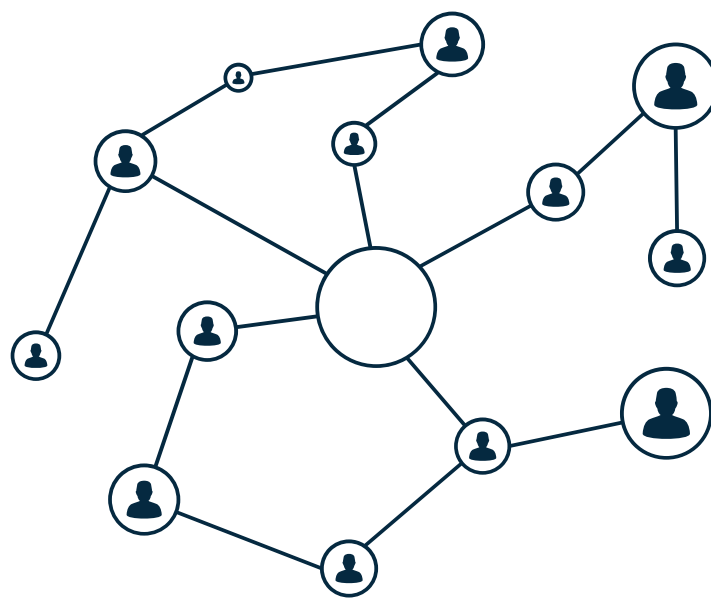


DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS



We Exist to Make Mature Disciples of All People for God's Glory

"And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

What is a Discipleship Group (D-Group)?

A D-Group is a group of 3-5 men or women who are committed to growing together for a year by regularly studying God's Word, praying together, and holding each other accountable, with the end goal of multiplying and replicating this process by inviting others to form a new group next year.

"And what you have heard from men in the presence of man witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" - 2 Timothy 2:2

Why D-Groups?

All of us desire to grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus, and make an impact in the lives of others - the problem is that we don't know where to start. D-Groups provide us with a simple and reproducible plan that anyone can follow to deepen their faith and help others follow Jesus. Christians grow through engaging in God's Word, by the power of the Holy Spirit, and in the context of a loving community. The benefit of a D-Group is that it provides a plan to help people get into the Word and keep them in the Word until the Word gets into them. The glue that holds it all together are the relationships that are formed within the group.

The "MARCS" of a Healthy D-Group

The guiding principles of a D-Group can be summed up in the acronym "MARCS": Missional, Accountable, Reproducible, Communal and Scriptural.

Missional - Healthy D-Groups meet regularly to pray for the lost, and hold each other accountable to sharing the gospel and making disciples

Accountable - Healthy D-Groups cultivate authentic and honest relationships where members can speak into each other's lives with the truth of the gospel, and hold them accountable to both their personal growth and to applying what they're learning.

Reproducible - Healthy D-Groups begin with the end in mind. From the beginning the goal is to replicate the process with others by starting new groups.

Communal - Healthy D-Groups are a community that practice the "one anothers" of scripture together. They text and pray for each other throughout the week, meet regularly, and build Christ-centered relationships with each other.

Scriptural - Healthy D-Groups primarily use the Bible as their textbook. They pursue intimacy with Jesus by engaging in God's Word and hearing from God through his Word.

7 Arrows Bible Reading Method

God's Word transforms his people - there is a direct correlation between a person's intake of Scripture and his conformity to the image of Christ. However, many of us can be intimidated by the Bible, confused on where to start, or what questions to ask. 7 Arrows is a simple bible reading method that helps us ask the right questions when we study God's Word.



Arrow 1 - What does this passage say?

- The first step is to summarize the passage in your own words. Simply read the passage and put the main point in your own words.



Arrow 2 - What does this passage mean to its original audience?

- Before we apply the Bible to our lives, we have to ask what the passage meant to those who experienced the stories of the bible firsthand. A good study bible can help you with this. But you can often answer this question by simply putting yourself in the scene and asking what you'd imagine those in the story would have thought or felt.



Arrow 3 - What does this passage tell us about God?

- The main character of the Bible is not you - it is God. Spend time asking what this passage teaches you about God's character, his likes or dislikes, his promises etc.



Arrow 4 - What does this passage tell us about man?

- What do you learn about mankind in this passage? What do you learn about yourself? Is there a sin that is revealed in this passage?



Arrow 5 - What does this passage demand of me?

- This is an action oriented question centered on our vertical relationship with God. Is there a sin to repent of? A promise to cling to? An example to follow? A truth to dwell on?



Arrow 6 - How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

- This is an action oriented question centered on our horizontal relationships with others. Consider how the passage would have us love the people God has put in our lives.



Arrow 7 - What does this text prompt me to pray?

- The final arrow invites us to talk to God about what we've read. We listen to Him speak to us through His Word, and then we respond back to Him in prayer.

7 Arrows Example

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward." - Psalm 19:7-11



Arrow 1 - What does this passage say?

"God's Word is a treasure that is meant to explain God's truth and guide my life"



Arrow 2 - What does this passage mean to its original audience?

"The Israelites had learned many painful lessons because of their failure to obey God's Word, so they would have understood the truth of this passage."



Arrow 3 - What does this passage tell us about God?

"God is gracious to give His people the gift of His word to protect them from harm."



Arrow 4 - What does this passage tell us about man?

"I need to be warned and led by God's Word, because I am often tempted to disobey God and do whatever I want."



Arrow 5 - What does this passage demand of me?

"Rather than thinking about reading the Bible as a task to complete, I should thank God for the gift of His Word and learn to treasure its wisdom."



Arrow 6 - How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

"I can learn to know, understand, and obey God's Word, so that I can share its truth with my friends and point them to God's plans and purposes for life."



Arrow 7 - What does this text prompt me to pray?

"God, I thank you for Your Word. I pray that You would help me learn to love Your Word over the course of this year, so that I can know You better and love You more."

D-Group Accountability

Accountability is a big part of what makes a D-Group effective. The Great Commission emphasizes that we **"teach them to obey"** all that Jesus commanded, and that is what accountability helps us do. To accomplish this, each group will follow the same bible reading schedule together and then meet regularly to discuss their insights from God's Word and ask each other the following accountability questions:

1. Have you spent time in the Word and in prayer this week?
2. Have you shared the gospel, your story, or taken intentional steps toward that end by building a relationship with an unbeliever this week?
3. Have you spent quality time with your family this week?
4. Have you honored God and your spouse with your thoughts, words and actions this week?
5. Have you told any lies or half-truths to put yourself in a positive light before others?
6. Have you participated in any divisive behavior that has caused relational strain or damage this week?
7. Have you lied about any of your answers today?

How to Spend Your Time

Before group each week complete the assigned bible reading and answer the 7 Arrows questions for each day. Spend time memorizing the memory verse for the week. Pray for your D-Group members often. Read any additional "Resources" that are assigned. Below is a sample of how you can make the best use of your time when you meet as a D-Group:

- Fellowship - 10 minutes
- Scripture Memory - 5-10 minutes
- Bible / Resource Discussion - 25-35 minutes
- Accountability - 10-15 minutes
- Prayer - 5-10 minutes

D-Group Covenant

I will commit to the following expectations:

1. I will meet with my D-Group consistently unless providentially hindered.
2. I will complete all assignments before my D-Group meeting, in order to contribute to the discussion.
3. I will contribute to an atmosphere of confidentiality, honesty, transparency, and charity for the edification of others in the group as well as my own spiritual growth.
4. I will pray every week for the other men/women who are in my D-Group.
5. I will begin praying about replicating the discipleship process upon completion of this group by starting a new D-Group.

Signature:

Date:

NT READING PLAN

Week 1

- ☐ Mark 1
- ☐ Mark 2
- ☐ Mark 3
- ☐ Mark 4
- ☐ Mark 5
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:1-2

Week 2

- ☐ Mark 6
- ☐ Mark 7
- ☐ Mark 8
- ☐ Mark 9
- ☐ Mark 10
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:3-4
- ☐ Resource: Definition of Disciple

Week 3

- ☐ Mark 11
- ☐ Mark 12
- ☐ Mark 13
- ☐ Mark 14
- ☐ Mark 15
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:5-6

Week 4

- ☐ Mark 16
- ☐ Acts 1
- ☐ Acts 2
- ☐ Acts 3
- ☐ Acts 4
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:7-8
- ☐ Resource: Gospel Overview

Week 5

- ☐ Acts 5
- ☐ Acts 6
- ☐ Acts 7
- ☐ Acts 8
- ☐ Acts 9
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:9-10

Week 6

- ☐ Acts 10
- ☐ Acts 11
- ☐ Acts 12
- ☐ Acts 13
- ☐ Acts 14
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:11-12
- ☐ Resource: What is the Gospel?

Week 7

- ☐ Acts 15
- ☐ Acts 16
- ☐ Acts 17
- ☐ Acts 18
- ☐ Acts 19
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:13-14

Week 8

- ☐ Acts 20
- ☐ Acts 21
- ☐ Acts 22
- ☐ Acts 23
- ☐ Acts 24
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:15-16
- ☐ Resource: Gospel Implications

Week 9

- ☐ Acts 25
- ☐ Acts 26
- ☐ Acts 27
- ☐ Acts 28
- ☐ Hebrews 1
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:17-18

Week 10

- ☐ Hebrews 2
- ☐ Hebrews 3
- ☐ Hebrews 4
- ☐ Hebrews 5
- ☐ Hebrews 6
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:19-20
- ☐ Resource: Wheel Diagram

Week 11

- ☐ Hebrews 7
- ☐ Hebrews 8
- ☐ Hebrews 9
- ☐ Hebrews 10
- ☐ Hebrews 11
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:21-22

Week 12

- ☐ Hebrews 12
- ☐ Hebrews 13
- ☐ Galatians 1
- ☐ Galatians 2
- ☐ Galatians 3
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:23-24
- ☐ Resource: How People Change

Week 13

- ☐ Galatians 4
- ☐ Galatians 5
- ☐ Galatians 6
- ☐ James 1
- ☐ James 2
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:25-26

Week 14

- ☐ James 3
- ☐ James 4
- ☐ James 5
- ☐ Matthew 1
- ☐ Matthew 2
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:27-28
- ☐ Resource: Preaching the Gospel to Yourself

Week 15

- ☐ Matthew 3
- ☐ Matthew 4
- ☐ Matthew 5
- ☐ Matthew 6
- ☐ Matthew 7
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:29-30

Week 16

- ☐ Matthew 8
- ☐ Matthew 9
- ☐ Matthew 10
- ☐ Matthew 11
- ☐ Matthew 12
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:31-32
- ☐ Resource: Shrinking the Cross

Week 17

- ☐ Matthew 13
- ☐ Matthew 14
- ☐ Matthew 15
- ☐ Matthew 16
- ☐ Matthew 17
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:33-35

Week 18

- ☐ Matthew 18
- ☐ Matthew 19
- ☐ Matthew 20
- ☐ Matthew 21
- ☐ Matthew 22
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:36-37
- ☐ Resource: Orphan vs. Child Assessment

NT READING PLAN

Week 19

- ☐ Matthew 23
- ☐ Matthew 24
- ☐ Matthew 25
- ☐ Matthew 26
- ☐ Matthew 27
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:38-39

Week 20

- ☐ Matthew 28
- ☐ Romans 1
- ☐ Romans 2
- ☐ Romans 3
- ☐ Romans 4
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:40-42
- ☐ Resource: Identity in Christ

Week 21

- ☐ Romans 5
- ☐ Romans 6
- ☐ Romans 7
- ☐ Romans 8
- ☐ Romans 9
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:43-44

Week 22

- ☐ Romans 10
- ☐ Romans 11
- ☐ Romans 12
- ☐ Romans 13
- ☐ Romans 14
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:45-46
- ☐ Resource: Idolatry

Week 23

- ☐ Romans 15
- ☐ Romans 16
- ☐ Ephesians 1
- ☐ Ephesians 2
- ☐ Ephesians 3
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 5:47-48

Week 24

- ☐ Ephesians 4
- ☐ Ephesians 5
- ☐ Ephesians 6
- ☐ Philippians 1
- ☐ Philippians 2
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:1-2
- ☐ Resource: 6 Ways to Minimize Sin

Week 25

- ☐ Philippians 3
- ☐ Philippians 4
- ☐ Colossians 1
- ☐ Colossians 2
- ☐ Colossians 3
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:3-4

Week 26

- ☐ Colossians 4
- ☐ Philemon
- ☐ Luke 1
- ☐ Luke 2
- ☐ Luke 3
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:5-6
- ☐ Resource: Repentance

Week 27

- ☐ Luke 4
- ☐ Luke 5
- ☐ Luke 6
- ☐ Luke 7
- ☐ Luke 8
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:7-8

Week 28

- ☐ Luke 9
- ☐ Luke 10
- ☐ Luke 11
- ☐ Luke 12
- ☐ Luke 13
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:9-11
- ☐ Resource: Fighting Temptation

Week 29

- ☐ Luke 14
- ☐ Luke 15
- ☐ Luke 16
- ☐ Luke 17
- ☐ Luke 18
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:12-13

Week 30

- ☐ Luke 19
- ☐ Luke 20
- ☐ Luke 21
- ☐ Luke 22
- ☐ Luke 23
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:14-15
- ☐ Resource: Conflict

Week 31

- ☐ Luke 24
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 1
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 2
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 3
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 4
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:16-18

Week 32

- ☐ 1 Corinthians 5
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 6
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 7
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 8
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 9
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:19-21
- ☐ Resource: Stewardship

Week 33

- ☐ 1 Corinthians 10
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 11
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 12
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 13
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 14
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:22-24

Week 34

- ☐ 1 Corinthians 15
- ☐ 1 Corinthians 16
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 1
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 2
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 3
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:25-26
- ☐ Resource: Tyranny of the Urgent

Week 35

- ☐ 2 Corinthians 4
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 5
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 6
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 7
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 8
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:27-28

Week 36

- ☐ 2 Corinthians 9
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 10
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 11
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 12
- ☐ 2 Corinthians 13
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:29-30
- ☐ Resource: Before Your Open Your Bible

NT READING PLAN

Week 37

- ☐ 1 Timothy 1
- ☐ 1 Timothy 2
- ☐ 1 Timothy 3
- ☐ 1 Timothy 4
- ☐ 1 Timothy 5
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:31-32

Week 38

- ☐ 1 Timothy 6
- ☐ 2 Timothy 1
- ☐ 2 Timothy 2
- ☐ 2 Timothy 3
- ☐ 2 Timothy 4
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 6:33-34
- ☐ Resource: SCAN

Week 39

- ☐ Titus 1
- ☐ Titus 2
- ☐ Titus 3
- ☐ 1 John 1
- ☐ 1 John 2
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:1-2

Week 40

- ☐ 1 John 3
- ☐ 1 John 4
- ☐ 1 John 5
- ☐ 2 John
- ☐ 3 John
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:3-4
- ☐ Resource: Praying the Bible

Week 41

- ☐ 1 Peter 1
- ☐ 1 Peter 2
- ☐ 1 Peter 3
- ☐ 1 Peter 4
- ☐ 1 Peter 5
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:5-6

Week 42

- ☐ John 1
- ☐ John 2
- ☐ John 3
- ☐ John 4
- ☐ John 5
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:7-8
- ☐ Resource: What is a Church?

