



# 12

## What Is the Gospel?

### Key Themes

- God reconciles sinners to Himself through the gospel of Christ.
- God's plan of redemption was in place before time.

### Key Passages

- Genesis 1:31–2:4, 3:6–7, 3:21–23, 6:5–8, 8:1, 8:15–17, 11:1–9; Romans 3:19–26, 5:12, 18–19; John 1:14–17; 1 Corinthians 15:1–5; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 21:1–8

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify the gospel as the central theme of the Bible.
- Relate the gospel through the Seven C's of History framework.
- Explain why the good news only makes sense in light of the bad news.



## Lesson Overview



### Come On In

Write on the board, "Which should come first: good news or bad news?"



### Studying God's Word

page 4

The Seven C's of History offer a framework for sharing the gospel by starting with the bad news of sin and moving to the good news of Christ's redemption.

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.
- Print the Scripture Strips from the Resource DVD-ROM and cut apart.
- Print one The Gospel Through the Seven C's of History worksheet for each student.



### Optional Activity: Seven C's Evangelism

page 9

Students will watch the "Seven C's Evangelism Training" video.

- Seven C's Creation Evangelism Cube
- TV and DVD player or computer
- Resource DVD-ROM to show video
- Seven C's of History booklets



# Prepare to Share

## SCRIPTURAL BACKGROUND

In past lessons we have introduced our students to the Bible—where it came from, how to study it, why we can believe it. These are all critical areas of learning for all of us, but what is the central message of the Bible? Let's start at the beginning. What happened long ago in the Garden of Eden—Adam's fall into sin—has affected us all.

God's first proclamation of a coming Redeemer who would crush the serpent's head appeared in Genesis (Genesis 3:15). And the death and Resurrection of Jesus the Messiah fulfilled this prophecy—revealing God's plan of redemption.

To truly understand the good news of the Bible, we must grasp the bad news of the Bible first. Because God is a holy God—righteous and separate from sin—He cannot dwell with sinful man, and His perfect justice demands that He punish disobedience. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23), and that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). This is the bad news—that all people are separated from God, born spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), under His just penalty, and destined for an eternity in hell.

There is absolutely no way that we can work our way to God or ever be good enough to merit eternal life. In fact, the Bible makes it clear that there are no good works that will commend us to God.

Isaiah 64:6—But we are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Ephesians 2:8–9—For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.

Titus 3:5—Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us . . .

God sent His own Son, Jesus, to become a man, live a sinless life, and then die on the Cross, paying the penalty of death that we all deserve. "God made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). In the death of Christ we see the justice of God satisfied and the love of God demonstrated (Romans 5:8).

So, what do we need to do to receive forgiveness for our sins against God and inherit eternal life? The apostle Paul makes the essential elements of the gospel clear.

Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you . . . For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died

for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:1–4).

Jesus's death for our sins, His burial, and His Resurrection are the heart of the good news. And what are we required to do to spend eternity with our Creator?

Mark 1:14–15—Jesus came to Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel."

John 3:16—For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Acts 16:30–31—And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved."

Acts 20:20–21—I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 10:9–10—That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

Repentance of one's sin, and trust in Christ as Savior are all that is required to be saved. And when that occurs in our hearts, we are adopted by God as sons, joint heirs with Christ (Ephesians 1:5; Romans 8:16–17); we are born again to a new and living hope (1 Peter 1:3); we become new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17); and we have the sure hope of eternal life (Titus 1:2). It is not until we grasp the bad news—we are sinners in desperate need of a Savior—that we will appreciate the good news—we can be reconciled to God by the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Praise be to God for His grace and mercy demonstrated in the good news of the gospel—the central theme of the Bible!

## APOLOGETICS BACKGROUND

In today's pluralistic society with its many religions and insistence on tolerance for all views, it is important that we understand that the good news of the Bible is not just one way among many. Rather, Jesus and the apostles make it abundantly clear that faith in this gospel message is the ONLY way to be reconciled to God. Jesus is the ONLY mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5).

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the

life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6).

