

# PREACHING THE GOSPEL

*'I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God to save anyone who believes.'* (Romans 1:16)

*'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. But how can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?'* (Romans 10:13-14)

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## 1) THE GOSPEL PRIORITY

*There is no news as wonderful and as urgent as the gospel. It is a message from heaven itself. That's why the sharp edge of the church's mission is to tell the gospel to the whole world.*

The main job of a church-planter is get the gospel to as many people as possible, and often as possible, as well as possible.

We're not told anywhere in the Bible to plant churches. But we are told to preach the gospel. It is the gospel that gives birth to a church. It is the gospel that then causes a church to grow numerically.

This is certainly the approach that the apostle Paul took: 2 Timothy 1:11 summarizes Paul's ministry, 'And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher'.

*We are to announce the gospel, start communities around it, and explore its depths, so that each church becomes a centre from which the message of the gospel can ring out.*

Paul saw himself as a **herald** of the gospel. 'A herald' was a news-announcer entrusted to send important messages from town to town. Today, we have a 2000-year-old message that is still as fresh, important and life-changing as it was then. We *must* announce it to people. We must go wherever we need to go to get the message out.

Paul saw himself as an **apostle** of the gospel. This is a unique function. Firstly, apostles plant churches, primarily through gospel preaching. Secondly, apostles work into existing churches and ensure that they are built solidly on the foundations of the gospel. Thirdly, apostles partner with existing churches in advancing the gospel near and far. Apostolic ministry is largely defined by the gospel! The main passion of an apostle is that the gospel will take root in lives and regions!

Paul saw himself as a **teacher** of the gospel. The central message of the Bible is the gospel message. As students of the Bible we need to explore more deeply the many facets of the gospel, as well as exploring carefully the implications of the gospel for our lives. (As a practical tip, studying the book of Ephesians is a good place to start, because its first three chapters explore a revelation of the gospel, and its last three chapters explore a life-application of the gospel.)

Let us look at one more important verse that reveals Paul's priority of gospel-preaching: 2 Timothy 3:15 tells us that the Scriptures are 'able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus'. We see here

that *church leaders today need to be very clear about the main purpose of the Bible: it is to point people to salvation through faith in Jesus.*

The Bible consists of 66 books. Together, they make up a multi-faceted message. This message is 'the gospel'. The Old Testament lays the foundation for it, and even reveals parts of it. The New Testament explores it in greater depth. It is when one is exposed to this gospel message in the power of the Spirit, that salvation can happen. The Bible does not automatically save us. We don't just get saved through reading or hearing the gospel message. Rather we need to be enabled by the Spirit to trust in Jesus Christ (who is the essence of the gospel). In this sense, the Bible does not save us - but it does point us to the One who can save us.

Today, one of the desperate needs in the church is the *gospel-centred* exposition of the Scriptures. I say this because not every chapter in the Bible reveals the gospel-message. So it is possible to preach a message, or even a whole series of messages from the Bible, without showing how these sections of Scripture fit into the larger context of the Bible's message, which is the gospel. When we fail to bring out the gospel in our Bible teachings - we fail to 'make people wise for salvation'. This hurts both non-Christians and Christians in different ways.

What a tragedy that non-Christians, who may only visit a church meeting once or twice, may hear the Bible being preached, but not hear what they need to hear to be saved. As leaders and preachers, we're called to do more than just preach parts of the Bible. We need to select and teach those parts that specifically refer *to the whole gospel message*. We need to preach in such a way, that in any sermon, or at least in any series of sermons, there are enough references to the gospel for a hearer to be saved! If we do not continue to weave the gospel of grace into our messages, non-Christian hearers will merely hear 'moralism'. They will wrongly think that Christianity is an attempt to do all the good things the Bible tells us to do. And it will leave them not only bored, but unsaved. The Bible's message is first and foremost a call to receive salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Christians also need to hear the gospel again and again. A common misconception is that 'people are saved by believing the gospel, but then mature through applying biblical principles'. Although this is partially true, the far more emphatic truth of the New Testament is this: people are saved through believing the gospel, but then mature through believing the gospel more and more deeply. This is why Christians need to keep on hearing the gospel. Without an ongoing, fresh revelation of the gospel of grace, a Christian is dangerously prone to falling into a joyless, legalistic and moralistic faith. (If you wish to explore this line of thought more deeply see the following article, and be sure to see its subsequent pages too:  
([www.redeemer2.com/themovement/issues/2004/june/postmoderncity\\_1\\_p3.html](http://www.redeemer2.com/themovement/issues/2004/june/postmoderncity_1_p3.html))

