

Biblical Counseling Training For Lay Counselors

Session 02 - Presenting The Gospel (NIV based)

What is the Gospel?

-- 'gospel' = good news or good message

KEY VERSES: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 - "1. Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4. that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5. and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8. and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born."

-- Jesus is God; He came to the earth; He was sinless. (John 1:1,14; 1 Peter 2:22)

-- He suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins. (1 Corinthians 15:3)

-- He was buried and then raised from the dead. (1 Corinthians 15:4)

-- We all have sinned, fall short of the perfection or complete sinlessness He requires, and we are headed for and deserve (permanent) eternal punishment. (Romans 3:23)

-- God says that each person needs to place his/her faith in Jesus (John 3:16) in order to receive eternal life rather than receive the default eternal punishment.

-- God completely rejects letting anyone into heaven based on their good works. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

-- By nature, the gospel advocates a 180 degree change in the direction of one's life (repentance).

-- The gospel requires a personal response for the hearer - to commit a step of faith.

How To Present The Gospel

-- Advance preparing of the person is good - God needs to work in their hearts to prepare them to receive Christ.

-- Watch for opportunity and time.

-- Watch for a willingness to listen - a strong negative reaction usually only comes when the person is trapped and forced to listen.

-- Utilize suitable lead-into questions:

-- - - "Do you think that you are connected to God? On what legal or technical basis?"

- - - - "If you were to die today, do you think you would go to heaven? What do you base that on? Are you sure God lets people into heaven on that basis?"
- - Record their response as to what basis they are relying on to get into heaven; later they may try to argue otherwise.
- - Explain the gospel clearly and concisely.
- - It is best to read the verses rather than quote or paraphrase - it is hearing and believing the Word that will save them. (Romans 10:17)
- - Use a sin verse, such as Romans 3:23 or 6:23.
- - Use an if / then salvation verse, such as John 3:16, Revelation 3:20, Romans 10:9-10, Acts 16:31, or John 1:12.
- - Make sure to emphasize that Jesus died for **YOUR** sins - personalize it to them.
- - Ask for their reaction, "What do you think about this?"
- - Address any issues they may have.
- - Ask for a response to the gospel (invitation to receive Christ), "Would you like to believe in Jesus to pay the penalty for your sins?", "When do you want to do that, right now?"
- - If they appear to be sincerely ready, assist them to pray, basing the prayer on the passages you used; otherwise allow them to decline or to think about it.
- - A sample prayer based on John 3:16 with Romans 3:23 is:
Dear God,
I know that I am a sinner, and because of my sins, I fall short and cannot get into heaven on my own. But, I also know that you love me so much that you sent Jesus to make a way for me to get into heaven. So, I believe in Jesus, that He had never sinned, that He died on the cross to take the punishment for my sins, and that He rose from the dead. Please forgive me of all my sins and give me eternal life in heaven one day when I die, because I believe in Jesus right now. Thank you. Amen.
- - Follow-up the prayer by asking them what they just prayed about - this can give you a good indication of whether or not they understand what you have been explaining to them and what they may want from God.
- - If it looks like they understand and willingly prayed to receive Christ, then reinforce from the salvation verse you used that God says in this verse that "if you believe in Jesus then you have eternal life" but do not declare that they are now saved (because you cannot see into their heart).
- - A common major misconception in some cultures is that 'Jesus died for our sins and took care of them, so we do not have to worry about our sins'. This thinking is not correct because if Jesus died for everybody's sins, then everybody would get to go to heaven. Jesus' sacrifice of Himself on the cross is sufficient to cover all sins, it is available to everybody, but it only applies

to those who believe and trust in His sacrifice to pay the penalty for their personal sins and get them into heaven (personalized and exclusive).

- - A common major belief in every culture is that 'God will let you into heaven if the good things or religious things (for example: church membership, communion, baptism, going forward in an altar call, catechism, and etcetera) you have done outweigh the bad things you have done'; Ephesians 2:8-9 or Romans 3:19-22 address and refute this clearly.
- - For a culture of predominantly Catholic adults, Romans 3:20-25 works excellently.
- - For young children, Romans 3:23 (sin verse) and John 3:16 (salvation verse) work good.
- - Be sensitive to and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- - Offer the gospel - you do not want to be demanding or pushy.
- - An important concept to remember, 'You have to get them lost before you can get them saved.'
- - A lot more sowing / planting is done than reaping / harvesting.
- - Wait for and allow God time to work in their hearts.
- - Make sure to emphasize that they must understand it (the gospel) and believe with sincerity in order for it to work.
- - If possible, follow-up a seemingly successful salvation, preferably a week or two later; watch for any measurable change; ask the lead-into questions again.
- - Realize and remember that as long as the person rejects receiving Christ, essentially they are not open to obeying anything else God says.

Works Cited:

Bible. "The Holy Bible: New International Version." *The Bible Library CD-ROM*. Oklahoma City, OK: Ellis Enterprises, 1988.

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File name: BiblicalCounselingTraining-Session02.____ (.htm, .doc, .pdf)
Translation used: NIV, quoted or referred to in various places within this document
Source: www.BelieverAssist.com
Updated: September 8, 2016