Week 43

- ☐ John 6
- ☐ John 7
- ☐ John 8
- ☐ John 9
- ☐ John 10
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:9-10

Week 44

- ☐ John 11
- ☐ John 12
- ☐ John 13
- ☐ John 14
- ☐ John 15
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:11-12
- ☐ Resource: What Does a Church Do

Week 45

- ☐ John 16
- ☐ John 17
- ☐ John 18
- ☐ John 19
- ☐ John 20
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:13-14

Week 46

- ☐ John 21
- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 1
- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 2
- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 3
- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 4
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:15-16
- ☐ Resource: Mapping Oikos

Week 47

- ☐ 1 Thessalonians 5
- ☐ 2 Thessalonians 1
- ☐ 2 Thessalonians 2
- ☐ 2 Thessalonians 3
- ☐ 2 Peter 1
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:17-18

Week 48

- ☐ 2 Peter 2
- ☐ 2 Peter 3
- ☐ Jude
- ☐ Revelation 1
- ☐ Revelation 2
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:19-20
- ☐ Resource: Overcoming the Fear of Evangelism

Week 49

- ☐ Revelation 3
- ☐ Revelation 4
- ☐ Revelation 5
- ☐ Revelation 6
- ☐ Revelation 7
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:21-23

Week 50

- ☐ Revelation 8
- ☐ Revelation 9
- ☐ Revelation 10
- ☐ Revelation 11
- ☐ Revelation 12
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:24-25
- ☐ Resource: Sharing Your Story

Week 51

- ☐ Revelation 13
- ☐ Revelation 14
- ☐ Revelation 15
- ☐ Revelation 16
- ☐ Revelation 17
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:26-27

Week 52

- ☐ Revelation 18
- ☐ Revelation 19
- ☐ Revelation 20
- ☐ Revelation 21
- ☐ Revelation 22
- ☐ Scripture Memory: Matt 7:29-29
- ☐ Resource: Sharing the Gospel

DEFINITION OF A DISCIPLE

Part 1: Following Jesus (Head)

Do you want your life to count? Do you want to look back and say that you made a big difference in the world and in those around you? Most people devote their lives to accomplish something significant - they want to leave their mark on the world, or on a particular individual. In short, they want to leave behind a legacy that outlives their own lives.

You can devote your life to many things:

- **Achievement** - believing that the best way to make your life count is to rack up personal accomplishments that others can see
- **Comfort** - believing that the best way to make your life count is to create a life of ease and comfort.
- **Power** - believing that the best way to make your life count is to gain influence over others, and make a name for yourself.
- **Pleasure** - believing that the best way to make your life count is to experience life to its fullest. You only live once, so might as well live it up and accomplish everything on your bucket list

But what if I told you that there is only one cause that will ultimately matter - that will ultimately make your life count? Everything else will fade one day - and death will be the great equalizer of us all. But what if you could devote your life to something that doesn't fade away, and that death cannot erase?

There is only one cause on earth that has eternal implications - there is only one cause on earth that truly makes your life count, and that is continuing the mission of Jesus of making disciples of all people for God's glory. Jesus began his mission by investing in a few people for a set period of time, and then commissioning them to do the same. And in so doing, he changed the world, and he continues to change the world today.

So this begs the question: If we want to make our lives count by making disciples like Jesus, then we need to understand what a disciple is. We need to have the end in mind, in order to make disciples, who then go on to make other disciples. We find a helpful definition of a disciple in Matthew 4:19: "And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

This verse can easily be broken down into a three-part framework that matches up with the three key aspects of discipleship that we see throughout the New Testament.

1. **"Following"** Jesus (head)
2. **"Being changed"** by Jesus through the Holy Spirit (heart)
3. Being committed to the **mission** of Jesus, which is to be "fishers of men" (hands)

Lets put it all together: A Disciple is someone who is **following** Jesus, **being changed** by Jesus, and is **committed to the mission** of Jesus.

This is the goal that we are aiming at in our own lives and in the lives of others. We want to "Follow Jesus" - he is the Lord of our life. In grace, he has called us to himself, and now he makes a lordship claim on our life. He takes the lead, we follow. Next, as we follow Jesus, we will become more like him through a process called sanctification. So in short, we are "being changed" by Jesus. A true disciple of Jesus will progressively look more and more like Jesus as he or she pursues him. And last but not least, a true disciple of Jesus reorients his or her life around what Jesus prioritized - which is making disciples of all people for God's glory. This is now the aim of every true disciple - to be used by Jesus to make more disciples.

But how do we do this? Well, this resource is designed to help in this process. But making disciples is simply: helping people to trust and follow Jesus.

Over the course of this year in your D-Group, our hope and prayer is that you will grow as a disciple yourself, while also being equipped and empowered to make disciples of others.

GOSPEL OVERVIEW

Part 1: Following Jesus (Head)

What is the "Gospel Story"? It is helpful to think of the gospel as a story with 4 parts: Creation, Fall, Redemption, and New Creation.

Creation: The World We Were Made For

The Story begins, not with us, but with God. Deep down, we have a sense that this is true. We sense that we are important—that there is something dignified, majestic, and eternal about humanity. But we also know that we are not ultimate. Something (or Someone) greater than us exists.

The Bible tells us that this Someone is the one infinite, eternal, and unchanging God who created all things out of nothing ([Genesis 1:1–31](#)). This one God exists in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ([Matthew 28:19](#)). Because God is Triune in his being, he wasn't motivated to create the world because he needed something. Rather, he created out of the overflow of his perfection. God made human beings in his image ([Genesis 1:27](#)), which is what gives us our dignity and value. He also made us human, which means we are created beings, dependent on our Creator. We were made to worship, enjoy, love, and serve him, not ourselves. In God's original creation, everything was good. The world existed in perfect peace, stability, harmony, and wholeness.

Fall: The Corruption of Everything

God created us to worship, enjoy, love, and serve him. But rather than live under God's authority, humanity turned away from God in sinful rebellion ([Genesis 3:1–7](#); [Isaiah 53:6](#)). Our defection plunged the whole world into the darkness and chaos of sin. As a result, all human beings are sinners by nature and by choice ([Ephesians 2:1–3](#)). We often excuse our sin by claiming that we're "not that bad"—after all, we can always find someone worse than we are! But this evasion only reveals our shallow and superficial view of sin. Sin is not primarily an action; it's a disposition. It's our soul's aversion to God. Sin is manifested in our pride, our selfishness, our independence, and our lack of love for God and others. Sometimes sin is very obvious and external; other times it's hidden and internal. But "[all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God](#)" ([Romans 3:23](#)).

Sin brings two drastic consequences into our lives. **First, sin enslaves us** ([Romans 6:17–18](#)). When we turn from God, we turn to other things to find our life, our identity, our meaning, and our happiness. These things become substitute gods—what the Bible calls idols—and they soon enslave us, demanding our time, our energy, our loyalty, our money—everything we are and have. They begin to rule over our lives and hearts. This is why the Bible describes sin as something that "[masters](#)" us ([Romans 6:14](#)). Sin causes us to "[serve created things rather than the Creator](#)" ([Romans 1:25](#)).

Second, **sin brings condemnation**. We're not just enslaved by our sin; we're guilty because of it. We stand condemned before the Judge of heaven and earth. "[The wages of sin is death](#)" ([Romans 6:23](#)). We are under a death sentence for our cosmic treason against the holiness and justice of God. His righteous anger toward sin stands over us ([Nahum 1:2](#); [John 3:36](#)).

Redemption: Jesus Come to Save

Every good story has a hero. And the hero of the Gospel Story is Jesus. Humanity needs a Savior, a Redeemer, a Deliverer to free us from the life bondage and condemnation of sin and to restore the world to its original good. This Rescuer must be truly human in order to pay the debt we owe to God. But he can't be merely human because he must conquer sin. We need a Substitute—one who can live the life of obedience we've failed to live, and who can stand in our place to bear the punishment we deserve for our disobedience and sin. This is why God sent Jesus into the world to be our substitute (1 John 4:14). The Bible teaches that Jesus was fully God—the second person of the Trinity—and also fully human. He was born to a human mother, lived a real flesh-and-blood existence, and died a brutal death on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem. Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to God (Hebrews 4:15), making him the only person in history who did not deserve judgment. But on the cross, he took our place, dying for our sin. He received the condemnation and death we deserve so that, when we put our trust in him, we can receive the blessing and life he deserves (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Not only did Jesus die in our place, he rose from death, displaying his victory over sin, death, and hell. His resurrection is a decisive event in history; the Bible calls it the "first fruits"—the initial evidence—of the cosmic renewal God is bringing (1 Corinthians 15:20–28). One of the greatest promises in the Bible is Revelation 21:5: "Behold, I am making all things new." All that was lost, broken, and corrupted in the fall will ultimately be put right. Redemption doesn't simply mean the salvation of individual souls; it means the restoring of the whole creation back to its original good.

New Creation: The Story Continues

So how do we become a part of the story? How do we experience God's salvation personally and become agents of his redemption in the world? By faith or trust (Ephesians 2:8–9). What does that mean? We trust a taxi driver when we count on him to get us to our destination. We trust a doctor when we agree with her diagnosis and entrust ourselves to her care. And we trust in Jesus Christ when we admit our sin, receive his gracious forgiveness, and rest entirely in Jesus for our acceptance. Faith is like getting in the taxi. It's like going under the surgeon's knife. It's a restful, whole-hearted commitment of the self to Jesus (Psalm 31:14–15). This is what it means to believe the gospel.

When we trust in Jesus, we are released from sin's condemnation and from its bondage. We are free to say "no" to sin and "yes" to God. We are free to die to ourselves and live for Christ and his purposes. We are free to work for justice in the world. We are free to stop living for our own glory and start living for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31). We are free to love God and others in the way we live.

God has promised that Jesus will return to finally judge sin and make all things new. Until then, he is gathering to himself a people "from every nation, tribe, people and language" (Revelation 7:9). As part of that called-and-sent people, we have the privilege of joining him in his mission (Matthew 28:18–20) as individuals and as part of his spiritual family. By grace, we can enjoy God, live life for his glory, serve humanity, and make his gospel known to others through our words and actions. This is the good news—the True Story—of the gospel

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Part 1: Following Jesus (Head)

The gospel is at the heart of what Christians believe. The good news of the gospel touches every aspect of our life. It has a profound effect on our eternity, as well as our Monday morning.

The Gospel in a Sentence

God saves sinners by sending His Son Jesus to live a perfect life and die in their place on the cross to reconcile them to God.

The Gospel in a Paragraph

There is one Holy God who has made us in His image. He made us good, but we rebelled against His rule and sinned against Him. Because of our sin God would be just and good to judge us eternally, but in His amazing love, God the Father sent His eternal Son, Jesus Christ, who took on human flesh. Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived perfectly the life that we should have lived. He then died on the cross in place of everyone who will repent of their sins and trust in Him. God raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus ascended to heaven, demonstrating that His sacrifice on the cross was accepted by God. Jesus has promised to return in the same manner. He now calls us to repent of our sins and trust in Him. When we trust in Him we will receive new life through the Holy Spirit, and will be adopted as his reconciled children forever.

God, Man, Christ, Response

A good way to remember and summarize the gospel message is through the four words: God, Man, Christ, Response.

God - God is the creator of all things ([Gen 1:1](#)). He is perfectly holy, worthy of all worship, and will punish sin ([1 John 1:5](#), [Rev 4:11](#), [Rom 2:5-8](#))

Man - All people, though created good, have become sinful by nature ([Gen 1:26-28](#), [Ps. 51:5](#), [Rom 3:23](#)). From birth, all people are alienated from God, hostile to God, and subject to the wrath of God ([Eph. 2:1-3](#))

Christ - Jesus Christ, who is fully God and fully man, lived a sinless life, died on the cross to bear God's wrath in the place of all who would believe in him, and rose from the grave in order to give his people eternal life ([John 1:1](#), [1 Tim 2:5](#), [Heb 7:26](#), [Rom 3:21-26](#), [2 Cor 5:21](#), [1 Cor 15:20-22](#))

Response - God calls everyone everywhere to repent of their sins and trust in Christ in order to be saved ([Mark 1:15](#), [Acts 20:21](#), [Rom 10:9-10](#))

GOSPEL IMPLICATIONS

Part 1: Following Jesus (Head)

When thinking through how the gospel applies to my life, it is helpful to think of the past, present, and future implications of the gospel. The good news of the gospel is that it provides hope for your past, your present, and your future.

Past - We have been saved from the penalty of sin

The theological term for this is **justification**, which refers to the formal act whereby God declares a person not guilty for sin. Justification is a change of status in God's sight. (Ps 103:11-13, Isa 43:25, 1 John 1:9, Rom 8:1). The good news of the gospel is that we are accepted by God, not by what we do, but by what Christ has accomplished on our behalf through his life, death and resurrection. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for sin by substituting himself in our place. "Jesus had come, not to bring judgment, but to bear it" - Edmund Clowney

Christians are justified by grace, through faith alone, in Christ alone. (Gal 2:16, Eph 2:8) When an individual turns away from his sin (**repentance**) and trusts in Christ (**faith**), he becomes justified in God's sight.

Present - We are being saved from the power of sin

The theological term for this is **sanctification**. Sanctification is just a big word for becoming more and more like Jesus through faith in Jesus. The good news of the gospel is that God promises to progressively transform a person to be like Jesus. This transformation requires the work of the Holy Spirit, who applies the Scriptures to every area of our lives within the context of the local church. (Phil 2:12-13, 2 Cor 4:16, 2 Thess 2:13, 2 Cor 3:18)

It's important to remember that we become Christians by faith in Jesus, we stay Christians by faith in Jesus, and we grow as Christians by faith in Jesus. Change is ultimately a work of the Triune God in our lives:

- **God the Father** is intimately involved in our lives so that our circumstances train us for godliness (Heb 12:10-11)
- **God the Son** has set us free from both the penalty and the power of sin so that we now live under the reign of grace (Rom 6:1-7).
- **God the Spirit** gives us a new attitude toward sin and a new power to change. We can now say no to sin, and yes to God by the power of the Spirit. (2 Thess 2:13, Gal 5:16-17)

Future - We will be saved from the presence of sin

The theological term for this is **glorification**. The end product of the gospel is moral perfection - where the believer will be made glorious, holy and blameless when he or she enters eternity. The good news of the gospel is that God is recreating us, but he is also recreating his creation, and restoring his creation to its original good. When Jesus returns, he will fix all that is broken, and completely remove sin and the effects of sin from all of his creation. The world will be made right, perfectly declaring the glory of God through all created things without any brokenness from sin. Everything, even the created world that has been marred by the effects of sin, will be made right again. In the end, it is heaven that comes to earth and not Christians that go to heaven. (Rom. 8:18-22, 1 Cor 15:35-45, 2 Pet 3:10-13, Isa 65:17)

WHEEL DIAGRAM

Part 1: Following Jesus (Head)



The Wheel diagram is a simple and effective way to visually explain the structure of a God-glorifying life. Sharing it can be as simple as drawing it on a napkin or notepad. The diagram challenges us to think deeply about how to be an obedient follower of Christ and each part represents a crucial component of a vibrant Christian life. It depicts six crucial components of a vibrant Christian life, broken down into 3 important dimensions:

The Volitional Dimension (Your Relationship to Your Will)

The Hub: Christ the Center

The act of making Christ central in your life - that is giving Him the place of true lordship in your life - is really an act of your will. For the believer, the “old life” has gone and the new has come ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)), and Christ has begun to dwell in us ([Galatians 2:20](#)). God creates within us the desire to do what He wants us to do in order to express His Lordship in our lives. There should be a moment in your life when you are willing to surrender totally to Christ’s authority and lordship.