## 2) PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN 40 SECONDS.

a) You can use an acronym GOSPEL to remember some key gospel points:

- **G - God created us** for a relationship with himself.
- **O - Our sins divorced us** from God now and forever. And our sins can't be removed by being moral or religious.
- **S - Sent from heaven, Jesus lived** an amazing life. He did miracles. He taught powerfully. He fulfilled prophecy. He loved the unlovable.
- **P - Paying the price for my sins, Jesus died and rose again.** Now we can have a relationship with God if we want to.
- **E - Everyone who trusts in Jesus** as their Lord and Saviour can have their sins forgiven, and start a relationship with God now and forever.
- **L - Learning to follow Jesus** is what the Christian life is all about. What an adventure it is!

b) Another brief way of proclaiming the gospel is to run through the phases of Christ's work and after each one proclaim one way that this aspect of Christ's work impacts us. Here is an example ...

*'Christ came to this world to show us how life was meant to be lived. Christ died on the cross so that our sins could be forgiven. Christ rose again from the dead to make us new people. Christ was then exalted to the right hand of God so that he could rule over the universe and us. Christ poured out his Spirit so we could experience his power and love. Christ will come back to wrap up human history, and to take us to be with him forever. He is worthy of your one and only life.'*

c) You can use some one-liners that capture major aspects of the gospel:

- *Christianity is not a religion. It's a relationship.*
- *We are more sinful than we ever realised, and more loved than we ever dreamed.*
- *We are on a collision course with a Holy God. Judgment Day is collision day.*
- *It's not good people who get to God and into heaven, it's forgiven people.*
- *The bad things you've done will not disqualify you from God's love. Nor will the good things you've done qualify you for God's love.*

- *Though I don't know everything there is to know about Jesus, I know enough to trust him with my soul, for the rest of my life.*
- *Long before you were deciding what to do with God, he was deciding what to do with you. And amazingly, he decided that instead of making you pay for your sins, he would pay them for you by sending his Son to die for you.*
- *Amazingly, God made it possible for sinners like me and you to have a relationship with a perfectly holy God like himself. And he did it through Jesus Christ.*
- *Real love is giving someone the very best, though it cost the giver everything, and though the receiver doesn't deserve a thing. (This translates into a three point Gospel explanation: 1) God wants our best and he knows that the very best thing he can give us is a relationship with himself. 2) God paid the ultimate price: he sent Jesus Christ to lay down his life on our behalf. 3) We don't deserve this gift at all since we have so sinned against God our whole lives.)*

### 3) PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN 4 MINUTES.

Here are four samples where people preach the gospel in a few minutes ...

#### **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO LOUIS GIGLIO**

*This is an excerpt from his famous Indescribable sermon.*

God made everything. Through Jesus God made the world. He created all things in heaven and on earth. That same God was made in human likeness and being found in appearance as a man he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross.

I don't know you. I don't know what you've done. I don't know what you have trailing behind you. What kind of shame, failure, mess - what you have trailing behind you. All I know is that long before you made a mess out of your life, God a mess out of Jesus life. And there is a shadow over this building tonight - it is the shadow of Calvary - it is the shadow of the Cross of Jesus Christ. There is freedom and forgiveness and cleansing and newness - there is no condemnation - shame and guilt and failure has been done with at the cross of Jesus Christ.

