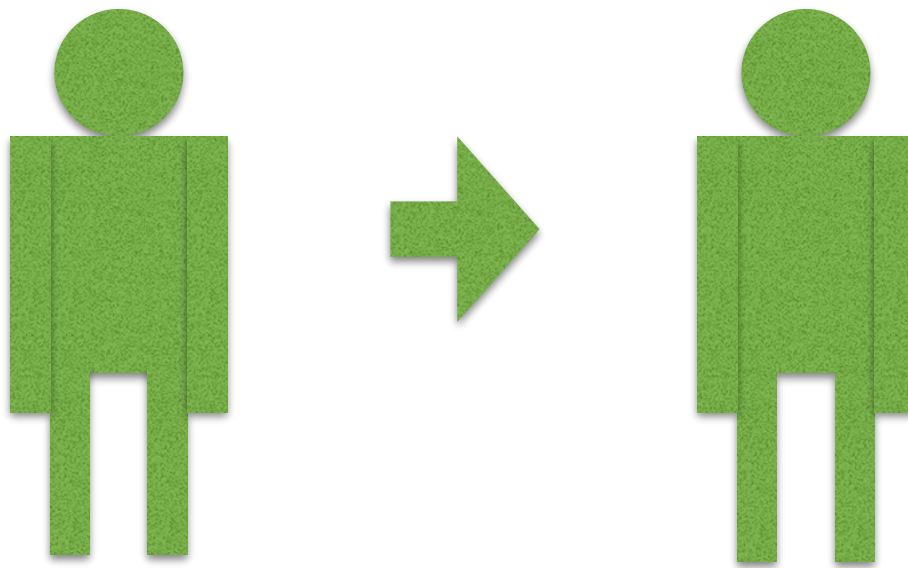


Equipping for Evangelism

By Nathan Combs



“My food is to do the will of him who sent me
and to accomplish his work” - John 4.34

Dear Tyngsboro Brother or Sister,

As our family prepares to move, I am reminded of the original goal that brought us to Tyngsboro in the first place: to “equip” you in your “ministry” (service) to God in His kingdom (Ephesians 4.11-12). Our goal as a congregation is not to pay one man to be the minister for us; instead, God has commissioned evangelists and other teachers to help all Christians become ministers who work together for God’s glory. While there are many different kinds of ministries we can learn about and grow in, I believe many Christians especially desire training and practice in the area of evangelism. Some of you have recently expressed interest in learning more about what I do to study with people. Therefore, we will focus on evangelism on Wednesday nights for the remainder of this year.

We’re going to carefully study the way Jesus evangelized in the gospels. The first eight lessons will focus on how He taught people personally and the last four will focus on how He equipped His disciples to go out and imitate Him. Our theme verse and class goal will come from John 4.34 - “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to accomplish his work.” Jesus spoke these words to His disciples in the Samaritan village of Sychar, right after He had taught a Samaritan woman and right before He taught the entire village. Like Jesus, connecting people with their Creator should be our source of strength, not merely our duty. The appendices in the second half of the book (pages 16-33) include the first five lessons I use with non-Christians as well as other thoughts on the nuts and bolts of connecting others with Jesus.

The conversions we’ve witnessed in our congregation recently are encouraging. If you pray for opportunities and seek the Lord’s equipping, I am confident He will continue to use this congregation to sow the gospel message. Let us be bold, knowing that God has “made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant” (2 Corinthians 3.6).

With Brotherly Affection,
Nathan

Proverbs 24.27 - “Prepare your work outside; get everything ready for yourself in the field, and after that build your house.”