The Rim: Obedience to Christ

When you are obedient to Christ and actively follow God’s leading, it will show in your outward lifestyle. Some acts of obedience to God are internal, such as attitudes, habits, motives, values and day-to-day thoughts. But even these eventually surface outwardly in our relationships with other people. Keeping His commands in obedience is our outward indication of inward health and love for Christ ([John 14:21](#), [Romans 12:1](#)).

The Vertical Dimension (Your Relationship to God)

Vertical Spoke: The Word

In this illustration, “The Word” is the foundational spoke. In practice, this spoke is perhaps the most crucial element in a balanced Christian life. Through the Bible, God reveals who He is, and how He calls us to live and interact with everyone around us (2 Timothy 3:16). This means an earnest personal intake of God’s Word is essential for our spiritual health and growth (Joshua 1:8). As God speaks to us through the Scriptures, we learn how to obey Him and apply the gospel to every part of our lives. We also come to know Jesus personally and find He is worthy of our steadfast allegiance.

Vertical Spoke: Prayer

Prayer is the natural overflow of meaningful time in the Bible. It is sharing our heart with the One who longs for our companionship and who cares about our concerns. Prayer not only trains our hearts and minds to know the power and glory of God, but also turns His ear towards action in our lives (John 15:7, Philippians 4:6-7).

The Horizontal Dimension (Your Relationship to Others)

Horizontal Spoke: Fellowship

God has directed Christians to build each other up through interdependence and loving relationships with each other (Hebrews 10:24-25). Gathering together as the Body of Christ draws God close around us as we praise Him and encourage one another (Matthew 18:20). We have the privilege of close, meaningful relationships with other members of God’s family.

Horizontal Spoke: Evangelism

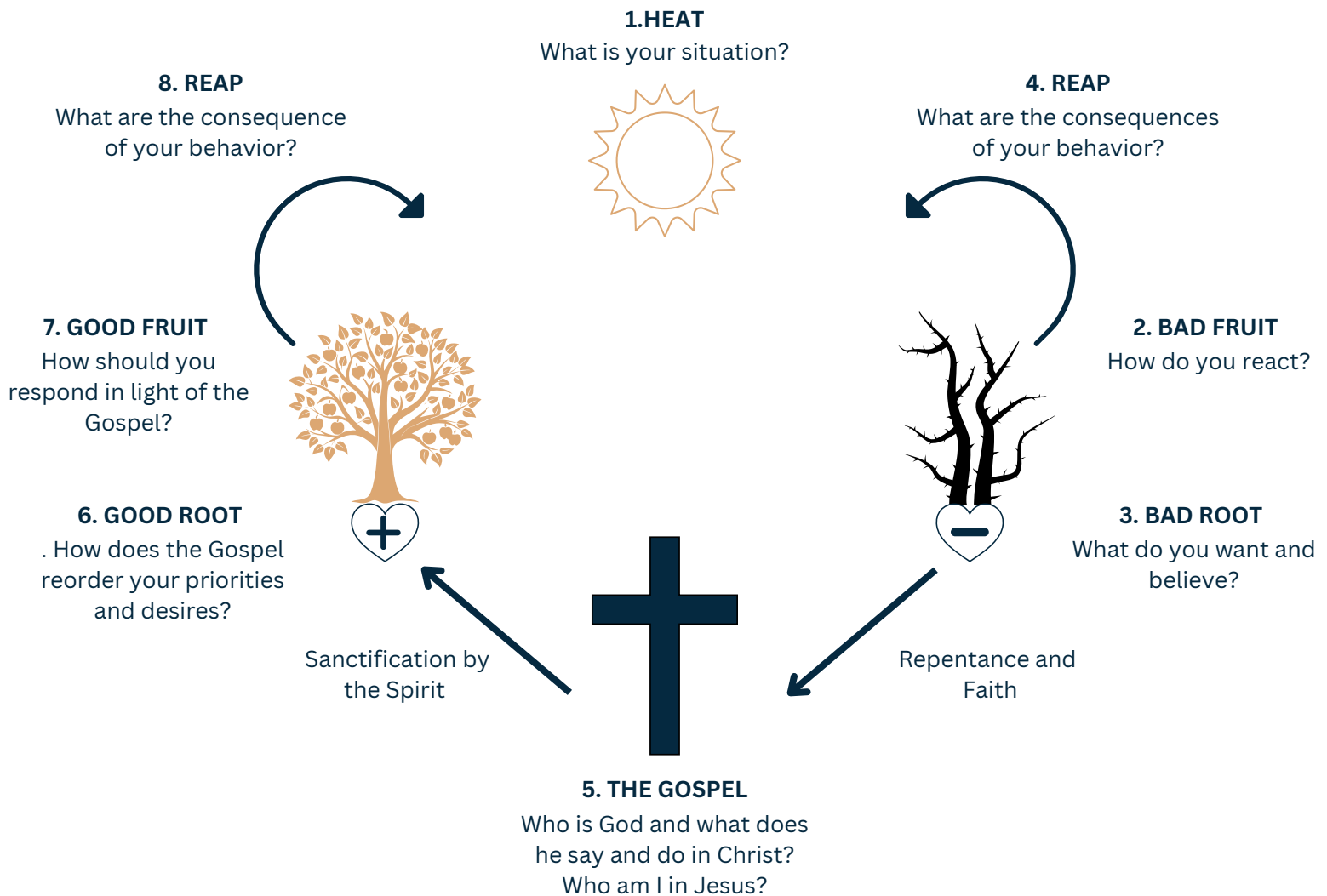
When a person has a vibrant life in Christ, it is natural to want to explain to others how they can also have it. Your devotional life, extended times of prayer, and prompt obedience to God will give your life an attractiveness that draws people and adds credibility to your words. God has given believers the joy and responsibility of telling the world about the good news of Christ’s work on Earth (Matthew 4:19). In fact, sharing about His amazing grace is the natural overflow of a rich, vibrant life in Christ (Romans 1:16)

The Wheel as a Whole

Usually “either/or” thinking is not reliable. Most of life is “both/and”. It is not either fellowship or evangelism; it is not either prayer or an intake of the Word. A balanced Christian life includes all of these ingredients. Because of this, the Wheel can serve as a good checklist for evaluating growth and balance in your spiritual life. Where are you currently strong? Keep developing that strength and trust God to use it to shape your life. Where are you currently weak? Ask the Spirit to give you the desire to grow in that area, and empower you to make progress.

HOW PEOPLE CHANGE: 3 TREES

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)



“For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, for each tree is known by its own fruit. For fig trees are not gathered from thorn bushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.” - Luke 6:43-45

This is a tool known as the “**3 Trees**” that helps you to apply the gospel to your life and the circumstances that you face. It finds its basis in [Luke 6:43-45](#) (see above) where Jesus explains the connection between our behavior and our heart. This is not an 8-set process to transformation - only the gospel can bring true and lasting change in your life. But it is a helpful tool that we can use to break down a situation that we are facing into manageable pieces so that we can get a better glimpse of our desires and how the gospel applies to the real circumstances that we are facing.

Directions: In order to get the most out of this exercise think back on the past two months and pick an incident that prompted a strong reaction or a recurring emotion from you that you recognize as sinful - whether it is internal or external. Pick a “normal” situation. For the sake of this exercise do not pick something that is too trivial or too dramatic. Now that you have this situation in your mind, walk through the 8-step below while keeping the “3 Tree” diagram in front of you.

- 1 HEAT** - What is going on? What is the specific context, situation, or relationship that you are facing?
 - Note: this doesn't always have to be a “negative” circumstance. Oftentimes “good” news like a promotion, or the arrival of a child, can bring about sinful responses.
- 2 BAD FRUIT** - How did you react to the “heat” in your life? What thoughts, actions, words, emotions, and choices did you make in response to the circumstance you were facing?
 - Do not try to minimize or deny your response, examine it for all that it is.
- 3 BAD ROOT** - What do you think about what is going on? What is your interpretation of the events and your response? What are you believing in? What are you fearful of? What are you trusting in?
 - All of us are responding and reacting to what we experience in life. And in [Luke 6:43-45](#), we see that what comes out of us, reveals what is in our hearts. What does your response reveal about your heart? What are you worshipping other than Christ alone? (**refer back to idolatry exercise for examples**)
- 4 REAP** - What are the consequences of your behavior and beliefs?
 - How are your reactions affecting your relationships, your work life, your mood, your finances, your health, and your faith?
 - Note: notice how on the diagram the arrow below “reap” is curved back in. This is in order to show us that this is a cycle that we will repeat itself unless we look to what Jesus has accomplished for us on the cross. If the cycle is not broken, then your consequences will produce more “heat” in your life, which will then produce more bad fruit, because the roots (the heart) have not changed.
- 5 The GOSPEL** - Who is God? What does God do in Christ for us? Who am I now in Christ?
 - If you skip this step, then you will remain depressed, anxious, arrogant, legalistic, or self-justifying. Only the gospel can produce in us a transformed heart which then produces transformed desires, when then produces transformed fruit.
 - Remind yourself of what Christ has accomplished for you:
 - The gospel saves you from the **penalty** of sin
 - The gospel is saving you from the **power** of sin
 - The gospel will save you from the **presence** of sin
 - Remind yourself of what is true of you now because of faith in Jesus (**look at Identity resource for greater explanation**) :
 - I am in **Christ** ([1 Corinthians 15:22](#))
 - I am **Justified** ([Romans 8:1](#))
 - I am **Adopted** ([John 1:12](#))
 - I am **Secure** ([Romans 8:38-39](#))
 - I am **Free** ([Romans 6:5-6](#))
 - I am **Unfinished** ([Philippians 1:6](#))

6 GOOD ROOT - How does the gospel change your desires and your wants?

- As you reflect on who God is, and what God has done for you in Christ Jesus, his Spirit will begin to progressively transform your hearts through a process called sanctification.
- How does faith in Christ Jesus alone, reorder your priorities and desires?
- Note: this doesn't happen overnight. But we can have assurance that as we remind ourselves of the gospel, and apply it to our lives, that over the long haul God by his Spirit will transform us from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18)

7 GOOD FRUIT - How does the gospel shape the way you ought to be responding to this situation?

- What commitments are you going to make in light of the gospel? What decisions do you need to make?

8 REAP - What is the effect of your behavior?

- Am I seeking the fruit of the Spirit produced in my life? And are others seeing this fruit as well?
- How do you see the Spirit working in your life? Give thanks to God for the work that he is doing in your life, and share this great news with others.
- Note: In the same way that there is a cycle on the right side of the diagram, there is a cycle on the left side. This is to remind us that we need to continually remind ourselves and each other of the gospel in order to be transformed by it.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL TO YOURSELF

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

In our pursuit of growth - we need to learn the art of "Preaching the Gospel" to yourself. Martin Llyod-Jones famously said: "Have you realized that most of your unhappiness in life is due to the fact that you are listening to yourself instead of talking to yourself?" As you pursue holiness, you will begin to realize what an awful sinner you are. And if you are not firmly rooted in the gospel and have not learned to preach the gospel to yourself everyday, you will soon become discouraged and will slack off in your pursuit of holiness. The following is an outline from Dick Kaufmann on how to begin preaching the gospel to yourself.

STEP 1: To see and confess that I am a bigger sinner than I thought

1. See and own your own sin

- a. Examine yourself in the mirror of God's Word, your negative emotions and attitudes, and the responses of others to you. Guard yourself against sin's deceitfulness: the tendency to water down God's standard, compare ourselves to others, shift the blame, or commit ourselves to trying harder.

2. See the sin beneath your sin

- a. Don't move too quickly to confess and receive forgiveness for the surface sin. Push the "Why" questions. Eg: "Why did I react, say, do . . .?" question until you find what you are looking to other than Jesus for meaning and sweetness in life.

3. Expose the idols of your heart

- a. The main three idols are:
 - i. **Approval** = looking good. How I look in the eyes of others.
 - ii. **Comfort** = feeling good. Experiencing a level of pleasure; the absence of stress, conflict, etc.
 - iii. **Control/power** = making good. How successful in mastery of something; controlling God, self, world.

4. Remember:

- a. Idols are **weak**
 - i. They can't deliver when you succeed.
 - ii. They can't forgive when you fail.
- b. Idols are **harmful**
 - i. They hurt you spiritually, emotionally and physically.
 - ii. They hurt others by undermining your ability to love.
- c. Idols are **grievous** to Christ
 - i. Most importantly, by going after these idols you are saying to God "Jesus is not enough."
 - ii. Realize that:
 1. "I am a much bigger sinner than I thought."
 2. "I am a worthy recipient of God's judgment."
 3. "Trying harder won't cut it."
 4. "I am helpless and hopeless in myself."

BUT there is Christ...

STEP 2: Thank God that Jesus is a much bigger savior than I thought

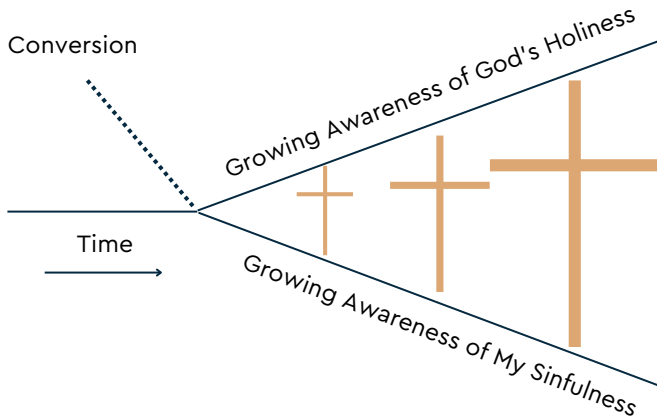
Give thanks that:

- Jesus lived for me
 - Think about and give thanks for specific ways Jesus has lived obediently where I have failed.
- Jesus died for me.
 - Think about Jesus' death on the cross for my specific sins and idolatry. Thank God that my sin has been punished once and for all.
- God sees me in Jesus.
 - Think about how God sees me in Jesus, clothed with his perfect righteousness. Thank Him specifically for how He provides for me in Christ all that my idols promised, but could not deliver.
- Jesus lives in me.
 - Thank God that He does not leave me to live the Christian life on my own, but the Spirit of Christ now dwells in me. Ask Him to live His righteous life through me, specifically in the areas where I have confessed sin.