(From Psalm 103): The Lord is compassionate and gracious - he does not treat us as our sins deserve - we don't get what we have earned because of his grace. As high as the heavens are above the earth - so great is his love for those who fear him. As far as the East is from the West, that's how far he has removed our transgressions from us.

That is what we call astronomical grace. It is mercy when you least expect to find it. It is grace, mercy, kindness, everywhere you look - it is God saying 'I love you!' There is grace everywhere. Long before you decided what you would do with God - he decided what to do with you - and that was not to give you what your sins deserve but to give his son what your sins deserve - and to give you the gift of himself - and to give you an invitation to live forever in a big big story that is all about him!

Maybe you're looking up to a big big mountain. Maybe its cancer, depression, divorce, abandon, loneliness, wrongly accused, bankruptcy, the darkness of death itself - but I say there is nothing this world can throw at you that can shake you out of the hand of God - who holds the entire universe in his hand - and who is holding onto you. His grace is strong enough to hold onto you now and forever - so that even in the darkness - you can trust him.

I haven't seen everything about God - but I've seen enough to trust him for the rest of my days. It is love so amazing, so divine, it should get back our love, our soul, our all. And he calls you trust him - to give him your love, your soul, your all.

## THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO TERRAN WILLIAMS

God is real. He is large and in charge, and loving and holy, and He created this wonderful universe. He created humans uniquely as image-bearers, so that we could have a loving friendship with Him, as our Father. That is our life's deepest purpose.

But something has gone wrong. Our sinfulness has divorced us from Him not only now in this life, but also forever in hell. Sadly, there is nothing we can do to remove the stain of sin in our lives: not religion, nor trying to be a good person.

God, in His great love for us, has made a plan to deal with our sinfulness. He sent his Son, Jesus Christ to this planet 2000 years ago. Amazingly, He fulfilled Messianic prophecies and did powerful miracles. He taught profoundly and lived beautifully, loving friends and enemies alike.

Christ's main mission was fulfilled when He died for our sins on the cross and then rose again. Since He is the sinless Saviour, His sacrifice has made it possible for our sins to be forgiven, and for us to have a relationship with God, starting in this life and lasting forever in heaven.

But in order to receive this forgiveness we must turn our lives over to the loving leadership of Jesus Christ, who now rules this universe with his Father. That is God's invitation to us: undeserving sinners like ourselves get a chance to start again, if, and only if, we take up his invitation.

And once we do that, we live as ordinary people touched by God's extraordinary love. The spiritual adventure just begins as we learn to love Him more passionately, to love each other more authentically, and to love those beyond more courageously.

## **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK DRISCOLL**

*Here I have reworked a five-minute Gospel presentation by Mark Driscoll that he gave to thousands of people in Seattle, USA.*

### ***Powerfully, God created the universe and us.***

There is one God and He is the maker of heaven and earth; and He made us in His image and likeness, male and female with dignity, worth and purpose. He made us to love, trust and worship Him.

### ***Devastatingly, you and I have sinned against God.***

But instead of worshipping him, you and me have chosen to sin against Him, to rebel against Him, to disobey Him, to refuse His rightful place in our lives. As a result we have all been separated from God. Now so many of us live under the foolish myth that to some degree we are each our own god. We foolishly think we can declare what is right and wrong, and live our own life with our own standards. All the time we are cut off from the real God. All the time we are enslaved in our sin. All the time we are on a collision course with a Holy God on Judgment Day where our sin will be both revealed and judged. All the time we are doomed to an eternal separation from our Creator in hell.

### ***Lovingly, salvation comes through Jesus' life, death and resurrection.***

But because of his great love, God came into human history as the man, Jesus Christ, fully God, fully man. He was born of a virgin and he lived a life without sin, although he was tempted in every way, just as we are. He went to the cross and there He substituted Himself for us. Interestingly, sin came into the world when our first parents (Adam and Eve) substituted themselves for God in the garden. But at the Cross Jesus Christ reversed that substitution and substituted Himself for sinners. When Jesus went to the cross; he willingly took upon himself the sin of those who would later trust in Him.

