



12

What Is the Gospel?

Key Themes

- God is merciful toward sinners.
- God provides salvation from sin through Jesus.

Key Passages

- Romans 3:23; John 3:16; Ephesians 2:8; Romans 5:8; Mark 1:14–15

Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Define what the gospel is.
- Explain why the good news only makes sense in light of the bad news.



Lesson Overview



Come On In

page 5

Choose one or both activities: Students will practice placing all the books of the New Testament in order. Students will practice the memory verse with the Memory Verse strips.



Studying God's Word

page 5

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the central theme of the entire Bible. Salvation can only come because of Christ's death and Resurrection. Our sins can be forgiven if we repent of our sins and believe in Jesus Christ.



Activity 1: The Gospel

page 7

Students will read verses that explain the gospel. The Bible tells us that if we repent of our sins, trust in Jesus, believe, and accept His free gift, we will be saved.



Activity 2: Good News/Bad News

page 9

Students will be given cards and will tell what these cards have to do with the good news or bad news of the gospel.

Lesson Preparation

WHAT YOU WILL DO

WHAT YOU WILL NEED



COME ON IN

- If you have not already done so, print one set of Memory Verse strips from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. Use the template from Lesson 9.
- Pass out the books of the New Testament cards. See the template on the Resource DVD-ROM, Lesson 2.

- Memory Verse strips for each student
- Books of the New Testament cards—one set for each group of 3–5 students



STUDYING GOD'S WORD

- Study the Prepare to Share section.
- Go Before the Throne.

- Student Take Home Sheets



THE GOSPEL

- Print one Gospel worksheet from the Resource DVD-ROM for each student. (You will fill this out during the teaching time.)

- Gospel worksheet for each student
- Pencils



GOOD NEWS/BAD NEWS

- Copy and cut out one or more sets of the Good News/Bad News cards from the Resource DVD-ROM—enough for each student to get at least one card.

- Good News/Bad News cards for each student



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.

► **Pace your lesson!** You can use the provided clocks to indicate the time each section should be completed to keep the lesson on schedule. While teaching, you can compare your anticipated times with the actual time and shorten or drop sections as necessary.





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 righteousneses 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, which also you

received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. 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:

1. 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).
2. 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).
3. 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).
4. 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).
5. 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).¹

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 that (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

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

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 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 corrupt 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 children. 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 grow into a tree that will bring forth its fruit in season and whose leaf shall not wither.



COME ON IN

Choose one or both of the following as students arrive . . .

- Provide envelopes containing the Memory Verse strips. Students are to place the strips in the proper order. Students can use the Memory Verse poster to make sure it is right.
- Provide envelopes containing Books of the New Testament cards for groups of 3–5 students. Students are to place the books in the proper order. They can use the Books of the Bible poster or their own Bibles to confirm the right order.



After all the students arrive, pray with them before beginning the lesson.



REVIEW

Using the Lesson Theme Posters provided with each lesson, quickly review the previous lesson(s) with your students. Take 5 to 10 minutes to reinforce the important truths the students have heard so far in your class.

Ask the children questions about the previous lessons as you display the Lesson Theme Posters. Reflect briefly on the passages you read, bringing the objectives and themes back into focus. This will refresh the truths in your students' minds and maintain continuity as you teach through the lessons.



Studying God's Word

READ THE WORD

We have been talking a lot about the Bible—where it came from, how to study it, why we can believe it. This is all really good stuff and we need to know it and trust it.

- ? But why is the Bible an important book to study? What is the main message of the Bible? *Allow children to answer.*

The main message of the Bible has to do with Jesus Christ and what He did when He came to earth. The main message of the Bible is the gospel.

- ? First of all, who can tell me what I mean by the gospel? *Listen for answers.*

Some people think the Bible is the gospel. Some people say that the books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the gospels. Both of these answers are right to a point. But there is more to it.

Did you know the word gospel comes from a Greek word that means good news?

- ? What do you think the good news of the gospel is? *Listen for answers.*

The good news of the gospel is that Jesus came to earth, He died, He was buried, and He rose from the grave so that all who would repent and believe in Him would be saved from the punishment of their own sins. But if that is the good news then there must be bad news. And there is.