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name [Jesus] under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

Why is Jesus the only way? Because, as Dr. Bruce Ware puts it:

- Christ alone was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin and as such, He alone qualifies to be Savior (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–38).
- Christ alone is God incarnate and as such, He alone qualifies to be Savior (John 1:1–18; Hebrews 1:1–3; 2:14–18; Philippians 2:5–11; 1 Timothy 2:5–6).
- Christ alone lived a sinless life and as such, He alone qualifies to be Savior (2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 7:23–28, 9:13–14; 1 Peter 2:21–24).
- Christ alone died a penal, substitutionary death and as such, He alone qualifies to be Savior (Isaiah 53:4–6; Romans 3:21–26; 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Christ alone rose from the dead, triumphant over sin and as such, He alone qualifies to be Savior (Acts 2:22–24; Romans 4:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3–8).<sup>1</sup>

No other person, and no man-made religion, offers the true path of salvation and reconciliation with God. Merely acknowledging that God exists, or believing there is a God, does not save anyone. Scripture tells us that even the demons believe (James 2:19). It is only through repentance and faith in Jesus and His work on the Cross that anyone can be saved.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The early church preached the true gospel amidst much opposition. For the first two centuries, Christians were persecuted, killed, ostracized, and considered second-class citizens. Yet, the gospel spread and the blood of the martyrs only seemed to validate the message, increasing its power.

It was in AD 312 that the Roman Emperor Constantine was converted to Christianity and, as a result, he commanded official toleration of Christianity and other religions. And then, in 380, Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the official religion of the empire. From this point on, Christians could worship openly, and they enjoyed the protection and favor of the government.

Throughout the following centuries, segments of the church began to include doctrines and practices that were not found in the Bible nor were part of the early church’s beliefs and traditions. These included the special authority

<sup>1</sup> Bruce Ware, “Only One Way? The Exclusivity of Jesus Christ and the Gospel,” <http://www.christianity.com/christian%20foundations/christianity%20main/11602124>

of the Pope, the concept of purgatory as a place for after-life purification of sins, the immaculate conception and assumption of Mary, the doctrine of transubstantiation (that the bread in the Eucharist becomes the true body of Christ and the wine becomes His blood), and the general belief that one’s good works had to outweigh the bad in order to attain eternal life.

While the true gospel had been corrupted by officials in the church, God always preserved a remnant who believed the truth of His Word. And in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, this remnant courageously began the movement known as the Reformation. God used these believers to restore the gospel of justification by faith in Christ alone, by grace alone—through the truth of the Bible alone.

Today, we again find the professing church corrupted and moving away from the truth and simplicity of the gospel message according to God’s Word. Many churches are distorting the Word of God in hopes of attracting more people to their services. These false messages can range from prosperity preaching (that God wants us all to be healthy and wealthy), to easy believism (just say a few words and you will be saved for eternity), to counseling sessions based on secular psychology (come see us and we can fix your life right up), to universalism (anyone can get to heaven as long as you are sincere in what you believe), and the list goes on—as far as man’s corrupted mind will take it.

The message of the gospel is clear. We are saved through repentance and faith in the God-Man, Jesus Christ, who came to earth, died for the sins of His people, and rose again from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). He is the only Mediator and He sits at the right hand of God the Father waiting to make His enemies His footstool (Hebrews 10:13).



## BEFORE THE THRONE

Lord, what could be more important than this lesson on the gospel—presenting your good news to these students? I ask that you would have mercy on me as I try to adequately explain the truth of your Word and what it could mean to them. That you would provide a way for sinful man to spend eternity with you is breathtaking. And that I would be privileged to share this truth and plant its seeds in these young minds is humbling and overwhelming to me. I cannot do it justice on my own. I only pray that I will speak your words and by your mercy, through the power of the Holy Spirit, the truth of this lesson will find fertile soil and begin to bring forth fruit.



## Review

Last week we talked about how the Seven C's of History give us a big-picture framework for understanding the Bible and the true history of the universe.

? Who can remember the Seven C's in order? *Creation, Corruption, Catastrophe, Confusion, Christ, Cross, Consummation*

Today, we are going to review this framework, but in a different way. Rather

than a historical framework to help us understand the true history of the universe, today we are going to look at it as a framework for understanding and presenting the gospel. We will be hopping through many different passages in the Bible today rather than camping out in a few spots.