### ***Awesomely, I have experienced his salvation.***

And since I am one who trusts in Him, He forgave all my sin - past, present and future - and in sin's place he credited us with his very righteousness. Wonderfully, Jesus Christ, God who was a man, died in my place, for my sins, paying my debt to God and purchasing my salvation. Jesus died, was buried and rose from the dead in order to secure my own victory over Satan, sin, death, demons and hell.

### ***Joyfully, tell the world that Jesus is alive.***

Once we trust in him and receive His wonderful gift salvation, he then commissions us to joyfully tell this great news to the world: Jesus has ascended into heaven and today he is alive and well, and he lovingly, passionately, continuously, relentlessly pursues you and me. There is a

good God in heaven and he is deeply interested in your life - and every life.

***Triumphantly, tell the world that Jesus rules.***

He sits at the right hand of the Majesty on high, and He is ruling and reigning over all nations and cultures, all periods of time. He is reigning over men and women, young and old, rich and poor, wise and simple, black and white, the living and the dead, those who have been born and those who are yet to be born. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords and he is ruling and reigning over all people.

***Urgently, turn your life over to Christ and his grace.***

And he commands everyone everywhere, you included, to repent of everything that violates his holiness and our dignity as image-bearers. And he urges you to trust in him and his grace, and to live your brief earthly life in his presence, in his power, according to his plan. If you do that you will have no need to fear death nor hell nor the worst that life can throw at you, because you will be safe in the strong grip of Christ's grace and love, and you will be assured that you will spend all eternity in his awesome heavenly kingdom. *So I give you this charge: turn your life over to Christ loving leadership, receive his gracious gift of salvation, and from hereon learn to live in his presence, in his power, in his plan!* What is your response? There are only two ultimate responses: reject him or trust him? Which is yours? Your whole life - now and forever - hangs in the balance, so decide carefully.

## **THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO TIM KELLER**

*(Note that the previous three gospels have been very individualistic, whereas this one emphasizes that salvation is not just what God does for us, but is about the ultimate restoration of the whole world)*

### **Why are we here?**

The one God is a community - a Trinity of three persons who each perfectly know and defer to one another and love one another and therefore have infinite joy and glory and peace. God made a good, beautiful world filled with beings who share in this life of joy and peace by knowing, serving, and loving God and one another.

### **What went wrong?**

Instead, we chose to centre our lives on ourselves and on the pursuit of things rather than on God and others. This has led to the disintegration of creation and the loss of peace - within ourselves, between ourselves, and in nature itself. War, hunger, poverty, injustice, racism, bitterness, meaninglessness, despair, sickness, and death all are symptoms of this 'divorce' from God.

### **What puts the world right?**

But though God lost us he determined to win us back. In an act of love, he entered history in the person of Jesus in order to deal with all the causes and results of our broken relationship with him. By his sacrificial life and death he both exemplifies the life we must live and rescues us from the life we have lived. By his resurrection he proved who he was and showed us the future - new bodies and a completely renewed and restored new heavens and new earth in which the world is restored to full joy, justice, peace, and glory.

### **How can we be part of putting the world right?**

Between his first coming to win us and his last coming to restore us we live by faith in him. When we believe and rely on Jesus' work and record (rather than ours) for our relationship to God, his healing kingdom power comes upon us and begins to work through us. Christ gives us a radically new identity, freeing us from both self-righteousness and self-condemnation. This liberates us to accept people we once excluded, and to break the bondage of things (even good things) that once drove us. He puts us into a new community of people which gives a partial, but real, foretaste of the healing of the world that God will accomplish when Jesus returns.

