



GOSPEL BASICS

Disciple Making Studies for the Church



Dear Grace Family,

The gospel of Jesus Christ is bright light and living hope. It's a bright light that shines into the darkest recesses of the world and the human heart. It's living hope that transforms, reconciles, and sustains.

The gospel isn't just a set of facts or statements and it's not a packaged presentation to dispense out to those in need. It is the comprehensive narrative of what God is doing in human history and beyond—the complete story of the Bible as God's relentless action to redeem and repair what sin has ruined. This Good News is the very message that God uses to bring sinners to Himself in salvation and it is the very message that shapes and informs the life of the disciple. But the gospel is more than a story and a message, more than light and hope. The gospel is ultimately about a person—the person of Jesus Christ.

In this study, we will walk through portions of *The Gospel at Grace*—a pamphlet we developed to help us think together about how to think about and share the Gospel. Our prayer is that this study will lead us to better understand, rest in, and proclaim this gospel. There is no hope or salvation apart from the gospel of Christ. There is no endurance or joy apart from the gospel of Christ.

Ricky Diaz and I partnered together in writing this and it's our hope that you will make this booklet your own, write your name on it, answer all the questions honestly, and let the truth of God's Word increase your desire to make & multiply disciples that worship the Father in Spirit and Truth. Let this study lead us to believe that “from Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things. To Him be glory forever. Amen.”

—*Jared Burkholder, Pastor of Prayer and Mission*

CONTENTS

Gospel Basics: The Gospel Starts With God	7
Gospel Basics: Mankind is Broken	11
Gospel Basics: Jesus Christ Saves Sinners	15
Gospel Basics: Salvation Brings Newness	19



GOSPEL BASICS

The Gospel Starts With God

John Calvin once said, “The purpose of the Gospel [is] to make us sooner or later like God; indeed it is, so to speak, a kind of deification.” It is imperative for everyone to understand and rest on the truth that only the Gospel of Christ is the means of transformation in people’s lives. God is the one who is actively involved in saving and changing people for Himself. However, before you start thinking about the transformational power of the Gospel, you must understand its origin!

The gospel starts with God. It must. All must understand the difference between the Creator and His creation. This establishes the relationship of all creation—including every human—to the Creator God. God created out of fullness rather than out of need. He spoke everything into existence to share his goodness and glory with the express purpose of that goodness and glory being reflected in all He made. God as Creator places Him in the role of Master and Lord over His creation. As Creator God, all things belong to God, exist for His pleasure, and are under His rule. All that God intends for and pronounces over His creation matters because all creation belongs to Him. (The Gospel of Grace)

The good news of the Gospel is good, because God is good. His grace in our lives is a demonstration of His amazing love for the world, for His people, and for His own worth. A clear understanding of this leads us to be part of the greatest rescue mission ever written in the history of the world!

GOSPEL BASICS

Big Idea: The Gospel Starts with God, He is the sole author of restoration and salvation for all creation.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- Why do you think it's imperative to start with who God is in our understanding of the Gospel? What do we risk misunderstanding if we don't start with God?
- How should the nature of our relationship with God as Creator shape the way we think about His holiness and our sin?
- How does understanding that all things exist for God inform my understanding of my purpose on earth?

GOING DEEPER

Often, we see ourselves as the center of the universe. Implicitly, we think and act as if *we* are the true god of the universe. The Gospel will never make sense to unbelievers and it will never have the appropriate place in our life unless we first know, understand, and believe that God alone is the Sovereign Lord of all creation.

Read Genesis 1:1–2:17; Romans 1:18–23

- What are some ways the world worships itself? How is sin, fundamentally, idolatry (self-worship)? Give specific ways that even Christians indulge in this self-glorification.
- Will sin make sense unless we understand our place before God as His creation? Why or why not?
- How does creation give evidence to God's existence? How would we talk to an unbeliever about ways that they can see clues to God's existence in the world around them?
- What would it look like, in your daily life, to live every moment thinking about the Lordship of Christ over your life?

Read Revelation 4:11

- What should change in us when we understand that all of creation exists to bring glory and honor to God?
- Given our own sinfulness, how does this help us appreciate the gospel more—leading us to rest more fully in what Christ has done on our behalf?
- How would we explain this principle to an unbeliever, helping them see that they could never live up to their created purpose?

The Gospel Starts With God

- Do we truly believe that living for God's glory is for our best? If so, why? How does sin rob us of this joy?

SO WHAT?