► Write on the board, "Which should come first: good news or bad news?"

► Hand out the Scripture Strips as people are coming in. Ask them to find the passage and mark it as they will be reading these passages later in the lesson.



## Studying God's Word

### READ THE WORD

First, we want to make sure that we know what the gospel is. The root of the word is found in the Greek word *euangelion* which means "good news." This is also the word we get evangelism from. When we evangelize, we are sharing the good news of what Christ has done for us in the hope that the person we are sharing with will experience that same freedom from sin and death.

Listen as I read 1 Corinthians 15:1–5 where Paul explains, in a condensed form, what the gospel is. Listen for the three elements he mentions. *Read the passage.*

1 Corinthians 15:1–5

### EXAMINE THE WORD

#### Observe the Text

? What are the three elements of the gospel Paul preached? *Christ died for our sins; He was buried; and He was raised on the third day.*

Now this is surely a very simple understanding of the gospel, but it communicates the idea that Jesus died for sins and was resurrected after His burial. But if Paul, or we, were to simply walk up to someone and say, "Jesus died for your sins," he would not be helping the person to understand the gospel. This person might claim that he is not a sinner, but we know better because of what God has revealed in the Bible.

? Why is the good news of the gospel good news? *The good news can only be good because there is bad news. It is necessary for someone to understand the peril that they are in*

before they can appreciate being saved from the danger. In order for someone to understand the good, they must understand the bad.

## Discover the Truth

In order to understand the need for a cure, there must be a diagnosis. We know that the disease is sin and that the cure is Christ's work on the Cross. However, we need to help those who do not understand this truth. There are many different evangelistic methods, but we are going to use the Seven C's of History to help explain the relationship between the bad news and the good news. *Pass out The Gospel Through the Seven C's of History worksheets.*



## READ THE WORD

So let's walk through the Seven C's relating them to the bad news/good news understanding of the gospel. I have given several of you Bible references. When we get to those passages, be ready to read them out loud. You can also use this worksheet to take a few notes as we discuss these ideas.

### Creation

*Have someone read Genesis 1:31–2:4.*

When God created the earth, everything was described as “very good.” There was no death, disease, suffering, or sin in the world. Adam and Eve lived in relationship with God with only one thing they were prohibited from doing—eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Because God is the Creator, He has the right to establish the rules that His creation must follow.

Genesis 1:31–2:4

### Corruption

*Have someone read Genesis 3:6–7, 3:21–23 and then Romans 5:12, 5:18–19.*

God existed in three persons before He created the universe. Since God is eternal and omniscient (all-knowing), He knew the plans He had for His creation. Part of that plan includes the redemption of mankind after the fall into sin. 1 Peter 1:20 tells us that Christ was “foreordained before the foundation of the world” to be our Redeemer. *Refer to the Attributes of God poster to remind your students of the meaning of these attributes.*

Genesis 3:6–7, 3:21–23;  
Romans 5:12, 5:18–19

When Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, their rebellion against God brought sin into the world and corrupted God's “very good” creation. Although they tried to cover their sin with their own efforts (the fig leaves), God made clothes of skins for them to hide their shame.

? **What can we infer happened if God made tunics of skin?** *This is the first record of animal death and represents a foreshadowing of the death of the Perfect Lamb who would come to take away, not just cover up, the sins of the world.*

ETERNAL  
OMNISCIENT

The coming of a Savior was also present in the curse placed on the serpent in Genesis 3:15. The gospel message of redemption from sin is present from the very beginning. This plan of redemption, the gospel, is woven throughout the Bible.

The corruption that Adam brought into the world was passed to all of his descendants. The punishment for Adam's sin was death and isolation from God. The same is true for each person that has ever lived—that is the beginning of the bad news.

Genesis 6:5–8, 8:1,  
8:15–17

## Catastrophe

*Have a student read Genesis 6:5–8 and then Genesis 8:1, 8:15–17.*

Sin continued to increase on the earth and God judged the sinfulness of man with a Flood that destroyed all of the air-breathing, land-dwelling creatures—including every human. Only those on the Ark were spared the judgment of God.