## 4) PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN 40 MINUTES.

When preaching it for a full message, I divide the message up into seven or eight objectives:

*Objective A: Lift their gaze to the loving creator.*  
*Objective B: Persuade them they're sinners.*  
*Objective C: Warn them that they're in trouble with God.*  
*Objective D: Tell them who Jesus is and what he's done.*  
*Objective E: Describe other aspects of salvation.*  
*Objective F: Clear up common misconceptions.*  
*Objective G: Tell them some of your story.*  
*Objective H: Urge them to trust in Christ.*

**Objective A: Lift their gaze to the loving creator.**

• ***Point 1: God made everything.***

- *In brief:* God created everything. He's real. He's alive and well, ablaze in energy. He made it all, knows it all, owns it all and cares about it all. He's large and in charge.
- *Key verses:* Genesis 1:1, Isaiah 40:12, Nehemiah 9:6, Romans 1:20

• ***Point 2: God loves you.***

- *In brief:* The Bible says that God loved making the world, and that he loves everything he has made. He especially loves human beings, because we are image-bearers. We're made to have a relationship with him.
- *Key verses:* Psalm 103:11, 1 John 4:16
- *Transition sentence:* So God made us, and he loves us - but something has gone wrong: we haven't loved him back ...

**Objective B: Persuade them they're sinners.**

• ***Point 3: We've all sinned against God through our disobedience.***

- *In brief:* Although most people don't think of themselves as sinful, the Bible tells us that all of us have sinned against God. God made us and therefore is in charge of us, but all of us have this inbuilt tendency to reject his authority. We do what we want even though we know he's not happy with it. Just think about it: Have you ever, even just once, broken one of these few commands: Don't lie. Don't steal. Don't hate. Don't be selfish. Don't dishonour your parents. Don't have sex outside of marriage. If so, then you have disobeyed God.
- *Key verses:* Romans 3:23 ('all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God'), Isaiah 53:6 ('we all, like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way')

• ***Point 4: We've all sinned against God through our idolatry.***

- *In brief:* Sin is not just doing things God doesn't want us to do. It is much deeper than that: sin is loving things more than we love God. The Bible calls this tendency to love things more than we love God *idolatry*.
- *Key verses:* Exodus 20:3, Matthew 22:37, Romans 1:25

**Objective C: Warn them that they're in trouble with God.**

***Point 5: Our disobedience and idolatry will be judged by God.***

- *In brief:* God is a Holy God. This means that disobedience and idolatry deeply offend him because he is so pure. God is also a righteous Judge. This means that he must deal with disobedience and idolatry in our lives - he must give us what our sins deserve. There is a day called Judgment Day when you will stand before God and the DVD of your life will be replayed - and all of your sin will be judged by God.
- *Key verses:* Romans 2:5, Romans 2:16

***Point 6: Our disobedience and idolatry will separate us from God forever in hell.***

- *In brief:* God made us to be with him in this life and forever. But our disobedience and idolatry separates us from God. We end up living lives far from God. But the worst happens when we die. We end up being separated from God forever. The Bible calls this eternal separation 'hell'.
- *Key verses:* Isaiah 59:2, 2 Thessalonians 1:8,9
- Transition sentence: If we are all sinners, is there any hope for us at all? There is only one way out of this mess. It is Jesus...

**Objective D: Tell them who Jesus is and what he's done.**

**• *Point 7: Let me tell you who Jesus is.***

- *In brief:* There is only one hope for sinners. It is Jesus Christ. Let me tell you who he is: 1) He is God. 2) He came to this world 2000 years ago, as predicted by thousands of years of prophecies recorded in the Old Testament. 3) He came to this earth as a human and lived an amazing life, loving people, healing people, teaching with all wisdom. 4) He was executed on a cross, but miraculously rose again from the dead. 5) He then went into heaven where he now rules the world as king of the universe - and he's even in this room with us. 6) He will come back one day to judge all those who have rejected him, and lovingly rule over all those who have received him.
- *Key verses:* the whole New Testament, but check out Acts 2:22-36 for starters.