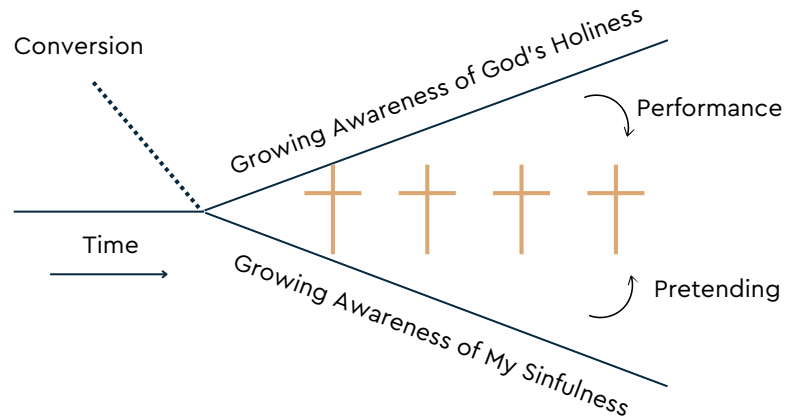
SHRINKING THE CROSS

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

GROWING



SHRINKING



Growing in the gospel means growing in our awareness of two things: **God's Holiness** and **Our Sinfulness**. The 'Growing in the Gospel' chart helps to show how the Gospel should be functioning in our lives and in contrast the 'Shrinking the Gospel' chart shows how that growth can be stunted. Notice that the top line of the chart is labeled "growing awareness of God's holiness"; this does not mean that God's holiness itself is increasing, for God is unchangeable in his character—he has always been infinitely holy. Rather, this line shows that when the gospel is functioning correctly in our lives, our awareness of God's holy character is growing. We realize in fuller and deeper ways the weight of God's glorious perfections.

Likewise the bottom line shows that when the gospel is functioning correctly in our lives, our awareness of our own sinfulness is growing. This does not mean that we are becoming more sinful. In fact, if we are growing in Christ, we'll start seeing victory over sin. But we are realizing more and more "how deep the rabbit hole goes" in our character and behavior as we seek more "sin beneath the sin". We are seeing that we are more profoundly sinful than we first imagined.

As these two lines diverge, and we with faith believe the gospel, the cross becomes larger in our experience, producing a deeper love for Jesus and a fuller understanding of his goodness. At least that's the ideal. But often, because of indwelling sin, we are prone to forget the gospel—to drift away from it like a boat from its moorings. That's why the Bible urges us not to be "moved [away] from the hope held out in the gospel" (Col.1:23). But when we are not anchored to the truth of the gospel, our love for Jesus and our experience of his goodness become very small. We end up 'Shrinking' the cross by either performance or pretending.

Performance

Growing in our awareness of God's holiness challenges us significantly. It means coming face to face with God's righteous commands and the glorious perfection of his character. It means reflecting on his holy displeasure toward sin. It means realizing how dramatically short we fall of his standards. If we are not rooted in God's acceptance of us through Christ, we compensate by trying to earn God's approval through our performance. We live life on a treadmill, trying to gain God's favor by living up to his expectations (or our mistaken view of them). This seeking to perform diminishes God's holiness by assuming that as fallen people, we could somehow meet his perfect standards apart from the Spirit of Christ within us. It also minimizes the cross and Christ's work on it to take our shortcomings and give to us his righteousness.

To reveal your tendency toward performance, pause and answer this question: *as God thinks of you right now, what is the look on his face?*

Do you picture God as disappointed? Angry? Indifferent? Does his face say "Get your act together!" If you imagined God as anything but satisfied because of what Jesus has done for you, you have fallen into a performance mindset. Because the truth of the gospel is that in Christ, **God is deeply satisfied with you**. But when we fail to root our identity in what Jesus has done for us, we slip into performance-driven Christianity.

Pretending

Growing in our awareness of our sinfulness is not enjoyable, but exceptionally beneficial. It means admitting—to ourselves and others—that we are not as good as we think we are. It means confronting the complex web of compulsive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that sin has created within us. Often however, we fail to see these things, or in seeing them fail to honestly deal with them. If we are not resting in Jesus righteousness, we can compensate and become deceived into self-righteousness, thinking that we are better than we really are. It takes many forms: **dishonesty** ("I'm not that bad"), **comparison** ("I'm not as bad as those people"), **excuse making** ("I'm not really that way; I'm just tired or it's been a long day" etc.) , and **false righteousness** ("here are all the good things I've done"). Because we don't recognize how sinful we really are, we spin sin in our favor.

ORPHAN VS. CHILD ASSESSMENT

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

This is a practical exercise to reveal our sinful tendencies to manipulate life and our daily need to return to Christ. This exercise will humble you, which is one of the first steps in serving Christ and others. Read through each bulleted list. Under "The Orphan" check the box if you see that tendency in yourself. Underline the words that most apply. Under "The Son/Daughter" check the boxes that describe where you most want to grow, underlying the key words.

THE ORPHAN

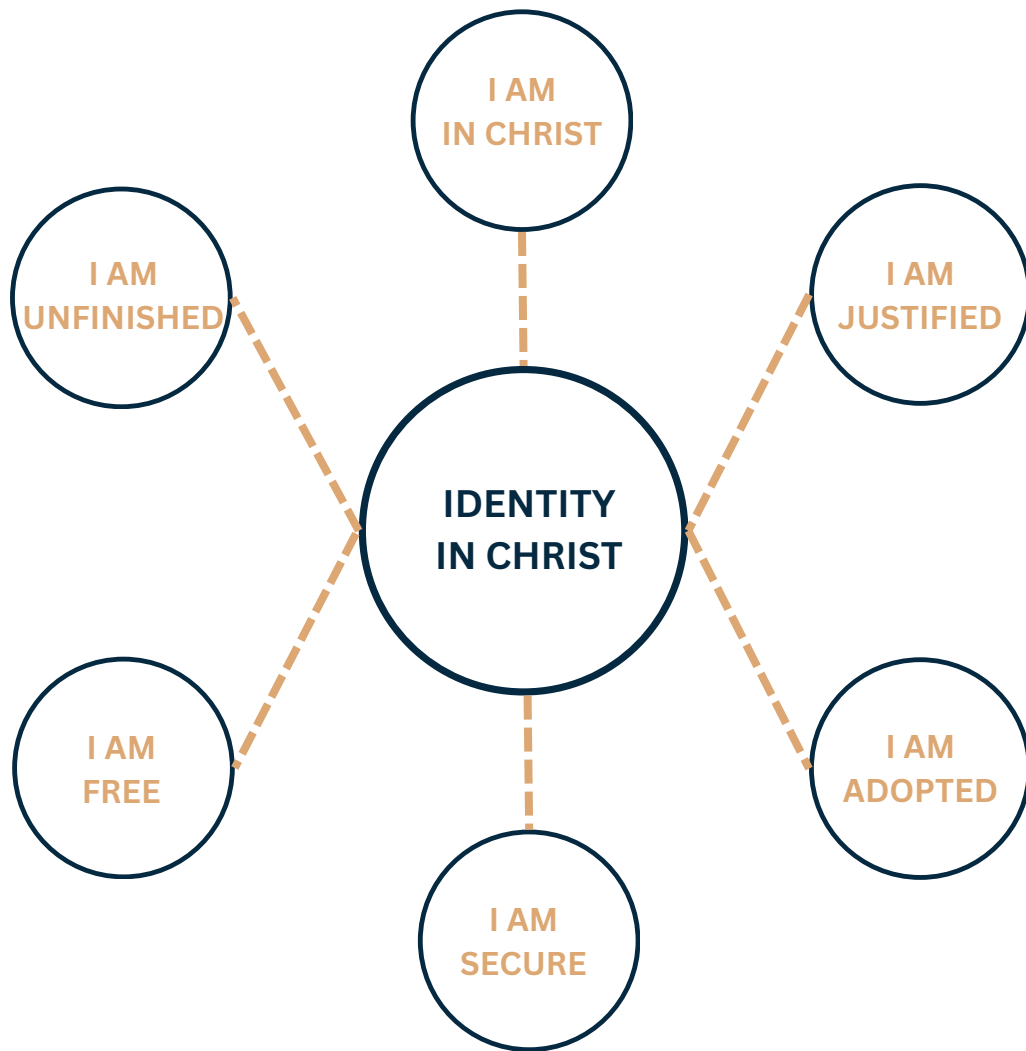
- ☐ Lacks a vital daily intimacy with God
- ☐ Anxious about friends, money, schools, grades, etc.
- ☐ Feels as if no one cares about you
- ☐ Lives on a success/fail basis
- ☐ Needs to look good
- ☐ Feels guilty and condemned
- ☐ Struggles to trust things to God
- ☐ Has to fix your problems
- ☐ Not very teachable
- ☐ Is defensive when accused of error or weakness
- ☐ Needs to be right
- ☐ Lacks confidence
- ☐ Feels discouraged and defeated
- ☐ Strong-willed with ideas, agendas, and opinions
- ☐ Solution to failure: "Try harder"
- ☐ Has a critical spirit (complaining and bitterness)
- ☐ Tears others down
- ☐ A "competent analyst" or others' weaknesses
- ☐ Tends to compare yourself with others
- ☐ Feels powerless to defeat the flesh
- ☐ Needs to be in control of situations and others
- ☐ Looks for satisfaction in "positions"
- ☐ Looks for satisfaction in "possessions"
- ☐ Tends to be motivated by obligation and duty, not love

THE SON/DAUGHTER

- ☐ Feels freed from worry because of God's love for you
- ☐ Learning to live in a daily partnership with God
- ☐ Not fearful of God
- ☐ Feel forgiven and totally accepted
- ☐ A daily trust in God's sovereign plan for your life
- ☐ Prayer is a first resort
- ☐ Content in relationships b/c you are accepted by God
- ☐ Freedom from making a name for yourself
- ☐ Is teachable by others
- ☐ Open to criticism b/c you rest on Christ's perfection
- ☐ Able to examine your deeper motives
- ☐ Able to take risks - even to fail
- ☐ Encouraged by the Spirit working in you
- ☐ Able to see God's goodness in dark times
- ☐ Content with what Christ has provided
- ☐ Trusting less in self and more in the Holy Spirit
- ☐ Aware of inability to fix life, people, and problems
- ☐ Is able to freely confess your faults to others
- ☐ Doesn't always have to be right
- ☐ Does not gain value from man-made "props"
- ☐ Experiences more and more victory over the flesh
- ☐ Prayer is a vital, ongoing part of the day
- ☐ Jesus is more and more the subject of conversation
- ☐ God truly satisfies your soul

IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)



The moment you put your faith in Christ Jesus you are given a new identity. In order to grow as a Christian it is absolutely crucial that you understand who you have become and who you are in Christ. Your new identity makes all the difference. It changes everything as you live this Christian life. If you want to grow close to Christ, you need to know who you are and whose you are: You are in Christ, and you belong to Christ.

I Am In Christ - 1 Corinthians 15:22

“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive”

Foundational to your new identity is this truth: You are in Christ. This refers to your “Union with Christ”, and it means that you have been spiritually united to him in such a way that you identify with him and he identifies with you. There is a kind of inseparable union between the two of you. Your union with Christ is the greatest blessing that you receive as a Christian. Why? Because it is only through your union with Christ that you gain all the benefits of Christ. Christ would be of no benefit to you if he had not united himself to you.

As a result of your union with Christ, God views you the way he views Christ. In God’s eyes, what Christ did, you did. When Christ lived a life of perfect obedience, God thought of you as living a life of perfect love and obedience. When Christ went to the cross to suffer and die, God counted your sins as belonging to Christ so that he suffered and died for you. God counts Christ’s death as your death; Christ’s burial as your burial; and Christ’s resurrection as your resurrection. Because you are united to him, all of Christ’s blessings are now your blessings, and all of his benefits are now your benefits. You are in Christ. This is your deepest identity. Whatever else is true of you, this will never change or waver.

I Am Justified - Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

By being in Christ, you have also been justified by Christ. We are all lawbreakers, guilty before God and deserving of punishment. But as a Christian, you can be confident you will not be punished. Why? Because you have been justified in Christ. Justification is a judicial term that means you have been declared innocent. And yet justice is still satisfied. How? Because Jesus took your place, suffering the punishment your sins deserve. Because of your union with Christ, God now thinks of your sins as being forgiven and of Christ’s righteousness as belonging to you. It is as if you never sinned at all. There is no sin left to be paid. There is not an ounce of guilt remaining. There is no sentence hanging over your head. There is nothing you can do to be more accepted by God, and there is nothing you can do to be less accepted by God. You are forgiven, you are accepted, you are innocent, you are righteous, and you are justified.

I Am Adopted - John 1:12

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”

You are united to Christ, and through him you are now united to every other person who has ever been saved by him. We become a part of God’s family with Jesus our elder brother and God our Father. Being adopted by God means God is your Father. He is a good and kind and loving Father who cares for his children, loves his children, wants only the best for his children, and loves to relate to his children. You are a child of God forever, this will never change.

Being adopted also means that you can relate to other Christians as brothers, sisters, fathers and mothers. It provides you with deep and meaningful relationships with others who are growing to love God and others just as you are.

I Am Secure - Romans 8:38-39

“I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

You are also secure. This means that you do not need to worry about your future or doubt that God will someday turn his back on you. You do not need to toss and turn at night worrying about where you will spend eternity. Once you are in Christ, you will always be in Christ. You will never be separated from him. Those who have been justified will always remain justified. Those who have been adopted will always be members of God’s family. You are secure - you can live your life free from fear.

You do not need to fear hell, because you are promised heaven. You do not need to fear death, because you know Christ has conquered death, and one day, you too will experience resurrection. You do not need to fear Satan, because Christ has triumphed over Satan. There is nothing that can ever separate you from God’s love.

I Am Free - Romans 6:5-6

“If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.”

Because of all of this, you are free - truly and gloriously free. All of us were born into this world enslaved to sin. We were enslaved to the approval of man, or to addictive substances, or to our sinful desires and patterns. But because of Christ, you are now free to be like Christ. Because you are justified, you are freed from having to try to earn your salvation and from the crushing guilt of sin. Because you are adopted, you are freed to love your brother and sisters far more than yourself. Because you are indwelt with the Spirit, you are now freed from the power of sin (1 John 4:4). Because you are secure, you are freed from worrying that God will someday change his mind and cast you away. Christian you are free. You are free to stop sinning - you have the power to overcome sin and to do those things that are good. You are truly and gloriously free.

I Am Unfinished - Philippians 1:6

“I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”

Finally, you are unfinished. This means that you are a work in progress. Christ has saved you, and he has begun to have a relationship with you. Yet you still sin. You still return to your old ways at times. Too often, you delight in doing what is evil. But take heart - God is committed to your holiness and to growing you into your new identity in Christ. You are unfinished, but God himself is moving you to completion.

IDOLATRY

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

Idolatry is at the heart of every sin that we commit. As we grow in maturity as Christians, we need to be able to **identify** and **uproot** the idols in our heart, and turn once again to one true God by the power of the gospel. An idol is simply anything that is more important to you than God. It is anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God. It's where you and I look for our happiness, meaning, and worth. We often think that idols are bad things, but that is almost never the case. Idols are more good things that we turn to instead of God. It is worshipping the creation rather than the creator (**Romans 1**).