Turn in your Bibles to Romans 3:23. Can someone read that for me? *Assign a reader or read the verse yourself.*



HOLY

(Refer to Attributes poster)

JUST

(Refer to Attributes poster)

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? What does God's Word tell us here? *We have all sinned.*

Yes, we are all sinners. And because God is just—He must punish sin That is very bad news!

? What is sin? *Listen for answer.*

Sin is anything we do that goes against what God has told us is right. Sin is disobedience to God.

? Does sin bother God? *Yes!*

? We know it does but why? Look at the Attributes of God poster and tell me why God hates sin. Who can figure it out? *He is holy. He is just. Help them find the answer if necessary.*

? What does *holy* mean according to our poster here? Can someone read that for me? *God hates all sin and will not stand for sin.*

The Bible tells us God hates every sin—even just a little one. In fact, there are no little sins in God's eyes.

? And what does *just* mean? Can someone read that for me? *Fair according to who He is; He must punish sin.*

Even one sin is not okay with God. God is perfectly right to punish all sins.

Do you know that whenever you do something wrong you are committing a sin? Can you tell me some things that the Bible says are sins? *Let the children name some things. Then clarify that lying, stealing, killing, disobeying parents, are all sins.*

? God has to punish sin. We talked about the Seven C's of History last week. We heard about three times God had to punish the sin of the people. Look up here at the Seven C's Timeline (or the Lesson Theme poster from Lesson 11) and see if you can find them. We have talked about them before. *Corruption—Adam sinned against God. Catastrophe—the global Flood destroyed every living thing except Noah and his family. Confusion—God confused the language and the people scattered.*

That's right. God had to punish the wickedness of the people. They were disobedient to His commands—just like we are when we don't obey Him. This is really bad news. What can we do? God must punish us because it is not possible for us to be perfectly sinless. This is our biggest problem. We sin and we know God hates sin. But we can't help it! And, we know that we must be punished for our sin because God is holy.

But there is good news, too! God is good and He loves His children. He is merciful.

Even though God is right to punish us because of our sin, He still shows love, mercy, and kindness to us. He knows we can't help ourselves. He knows we can't be perfect.

Let's see what God did for us. Turn to John 3:16 in your Bibles. Can someone read that for me? Or maybe one of you knows that verse by heart? *Have a student read or recite the verse or read it yourself.*

- ? What did God do for us? *He sent Jesus Christ, His Son, to earth. If we believe in Him we will have eternal life in heaven.*
- ? That's right. Did Jesus ever sin? *No.*
- ? And how did He die? *Crucified on a Cross.*

That's right. Jesus never did anything wrong—yet He was punished—put to death on the Cross. He was punished for our sins. This is how God showed His love and mercy to us. Jesus, by His death, saves us from that terrible punishment we deserve. That is good news!

Discover the Truth

We've heard some really bad news today. We are all sinners and we must be punished by our holy God. There are no sins God can overlook. He hates every sin. We cannot save ourselves.

But do you see? That makes the gospel really GOOD news. God loved the world so much that He was willing to send Jesus, His Son, to earth to die so that whoever would believe in Him would have eternal life. The gospel is amazing!



The Gospel

MATERIALS

- Gospel worksheet for each student
- Pencils

INSTRUCTIONS

Before you begin the next section, give each child a copy of the Gospel worksheet and a pencil.

We are going to use these worksheets for the next couple of minutes and see what else the Bible says about the gospel and being saved.

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

The Bible tells us that if we repent of our sins, trust in Jesus, believe, and accept His free gift, we will be saved.

READ THE WORD

These worksheets have different Scripture verses on them. We are going to read them and I'll be asking questions. I want you to circle the answers on the sheet as we answer the questions. OK?

We'll start with Ephesians 2:8. Anyone want to read it? *Assign a reader or read it from the worksheet.*

EXAMINE THE WORD

Observe the Text

? Great. Now I am going to ask some questions and I want you to circle the answers on your worksheet. First, how are we saved? *By grace. Have children circle the word grace on the worksheet.*

? And how do we get grace? *It is a gift. Have the children circle the word gift on the worksheet.*

? Who gives the gift? *God. Have the children circle the word God on the worksheet.*

So, we learn from Ephesians 2:8 that we are saved by grace and it is a gift from God.

? Do gifts normally cost you anything? Like if your mom gives you a birthday present, do you have to pay for it? *No! It is free.*

Of course not. And salvation from God through Jesus is also perfectly free. We could never pay for it.