Class Organization

	Topic	Scripture(s)	Date
How Jesus Evangelized	Why Jesus Taught People	Matt. 9.35-38, Mk. 6.30-34, Jn. 4.31-38	October 4th
	Where Jesus Taught People	Matt. 9.35; 26.55, Mk. 2.1-2; 4.1, Acts 5, 8, 16, 17	October 11th
	How Jesus Set Up Teaching Situations	John 1.39-51, Luke 5.1-11	October 18th
	How Jesus Sustained Himself	Mk. 1.21-39, Matt. 14.13-23	October 25th
	How Jesus Had Conversations	John 4.1-6	November 1st
	How Jesus Had Conversations	John 4.7-15	November 8th
	How Jesus Had Conversations	John 4.16-29	November 15th
	The People Jesus Pursued	Matt. 11.19, Jn. 7.49, Lk. 5.27-31; 7.36; 14.1; 15.1; 19.1-10	November 22nd
	How He Trained the Disciples to Evangelize	Jesus Sends Out the Apostles	Matthew 10.1-15
Jesus Sends Out the Apostles		Matthew 10.16-25	December 6th
Jesus Sends Out the Apostles		Matthew 10.26-42	December 13th
Jesus Sends Out the 72		Luke 10.1-20	December 20th
Class Review		N/A	December 27th

Why Jesus Taught People

1. List some reasons for why we're sometimes not as diligent as we should be in talking to others about Jesus?
2. Read Matthew 9.35-38 and Mark 6.30-34. What motivated Jesus to proclaim the gospel of the kingdom? Why did he have that concern?
3. Based on what Jesus tells his disciples in Matthew 9.37-38, what do we learn about our general attitude about evangelism and what we should pray for?
4. Read John 4.31-38
 1. What's happening in the context of John 4 leading up to this passage?
 2. What does Jesus teach the disciples about His "food"? How do we apply this?
 3. What is the point of Jesus' discussion of sowing, reaping, and harvest? How can we use this encouragement?

Where Jesus Taught People

1. Name some locations in which Jesus taught people in the gospels. Consult Matthew 9.35; 26.55, Mark 2.1-2; 4.1 for some ideas and provide any more that come to mind.

2. Later on, where did Jesus' disciples teach people in the book of Acts? For some examples, see Acts 5.42, 8.26, 16.13, 17.1-2, 17.17.

3. What do these teaching situations have in common with each other?

4. Brainstorm some places where we could go to have conversations about Jesus.
 - a. Where can we go to find groups of people?

 - b. What are some ways in which we can get into our communities like Jesus did?

 - c. What kinds of services can we perform in the world that will create opportunities to be around people and share our message about Jesus?

How Jesus Sustained Himself

1. Read Mark 1.21-39.
 - a. List the amazing things that Jesus did in the course of one day (vss. 21-34).
 - b. How did Jesus recover from such an exhausting day? How can we apply this?
 - c. According to vs. 38, how did Jesus characterize His mission? How can we use this?

2. Examine Matthew 14.13-23.
 - a. What had just happened earlier in the chapter that caused Jesus to seek solitude?
 - b. How were Jesus' plans derailed and what was His attitude about it? What can we learn from His example?
 - c. Did Jesus eventually receive His alone time? What did he do with it? When did he eventually rejoin the disciples (vs. 25)?

How Jesus Had Conversations

1. Read John 4.1-6.
 - a. Leading up to this conversation, what are we told about Jesus' personal situation?

 - b. What was unusual about Jesus and His disciples passing through the area of Sychar (Hint: read John's commentary at the end of vs. 8)?

 - c. Who were the Samaritan people? Consult 2 Kings 17.24-41.

 - d. Why does John tell us what time it was when Jesus was sitting beside the well?

2. What applications do you see for us? How can we make our lives imitate this passage?

How Jesus Had Conversations

1. Read John 4.7-15.
 - a. Considering the natural barriers between Jesus and this woman, what is curious about how this conversation begins in vs. 7-8?
 - b. How does Jesus move the conversation forward after she becomes amazed (vs. 10)? What is the "gift of God"?
 - c. Based on the woman's response, how is she thinking about Jesus and what is He offering her?
 - d. How does Jesus compare what He's offering with the well water in Sychar?
2. How can we put our lives into this text? What practical lessons do you see for us?

How Jesus Had Conversations

1. Read John 4.16-29.
 - a. Why does Jesus so abruptly change the subject in vs. 16? Or does He?
 - b. After realizing Jesus' prophetic powers, where does the woman steer the conversation?
 - c. In Jesus' response to her question, do you see any connection back to the first things He was talking to her about?
 - d. How does the reaction of the disciples contrast with the reaction of the woman?
2. What are some practical applications we can see from this text?