**• *Point 8: Let me tell you what Jesus has done for us.***

- *In brief:* The main thing Jesus did while on the earth was to die on

the cross on our behalf, so that our disobedience and idolatry could be forgiven. On the cross, he took the punishment our sins deserved so that we could be right with God. 'The punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed' (Isaiah 53:5). He was sinless and yet he received the judgment that only a sinner deserves, so that we who are sinful can receive the acceptance that only Christ deserves. 'For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son that we should not perish, but that we shall have eternal life' (John 3:16).

- *Key verses:* Isaiah 53:5, John 3:16, Romans 5:8, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Thessalonians 1:9,10, 1 Timothy 2:5,6

### Objective E: Describe other aspects of salvation

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>Point 9: Let me tell you what else Jesus has done for us.</i></b></li> </ul>
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- *In brief:* The Bible's word for all that Jesus has done for us is salvation. The main thing salvation is, as we have already seen, is that, through Christ's death, we are forgiven and reconciled to God. We are made right with God. But there are other aspects of salvation:
  - ***1) We're given a new innocence.***
  - *In brief:* Without Christ our lives accumulate a sense of guilt and shame. But Christ forgives us when we trust in him. He removes the shame, giving us a new innocence in its place.
  - *Key verse:* Psalm 103:12
  - ***2) We're given a new power.***
  - *In brief:* Without Christ we're unable to not sin - our lives are characterized by disobedience and idolatry. But as we trust in Christ, he gives us a new power to overcome the pull of sin on our lives. The Spirit of God comes and lives inside of us, producing new desires to trust and love Jesus, giving us a new power to change.
  - *Key verse:* Galatians 5:16
  - ***3) We're given a new peace and joy.***
  - *In brief:* Without Christ there will always be an emptiness inside of us that nothing and no one can truly fill. It's like there is a God-shaped hole inside of us that Christ alone can fill. But when we trust in Christ, he fills that hole with himself. This brings about a peace and joy that is unlike anything this world offers.
  - *Key verse:* Romans 5:5, Romans 15:13
  - ***4) We're given a new identity.***
  - *In brief:* Without Christ it's difficult to figure out who we are. We may try to find our identity in our relationships, or in what we do, or in what we wear, or in how much money or education we have. But none of these things are good enough to find our identity in because they are all temporary and leave us unstable. Then along comes God and he adopts us as his own kid! He sees us as his very

own children. Now everything is more stable - because our identity is anchored to something (or someone) that cannot change.

- *Key verse:* John 1:12
- **5) We're given a new purpose.**
- *In brief:* Without Christ it's almost impossible to figure out our reason for existence, what we're meant to do with our lives. But Christ comes and gives us a purpose. He calls us to join him on his mission to reach and bless the world, starting with the people around us. Jesus said to his disciples, 'Let your good deeds shine before people' (Matthew 5:16). Amazingly, he plans 'good works in advance for us to do' (Ephesians 2:10). With Christ, we get to live our lives with a sense of purpose.
- *Key verse:* Jeremiah 29:11
- **6) We're given a new eternity.**
- *In brief:* Without Christ we should fear death because judgment and hell are real. But with Christ, judgment is replaced with forgiveness, and hell is replaced with heaven. Death is not something to be feared anymore.
- *Key verse:* Hebrews 2:15
- **7) We're given a new family.**
- *In brief:* Without Christ we have only one family - our earthly one. But with Christ we become part of yet another family, the church. We become brothers and sisters with other Christians.
- *Key verse:* John 13:34

#### Objective F: Clear up two common misconceptions

• **Point 10: Salvation cannot be earned through good deeds.**

- *In brief:* When telling people what Jesus has done for them, and what he wants to do for them - they often think that they have to *earn* this salvation by good deeds. But this is not true at all! Salvation is a pure gift from God. It is paid for by Christ's blood - and not by our sweat. Being good and doing good deeds cannot remove our disobedience and idolatry, and it cannot earn us Christ's salvation. 'For it is by grace you have been saved, not by your works' (Ephesians 2:8). This is good news because it means that no matter what we've done we too can receive salvation.