In order to help you identify the idols of your heart, answer this question: **life only has meaning, I only have worth if I have _____**. If you were being honest with yourself, how would you answer this question? How would those closest to you answer this question for you?

SOURCE IDOLS

Most of the idols that pull our affections away from Jesus find their source in one of these 4 categories.

POWER - life only has meaning, I only have worth if I have **power or influence over others**
A person who idolizes power seeks success, winning and influence. They often think of life in terms of competition. For this individual, it's not only about winning, but even more so about not losing. Those in their life often feel used by them because relationships can be seen as a means to an end. Their greatest nightmare is **humiliation**, and their problem emotion is **anger**.

COMFORT - life only has meaning, I only have worth if I have **some type of pleasure experience or a particular quality of life**
A person who idolizes comfort values privacy, lack of stress, comfort and freedom. They often see others, even those close to them as potential obstacles to their comfort. As a result, authentic relationships do not come easy. These individuals are prone to laziness, and their greatest nightmare is **stress and demands**. Their problem's emotion is **boredom**.

CONTROL - life only has meaning, I only have worth if I am able **to gain mastery in my life over the area of _____**
A person who idolizes control values self-discipline, certainty, and standards. Others often feel condemned by them because they do not meet their standards. They use phrases like: **"Why can't you just _____."** If they want it done right, then they have to do it themselves. The greatest nightmare for this individual is **uncertainty**, and their problem emotion is **worry and anxiety**. They are often so concerned with having things go exactly as they planned that they pay for it with deep seated anxiety.

APPROVAL- life only has meaning, I only have worth if I am **loved or respected by _____**
A person who idolizes approval desires relationships, approval, attention and love. Others often feel smothered by them because they are asking them to be what is impossible for them to be. They often overcommit, over promise, and over state in order to gain affirmation. Their greatest nightmare is **rejection**, and their problem emotion is **cowardice**.

All of these idols are false saviors promoting false gospels. Every one of these things - **power, comfort, control and approval** - is something we already have in Jesus because of the gospel! But when we are not living in light of the gospel, we turn to these idols to give us what only Jesus can truly give us.

So what is the solution? How do we fight against these idols that take up residence in our hearts? We need to first identify them - and then we need to preach the gospel to ourselves, and combat the lies of these idols with truth. Below are four truths about God that you can begin to use to combat these idols. They are known as the 4 G's.

1. GOD IS GREAT - **so we do not have to be in control**

a. If you worship the idol of control, then remind yourself of God's greatness. There is nothing outside of his good and sovereign control. Your Father in heaven knows exactly what you need.

2. GOD IS GLORIOUS - **so we do not have to fear others**

a. If you worship the idol of approval, then remind yourself of God's glory. The answer to the fear of man is the fear of God. Meditate on God's glory, greatness, holiness, splendor, beauty, mercy and love. Whenever you see someone whom you fear or whose approval you crave, imagine God next to him or her. Which of them is more glorious?

3. GOD IS GOOD - **so we don't have to look elsewhere**

a. If you worship the idol of comfort, then remind yourself of God's goodness. Remind yourself that whatever sin or this world offers, God offers more, for God offers us himself. By faith hold on to the truth that we find lasting fulfillment, satisfaction, joy, and identity in knowing God, and nowhere else.

4. GOD IS GRACIOUS - **so we do not have to prove ourselves**

a. If you worship the idol of power, then remind yourself of God's grace given to you in Jesus Christ. Because God is gracious you do not have to work for his acceptance. You do not need to justify yourself. You do not need to win, or to be successful. You are fully accepted and loved by God because of the finished work of Jesus Christ.

6 WAYS TO MINIMIZE SIN

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

Defending

I find it difficult to receive feedback about weakness or sin. When confronted, my tendency is to explain things away, talk about my successes, or justify my decisions. As a result, people are hesitant to approach me and I rarely have conversations about difficult things in my life.

Faking

I strive to keep up appearances and maintain a respectable image. My behavior, to some degree, is driven by what I think others think of me. I also do not like to think reflectively about my life. As a result, not many people know the real me. (I may not even know the real me.)

Hiding

I tend to conceal as much as I can about my life, especially the "bad stuff." This is different from faking, in that faking is about impressing. Hiding is more about shame. I don't think people will accept or love the real me.

Exaggerating

I tend to think (and talk) more highly of myself than I ought. I make things (good and bad) out to be much bigger than they really are (usually to get attention). As a result, things often get more attention than they deserve and have a way of making me stressed or anxious.

Blaming

I am quick to blame others for sin or circumstances. I have a difficult time "owning" my contributions to sin or conflict. There is an element of pride that assumes it's not my fault and/or an element of fear of rejection if it is my fault.

Downplaying

I tend to give little weight to sin or circumstances in my life, as if they are "normal" or "not that bad." As a result, things often don't get the attention they deserve. They have a way of mounting to the point of being overwhelming.

Each of these ways highlights a counter-intuitive truth

When we minimize our sin, we minimize God's life-giving impact in the world.

Even in something so small as missing a meeting, many of us show how little we understand God's holiness, how little faith we have in Christ's righteousness, and how little we expect God is able to do with our situation.

To counteract our tendency to shrink the gospel, we must constantly nourish our minds on biblical truth.

- We need to know, see, and savor the holy, righteous character of God.
- We need to identify, admit, and feel the depth of our brokenness and sinfulness.
- We make this our aim not because it is "what Christians are supposed to do," but because it is the life God wants for us – a life marked by transforming joy, hope, and love.

Our hope is not in our own goodness, nor in the vain expectation that God will compromise His standards and "grade on a curve" considering our excuses. Rather, we rest in Jesus our perfect Redeemer – the One who is "our righteousness, holiness, and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30).

REPENTANCE

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

The consistent pattern of the Christian life is **repentance** and **faith**. We never stop needing to repent and believe. In repentance, we confess our tendency to “shrink the cross” through **performance** and **pretending**. We pull our affections away from false saviors, and fraudulent sources of righteousness and turn to Jesus as our only hope.

For most of us repentance has a negative connotation. Many have a view of repentance that results in us feeling sorry about our sin, beating ourselves up about it, and trying to do something to make up for it. In other words, repentance often becomes more about us than about God or the people we’ve sinned against. How do we start identifying our tendencies towards false repentance? We look for patterns of remorse and resolution when we deal with sin.

Remorse: “I can’t believe I did that!”

Resolution: “I promise to do better next time.”

Behind this way of living are two great misunderstandings about our hearts. First, we think too highly of ourselves. We do not truly believe the depth of our sin and brokenness. This leads us to react in surprise when sin rears its ugly head: “I can’t believe I just did that!” In other words: “That’s not what I’m really like!” Second, we think we have the power to change ourselves. We think that if we make resolutions to try harder next time, we’ll be able to fix the problem. We often make excuses for our sin to avoid the hard work or repentance. Below is a list of some common excuses - and (in parentheses) the inner thoughts they reveal. Look over the list and see which excuses you most identify with:

- **I was just being honest.** (Can’t you handle the truth?)
- **I’m just saying what I feel.** (There’s nothing sinful about my feelings.)
- **I was only kidding.** (Didn’t you get the joke?)
- **I misunderstood you.** (You’re not as crazy as I thought you were!)
- **You misunderstood me.** (I’m not as bad as you think.)
- **That’s just who I am.** (I’m a sinner, so that excuses my behavior.)
- **I made a mistake.** (Don’t we all?)
- **I didn’t mean to do it.** (I didn’t mean to be caught.)
- **I’m having a bad day.** (I deserve better.)

The bible calls us to (and empowers us for) true repentance. According to the Bible, true repentance:

- **Is oriented toward God, not me.** (Psalm 51:4: “Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight...”)
- **Is motivated by true godly sorrow and not just selfish regret** (2 Cor 7:10: “For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly sorrow produces death.”)
- **Is concerned with the heart, not just with external actions.** (Psalm 51:10: “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.”)
- **Look to Jesus for deliverance from the penalty and power of sin.** (Acts 3:19-20: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ who has been appointed for you - even Jesus.”)

Instead of excusing our sin or falling into patterns of remorse and resolution, true gospel repentance moves us to realize and repent. **Realize:** “I did do that.” (“That IS what I’m really like.”) **Repent:** “Lord, forgive me! You are my only hope.” When we stop believing that we can fix ourselves, then we will more quickly turn to Jesus for forgiveness and transformation.

Repentance Step by Step

STEP 1: Acknowledge that you have sinned against God

STEP 2: Confess forms of false repentance and selfish regret (remorse, resolution, etc.)

STEP 3: Discern and repent of the underlying heart motivations that drive you to this sin.

STEP 4: Receive God’s forgiveness by faith.

STEP 5: Rely upon God’s power to turn away from sin

FIGHTING TEMPTATION

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

Do you have a strategy for battling temptation and lust in your life? The best time to prepare for temptation is before temptation comes. One strategy that you can adopt in order to go to war with sinful desires is to follow the acronym: **ANTHEM**.

A - AVOID

Avoid as much as is possible and reasonable the situations that arouse sinful desires. I say “possible and reasonable” because some exposure to temptation is inevitable. Think about your life - in what situations do you feel most tempted to sin? In what situations is the temptation to sin more prevalent and constant? Learn your weakness - the devil certainly has. “Avoiding” is a biblical strategy. “Flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness” (2 Tim 2:22). “Make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.” (Romans 13:14) Remove yourself more situations that stir up the wrong desires.

N - Say NO

Say no to every sinful temptation within the **first five seconds**. You don’t have much more than five seconds. Give it more unopposed time than that, and it will lodge itself with such force as to be almost immovable. Say it out loud if you dare. As John Own said, “Be killing sin or it will be killing you.” And as James says, “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

T - TURN Your Mind Toward Christ

Turn your mind forcefully toward Christ as a superior satisfaction. Simply saying “no” will not suffice. You must move from defense to offense. Attack the promises of sin with the promises of Christ. Sin always lies and promises more than it can deliver (Eph 4:22; 1 Peter 1:14). Deceit and lies are defeated by truth. We must stock our minds with the superior promises and pleasures of Jesus. Then we must turn to them immediately after saying, “NO!”

H - HOLD Fast to the Promises of Christ

Hold the promise and pleasure of Christ firmly in your mind until it pushes the other images out. “Fix your eyes on Jesus” (Heb 12:2). Here is where many fail. They give in too soon. Hold the promise of Christ before your eyes. Hold it and keep holding it! How long? As long as it takes. Fight until you win.

E - ENJOY a Superior Satisfaction.

Enjoy Christ. One reason lust reigns in so many is that Christ has so little appeal. We default to deceit because we have little delight in Christ. Take steps to awaken your affection from Jesus. Pray alongside the psalmist “Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.” (Ps. 90:14) Look to Christ - keeping looking to Christ, until you see how magnificent and beautiful he truly is.

M - MOVE Into a Useful Activity, and Away From Idleness

Sinful desires grow fast in the garden of leisure. Find a good work to do, and do it with all your might (Rom 12:11; 1 Cor 15:58). Get up and do something good. Christ died to make you “zealous for good works” (Titus 2:14). Displace sinful desires with a passion for good deeds.

CONFLICT

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

As the gospel transforms us internally it will ultimately affect the ways you relate to others. Nothing is more common to relationships than conflict. If the gospel is not affecting the way we deal with conflict, then it's probably not touching us very deeply!

Think of the most recent fight you've had. Now, set aside the circumstances of the argument and take a moment to ponder your actions during the conflict. Your behavior probably falls into one of two categories.

ATTACKERS

Some people are attackers. They like to be on the offensive. They place a high value on justice, so it matters greatly to them who is right and who is wrong. Below are signs that you might be an attacker:

- You deal with anger or frustration by “venting” it.
- You argue your case passionately.
- You ask questions like “How do you know?” and “Can you prove that?”
- You want to fight until the fight is over.
- You cross-examine like a lawyer in order to “get to the heart of the conflict.”
- Winning the argument is more important than loving the opponent.
- You turn the argument to focus on the other person, even if it began with you as the focal point.

WITHDRAWERS

On the other end of the spectrum are withdrawers. People with this tendency often find themselves on the defensive. They tend to avoid or ignore conflict and, when pressed into an argument, they respond with silence or apathetic passivity. Below are some signs that you might be a withdrawer:

- You deal with anger or frustration by suppressing it.
- You have opinions but keep them to yourself in order to “keep the peace.”
- You ask questions like, do we have to talk about this now? And does it matter?
- You'd rather avoid a fight than win one.
- You sometimes physically leave an argument in order to “get some space.”

These are the typical ways we respond to conflict. The fact that these responses are considered “normal” is a clue that they may not be biblical.

A Gospel-Centered Approach To Conflict

Outlined below is a process of dealing with conflict in a gospel-centered manner.

1. **Heart Foundation:** Identify the tendency toward either self-righteousness or insecurity. Do you tend to be defensive, or blame others, or always think you are right (self-righteousness)? Do you tend to harbor anger or gossip, or stuff things to avoid confrontation (insecurity)? Confess these things as sin
2. **Power Source:** Acknowledge what drives your attacking or withdrawing. Are you concerned with losing face, being wrong, disrupting the peace, other's disapproval, etc.? By faith, affirm your trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to free you from these sins of pride and fear

3. **Commitment:** Communicate to those involved that you want to seek resolution. To help with this, identify what else you tend to seek instead of resolution (being right, being “safe”, comfort)? Reject these pursuits as false and destructive
4. **Direction:** As you engage the person you are having conflict with, talk honestly and respectfully about your thoughts and feelings, and invite the other party to do the same. Do you understand each other? What usually gets in the way of your understanding, or being understood (anger, argumentativeness, dishonesty, timidity, assumptions you make about others, etc.)?
5. **Feeling and Goal:** Talk about what it will cost each of you to resolve this conflict. Specify what steps need to be taken toward resolution. Pray for God’s will to be done. Ask him to enable you to pay the price of resolution, thanking him for paying the ultimate price of death to resolve the ultimate conflict of our sinful rebellion.

The below outlines the differences between attacking and withdrawing and contrast them with a gospel-centered approach to conflict. The goal is to help you identify what is at the root of the unhealthy patterns of conflict in your life and to provide a clear path toward gospel resolution.

ASPECT	ATTACKING	WITHDRAWING	GOSPEL
HEART FOUNDATION	Self Righteousness	Insecurity	Repentance, Forgiveness
POWER SOURCE	Flesh, Pride	Flesh, Fear	The Holy Spirit
COMMITMENT	To Be Right	To Avoid Conflict	To Understand & Engage
DIRECTION	To Argue or Subdue	To Deny Or Appease	To Convey & Invite
FEELING	Life Is Safe	Life Is Less Painful	Life Is Challenging
GOAL	Self-Protection	"Peace"	God's Glory, Their Good
RESULT	Hurt, Divisiveness	Bitterness, Separation	Healing, Reconciliation

STEWARDSHIP

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

An aspect of growing as a disciple is realizing that everything you have, belongs to God and not you. All of your life, possessions, and time belongs to God. The question is, will you treat it like you own it - or will you acknowledge that you are managing it on his behalf? God has appointed you to be a steward of his world. Stewardship speaks to the relationship between you and God's creation - between you and God's gifts. It touches everything: possessions, money, talents, relationships, your body, your mind, and your sexuality. It all belongs to God, and he has entrusted it to you. The principle of stewardship is built on two simple premises: **God owns it, and you manage it.**

God Owns It. Because God created this world and everything in it, God owns this world and everything in it (**Deut 10:14**). There is nothing in this world that falls outside the ownership of God. Theologian Abraham Kuyper says: **"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"**

You Manage It: God gives you what is his, and he instructs you to use those things in ways that are consistent with his desires and his purposes. We see this mandate from the very beginning of time, when God created the world and then created human beings and commissioned them with the job of managing and cultivating God's good creation (**Gen. 1:28**).