The Kind of People Jesus Pursued

1. What kind of reputation did Jesus have amongst the Jews (Matthew 11.19, Luke 15.1)?

2. What did the Pharisees think of the Jews who weren't part of their number (John 7.49)?

3. Read Luke 19.1-10.
 - a. Write down everything we're told about Zacchaeus in these verses.

 - b. Think about Jesus' mission statement (vs. 10) in the context of this passage. What does Jesus mean by seeking and saving the "lost"?

 - c. There are other places in Luke that discuss being "lost" (Luke 15.6, 9, 32). What do these verses have in common? To whom was Jesus addressing these teachings?

 - d. How does Luke 19.5 compare with Luke 7.36 and 14.1?

 - d. What do we learn by looking at Jesus' party with Levi and his friends (Luke 5.27-31)?

 - e. Practically speaking, how can we imitate Jesus in our attitudes and choices?

Jesus Sends Out the Apostles **Matthew 10.1-15**

1. Obviously Jesus gave his apostles a special kind of supernatural authority in vs. 1 that we haven't been given (exorcism and healing). But what kind of authority do we have as 21st century Christians?

2. What do we learn about Jesus' apostles from examining the list of their names (vss. 2-4)? What applications can you make from your observations?

3. Jesus gave them strict instructions to only preach to fellow Jews, not Samaritans or Gentiles (vss. 5-7). Why? What do we learn from that?

4. What was the primary message they carried with them (vs. 7)? What was their attitude supposed to be toward their gifts (vs. 8)? Applications for our evangelism?

5. Why does Jesus forbid his apostles from preparing for their journey (Vss. 9-10)? How can we apply that to ourselves?

6. In vss. 11-15, Jesus tells them to find a "worthy" person and house or move on to the next town. What does he mean by that and how can we use that principle ourselves?

Jesus Sends Out the 72 **Luke 10.1-20**

1. Do you see any differences between how the 12 apostles were sent out compared to the 72 disciples (compare Matthew 10.1-2 and Luke 10.1)?

2. Why would Jesus send the disciples out in pairs?

3. What message were they supposed to proclaim regardless of whether they were accepted or rejected by the town they entered (vss. 9, 11)?

4. Where were Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum? Why does Jesus condemn them? What encouragement can we draw from this as gospel messengers?

5. The disciples returned from their mission with joyful excitement about their miraculous powers. What does Jesus teach them in response? What applications can we make from vss. 13-16?

Appendix 1: Objectives & Disclaimers

- I. Objectives: KEP
 - A. *Knowledge* of big-picture Bible lessons, as well as evangelistic mechanics
 - B. *Encouragement* in making the prospect of studying with non-Christians real
 - C. *Practice* in using lessons on each other to prepare for using them with others
- II. My Disclaimers
 - A. The lessons in this material are not the only way of teaching evangelistically
 1. This is a man-made arrangement of the perfect words of God and anything other than scripture should never be viewed as scripture itself.
 2. Jesus instructed his followers to teach general concepts (i.e. preaching the “kingdom of God”), but he did not provide one specific script of exactly what to say in every circumstance.
 - a) In Acts 2, Peter quoted the Old Testament constantly as he tried to reach a crowd of Jews.
 - b) In Acts 17, Paul didn’t quote the Old Testament at all when he preached to a crowd of Athenians, but instead quoted Greek poets.
 - c) Gospel teaching varied according to audience, but it was always rooted in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus (1 Corinthians 15.1-4).
 3. The Holy Spirit worked through the different personalities of Bible writers to emphasize different (but overlapping) ideas.
 - a) The apostle John heavily emphasized the concepts of truth and love in the gospel and letters he wrote.
 - b) The apostle Matthew heavily emphasized the “kingdom of heaven” that Jesus came to establish.
 - B. Although we will examine and practice a specific way of presenting the gospel, our end goal is not to memorize and adhere to a set of rigid formulas
 1. These lessons are guidelines, so please treat them as such
 - a) I encourage you to absorb my material so that you can adapt it for your own use and make it yours. That’s what we will do in the last five weeks.
 - b) I’m not trying to make clones of Nathan Combs.
 2. We’re interacting with unique, individual souls, not cars on an assembly line
 - a) The gospel message is unchangeable, but the way it’s presented depends on the unique individuals we teach.
 - b) We cannot stick a soul into a formula and expect a Christian to pop out.
 - c) Everyone needs to understand concepts like God’s holiness, our sin and death, and Jesus’ triumph, but the specific needs of each individual might require different presentations.
 - C. These lessons are not exhaustive of EVERYTHING a non-Christian might need to know in order to reach God
 1. We’re going to cover big-picture ideas which target the average non-Christian who perhaps has some exposure to Christianity, but doesn’t know much about it.