• **Point 11: Salvation cannot be inherited from others.**

- *In brief:* one of the great misconceptions of Christianity is that people think they're Christians because they have Christian parents, or because they have gone to church, or because they have grown up in a so-called Christian part of the world. These things are all wonderful, but they are not enough - salvation is not inherited from parents, or culture. Everyone must trust in Christ directly for themselves if they are to become real, not just cultural, Christians.

## Objective G: Tell them some of your story

- **Point 12: Let me briefly tell you some of my story.**

- *Note to preacher:* Your testimony is very powerful (see Revelations 12:11). It is usually effective to tell a little of how you have experienced salvation. Perhaps briefly mention 1) what held you back from trusting in Christ, 2) how you came to trust in Christ, and 3) the difference he has made in your life. Don't get caught up in too much detail though, after all Christ, not you, is the theme of this message.

## Objective H: Urge them to trust in Christ.

- **Point 13: Christ is calling you to trust in him.**

- *In brief:* If salvation is not earned by good works, and not inherited from others, then how do you receive salvation? The answer is simple: trust in Christ. Call on him and ask him to come and save you. Ask him to come into your life. Here are some important verses that tell us how to receive Christ:
  - 'For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this not of yourselves but is the gift of God' (Ephesians 2:8,9).
  - 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord (Jesus) will be saved' (Romans 10:13).
  - 'If you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved' (Romans 10:9).
- Just pray a simple prayer: 'Jesus, I trust in you. You are Lord. You rose from the dead. You died to accomplish salvation for me. Come and save me now'.

- **Point 14: Why not respond now?**

- *Note to preacher:* There are many ways to do this, but most people who are ready to trust in Christ appreciate someone providing an opportunity to do so. Make sure you place the emphasis on them calling out to Christ, and not on an external action (like coming forward, or raising a hand, or being prayed for by you). Inviting them to do some action can be helpful, but focus on facilitating them reaching out to Christ. Perhaps guide them in that prayer: '*Jesus, I trust in you. You are Lord. You rose from the dead. You died to accomplish salvation for me. Come and save me now*'.
- When someone does respond, encourage them with words such as these: 'Wow. The choice to respond to Christ's call is the most important you can ever make. Well done! Christ hears you. As you call on him, he hears and responds.'
- *After they have responded say,* 'Now that you've begun your relationship with Christ, we'd love to help you in your first steps. This leads naturally to new-believer discipleship.'

## SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

Objective A: Lift their gaze to the loving creator.

- *Point 1: God made everything.*
- *Point 2: God loves you.*

Objective B: Persuade them they're sinners.

- *Point 3: We've all sinned against God through our disobedience.*
- *Point 4: We've all sinned against God through our idolatry.*

Objective C: Warn them that they're in trouble with God.

- *Point 5: Our disobedience and idolatry will be judged by God.*
- *Point 6: Our disobedience and idolatry will separate us from God forever in hell.*

Objective D: Tell them who Jesus is and what he's done.

- *Point 7: Let me tell you who Jesus is.*
- *Point 8: Let me tell you what Jesus has done for us.*

Objective E: Describe other aspects of salvation

- *Point 9: Let me tell you what else Jesus has done for us ...*
  - 1) *We're given a new innocence.*
  - 2) *We're given a new power.*
  - 3) *We're given a new peace and joy.*
  - 4) *We're given a new identity.*
  - 5) *We're given a new purpose.*
  - 6) *We're given a new eternity.*
  - 7) *We're given a new family.*

Objective F: Clear up two common misconceptions

- *Point 10: Salvation cannot be earned through good deeds.*
- *Point 11: Salvation cannot be inherited from others.*

Objective G: Tell them some of your story

- *Point 12: Let me briefly tell you some of my story.*

Objective H: Urge them to trust in Christ.