- ? **Why was Noah saved from the judgment of the Flood?** *Noah's rescue was not because Noah was such a good man, but because he found grace in the eyes of God (Genesis 6:8). He alone was "perfect" in his generation (6:9) because he was looking forward to what Christ (the promised Savior) would do on his behalf. No man has ever been perfect through his own efforts, but only by the grace of God.*

The Flood is an example of the justice of God. Because God is a holy God, He must judge sin. The Flood is a concrete example of God's judgment that we can point to from Scripture.

## Confusion

Genesis 11:1–9

*Have someone read Genesis 11:1–9.*

After the Flood, Noah's descendants were commanded to fill the earth. But this passage gives us a different picture. They disobeyed, and were settling in one place. In Genesis 8:21, God acknowledged that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" and that became evident as the people desired to make a name for themselves. They were turning away from worshiping the true God and toward worshiping idols. This is another reminder that man is sinful at his core and that God, in His holy justice, must judge sin.

God decided to confuse their language and the people were scattered around the globe. Despite skin color, nationality, facial features, or language, all people can trace their heritage back to Adam through Noah. All of mankind is in need of salvation from their sin because all are descended from Adam.

- ? **Why did Jesus command the disciples to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19), and why do we see people from every tribe, tongue,**

people, and nation worshiping Christ in heaven (Revelation 5:9)? *The existence of these different groups is explained by the events surrounding the Tower at Babel. All of these groups need salvation because they have all inherited sin through Adam.*

As we talked about last week, the Seven C's of History do not cover every event in history. There is a large gap between Confusion and Christ. One additional C we might insert in this gap is Commandments to acknowledge the giving of the Law to Moses.

Paul explains the connection between the Law and the gospel in many places in his writings. In order for the bad news of the corruption of sin to make sense, people must apply it to themselves. We can recite Romans 3:23 to them (“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”), but we need to look at that verse in its context. *Have someone read Romans 3:19–26.*

Romans 3:19–26

- ? According to verse 19, what is the purpose of the Law? *To stop the mouth of those who deny their guilt before God.*
- ? Is the Law able to make anyone righteous or justify anyone? *Not according to verses 20 and 21.*
- ? Who can keep the Law perfectly? *No one, apart from Christ, can keep the Law.*
- ? How does this passage explain that we can be justified and made righteous before God? *We are made righteous through faith in what Christ has completed on the Cross.*

So the Law is a tool that we can use to help people see their sin in light of God's standard of perfection. The Ten Commandments give a summary of God's standard. Paul referred to these in Romans 7 as a way to personally understand how each individual has sinned against God. Use the commandments as a mirror to help people understand that the bad news applies to them. Have you ever told a lie? Have you ever stolen anything? Have you ever put anything before God (idolatry)? Or used His name in a loose way? Those questions can bring conviction of sin as the Holy Spirit accompanies the message we are communicating. Remember, it is the Holy Spirit's work to bring conviction as we proclaim the truth.

So that is the bad news—each person has sinned and is in need of salvation from God's just judgment of their sin. With that set forth in a clear way, we have paved the way to understand how good the good news of the gospel really is!

## Christ

*Have someone read John 1:14–17.*

John 1:14–17

As promised way back in Genesis 3:15, the Savior was coming. The Israelites received expanded understanding of who the Messiah would be.

He would be born of a virgin in Bethlehem from the line of Judah through David's house. There were many other prophecies of the Messiah that were given to the prophets and fulfilled in the incarnation of Christ.

Christ came into the world as God in the flesh. He lived a perfect life—never sinning once. He became the Last Adam to act as the representative for mankind to offer them the hope of freedom from their sin and the judgment that the first Adam brought into the world.

## Cross

### 2 Corinthians 5:21

*Have someone read 2 Corinthians 5:21.*

Though Christ had lived a sinless life, He willingly offered Himself as a sacrifice. God poured out his wrath for sin onto Jesus while He was hanging on the Cross. More than just the physical punishment He faced, the cup he was afraid to drink (Matthew 26:38–46) was the cup of wrath that the holy God the Father was about to empty on God the Son.

To demonstrate that He was victorious over the death that Adam had brought into the world, He rose bodily from the grave on the third day. He appeared to 500 witnesses and then ascended to His rightful place at the right hand of the Father.