2. While most people are helped by understanding the big picture of the Bible, a study's direction will somewhat depend on the person with whom we're studying.
 - a) If we're studying with someone who's already entrenched in a different religion, like Islam, he might need lots of evidence that the Bible is reliable and accurate.
 - b) If we're studying with an atheist, he might need a rigorous study of Jesus' resurrection to convince him that God exists.
 - c) There are plenty of other important topics that might need to be studied in greater depth with someone who's interested in our faith.
 - (1) Why is there suffering and pain in this world and why doesn't God stop it?
 - (2) How could a loving God send people to hell?
 - (3) Why does God seem arrogant and egotistical?
 - (4) Hasn't macroevolution taken away the need for a God?
 - (5) Aren't the holy wars in the Bible just like Islamic jihad?
 - (6) Isn't it arrogant to say that there's just one true religion?
 - (7) Isn't it okay to do whatever you want as long as you don't hurt anyone?
- D. This material is a snapshot of constantly evolving material
 1. It reflects the way I present the gospel currently, not how I will teach it in 10, 15, 20 years, etc.
 2. The material will inevitably change as time passes, for a few reasons:
 - a) Our average audience will change. Whom I tend to teach at the moment is reflected in this material (i.e. not a lot of evidences material).
 - b) Our cultural values and priorities will change. What's important to one generation is not necessarily important to the next. As the apostles adapted to the different cultures around them, we must adapt our presentation of the gospel message to suit our times.
 - c) As we grow in our knowledge and study of the scriptures, we (hopefully) change the way we think and the way we help others think.
- E. We will not focus on evangelistic methods, but rather evangelistic material.
 1. Many methods of engaging strangers simply boil down to two simple things: be friendly and ask if they want to study.
 2. Much advertising takes place online (meetup.com, facebook, etc.) and in paper form (mailed flyers, neighbor-to-neighbor, etc.).
 3. From everything I've read and been taught by more experienced preachers, the best evangelism happens with friends and family members of Christians.
 4. Our emphasis will instead be directed towards the question of how to study with someone. What ground do we cover? How do we move them from the point of no knowledge of God to the point of committing their life to Jesus?

Appendix 2: Practical Considerations & The First Conversation

- I. Practical Considerations:
 - A. Whenever possible, take another Christian with you to the study
 1. It avoids the possibility of sexual temptation
 - a) If you're male, don't study with a female unless you bring your wife or another sister with you. Since Jenny is occupied with our children, people like Janet Ledford and Nancy Krause have been very helpful co-workers.
 - b) Likewise, if you're female, don't study with a male alone. A husband or brother in the faith needs to be there.
 - c) Even if we are not necessarily in imminent danger of sin, our personal reputation and (more importantly) the reputation of Jesus must be upheld.
 - d) Matthew 10.16 - "Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves."
 2. It follows the wisdom and examples of the scriptures
 - a) Jesus sent out his apostles two by two (Mark 6.7, Luke 10.1).
 - b) The apostle Paul always took at least one person with him on his journeys.
 - c) Eccl. 4:12 - "And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken."
 3. It makes your life easier and helps to equip other Christians
 - a) When we're struggling to explain a concept clearly, when our mind can't remember a certain scripture, or when we're having trouble defeating an opposing argument, our co-worker is there to help us.
 - b) If we get sick or need to drop out temporarily from the class for some reason, our co-worker could still carry on with the class.
 - c) Also, taking an additional person with you gives that person an opportunity to serve the Lord and receive valuable evangelistic experience.
 - B. Give thought to the atmosphere and location of your study environment
 1. You could study in a public location or business, like a Dunkin' Donuts, Panera Bread, or local park.
 - a) Pro: any public Bible study can potentially attract others nearby who are curious about the gospel.
 - b) Pro: studying at a public location gives you the ability to study with long-distance contacts by meeting them halfway.
 - c) Con: depending on the business, it might be too loud or distracting to have a productive, focused study. You're not in control of the atmosphere.
 - d) Con: if you're studying at a business, you're constrained by the business' hours of operation.
 - e) If you choose a public business, it might be a good idea to scope out the location and before suggesting it to your contact.
 2. You could study in a more private location, like your home
 - a) Pro: your home provides a comfortable, convenient, quiet, and less distracting location where you have much more control over the environment.

