

LESSON 4



The Gospel Transforms Relationships

"He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?" Romans 8:32

The gospel reconciles us to God... and to one another

The word "gospel" means "good news." To understand God's good news, we first need to understand the truth about ourselves.

The Bible tells us that God created us in his image and designed us to reflect his perfect love and character by living according to his commands.¹ But everyone on the earth has fallen short of that perfection. Instead of living for God, we have lived for ourselves. We have loved and served worldly pleasures more than we have loved and served God. We have repeatedly broken his commands and pursued our own desires and goals. As a result, God's justice requires that we pay for our sins by being eternally separated from him.²

But there is good news. God is radically relational and perfectly wise. In his great love and mercy, he sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, to pay for our sins by dying on the cross.³ He then raised Jesus back to life to show that his sacrifice paid our debt in full and to open the way for us to be reconciled to God and enjoy him forever.⁴ The reconciling power of the gospel can also overflow into our human relationships.⁵

Relational wisdom is an outpouring of the gospel

As the gospel overflows in our lives, it inspires and empowers every aspect of relational wisdom.

GOD-AWARE: The first outpouring of the gospel occurs when Jesus makes us God-aware by sending the Holy Spirit to renew our hearts and minds so that we can know, value and love God.⁶

GOD-ENGAGED: As we become aware of God's love and mercy, we are moved to become God-engaged. His grace enables us to worship him in spirit and truth, to glorify him with trust and obedience, and to delight in imitating him.⁷



For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
- John 3:16



DEFINITION:
The gospel is the good news that Jesus died on the cross to pay for our sins and rescue us from eternal separation from God, and he rose from the dead to give us new life. Through faith in Jesus, we are reconciled to God, adopted into his family, empowered to love others as he has loved us, and given the gift of enjoying him forever.

SELF-AWARE: God-awareness also opens the way for true self-awareness. As we come to know the holiness of God, we are able to know ourselves more accurately. We see our sin and realize how empty and miserable we are when we live for ourselves.⁸ This leads us to humble ourselves, turn from our self-absorbed lives and trust in Jesus as our Savior.⁹ But God also opens our eyes to see his many blessings: he has forgiven our sins, adopted us as dearly loved children and entrusted us with gifts and opportunities to know and serve him.¹⁰

SELF-ENGAGED: God-awareness and self-awareness lead to self-engagement. As we are filled with God's Spirit and united with him through Christ, we are inspired and empowered to break free from the slavery of sin, to develop self-discipline and to grow in godliness.¹¹ Our old habits do not die easily,¹² but God promises to steadily transform us into his likeness.¹³

OTHER-AWARE: As God fills us and gives us the heart and mind of Christ,¹⁴ we are freed from seeing ourselves as the center of the world and enabled to become others-aware. We start to listen, understand, value and care for others! As we develop compassion and understanding, their joys become our joys and their sorrows become our sorrows.¹⁵

OTHER-ENGAGED: This growing other-awareness spills over in other-engagement. As the Holy Spirit changes our hearts from being self-absorbed to being God-absorbed, we are freed from the desire to manipulate others to get what we want. Why? Because we see that we already have the best of the best in Christ! We learn to find our greatest joy and fulfillment in loving him and the people he has placed around us. Thus the gospel results in relationships that are characterized by the same compassion, kindness, gentleness and forgiveness that God has shown to us through Jesus.¹⁶

A FREE GIFT: God offers all these blessings to each of us as a gift. We don't need to (and never could) clean ourselves up to earn them. We must simply confess our sin, admit our need, believe that Jesus' death and resurrection have saved us and then follow him as Lord of our lives.¹⁷



For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God. - Eph. 2:8

But mental assent alone will not change your relationships. Many people who say they believe in Jesus have not truly made him the "guidance system" of their lives. They still live according to their own desires, ways and agendas.¹⁸ As a result, they are not growing into his likeness or relating to others like true disciples of Christ.¹⁹

To avoid this trap, pray that God would fill you with his Spirit, transform your mind through the daily study of his Word and give you a deeper understanding of the gospel and the life-changing power he offers to all who trust in Christ.²⁰

If you would like to learn more about what it would mean for you to trust in Jesus and make him Lord of your life and relationships, please talk with a course instructor or one of the pastors or counselors who are available through the church or ministry hosting this training.

If you've not yet put your trust in Jesus, you can do so right now by sincerely praying this prayer:

Jesus, I know that I am a sinner and I realize that my good deeds could never make up for my wrongs.

I need your forgiveness. I believe you died for my sins, and I want to turn away from them.