That is the good news that offers us freedom from the bad news of sin and judgment. When we repent of our sins before God and put our trust in the substitutionary work of Christ on the Cross (Acts 20:21), we can be transferred from death to life. Rather than facing the eternal punishment for our sins in hell, we can spend eternity with God in heaven. Christ pays our penalty for sin and we receive His righteousness—a great exchange of sin for righteousness.

## Consummation

### Revelation 21:1–8

*Have someone read Revelation 21:1–8.*

Christ will return to judge the world in righteousness, the Curse will be removed, and a new heaven and earth will be the dwelling place of those who are in Christ for eternity, while the lake of fire awaits those who die in their sins.

In Romans 7, Paul describes how he knew of his need for salvation because of his understanding of what sin was. In order for the good news of salvation from sin to make sense, a person has to understand the bad news of sin entering the world and corrupting God's perfection. Understanding the true history of the world helps to make the message of the gospel clear.





# Seven C's Evangelism (Optional)

## MATERIALS

- Seven C's Creation Evangelism Cube
- Creation Cube Evangelism Training video
- Computer to show video

## INSTRUCTIONS

The Seven C's of History have been placed on a visual aid called the Creation Evangelism Cube. This cube offers a great way to share the gospel starting with the Creator and His work throughout history. The bad news of sin and its consequences entering the world, and the good news that is found through redemption in Christ are presented as well as the coming Consummation.

The video gives some helpful tips on how to use the cube as an evangelistic and apologetics tool. If you do not have

time to show this video, which runs about 10 minutes, consider pointing students to the Online Resource Page where they can find a link to the video.

The video file is located with the PDF files for Lesson 12 on the DVD-ROM. It is in both flv and mp4 formats. Your computer should have a media player (e.g., Quicktime, Windows Media Player) that will play this video.

## CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

Blending apologetics and evangelism using the Creation Evangelism Cube is a great tool to have in an evangelistic toolbox. It presents the good news of the Cross in light of the bad news of Corruption.



# Applying God's Word

## WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

I hope you can see how the Seven C's of History not only give us a framework for understanding the big picture of biblical history, but how God has worked through that history to redeem a creation that is in rebellion against Him. As we seek to share the gospel with a world that is enslaved to sin and facing God's judgment, we must first help them to see that the bad news of sin is the reason we need the good news of Christ's death on behalf of sinners.

## GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

Let's talk about how these ideas might be used in our everyday lives. If we don't seek to apply what we are learning from the Word, we are deceiving ourselves (James 1:22).

- ? Do you see this method of presenting the gospel being useful? Why or why not? Allow for discussion.

- ? **Why is it essential to understand the historical relationship between the first Adam and the Last Adam?** *If Adam was not a historical person who brought sin into the world, then we wouldn't need a real man to come and be our Savior. Paul makes a clear connection between the two Adams.*
- ? **Is it important to understand where sin came from in order to understand the gospel rightly?** *Without understanding that sin has impacted every person who has ever lived, since it is inherited from Adam, some may wrongly conclude that certain people could be good enough to merit heaven.*
- ? **How does the bad news/good news connection help to make the gospel message clear?** *Allow for discussion.*
- ? **Why is it appropriate to say that the message of the gospel is woven throughout the entirety of the Bible?** *Throughout the Scriptures we see a thread of redemption. Redemption could be called the central theme of Scripture. Beginning in Genesis, God's plan to redeem humanity through the person and work of Christ is revealed.*
- ? **What do you see as the biggest stumbling blocks for unbelievers as you share the truth of God's Word with them?** *Allow for discussion.*
- ? **What areas do you need to grow in to be able to understand and share the gospel with others?** *Allow for discussion.*



### MEMORY VERSE

**Psalm 119:89–90** Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides.

I truly hope you are committing this passage to memory. It is a great reminder of the unchangeable nature of God and His power over and care for His creation.



### GROUP PRAYER TIME

Be sure to pray with your class before you dismiss them.

- Thank God for the gospel—the good news of Jesus Christ.
- Thank God for the forgiveness He offers to all sinners who will repent and believe in Him.
- Pray that the Lord would be pleased to open the minds of these students to His truth and that they would come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Pray that God would give the students opportunities to tell their family and friends the good news of the gospel.