- b) Pro: opening up your home for a study provides non-Christians with an opportunity to get to know you more quickly as they see where you live.
 - c) Con: depending on the situation, opening up your home for non-Christians that you don't know well might be uncomfortable.
 - d) Con: your house might not be a convenient location for the individual.
3. The place you pick will depend on lots of factors: where the individual lives/works, time of the study, area traffic, your comfort level with opening your home, etc.
- II. The First Conversation:
- A. Be friendly and aim for building a relationship
 - 1. The goal of evangelism is not to find a willing individual and dump information into them - we are interacting with human beings, not robots.
 - 2. Analogy: there are no thumb drives for people!
 - 3. We must instead aim to form relationships with people and bring them alongside of us in the faith.
 - 4. I will often spend my first meeting with a person chatting extensively about their life so I can get to know them and gain valuable background information.
 - B. Ask questions!
 - 1. About their personal background
 - a) Where are you from? Have you always lived in the area?
 - b) Are you in school? What year are you in? What are you going to school to do?
 - c) What kind of job do you have? What's involved in your job?
 - d) Do you have family living in the area? Spouse, parents, siblings, kids?
 - e) What do you enjoy doing when you have spare time?
 - 2. About their religious background
 - a) Do you go to a church? Which church? How long have you been going there?
 - b) Is your church part of a denomination? Nondenominational?
 - c) What kinds of subjects are emphasized at your church?
 - d) **Important:** "Can you share your experience of how you were saved? What did that process look like?"
 - 1) There are many people who claim to follow Christ and many different teachings about how we reach Jesus' salvation. I'd like to know yours.
 - 2) Did you say a prayer and have Jesus come into your heart?
 - 3) Were you saved and then baptized at a later point in time?
 - 4) Don't automatically assume that someone is saved or not saved. Ask them.
 - C. Don't start teaching them until you generally grasp their spiritual status.
 - 1. Upfront questions are crucial in planning class direction.
 - 2. If someone is not a Christian and knows he is not, you can gear the study towards filling them up with truth and not have to debunk false Christian doctrines (i.e. Calvinism).
 - 3. If someone is not a Christian but thinks he is, you have to tread carefully to validate common ground when you have it, but teach the truth about salvation.
 - 4. If someone is already Christian, they need to be strengthened in their knowledge about the identity and purpose of God's church and their role in it.

Appendix 3: What Happens After Conversion?