If we misunderstand who God is, we will get the entirety of our Christian faith wrong. Christianity isn't about the incremental improvement of my life or about God making me a better me. The Christian journey is living in joyful and submissive obedience to the only God of the universe. It means relinquishing my attempts to worship myself as ultimate. And this isn't a diminished existence. It's the very thing we were created for—what brings us the most joy and God the most glory.

- How can we lead ourselves, our families, and our church into more deeply embracing God as God? How can this shape our idea of *lifestyle worship*?
- What objections might an unbeliever have to recognizing the Lordship of God?
- How would we seek to answer these objections and questions? How does John 6:44 root us in remembering that salvation is a supernatural act of God?

Pray together that God will open your eyes to see more clearly what it means to live as his worshipful creation. Ask together that God would give you wisdom and insight to help the people in your life see that they were made for God. Pray specifically, by name, for people that you think God could use you to speak truth into.



GOSPEL BASICS: *Mankind Is Broken*

The news, social media, and more are constantly informing and reminding us of our cruel reality: Brokenness! Day after day, we are firsthand witness that there is something wrong in the world around us, and inside of us. It seems quite impossible not to ask: Why is it so difficult to get along? Why is it so difficult to do good? Why do we have the proclivity to destroy rather than preserve?

While God created all things to experience His goodness, live under His rule, and reflect His glory, mankind rejected this role as worshipper. Rather than living out their purpose to know and love God—all mankind has pursued loving themselves. This is called sin—it separates all humans from God and brings destruction to all creation and to the lives of every person. And the root of this problem is internal—every person is broken and sinful from the inside out. Sin is not merely a problem of action, it goes much deeper into the disposition and the heart of every person.

And this universal sin problem means that every person is alienated from God, inherently unrighteous, and headed towards ultimate judgment. Worse still, this sin principle renders everyone spiritually dead and unable to appease God or earn His forgiveness and acceptance. The Bible teaches that while Natural Revelation (evidence of God's existence seen in the created world) and the human conscience are enough to point to the problem of sin, they are incapable of leading sinners from death to life. (The Gospel of Grace)

GOSPEL BASICS

Fortunately, God's Special Revelation, His precious Word, not only reveals the reality/problem of the world around us, but our hearts as well. Moreover, in His Word we can find the solution; Jesus Christ! Only the Creator can fix the creation and His creatures. Only by His power can we have new life now, with our affections being changed from wickedness to obedience, giving the ability to delight ourselves in the sweet taste of holiness. We are restored in what it means to be human, a worshiper of God.

Big Idea: Mankind is Broken, fully lost and helpless in their sin.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- What are some ways that we see the brokenness of the world on a large scale? What are ways we see that brokenness in daily life? In ourselves?
- What cause or reason would an unbeliever give for the evil in the world? Why is this insufficient? How could we respond to such a reason?
- What's wrong with the idea that people are fundamentally good, only occasionally doing bad things?

GOING DEEPER

People today are deeply put-off by the Christian idea of sin. But this isn't a recent phenomenon. Throughout human history, mankind has wanted the freedom to live, think, act, and speak in whatever manner they think best. But, while no one naturally wants to be called broken, sinful, or evil, the Bible does just that. It identifies that every person is spiritually dead, from the inside out. And this deadness manifests itself in all kinds of little and big ways. We cannot give someone the good news of the Gospel unless the bad news of their lostness sinks deep into their soul. Similarly, we cannot rightly fight our own sin with the joy and power of Jesus unless we have a biblical perspective on mankind.

Read Genesis 3:1–24

- What did Satan tempt Adam and Eve, ultimately, to do? In what ways was this about much more than eating fruit?
- How does our sin and temptation mirror Adam and Eve's? How are we tempted to treat ourselves and our opinions and desires as god? How does our sin lead to brokenness, like that of Adam and Eve's?

Read Romans 2:14–16

- What is Paul saying here about the conscience that every person has?

ManKind Is Broken

- What does our conscience and the feelings of guilt for wrong-doing teach us about the reality of sin?
- How can God use someone's conscience to point them to their need for Christ? How does God use our conscience to signal sin in our lives?

Read Romans 5:12–14

- What do these verses tell us about the pervasiveness of sin?
- How would we explain original/universal sin to an unbeliever?
- What is the Christian's relationship with sin after salvation?

Read Ephesians 2:1–3

- What does Paul mean in referencing spiritual deadness?
- How does this highlight the hopelessness of the world apart from Christ?
- How would we explain that hopelessness to the people around us?

SO WHAT?