Money and Possessions

Few things in this world have a deeper hold on us than money and possessions. Because of this, it comes as no surprise that the way you relate to your money tells an awful lot about your spiritual health and maturity. Knowing that you are the manager of God's money makes every bit of difference to the way you relate to your money and to the possessions you buy with it. Many people attempted to measure their value in how much money or possessions they have. But the good news of the gospel is that we find our value in worth in what Christ has accomplished for us on the cross. This reality frees us up to use his resources, for his purposes, and not to hold so tightly to them.

When we release our ownership of money, we are freed to be generous with it. One of the ways that we steward God's money is through sacrificial giving. The Gospel compels us to give generously to others and to the church in light of Christ giving his life generously for us (**2 Cor 9:7**). Christians give generously to meet the needs of those around us, and to also advance the gospel and support the work of the gospel in their church and community.

Body

I do not know of a concept that is more radically opposed to our cultural moment than this one: Your body does not belong to you. The rising acceptance of elective abortion and euthanasia so that this is the case. God speaks clearly in his word: **"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body."** (**1 Cor 6:19-20**). Your body was created by God; it is owned by God; and it is to be used for God's purposes. As a result, it is right and good for Christians to steward their body through physical exercise and through exercising self-control on what we consume and how much we consume. Do you care for the body God has given you? Do you treat it like it belongs to him, not you?

Sexuality

Closely related to God's ownership of your body is God's ownership of your sexuality. God has given sexuality as a gift to humanity, and his plan is that it be expressed only and often between a husband and a wife within the covenant bond of marriage. When used this way, sexuality has the power to bind a husband and wife into a uniquely powerful union, while also generating more of his image bearers through procreation.

Yet as a result of sin, humanity has determined to use sex for their own purposes rather than God's. They misuse his good gift. The rise of pornography, adultery, and sexual perversion reveal that many believe the idea that my sexuality is my own and that I am free to express it however I desire. Your body is not your own, and your sexuality is not your own. God expects "that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." (1 Thess 4:4-5). To control your body in holiness and honor is to allow God to direct your sexuality.

Environment

As Christians, we know that God is the creator of this planet, and he has given us stewardship over it. We are stewards of this planet and of this world. We are charged by God to care for it well and to use its riches to carry out God's purposes.

Gospel

Perhaps the most important stewardship of all is the stewardship of the gospel. As Jesus left this earth, he gave his disciples and his church the Great Commission, which is the command to make disciples of all people for God's glory. The earliest Christians gave all that they had to ensure that they were good and faithful stewards of this gospel message, and as a result, it has spread through the generations, and it eventually was spread to us. You are a Christian only because other Christians were faithful stewards of the gospel. We faithfully steward the gospel when we **protect it and spread it**.

TYRANNY OF THE URGENT

By Charles Hummel

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

Have you ever wished for a thirty-hour day? Surely this extra time would relieve the tremendous pressure under which we live. Our lives leave a trail of unfinished tasks. Unanswered letters, unvisited friends, unread books haunt quiet moments when we stop to evaluate what we have accomplished. We desperately need relief. But would that longer day really solve our problem? Wouldn't we soon be just as frustrated as we are now with our twenty-four-hour allotment? We could hardly escape Parkinson's Principle: Work expands to fill all the available time. Nor will the passage of time necessarily help us catch up. Children grow in number and age to require more of our time. Greater experience in profession and church brings more demanding assignments. We find ourselves working more and enjoying it less.

Jumbled Priorities

When we stop long enough to think about it, we realize that our dilemma goes deeper than shortage of time; it is basically a problem of priorities. Hard work doesn't hurt us. We all know what it is to go full speed for long hours, totally involved in an important task. The resulting weariness is matched by a sense of achievement and joy. Not hard work, but doubt and misgiving produce anxiety as we review a month or a year and become oppressed by the pile of unfinished tasks. We sense uneasily our failure to do what was really important. The winds of other people's demands, and our own inner compulsions, have driven us onto a reef of frustration. We confess, quite apart from our sins, "**We have done those things which we ought not to have done, and we have left undone those things which we ought to have done.**"

An experienced factory manager once said to me, "**Your greatest danger is letting the urgent things crowd out the important.**" He didn't realize how hard his advice hit. It has often returned to haunt and rebuke me by raising the critical problem of priorities. We live in constant tension between the urgent and the important. The problem is that many important tasks need not be done today, or even this week. Extra hours of prayer and Bible study, a visit to an elderly friend, reading an important book: these activities can usually wait a while longer. But often urgent, though less important, tasks call for immediate response--endless demands pressure every waking hour. A person's home is no longer a castle, a private place away from urgent tasks. The telephone breaches its walls with incessant demands. The appeal of these demands seems irresistible, and they devour our energy. But in the light of eternity their momentary prominence fades. With a sense of loss we recall the important tasks that have been shunted aside. We realize that we've become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent.

Is there any escape from this pattern of living? The answer lies in the life of our Lord.

The Example of Jesus

On the night before he died, Jesus made an astonishing claim. In his great prayer of John 17 he said to his Father, "**I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do**" (v.4).

We wonder how Jesus could have talked about a completed work. His three-year ministry seemed all too short. A prostitute at Simon's banquet had found forgiveness and a new life, but many others still plied their trade. For every ten withered muscles that had flexed into health, a hundred remained impotent. The blind, maimed and diseased abounded throughout the land. Yet on that last night, with many urgent human needs unmet and useful tasks undone, the Lord had peace. He knew that he had completed the work God had given him.

The Gospel records show that Jesus worked hard. After describing a busy day, Mark reports, "That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. The whole town gathered at the door, and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons" (Mark 1:32-34). On another occasion the demands of the sick and maimed kept Jesus and his disciples so busy that they were not even able to eat. His family went to take charge of him, concluding that he was out of his mind (Mark 3:20-21). After yet another strenuous teaching session, Jesus and his disciples left the crowd and boarded a boat. "A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped." Through it all Jesus was sleeping in the stern on a cushion (Mark 4:35-38). What a picture of exhaustion!

Yet Jesus' life was never feverish; he had time for people. He could spend hours talking with one person, such as the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4). His life showed a wonderful balance, a sense of timing. On one occasion his brothers urged him to go to Judea. Jesus replied, "The right time for me has not yet come; for you any time is right" (John 7:6). In *The Discipline and Culture of the Spiritual Life* A. E. Whiteham observes, "Here in this Man is adequate purpose . . . inward rest, that gives an air of leisure to His crowded life. Above all there is in this Man a secret and a power of dealing with the waste-products of life, the waste of pain, disappointment, enmity, death . . . making a short life of about thirty years, abruptly cut off, to be a 'finished' life. We cannot admire the poise and beauty of this human life, and then ignore the things that made it."

Wait for Instructions

What was the secret of Jesus' ministry? We discover a clue in Mark's report of what happened after the very busy day of teaching and healing which we first noted. "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed" (Mark 1:35). He prayerfully waited for his Father's instructions. Jesus had no divinely drawn blueprint or schedule; he discerned the Father's will day by day in a life of prayer. Because of this he was able to resist the urgent demands of others and do what was really important for his mission.

In the middle of a fruitful ministry across the Jordan where John the Baptist had preached, Jesus received an urgent message from his close friends Mary and Martha concerning their brother Lazarus: "Lord, the one you love is sick" (John 11:3). John records the Lord's paradoxical response: "Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days" (vv. 5-6).

The urgent need was to prevent the death of the beloved brother. But the important thing from God's point of view was to raise Lazarus from the dead. So he was allowed to die and his sisters to grieve. Then Jesus traveled to Bethany and also wept with the family He raised Lazarus, having proclaimed: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (v.25). We may wonder why our Lord's ministry was so short, why it could not have lasted another five or ten years, why so many wretched sufferers were left in their misery. Since Scripture gives no answer to these questions, we must leave them within the mystery of God's purposes. But we do know that Jesus' prayerful waiting for the Father's instruction freed him from the tyranny of the urgent. It gave him a sense of direction, set a steady pace and at the end of his earthly ministry gave him the satisfaction that he had completed the work God had assigned him.

Dependence Makes You Free

Freedom from tyranny of the urgent is found not only in the example of our Lord but also in his promise. In a vigorous debate with the Pharisees in Jerusalem, Jesus said to those who believed in him, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free . . . I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin . . . If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31-32, 34, 36). Many of us have experienced Christ's deliverance from the penalty and power of sin in our lives. Are we also letting him free us from the tyranny of the urgent? In this message he points the way: "If you hold to my teaching." This is the path to freedom, continuing day by day to meditate on the Scriptures and gain our Lord's perspective.

P. T. Forsyth once said, "The worst sin is prayerlessness." Does this statement surprise us? We usually think of murder and adultery as among the worst offenses against God and humanity. But the root of all sin is self-sufficiency-independence from the rule of God. When we fail to wait prayerfully for God's guidance and strength, we are saying with our actions, if not with our words, that we do not need him. How much of our service is actually a "going it alone"? The opposite of such independence is prayer in which we acknowledge our need of God's guidance and empowerment. In this respect we have seen the example set by Jesus in the Gospels. He lived and served in complete dependence on his Father. Contrary to popular views, such dependence does not limit or repress human personality We are never so fully personal-free to become our true selves-as when we are living in complete dependence on God.

Evaluate

People in business recognize the need to evaluate the present and plan for the future. Former President Greenwalt of DuPont said, "One minute spent in planning saves three or four minutes in execution." Many in sales have multiplied their profits by setting aside Friday afternoon to plan carefully the major activities of the coming week. Executives who are too busy to stop and plan may find themselves replaced by others who know better Christians who are too busy to stop, take spiritual inventory and receive their assignments from God become slaves to the tyranny of the urgent. They may work day and night to achieve much that seems significant to themselves and others, but they don't complete the work God has for them to do.

In addition to your daily quiet time, set aside one hour a week for spiritual inventory. Jot down an evaluation of the past, record any lessons God may be teaching you, and plan your activities for the coming week. Also try to set aside a few hours each month for longer-range evaluation and planning. Often you may fail. Ironically, the busier we get, the more we need these periods—and the less we seem able to schedule them. We become like the fanatic who, unsure of his direction, doubles his speed. Prayerful waiting on God is indispensable to effective service. Like the time-out in a basketball game, it enables us to catch our breath and reevaluate our strategy. In prayer we learn the truth about God, ourselves, and the tasks he wants us to undertake. The need itself, however urgent, is not the call for us to meet it; the call must come from the Lord who knows our limitations. "The LORD has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust" (Ps 103:13-14). It is not God who loads us until we bend or break with an ulcer, heart attack or stroke. These largely come from our inner compulsions under the pressure of external demands.

Continue the Effort

Over the years I have found that one of the greatest struggles in the Christian life is the effort to make adequate time for daily waiting on God, weekly inventory and monthly planning. Yet this is the path to escaping the tyranny of the urgent. As we hold to the teachings of Jesus and seek his wisdom in the decisions we make, he frees us from the tyranny of the urgent to do what is really important.

Nothing substitutes for knowing that on this day, at this hour, in this place, we are doing the will of our Father in heaven. Only then can we contemplate in peace so many unfinished tasks. At the end of our lives, whether they are short or long, what could give us greater joy than being sure that we have completed the work God gave us to do? Then we can look forward to seeing our Lord and hearing him say, 'well done, good and faithful servant!' (Matt 25:21).

	Urgent	Not Urgent
Important	1 Crisis 25-30%	2 Quality 15%
Not Important	3 Deception 50-60%	4 Waste 2-3%

This is a "Time Grid" and its supposed to help visualize the % of time we spend in each category. Research has been done to show an average of how much time the normal individual spends in each quadrant.

What are some activities that fit into each quadrant in your life?

How does your time break into these quadrants?

BEFORE YOU OPEN YOUR BIBLE

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

How we approach things matters in a big way. How you approach your job, or your parenting, or a task in large part determines your ability to achieve the outcome that you were hoping for. Your bible is now different. How we approach the bible determines in large part what we get out of the Bible as we read and study it. As a result, here are nine heart postures that we should have before we open God's Word.

Approach Your Bible Prayerfully

This one feels like a given, but it is often the most neglected. What does it look like to approach your bible prayerfully? It means not rushing into your bible reading, expecting the pages to magically microwave your cold heart. What should we pray for then? A helpful place to start is to remember the acronym: **O-I-U-S**

I - "Incline my heart to your testimonies, and not to selfish gain." (Ps. 119:36)

- This assumes our hearts are bent in the wrong direction, away from what gives life. It reveals that while it's effortless to be mindful of self, I have to work to be mindful of God. Thankfully God loves to direct our hearts away from what is worthless, towards what is priceless, all for the sake of our joy.

O - "Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law" (Ps. 119:18)

- The Spirit loves bringing God's word to life, day after day, in the hearts of those blinded by the tyranny of worthless things. Ask the Spirit to unbind you to see the beauty of the scriptures staring you in the face.

U - "Unite my heart to fear your name." (Ps. 86:11)

- The devil knows that the easiest way to keep us from God's Word is to distract us and to lure us into thinking about something - anything - else. We must pray earnestly for a united heart, lest it drift toward being divided, distracted, and distant from the words of the living God.

S - "Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love" (Ps. 90:14)

- It's not just that we're distracted from God, though. We're also dissatisfied in God. We must approach God's word prayerfully asking him to satisfy our restless hearts with his steadfast love.

Approach Your Bible Humbly

We often miss what the existence of God's Word proves about God himself. For one, it reveals to us that God is a talker. He could have remained silent. But in his love and providence, he has spoken to sinners like us, and has revealed his mind and heart to us. The Bible you possess is evidence that God loves you and wants a relationship with you. It is a gracious gift from a loving God, to sinners who are completely undeserving. Humbly receive it as such.

Approach Your Bible Desperately

We shouldn't approach the bible out of duty. We shouldn't even approach the bible out of delight. We should approach the bible out of desperation. Am I merely interested in the scriptures, or am I desperate for them? Am I merely willing to hear from God, or am I desperate to hear from him? Your soul will wither and die without the bible - it is that serious.

Approach Your Bible Studiously

Think about it: We study what we love, don't we? We long to learn about what we love. If we're so careful to study and accurately represent our earthly heroes, why are we lackadaisical in how we talk about our Creator? Jesus insists the greatest commandment includes loving God with your mind. (Matt 22:37-38) Do you approach the bible with an alert and engaged mind? Are you prepared to read slowly, to ponder carefully, and to study studiously? Don't settle for a surface level reading - go deep.