- I. The Principle: don't ignore fragile, new Christians!
 - A. Put yourself in their shoes
 1. New Christians are in transition between two different worlds. They are attempting to break down their previous attitudes and embrace a new mindset.
 2. They are extremely vulnerable to being pulled back into the life they have just committed to leaving.
 3. Analogy: what if we got home from hospital with a new baby, set it down, gave it the house rules and a supply of diapers and formula, then left it to fend for itself? Eventually children reach a stage of growth when they can become more self-sufficient, but not at the very beginning. So it is with new Christians.
 4. We cannot simply hand them a new Bible, a church bulletin, inform them about the times for congregational worship, and turn them loose on the world!
 5. Once someone obeys the gospel, our work with them has just begun.
 - B. Consider what the apostles/leaders did with new Christians in the book of Acts
 1. Acts 2.42 - the new Christians who were converted after Pentecost got together frequently to worship and eat together and be taught by the apostles.
 2. Acts 8.14, 25 - after Samaritans became Christians, Peter and John traveled north to give the Holy Spirit to them and to reinforce the teachings of Philip.
 3. Acts 11.19-26 - after a church of Gentiles formed in Antioch, the church sent Barnabas to strengthen the church. Barnabas and Saul worked in Antioch for a whole year with the purpose of solidifying the church and encouraging growth.
 4. Acts 15.36 - the whole purpose of Paul's second journey was to revisit the churches he had already planted and strengthen the new Christians.
 - C. Consider Paul's relationship with the brand-new Thessalonian church
 1. 1 Thessalonians 2.8 - While he was with them, Paul shared his whole life with the Thessalonians, not merely the message of Jesus.
 2. 1 Thessalonians 3.1-3 - After he had to leave abruptly, he sent a strong Christian back to Thessalonica check on them and help their progress.
 3. Obviously, he sent at least two letters to their group to encourage growth.
- II. The Practical: what should we do to help?
 - A. Find ways to incorporate them into the community of believers
 1. Get them involved in the Lord's work
 - a) Train them to lead public worship (scripture reading, prayer, singing, etc.).
 - b) Encourage them to reach out to their friends/family to start more classes.
 - c) Take them along with you as you do your work.
 - (1) Jesus frequently did his work alongside of the apostles (Mark 5.37).
 - (2) Paul sometimes took young Christians with him on his journeys (Acts 16.3).
 2. Eat with them
 - a) We have many indications that early Christians valued sharing meals together
 - (1) Acts 2.46 - the new Christians at Jerusalem shared bread house to house.
 - (2) Acts 20.11 - the Christians at Troas ate with Paul before he left their group.

- (3) Galatians 2.11-14 - Paul chastised Peter for not eating with Gentile disciples
- (4) 1 Corinthians 5.11 - Christians are not to eat with rebellious brothers
- b) Invite them over for meals in your home, so they can get to know you better. Consider inviting other Christians as well to create additional bonds.
- c) If they have a busy schedule and/or live far away, meet for occasional coffee.
- 3. Organize other Christians to build them up
 - a) If only one or two people are working with new Christians, two things occur:
 - (1) The encouragers will eventually get burned out.
 - (2) The new Christians will be robbed of the opportunity to learn and grow from being with the many other Christians in the congregation.
 - b) Recruit other Christians to connect with them
 - (1) By writing occasional encouraging notes, emailing, texting, etc.
 - (2) By reading a book together with them
 - (3) By having purposeful conversations
 - c) We must share the privilege and responsibility of building up new believers!
- B. Study the Scriptures with them
 - 1. Study how to study the Bible
 - a) Famous Chinese proverb: Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.
 - b) A new Christian must learn the basics of how to approach the Scriptures, following a simple three-step process.
 - (1) Observation - what does the text say?
 - (2) Interpretation - what did the text mean for its' original audience?
 - (3) Application - what does the text mean for my life?
 - 2. Study a specific book
 - a) Acts: the only book of the NT which centers on the history of the early church and how the gospel spread. This is excellent for covering what God's church is, its' purposes, and our individual places in it.
 - b) Ephesians: this book focuses on God's plan for the world and our purpose for living, as well as specific character attributes that need to be developed.
 - c) Ecclesiastes: to reinforce the power of the gospel, this is a good book to emphasize the hopelessness and futility of life without God in our picture.
 - 3. Ask them what they need from the Scriptures
 - a) If there's a pressing spiritual question in their life that they're wondering about, you need to know so you can be their teacher and not the internet or non-Christian friend.
 - b) The only way to know is to ask!
- C. Pray with them and for them
 - 1. Scriptural examples
 - a) 1 Thessalonians 1.2 - Paul constantly prayed for the new Thessalonian church.
 - b) Acts 2.42 - early Christians devoted themselves to praying together.
 - 2. Ultimately, the Lord alone is capable of purifying and completing a new Christian in this life and the next (1 Thessalonians 5.23). We should ask for His grace.

Lesson 1: What's God Doing With The World?