One of the most loving things we can do with the unbelievers in our lives is to point out their sin. To not call attention to sin is to let the fear of awkwardness be more important to us than the threat of hell for those we love and live alongside. With love and humility in our hearts, God calls us to speak openly and directly about the reality of sin. And we can do this with joy because the conversation doesn't end with sin and judgment—God's judgment leads us to the need for our Savior Jesus Christ.

- How should understanding the force of sin rid us of our own natural bent toward legalism?
- Why does sin cause us to feel separated from God? What sins in your life contribute to this now (be specific-James 5:16)? How does the Gospel free us from this guilt?
- Practice with the person next to you about how you would explain human sin and brokenness to an unbeliever. How would you explain the human need for a Savior?

Pray that God would grow your own gratitude for salvation from sin. Pray together for one person, by name, with whom you need to speak about the reality of sin and brokenness.



GOSPEL BASICS: *Jesus Christ Saves Sinners*

The Good News of Jesus Christ will never seem truly good unless the really bad news of our total lostness grips us. Similarly, unless we understand the fullness of God's promise to save—spoken of and waited for in the Old Testament—we will fail to appreciate the immensity of God's provision in Christ.

Into the brokenness of all creation, God promised to send a Victor who would overcome Satan and the curse of sin. The story of the Old Testament is the story of the expectation of and need for this Messiah. Yet the Savior came not as the conquering king but as a suffering servant—taking upon Himself the sin and guilt of God's own. In dying on the cross and taking the punishment from the Father that all deserve, Jesus Christ has opened the way for sinners to be forgiven, declared righteous, brought back into relationship with God, and given new and eternal life. Christ's resurrection signals the coming of what God promised—the defeat of death and the undoing of sin's stranglehold on people and on creation. (The Gospel of Grace)

The hope of salvation and the hope of the Christian doesn't come in a process or even in a system of belief, it comes in a person. Salvation will never come to the person who isn't rightly connected to Christ through faith. And joy in the Christian life will be elusive for those who never learn to rest in Christ.

GOSPEL BASICS

Christianity breaks out of the mold of every other religion by admitting a brokenness that cannot be fixed by morality or religious action. The Christian faith beckons the unbeliever to come and find life in Christ alone. But a joyful and fruitful life of discipleship is rooted in that same dependence and joy in Christ.

The more our hearts and minds are filled with the love, truth, and righteousness of Christ, the more we are equipped to live as obedient disciples and faithful evangelists.

Big Idea: Joyfully following Christ and faithfully sharing Christ must be rooted in rightly knowing Christ.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What are some ways that we tend to focus on the Gospel without focusing on the person of Christ? Why is this mistaken?
- What does real rest in the person of Christ look like? How does that differ or match your understanding of what it means to follow Christ?
- What does it look like to share the Gospel emphasizing hope and newness in Christ, rather than an angry, judgmental Gospel? How do we balance highlighting sin and judgment while still focusing on God's kindness and hope in Christ?

GOING DEEPER

We grow in our joy to follow and obey Christ and our motivation to share Christ when our affection grows for Christ. This isn't something merely for newer believers, this is a chief goal of the Christian life—to see, and keep seeing, the greatness of Jesus Christ.

Read Genesis 3:15; 2 Samuel 7:7–16; Isaiah 53:4–11

- What is the sense of expectancy the Old Testament has about the coming of the Messiah?
- What do these passages (and others) tell us about the reign and hope of Christ on earth?
- How does understanding the promises God made help us recognize, in a greater way, the provision of our Savior Christ?

Read Ephesians 2:4–10; Colossians 2:9–14

- What kind of change does Christ work in someone when he saves them?

Jesus Christ Saves Sinners

- What does it mean to be made *full* in Christ?
- Paul says, in Colossians 2:14, that Christ has nailed the record of our debt to the cross—what kind of finality is Paul referencing here? What hope does that give us? How should the fullness of our forgiveness motivate our worship?

Read John 4:13–14 and 6:35–40

- Christ speaks here of life and fullness in Him—what does it look like to find our fullness in Jesus Christ?
- How does Christ provide true satisfaction and rest in Himself?
- How should Christ’s approach to sharing the good news with unbelievers in John 4 & 6 shape our evangelism?

SO WHAT?

The more we know about Jesus Christ, the more our love for Him will grow. And, in God’s plan, it’s this love that truly motivates a life of discipleship and a heart of evangelism. Any other motivation, for obedience and mission, is unsustainable or misguided. God calls us to deepening joy in Himself. Joy that leads us to fight sin, refuse anxiety, and find true hope in Him. This deepening joy should propel us to seek to make the greatness of Christ known in all we do and among all that God has placed us.