Approach Your Bible Obediently

God deserves your obedience. But you were also made for obedience, like fish for water and birds for air. In the Great Commission the risen King sends his servants into the world not merely to impart information, but to promote obedience. (Matt 28:19-20). The beautiful thing about obedience is that it actually leads to our flourishing and good. Because God wants us to flourish, he restricts us in order to truly free us. He prohibits us in order to drive us to what is good. The Bible is not an arbitrary list of prohibitions; it's an epic story of a Creator more committed to your joy than you could imagine. Entrusting each sphere of your life to him, therefore, is not something you do instead of enjoying him; it's the way you enjoy him.

Approach Your Bible Joyfully

It may sound somewhat strange, but God is happy. Happier than the happiest person you've ever known. And you were made to be happy in a happy God. Despite what our culture tells you, real joy is not found in listening to yourself; it's found in listening intently to God. It's found when your "delight is in the law of the Lord" (Ps. 1:2); when your happiness is tethered not to circumstances but to promises. The purpose of your bible is to fill your heart with joy. (1 John 1:4; John 17:13). But if we are honest, studying the bible can feel like a duty and not a delight. It requires discipline. But as with so much in life - eating healthy, working out, and otherwise things that we struggle to do - it is the nature of discipline to give way to delight. Not every time, and not all at once. But steadily and increasingly, until the day we see our King face to face and behold him in his beauty - with joy that never ends (Isa. 33:17; 1 Cor. 13:12)

Approach Your Bible Expectantly

The Bible has an incredible way of challenging your assumptions and shattering your classifications. There are many things that will let you down in life. There are many things that you pursue that will not meet your expectations. The Bible is not one of those things. It can bear the weight of your expectations and even exceed them. All of the Bible is written for you - to instruct you, to encourage you, to help you endure, and to strengthen your heart with hope. When you come to your bible, come with anticipation. I assure you that among its pages you'll discover everything you need, and more than you expect.

Approach Your Bible Communally

None of us opens God's Word in a vacuum. We are complex individuals who all come to our Bible with luggage carts of experiences and intuitions, beliefs and biases. There is no such thing as a "neutral" reading of any book - especially one that makes all encompassing claims over our lives. Its imperative, therefore, that we approach the bible alongside others, in the context of a diverse community - otherwise our experiences will limit us, our preference will govern us, and our biases will blind us. We desperately need other Christians - ideally those who are different from us - to function in our lives as both barrier-setters and barrier-movers, simultaneously keeping us from reading wrongly and freeing us to read wisely.

Approach Your Bible Cristo-Centrically

Contrary to popular belief, Scripture is not simply a collection of ethical principles, moral platitudes, or abstract life lessons. The Bible shares one large story that is centered on Christ. From the beginning to the end, your Bible is an epic story about Jesus. Above all, the story is one of rescue - God becoming man to bring man back to God. Read it with eyes to see Jesus, and a heart to receive him.

SCAN

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

It may sound odd, but just as God has attributes, so does the Bible. Just as it matters what we believe about God, it matters what we believe about his Word. How we approach God's Word, and how we use God's word are directly connected to what we believe about God's Word. The attributes of Scripture can be summarized using the acronym: **SCAN**

Sufficiency

Scripture does not tell us everything about everything, but it tells us all we need to know to make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3:15). Scriptures contain everything we need for knowledge of salvation and godly living. We don't need any new revelation from heaven. In Christ we have the fullness and the finality of God's redemption and revelation (Heb 1:1-4). In these last days God speaks to us not in many ways, but in one way, through his Son. The former ways that God spoke and revealed himself have ceased. And how does God speak through his Son? By the revelation of the Son's redeeming work - the saving work announced in the Gospels and then interpreted by the Spirit through the apostles in the rest of the New Testament (John 16:12-15). Just as Christ's redemption is enough, God's Words are enough. We need not look elsewhere.

Clarity

The clarity, or perspicuity, of Scripture does not mean that everything in the Bible is easy to understand (just like sufficiency does not mean the Bible tells us everything about everything). Rather, it means that even the unlearned, if they are willing to think and study and pray, can understand the Bible in such a way that they can be saved and live a life pleasing to God. God's words are not beyond us (Deut 30:11-14). You do not need a PhD or a Master's degree to understand scripture. You do not need to rely on "professionals" to understand it. Ordinary people, using ordinary means, can accurately understand enough of what must be known, believed, and observed for them to be faithful Christians.

Authority

What is our ultimate authority? Do we give the final word to reason and experience? To science? To tradition? For Christians, our final authority must be the Holy Spirit speaking through the Scriptures. The last word always goes to the Word of God. We should be like the Bereans, who were eager to let the Scriptures have the last word (Acts 17:11). When interpreted correctly, the Bible is never wrong in what it affirms and must never be marginalized as anything less than the last word on everything it teaches. This refers to "inerrancy" which is the belief that the bible is without error. Inerrancy essentially means that the Word of God stands over us, we never stand over the word of God. When we reject inerrancy, we put ourselves in judgment over God's word. We claim the right to determine which parts of God's revelation can be trusted and which cannot.

Necessity

The only being knowledgeable enough, wise enough, and skillful enough to reveal God is God himself (1 Cor 2:6-13). We cannot know God's saving work by means of personal experience or human reason. We need God's word to tell us how to live, who Christ is, and how to be saved. Nobody can truly know God, his will, or the way of salvation apart from the Bible.

PRAYING THE BIBLE

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

The Problem

Since prayer is talking with God, why don't people pray more? Christians often do not pray because they do not feel like it. And the reason they don't feel like praying is that when they do pray, they tend to say the same old things about the same old things. And if we are honest, saying the same old things, and doing the same old things feel monotonous and boring. If you are a born again Christians who finds himself bored with prayer, then the problem is likely not you - it is with your method.

Prayers without variety eventually become boring words without meaning. Jesus in Matthew 6:7 says "When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard with many words." The tragedy is that too often that's the way it is with our own prayers. We believe in prayer, and the Spirit of God prompts us to pray, but because we always say the same old things about the same old things, it can seem as though all we do in prayer is simply "heap up empty phrases." To be clear, the problem is not that we pray about the same old things - this is quite natural and expected - for we experience much of the same things in life. The problem is that we say the same old things about the same old things.

The Solution

Prayer is actually quite simple. God made it that way so that every one of his children, no matter their background, and education can speak with him. Therefore it is possible for every Christian to have a meaningful and satisfying prayer life. So what is the solution to the boring routine of saying the same old things about the same old things? Here it is: when you pray, pray through a passage of Scripture, particularly a psalm.

The Method

It is quite simple - pick a psalm, any psalm, and begin reading it one verse at a time. Read one verse and whatever truths, imagery, or words stick out to you, pray those back to God. Once you have run out of things to pray for in that verse, move on to the next verse, and so forth. By doing so, you will never run out of anything to say, and best of all, you never again say the same old things about the same only things. Basically, what you are doing is taking words that originated in the heart and mind of God and circulating them through your heart and mind back to God.

That's it. If you are praying through a psalm, you simply read that psalm line by line, talking to God about whatever thoughts are prompted by the inspired words you read. If your mind wanders from the subject of the text, take those wandering thoughts Godward, then return to the text. If you come to a verse you don't understand, just skip it and go to the next verse. If you do understand the verse but nothing comes to mind to pray about, go to the next verse. You may read 20-30 verses in a psalm, and yet on a given day have only 5-6 things come to mind. No problem. Nothing says you have to pray over every verse. Nothing says you have to finish the psalm.

Example: Psalm 23

You may pick Psalm 23 and read the first verse “The Lord is my shepherd” - and pray something like this:

“Lord, I thank you that you are my shepherd. You’re a good shepherd. You have cared for me my whole life. Great shepherd, please shepherd my family today: guard them from the ways of the world; guide them into the ways of God. O Great shepherd, I pray for my children; cause them to be your sheep. May they love you as their shepherd, as I do. And, Lord, please shepherd me in the decision that’s before me about my future. Do I make that move, that change, or not?”

Then when nothing else comes to mind, you go to the next line: “I shall not want.” And perhaps you praying something like:

“Lord, I thank you that I’ve never really been in want. I haven’t missed too many meals. All that I am and all that I have has come from you. But I know it pleases you that I bring my desires to you, so would you provide the finances that we need for those bills, for school, for that car?”

And just as before, when nothing else comes to mind, just go to the next line.

Now it’s your turn. Finish praying through Psalm 23. What you will find is that God’s word is sufficient to direct your prayers and that your prayer will become deeper and more heartfelt. Make it a habit to regularly pray the bible as you read it. It doesn’t have to be a psalm, it can be any verse from any book. They are all inspired and profitable. But if you are looking somewhere to start, begin with the Psalms. Many of them are prayers themselves.

WHAT IS THE CHURCH?

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

One of the most beautiful truths about the gospel is when we become united with Christ by faith, we also become united with each other. All of us experience a constant pull toward radical individualism. Our sin puts blinders on us to where we interpret all of life with us at the center of it. But a big part of understanding the gospel and growing as a disciple, is understanding that you are now a part of something bigger than yourself. You are now adopted into a family of believers, known as the church, that is designed to care for you, and journey with you as you follow Christ together. The idea of a “solo Christian” is found nowhere in the New Testament. All Christians are expected to be actively and faithfully involved in the life of other Christians, primarily in the context of a local church. If we are called to be a part of a local church, then it's important to understand what a church is and what a church is not.

The church is a group of **people** who **profess and give evidence** that they have **been saved by God's grace**; who are committed to **God's mission and God's people**; and who exist for **God's glory**. Lets break it down:

- **People** - the church is a people. It is not a service you attend, or a building you go to. It is a people to belong to.
- **Profess and Give Evidence** - the church consists of true Christians who have demonstrated their union with Christ through baptism, and through a life that bears good fruit.
- **Committed to God's Mission and God's People** - those who belong to a church have a very particular purpose: to work together in fulfilling the mission of the church, which is the Great Commission ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)), and to be committed to the grow and care of the other members of the church. the church has a mission, to make disciples of all people for God's glory.
- **God's Glory** - the church ultimately exists to glorify God. It is where the manifold wisdom of God is most clearly displayed.

The Bible uses a variety of images in the Bible to describe the church. And each image highlights the corporate identity of God's people.



Body - 1 Corinthians 12

For Paul, an individual Christian is neither isolated nor independent. Rather, every Christian is a dignified member of a body. Each member has worth because every body part is necessary to the health of the body. This imagery also highlights the danger of being disconnected from the body. How healthy is a detached limb or a discarded organ?



Family - 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Peter 4:17

A family is a network of relationships and obligations. Family members are bound to one another. They share meals, they celebrate together, they mourn together, they rejoice together, they make decisions together, and, when apart, they long to Reunite.



Temple - 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Pet 2:4-5

Like bricks mortared together, the local church is composed of individuals built into a single temple where the presence of God dwells.



Bride - Eph 5:22-33; Rev 21:1-9

Jesus has a particular relationship with his church that is marked by covenant love, intimacy and purity. He has purchased her with his blood and has promised to present her spotless and without blemish.

Why should a Christian Join a Church?

For Godly Leadership

You will have pastors who are committed to making every effort to care for you and help you grow in your relationship with Jesus. Joining a church also identifies for the pastors who they are responsible for. (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17)

For Other Believers

Joining a church allows you to more accurately practice the "One- Another's" in scripture. It is good to commit yourself to love and serve others. You will grow as a Christian as you commit to encourage, build up, strengthen, serve, rebuke, and pray for other Christians. In addition, by joining a church you now own or have a share in the discipleship of other church members.

For Spiritual Care

You will be part of a family with built in accountability and care when life gets hard. Suppose you ever become that lamb who wanders away from the fold (Matt 18:12-14). It's your church that Jesus will send after you (Matt 18:15-18). In addition, joining a church will help you gain a greater assurance in your salvation. Membership is the church's affirmation of someone's profession of faith. Church membership doesn't guarantee that someone is a Christian, but it should assure believers that the genuineness of their faith has been examined and affirmed.

For Mission

You will be trained and equipped to join in and play an integral role in the mission of the church as we seek to make mature disciples of all people for God's glory. Membership also helps to protect and promote the reputation of Christ on earth by guarding the church's witness (Matt 5:13-16; 28:18-20; John 13:34-35).

WHAT DOES A CHURCH DO?

Part 2: Being Changed by Jesus (Heart)

We Gather Together

God made us for relationship. We were made to be in relationship with him and with others. When we fail to gather physically as a church, we cut ourselves off from the very means by which Christ grows us, cares for us, and protects us. On this side of eternity, the local church is where you and I must tangibly experience the presence of Christ in our lives. As we gather as a church we are being obedient to scripture ([Heb 10:24-25](#)), and we are behaving like a family. Gathering is what a family does, and it is what a family need. When we fail to gather physically, we ourselves off from the very means of grace that reminds us of God's love for us and the hope we have in the gospel.

We Hear From God Together

How does God speak to his people? The primary way that God speaks to his people is through the preaching of his Word to his gathered people - the Church. The proclamation of God's Word is one of the greatest gifts God has given to his church. God speaks clearly to his church when his Word is read and explained to its hearers. When we gather as a church, we do not gather to hear the thoughts of men, we get plenty of that during the week. We come to hear the thoughts of God revealed in his word, and we long for it, because it is only God's Word that brings life.

We Pray Together

Nothing binds hearts together quite like praying together. When Jesus taught his disciples how to pray, he frames it as a corporate prayer. ([Matt 6:9](#)) All of the pronouns used in his prayer were personal plural pronouns ([our, we, us](#)). When we pray like this as a church, it encourages unity and humility - unity because, as the body, we take on each other's burdens and hurts, and humility because our prayers are not focused on me but on us.

We Serve Together

Have you ever been on a mission trip or done a service project with a group? It is an exhausting and good work that blesses those who receive it. But isn't it true that it also blesses you? As you serve alongside other people, you get to meet real needs, but you also get to know real people in a deep and meaningful way. The church is Christ's body ([1 Cor 12:17](#)) and we are fellow works in it ([1 Cor 3:9](#)). We have the privilege of serving God by working alongside each other to serve othes. And by doing so, we develop deep and meaningful relationships that only happen by working together, side by side.

