-32; 3:9-26

Notice both the seriousness of sin and God's answer in Christ.

Day 3: Dead, Then Made Alive — Ephesians 2:1-10

Circle or write every phrase that describes life before and after salvation.

Day 4: The Gospel Announced — 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Write the events Paul delivered “first of all.”

Day 5: Repent and Believe — Mark 1:14-20; Romans 10:9-13

Describe the response God calls for.