I trust you now to be my Savior, and with your help I will follow you as my Lord and King, in the fellowship of your church.

If you say this prayer, it is essential that you find fellowship with other Christians in a church where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied.

⁸ Job 42:1-6 | Isa. 6:1-5 | Luke 5:8 • ⁹ Rom. 2:4 | Acts 16:29-34 • ¹⁰ 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:9-11 | Rom. 8:15 | 2 Cor. 5:17 | Eph. 2:10 • ¹¹ John 1:12-13 | Rom. 6:5-6 | Titus 2:11-12 | Gal. 5:22-23 | 2 Pet. 1:3-8 • ¹² Rom. 7:15; 21-25 • ¹³ 2 Cor. 3:18 | Phil. 1:6 • ¹⁴ 1 Cor. 2:16 | Gal. 2:20 • ¹⁵ Rom. 12:15-16 | 1 Pet. 3:8 • ¹⁶ John 13:34 | Col. 3:12-17 | Eph. 4:30-32 • ¹⁷ Rom. 6:23 | Eph. 2:8 | Acts 16:30-31 | Rom. 10:9-13 | 1 John 2:6 • ¹⁸ Gal. 5:13-15 | 1 John 2:9-11 • ¹⁹ John 13:34-35 • ²⁰ Eph. 1:6-23

Relationships thrive on the gospel... not on "the law"

Most of us find it easier to bring "the law" to people rather than the gospel. By "law" I mean all the "thou shalt" passages. You know, the ones we use to tell other people how they should live or how they're falling short ... or better yet, to prove how we are right and they are wrong.

Don't get me wrong. I love God's Law. It is beautiful and perfect (*Ps. 19:7*). It reflects God's perfect righteousness and reveals our sinfulness, leading us to seek pardon in Christ. It restrains sin by establishing moral boundaries that support civil societies. And it teaches those who trust in Christ how to live a life that honors him and advances his kingdom.

These are proper uses of God's Law. But because of our sinful nature, we often ignore these benevolent purposes and instead use the commands of Scripture to vindicate ourselves and critique others. It's a hard habit to break because it's fueled by our pride and self-righteousness.

Bring the gospel to both the saved and unsaved

One way to counteract this tendency is to develop a counter-habit, the habit of constantly bringing the gospel to others. Not only to the unsaved, but also to believers.

Yes, the gospel is central to evangelism. But the Lord also calls Christians to bring the good news of our redemption to one another to inspire worship, encourage thankfulness for God's mercy, dispel doubts and fears, remind us of our adoption and identity in Christ, promote spiritual growth and motivate us to love others as Christ has loved us (see Paul's example in *Rom. 5:1-5* | *Eph. 1:1-14, 4:20-24, 5:1* | *Col. 1:11-14*).



**The law repels;
the gospel attracts.
The law shows the
distance which there
is between God and
man; the gospel
bridges that awful
chasm and brings
the sinner across it.
- C.H. Spurgeon**

Ways to bring the gospel

Here is a small sample of the promises that flow from the gospel, which you can pass on at any time to your spouse, children, coworkers, friends... even your pastor (who needs to be reminded of the gospel, too).

- "God has given you a priceless gift: eternal life through Jesus Christ." *Rom. 6:23*
- "The Lord set his love on you before he even created the world ... so it obviously has nothing to do with your earning it." *Eph. 1:4*
- "You are chosen by God, holy and dearly loved." *Col. 3:12*
- "God has rescued you from the dominion of darkness and brought you into the kingdom of the Son he loves." *Col. 1:13*
- "I know you are weary and burdened today. Jesus promises that if you turn to him he will give you rest." *Matt. 11:28*
- "Even though you feel like you've completely blown it, remember that Jesus has already paid the full price for your sins; he has separated them from you as far as the east is from the west." *Ps. 103:12 | 2 Cor. 5:21*
- "Don't give up on yourself. When you put your trust in Jesus, he began to change you into his likeness. And he will continue that process until the day he takes you home." *Rom. 8:29 | 2Cor. 3:18 | Phil. 1:6*
- "If you are trusting in Jesus, you are a new creation. The old is gone the new has come!" *2 Cor. 5:17*
- "If God gave his only Son for you, will he not also give you everything else that you need in this life?" *Rom. 8:31-32*
- "You are God's workmanship, created in Christ to do good works, which God prepared for you long ago." *Eph. 2:10*
- "Never forget that you are part of a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation?" *1Pet. 2:9*



Christians need other Christians who speak God's Word to them. They need them again and again when they become uncertain and disheartened. They need other Christians as bearers and proclaimers of the divine word of salvation.
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