? Now, who can read the next verse for me? Romans 5:8. *Assign a reader or read it yourself.*

? OK. What did Christ do for us? *He died for us. Have the children circle the word died on the worksheet.*

He did die for us. And He died even though we are sinners. That shows us how much God loves us.

Look at the next verse. I'll read it and I want you to answer a couple of questions and circle the answers. Follow along with me as I read. *Read Mark 1:14–15.*

? Who is speaking in this verse? His name is right there on your sheet. *Jesus. Have the children circle the word Jesus on the worksheet.*

? What is Jesus preaching? *The gospel. Have the children circle the word gospel on the worksheet.*

? What did Jesus say to the people He was preaching to? *Repent and believe in the gospel. Have the children circle repent and believe on the worksheet.*

? Wow! Jesus is even preaching the gospel. And He told the people to repent and believe! What does repent mean? Who can read the definition on your worksheet? *Call on someone or read the definition yourself.*

? If we repent what do we turn away from? *Our sin. Have children circle the word sin on the worksheet.*

? And who do we turn to when we repent? *To Jesus. Have children circle the word Jesus on the worksheet.*

That's right. Jesus wants us to turn away from our sin and turn to Him. If we do that, we will be saved from the punishment that we deserve for our sin.

Repent: Turn away from your sin and turn to Jesus

Discover the Truth

That is the gospel. We started with some really bad news about our sin, but ended with really good news about God's free gift of forgiveness through His grace. Jesus said to be saved we need to repent and believe.

Jesus did the really hard part. He took all of the punishment for us. No one else can help us get to heaven and God. We need to turn from our sins, turn to Jesus, and believe what the Bible tells us about Jesus. Then we will be forgiven and won't have to bear the punishment we deserve.



Good News/Bad News

MATERIALS

- Good News/Bad News cards

INSTRUCTIONS

Give each child a Good News/Bad News card.

We talked about good and bad news today. I have handed you each a card. We'll go around the room. When it is your turn, read your card, jump up and go to the back of the room if your card is bad news and the front of the room if your card is good news.

After the students are in the front and back of the class, have them read their cards again and briefly discuss why the news is good or bad.

Great! Now I want you to read your words again and we'll talk about why these are good or bad news. *Forgiveness—good news—we can have forgiveness through Jesus*

*Sin—bad news—we are all sinners; must be punished
Free Gift—good news—Salvation is a free gift from God
Cross—good news—Jesus took the punishment on Himself of those who would repent and believe
Jesus—good news—God's Son who died for sins
Punish—bad news—God must punish all sin
Heaven—good news—A place with Jesus for believers who repent and believe
Hell—bad news—A place of pain without Jesus for people who do not repent and believe*

CONNECT TO THE TRUTH

We all need to know the bad news—that we are all sinners and God must punish us—before we understand how wonderful the gospel is. Jesus died for our sins. If we turn away from our sins and repent and believe in Jesus we will be saved.



Applying God's Word

WHAT YOU HEARD IN THE WORD

What a great lesson. What good news the gospel is! How loving and kind and merciful God is to us—even though we are such terrible sinners. The word gospel actually comes from a Greek word that means good news.

And in order to know and understand the good news, we need to know what the bad news is.

? **Who can tell me what the bad news is?** *We have all sinned. God has to punish sin. We cannot save ourselves.*

Because God is holy and just, He must punish sins—all sins. And that means all of us deserve to be punished by God.

? **But that leads to the good news. What is the good news?** *Allow answers.*

Right! The good news is the gospel. God provided a way for us to get to heaven. Jesus died for our sins, was buried, rose again, and was seen by lots of people.

? **And what do we need to do?** *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and accept His death on the Cross as payment for our sin.*

GOD'S WORD IN THE REAL WORLD

This good news about Jesus is worth sharing with your friends.

A lot of people don't think their sin is that bad. They don't think that God would really punish us because of our sins. They might even think that they can work or do some good things and that will make up for the bad things they do. But they don't understand God. They don't know that He is holy and doesn't like sin.

You can tell your friends about Jesus, that He is a friend to sinners, and that He will forgive sins if they repent and believe in Him.



► Pass out the Student Take Home Sheets and remind the children to practice the memory verse this week.



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.



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 children 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.