- What are some ways we settle for lesser things, rather than seeking fullness in Christ?
- What does it look like, on a day-to-day level, to find our fullness in Jesus?
- How can our own joy in Jesus Christ fuel our evangelism to others?

Pray together that God would deepen your love of and rest in the person of Jesus Christ. Pray for someone, by name, with whom you need to share the hope of Jesus Christ.



GOSPEL BASICS: *Salvation Brings Newness*

Any time the Gospel is proclaimed, there *is* a response to it. We see this in the Gospel stories of Christ’s own ministry—where some walked away in anger, some had doubts, and some believed. Salvation doesn’t come through proximity to the Gospel or even a mere intellectual assent to the facts of the Good News. Salvation comes, by grace, through faith. It is the work of God to lead the believing and repenting sinner to commit their whole life to the claims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The saving work and resurrection life of Christ come only to those who repent and believe. Repentance, which is itself a gift of God’s grace, signals a person’s willingness to turn from their life of sin and self-worship to one of following God as the ruler and authority in their life. Faith is more than intellectual understanding or the belief that the gospel is true. Rather, saving faith is the life commitment to all that the gospel claims as the believing sinner entrusts their life and eternal destiny to the work of Christ. This salvation is not only from sin and towards righteousness, it also places the believer into the Church. God unites all His own to this Church, leading them to gather together for growth, engage one another in service, and reach others with the saving hope of the Gospel. (The Gospel of Grace)

Repentance and faith are the gateway to salvation—there can be no life, forgiveness, or righteousness without them. But they continue to be the foundation of Christian growth and joy. The narrative of Scripture is that

GOSPEL BASICS

the idolatry and selfishness of sin corrupts and destroys. Reconciliation with God in Christ leads every person back to what they were created for—joyful communion with God.

A lifestyle of repentance and active trust in Christ is the basis of a hope- and joy-filled Christian walk. There is no salvation apart from a repentant faith. But this response must continue to characterize the Christ-follower.

Big Idea: The gift of forgiveness, new life, and reconciliation to God comes only by grace, through faith.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- How does the Christian approach to salvation differ from other religions?
- What responses have you experienced in sharing the gospel with others?
- Can you think of a person in whom you have seen the Gospel do a complete transformation?
- What are some ways we downplay the importance of continued repentance and faith throughout the Christian life?

GOING DEEPER

The first of the 95 theses that Martin Luther nailed to the door of Castle Church in Wittenburg reads:

When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said “Repent,” he intended that the entire life of believers should be repentance.

To come to Christ and to live with Christ, repentance must be a hallmark of our lives. And true repentance must be paired with robust faith—faith that believes and lives as if the righteousness of Christ is enough.

Read Isaiah 6:1–6; Mark 1:15; 2 Corinthians 7:10–11

- How should coming face-to-face with the holiness of God produce a repentant and contrite heart within us?
- What does saving repentance look like for the unbeliever? What does lifestyle repentance look like for the believer?
- How does the inexhaustibility of God’s grace motivate our willingness to continually repent?
- What’s the difference between confession and repentance? How is repentance more than just admitting wrong-doing?

Salvation Brings Newness

- What distinction is Paul making, in 2 Corinthians 7, between godly grief and worldly grief over sin? How does godly grief lead to true repentance?

Read Genesis 15:1–6, Romans 3:21–26, 5:1–2; James 2:14–26

- What is faith? What does it mean to have faith in Christ?
- James speaks of a faith that doesn't save (a faith that the demons share). What characterizes this kind of faith? What is the relationship in James between what we believe and how we live? Does that undermine salvation by grace through faith? Why or why not?
- What does it look like for our faith to be a full life-commitment to Christ?

SO WHAT?

Thinking about the Gospel and salvation isn't just something for unbelievers—it should be the impetus for the Christian's joy, hope, and worship.

- How should understanding and believing the Gospel give us hope?
- How does obedience motivated by gratitude differ from a begrudging, duty-oriented obedience?
- Why must we call the unbelievers in our life to repentance and faith? How do we do this lovingly and helpfully?
- Because of this study, how are you better equipped to share the hope of Christ with others? What do you still need to be more effective?

Spend some time praying for the unbelievers in your life—that God would give you boldness, wisdom, and kindness to share the hope of Christ

NOTES

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TOGETHER**

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22833 Copper Hill Drive
Santa Clarita, CA 91350