- *Point 13: Christ is calling you to trust in him today.*
- *Point 14: Why not respond now?*

## 5) PREACHING THE GOSPEL IN 4 HOURS

In God Sessions I preach the gospel over five sessions, each about 45 minutes long. The power of stretching yourself to do something like this is that it ensures that you have a deep insight into the gospel as opposed to a shallow one.

**Session one: Is there more to life than this?**

This does not preach the gospel as much as it makes people want to hear the gospel.

**Session two: Is God real, and if he is, what's he like?**

This one argues for God's existence and gives a brief glimpse into God as a holy king and as a loving father.

**Session three: Who is Jesus, and does it matter?**

This one reveals who Jesus is and gives evidence to support it.

**Session four: If I'm reasonably good, why do I need faith?**

This one helps people see themselves as sinners in need of salvation, and explains what salvation is, and how to receive it.

**Session five: Where to from here?**

This one clarifies that Christianity is neither liberalism nor legalism, but is really an invitation to be loved and changed by God's sheer grace. It also invites people to continue the journey.

*All these talks both written and audio, as well as the God Sessions course details and resources, are available on [www.commongroundchurch.co.za](http://www.commongroundchurch.co.za). Click on 'free resources' then 'stuff for church and ministry leaders' then 'god sessions'.*

*Another two excellent resources are: 1) the book based on the course 'Introducing God' by Dominic Steele (see [www.introducinggod.org](http://www.introducinggod.org)) - which shows a great way of preaching the gospel over 8 or 9 sessions. 2) the book '3:16 - the number of hope' by Max Lucado.*

Perhaps you can preach the gospel on Sundays in a series format. Or run a course for those looking into Christianity by doing one of them every week. Or use these talks in a weekend camp.

## 6) PREACHING THE GOSPEL EFFECTIVELY

**Are you saying all I have to do is preach this message and I'll get converts?** No, but my guess is that if you do you will probably get results. It is generally not enough to just preach the right content - as important as that is. A few other factors will help - I will put them in the form of questions:

*1) Are you freshly excited about Christ and the gospel?* People will easily pick up whether the gospel is something that burns in you with fire and joy, or is just something that you know in your head. One way of keeping the gospel message alive in you is to memorize and or mediate on the key verses that are included in this document.

*2) Are you dependent on the Spirit's power?* 1 Thessalonians 1:5 says, 'Our gospel came to you with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep conviction.' The Holy Spirit wants to supernaturally enable your preaching of the gospel, and wants to supernaturally cut people to their hearts as they listen.

*3) Are you communicating the content in the most clear and captivating way you can?* It's a sin to bore people with the gospel. Make sure that you do all you can to communicate to people in ways that are clear and captivating. Practice it on some people beforehand if need be - and invite feedback so you can do it better.

*4) Are you trusting God for salvations?* Charles Spurgeon said that preaching the gospel with faith that, every time you do, someone will get saved, is a key to evangelism success. Listen to how the Thessalonians responded to Paul's preaching: they 'turned from idols to serve the living and true God, and began to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead - Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath' (1 Thessalonians 1:9,10). This is one reason that prayer beforehand is so important - it is an opportunity to ask God with faith for similar results to what Paul experienced.

*5) If people respond to Christ, what will you do to disciple them and integrate them into a church?* Very often God withholds salvations because he knows that we have no intention of looking after the newly converted lives he entrusts to us. So make sure you have both the heart, and the plan, to disciple new converts and integrate them into a healthy church.

## CONCLUSION

Gospel preaching is the most important thing you will ever do. It is the foundation upon which everything else in church- and ministry-life happens.

Practically, you should be able to preach the gospel in 40 seconds, in 4 minutes, in 40 minutes and in 4 hours! It should be your life's passion and focus to preach the gospel to as many as possible, as clearly and powerfully as possible, and as often as possible.