We Evangelize Together

The church gathers weekly to be encouraged and equipped for gospel ministry and mission ([Eph 4:12-17](#)), and then scatters throughout the week in order to accomplish the mission that Christ has given his church - which is to make disciples of all people for God's glory ([Matt 28:18-20](#)). The church is a people you belong to, and not a service you attend. So as the church, we steward the areas of our lives: the places where we live, work, and play, and seek to make disciples of all people where God has placed us. This is what we do individually. But when the church gathers corporately, the manifold wisdom of God is on display for unbelievers to see, as people from all different backgrounds and walks of life, love each other and care for each other, in light of what Christ has done for them. ([Eph 3:9-12](#))

MAPPING "OIKOS"

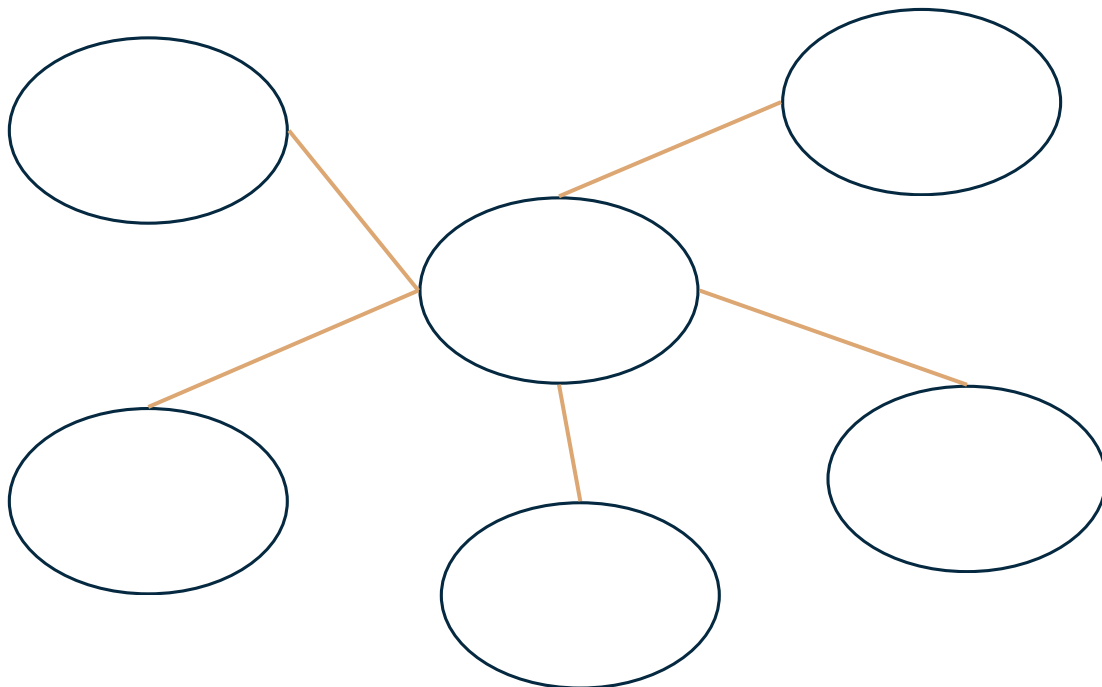
Part 3: Committed to the Mission of Jesus (Hands)

The term **oikos**, which is used roughly 120 times in the New Testament, is a Greek word that means “**household**”, and it refers to the people in your sphere of influence. Oftentimes when Jesus found people who were open to his message he would eventually share the message with their entire family network, their oikos. This is true of the early Christians as well. One of the primary ways that the church grew in the New Testament was through people sharing the gospel with people that they were relationally connected with.

An Oikos Map is a simple way to identify who these people are in your life so that you can begin praying intentionally for them, and living with gospel intentionally around them. An Oikos map essentially helps you identify the people who are close to you but far from God. Prayerfully think of 5 people in your relational network (your “oikos”) that you would like to begin praying for and sharing the gospel with. These can be people in your household, workplace, neighborhood, sports team, class, gym, club, etc.

Follow these steps:

1. Write your name in the middle circle
2. Think about the people in your life who are far from God (family, friends, classmates, co-workers, team mates, neighbors etc.) Put a name in each of the connected circles.
3. To visualize the potential for multiplication you can also add some people who each of the above may reach if they became a Christian using lines to connect to that person.
4. Begin to pray regularly and intentionally for the people on your Oikos Map and seek opportunities to share the Gospel with them.



OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF EVANGELISM

Part 3: Committed to the Mission of Jesus (Hands)

It's no secret that one of the main reasons we shrink back from sharing our faith with others is because we are afraid. Perhaps we are afraid of a painfully awkward situation; or the fear of outright rejection or embarrassment; or the fear of not being able to answer a skeptic's question. The solution then is not removing the fears, for that would be impossible. Rather, we need to learn how to face our fears in order to be faithful to the Great Commission. If we wait to share our faith until our fears are no more, then we will never share it.

Does the thought of evangelism make your heart race, your voice shake, and your stomach drop? Well if it does, then welcome to the club. These unpleasant feelings are not a signal to escape, but rather an invitation to face your fear head on. The simple fact is that sharing the gospel will always be inconvenient. There will always be something unideal about the situation that prompts Satan to whisper his two favorite words into your ear: **"Not now"**. Satan is busy keeping sinners from opening their eyes, and he does so by keeping you from opening your mouth (2 Cor. 4:3-6). He knows that he can prevent sight, if he can simply prevent speech. This is his tactic. So, don't wait for the perfect scenario. It will never come. Instead, make a resolution to seize and steward the one that God has given you now. And don't forget that God loves to save sinners.

Below are some verses that you can meditate on to help you face your fear of sharing your faith: Psalm 56:3-4; Proverbs 29:25; Isaiah 8:12-13; Isaiah 41:10; John 15:5; Acts 18:9-10; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 3:5; Galatians 1:10; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 1:7

These verses can help ground you in truth, as you overcome your fear of evangelism. But ultimately, there is really only one way to overcome your fear: your heart needs to be captivated by Jesus, and not the opinions of others.

In Matthew 12:34 Jesus tells us that **"out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks"**. It is natural for us to speak about the things that capture our hearts. We freely speak about the things that we love. For instance, think about the sports fans who are covered head to toe in his team's merchandise. He walks into any environment and shares with anyone who will hear about how great his team is. How is he able to do that? His heart is captivated by his favorite team. Or think about the friend, or the office colleague who holds an unpopular opinion yet voices it anyway. In both of these examples, people have managed to overcome the fear of others. How? Because they have a great passion that is ruling their hearts.

And this is the answer for Christians who fear evangelism. If you struggle to share your faith with others - the answer is not to learn a new set of arguments or techniques. Instead, let's return to the source: the glory of Christ, a treasure greater than all the sports teams, all the celebrity gossip, all the pet peeves, and all the hobbyhorses that fill our conversations. As we are captured more by his glory, we will speak. Not fluently. Not impressively. But genuinely, from the heart- and our passion will communicate more than our eloquence ever could.

*Source: "Before You Share Your Faith" by Matt Smethurst and Article: "Evangelism Made Simple" by Glen Scrivener

SHARING YOUR STORY

Part 3: Committed to the Mission of Jesus (Hands)

One of the joys of following Jesus is being changed by Jesus. Every person who follows Jesus has a story of redemption that they are able to share with others to help them on their journey with Jesus. One of the difficulties of sharing our story, is actually understanding our story. Below is a rough outline to help you understand your story, so that you can share it more effectively with others.

Creation: “What is my identity in?”

Creation is all about **identity** and **purpose**. We all have fundamental beliefs about who we are and what shaped us into the people we are today. Every person finds their identity in someone or something. We all look to someone and something to give our lives meaning and purpose. Many attempt to find their identity in their relationships, money, work, appearance, possessions, or approval.

- Goal: Identify what you look to and or still tend to depend on for your sense of identity. What do you trust in for your sense of worth and value?
- Remember: The gospel story grounds our identity in our creation as image bearers of God, who were put into his world in order to worship him and represent him.

Fall: “Who or what was the problem in my life?”

The Fall is all about **brokenness**. In this movement of the story we begin to share what has destroyed or is destroying our identity and purpose. We all recognize that the world is not as it should be. We are not as we should be. There is brokenness out there, and there is brokenness in us. Why are things broken? How did it become broken? Who is the blame? We must recognize that the problem is in us. The gospel informs us that the real problem is sin - our unbelief in God. And sin destroys everything that it touches.

- Goal: Take ownership of your sin and the brokenness that it caused. Identify what you have done that is broken. What have you believed about God, others, and yourself that is wrong. And how have these sinful beliefs led to sinful behaviors?
- Remember: When we share our stories and fall to confess our sins, we often fail to show our need for a savior as well. Honestly and appropriately confess your sins so that others will recognize your need for a savior and theirs as well.

Redemption: “Who or what is our savior?”

Redemption is all about rescue. Everyone is in need of a savior. Everyone needs to be rescued. This is the part of the story where you share who or what we look to in order to save us and rescue us. This is where we make it clear that there is only one savior who can actually deal with the real problem of sin and his name is Jesus Christ. Every other “savior” falls drastically short of addressing our real problem.

- Goal: Share who or what you were looking to for deliverance and how you came to see Jesus as a far better savior, who rescued and redeemed you from sin and your slavery to it.
- Remember: Jesus is enough. Only Jesus measures up, and only Jesus can truly save us.

New Creation: “What has changed and what will change?”

There is a longing in every one of us for change, for transformation - for all things to be made new. Everyone is looking forward to a final conclusion, to the complete fulfillment of our every longing. This is the hope that drives us. In this last part of our story, we share what has changed in us, as well as the ultimate change we are longing for. We share how we’ve been transformed and what our ultimate hope is.


- Goal: Share how Jesus has changed you, is currently changing you, and about your future hope for everything to change
- Remember: The gospel is not just about what has happened. It’s also good news about what is happening right now and will happen in the future.

HOW TO SHARE YOUR STORY IN 15 SECONDS

How do we turn a normal conversation into a gospel conversation? We use our story. But in most cases, we only have a short amount of time to accomplish this. One helpful tool is to summarize your story so that you can share it in 15 seconds or less, with the hopes that it will lead to a more in depth conversation. Use the template below to craft your 15 seconds testimony.

1. **Intro**: “There was a time in my life...”
2. **Life Before Jesus**: pick two words that characterized your life before knowing Jesus
3. **Jesus**: “But then I was forgiven by Jesus and chose to follow him...”
4. **Life after Jesus**: pick two words that characterize your life now that you follow Jesus
5. **Invitation**: “Do you have a story like this?”

Example: “There was a time in my life when I was depressed and hopeless, but then I was forgiven by Jesus and chose to follow him. Now my life is characterized by joy and hope. Do you have a story like this?”

INTRO There was a time in my life...	Life before Jesus		Life after Jesus	INVITATION Do you have a story like this?
	← _____		→ _____	
	_____		_____	
	Write a word in each line that characterized your life before knowing Jesus.		Write a word in each line that characterizes your life now.	
		“But then I was <u>forgiven</u> by Jesus and chose to <u>follow</u> him...”		

SHARING THE GOSPEL

Part 3: Committed to the Mission of Jesus (Hands)

“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 10:14-15

The average person has about 27 conversations per day. We talk about all kinds of things: sports, weather, news, movies and TV shows. We're even willing to debate the nuances of politics and the complexities of the problems facing our world. However, when it comes to bringing up the gospel, we quickly shy away. We find ourselves talking about everything but the gospel. We have made talking about the gospel a daunting task, but it doesn't have to be this way. Talking about Jesus can become as natural as talking about any other topic.

But in order to become comfortable with it, we need to have a simple and reproducible way for turning everything into gospel conversations. Below is a simple model to do just that.

Step 1: Pray

Sharing the gospel always begins with prayer. We need to pray fervently for opportunities to address brokenness. Prayer aligns our hearts with God's heart for the lost. It is prayer that prepares their hearts - and ours - for everyday gospel conversations.

Step 2: Listen

When was the last time you had a conversation and the person with whom you were talking shared a problem, issue or concern? It happens a lot. These interactions are gospel opportunities. It is important for us to recognize them and seize the opportunity. Identify a problem or a hurt that the individual is experiencing.

Step 3: Transition

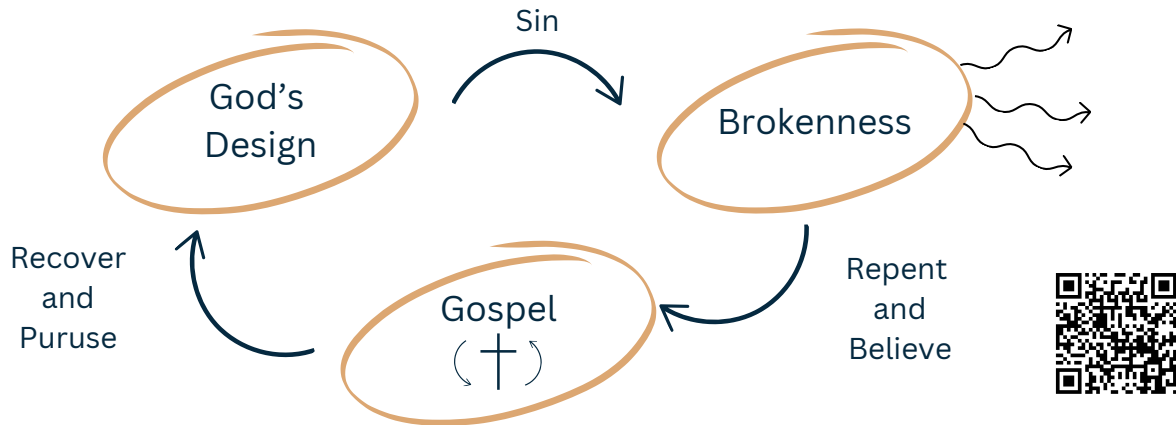
Transitioning conversations is actually something we do every day. We often change the course of a conversation with a question or a statement. Yet when it comes to transitioning to the gospel, we can think of a million reasons why we shouldn't do it. Using a transition statement like the one below can serve as a great help.

“I haven't been through the exact situation that you just mentioned, but I have had similar problems (or issues or concerns). Can I share something with you that has really helped me?”

Step 4: Share the Gospel

There are many faithful and effective ways to share the good news of the gospel. Feel free to share it the way that you feel most comfortable. It is the gospel that saves, not a particular gospel sharing tool. However, if you are looking for a simple and effective way to share the gospel, then consider using the 3 Circles Method.

3 Circles: Below is an example of the 3 Circles. Scan the QR code below to watch a short video on how to use it, or download the “Life on Mission” App on your phone.



Step 5: Invitation and Response

It's important to remember that we are only responsible for sharing the gospel and inviting people to respond. We are not responsible for their response. Many people refused Jesus' invitation in the Gospels, and many will refuse ours as well. But this shouldn't keep us from inviting. After sharing the gospel ask him or her: **“Is there anything that would keep you from repenting and believing the gospel right now?”** and then wait for their response.

“Now when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked. But others said, “We will hear you again about this.” So Paul went out from their midst. But some men joined him and believed...” - Acts 17:32-34

In the passage above we see three different responses to the gospel being preached. They are summarized below

- **Red Light (v.32)** - **“some mocked”**
 - In the case of a clear no, we should respond graciously. You can say something like: **“Thank you for listening to me. If you ever find yourself in a place of brokenness, please remember our conversation and that God has made a way out through his Son, Jesus.”**
- **Yellow Light (v.32)** - **“We will hear from you again”**
 - This is the **“I need to think about it response”**. These individuals are not ready to respond in faith to the gospel, but they are interested in learning more. If this is the response, then invite them to study the bible with you, or set up another time to talk. Ed Stetzer reports that over 50% of non-Christians would be willing to study the bible with a friend, and that over 75% would listen to someone share his or her faith. It often takes multiple gospel conversations for someone to repent and believe in the gospel, so do not give up, continue the conversation in future and continue to pray for the individual.
- **Green Light (v.34)** - **“some men joined him and believed”**
 - This is the response that we all long for. If the individual wants to trust in Jesus then lead the person in a verbal expression of his or her inward heart change (**Rom. 10:9**). Set up a follow up meeting where you can discuss what it looks like to follow Jesus, and invite the individual to attend church with you.