- I. Introduction
 - A. When we put a puzzle together, it's very helpful to have the box lid to see the overall picture of how to fit all the pieces together. This lesson is the box lid of the Bible.
 - B. When we think about what the Bible is, it's important that we not think of it as an encyclopedia of morality. It is not a dry collection of facts.
 - C. Everything in the Bible is inspired by God and therefore factual and true, but the Bible itself is a grand and beautiful narrative, a story. It has major and minor characters. It has plot development. It has themes that thread everything together.
 - D. The major theme of the Bible: God creates light from the darkness.
 - E. Throughout the narrative, mankind continually breaks the world and God continually makes promises to fix the world. Ultimately, all promises are fulfilled in Jesus Christ.
- II. "In the Beginning"
 - A. God made a beautiful world out of chaos and darkness (Genesis 1.1-5)
 1. Analogy: When you meet someone for the first time, you form an impression about them that lasts throughout the time you're getting to know them.
 2. This is our very first impression of God when we meet him in Genesis: He takes something that is "formless and void" and gives it form, beauty, and light.
 3. As readers of the Bible, we're supposed to carry that first impression with us for the rest of Scriptures.
 - B. Everything God made was "good" (Genesis 1.31)
 1. At the end of every day that God created, he reflected on that day and "saw that it was good."
 2. At the end of making the entire world, God's final conclusion was: "it was very good." There was peaceful harmony between everything. No war. No pain.
 3. What we learn from this: God is the one who has the right to define what is good and not good because he is the author of the created world.
 - C. Mankind destroyed the good in the world (Genesis 3.1-7)
 1. Satan came to Eve and presents God as a cruel dictator who withholds good.
 2. Eve believed the lie, she ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam ate, and the world became broken through their disobedience.
 3. Their choice produced spiritual death, followed later by their physical deaths.
 4. They had to leave the Garden of Eden, symbolizing their separation from God.
 - D. God's promise: the serpent will lose the war (Genesis 3.14-15)
 1. Although the serpent won the first battle over Eve, God promised that one day a descendant of Eve would win the war over the serpent.
 2. The serpent would injure his heel, but this descendant would fatally injure the serpent's head.
 3. Out of darkness, death, and chaos, God would bring light, life, and peace again.
- III. Noah
 - A. The earth became dark, God wiped out the darkness, recreated life (Genesis 6.5-8)
 1. Through the wickedness of man, the earth became "formless and void" again.

2. The entire population of the world was drenched in evil, except for Noah & family.
 3. God declared his intention of flooding the earth, washing it, and starting over.
 4. He told Noah to build a boat that would hold his family and certain animals.
- B. God's promise: never destroy the earth with water again.
1. God created the rainbow to remind us of the covenant promise made here.
 2. We are taught something very important here about God: He will destroy and punish when He is rejected, but He truly desires to create and bless.
- IV. Abraham
- A. God picked two childless old people and created life from them
1. God told a man named Abraham to move from his home to a foreign land because he had selected him for some very important purposes.
 2. The origin of the Jews displayed God's power to create light from darkness.
- B. God's promise: make a people, give them land, bless all nations (Genesis 12.1-3, 7)
1. Sarah, Abraham's wife, had a lifeless womb, just like the world was lifeless at the beginning of time.
 2. Although they didn't have children, God gave them a promise to make a huge family from them, give them land, and bless all people through their family.
 3. Abraham and Sarah waited 25 years and had a son (named Isaac) when he was 100 and she was 90.
 4. Isaac grew up and married, but his wife couldn't have children until God blessed them with two sons, Esau and Jacob. Once again, God created light from darkness.
 5. Jacob was chosen by God to receive the family promise, his name was changed to Israel, and he had 12 sons, who became the 12 tribes of Israel.
- V. Moses
- A. God picked an old shepherd to deliver the Israelites out of their slavery
1. Time passed, the Israelites moved to Egypt because of famine and became enslaved by the Egyptians for hundreds of years - "formless and void."
 2. God heard their cries, appeared to an Israelite named Moses, and gave him the job of going to Pharaoh king of Egypt to tell him to let the people go.
 3. Pharaoh responded with arrogance, so God sent 10 plagues to Egypt and the Israelites were allowed to leave Egypt.
- B. God's covenant law
1. Out of the chaos of their slavery, God led Israel down to Mt. Sinai, where he gave them order and structure by giving them his law, including the 10 commandments.
 2. This was a temporary covenant that only applied to the time between Moses and Jesus (Deuteronomy 5.2-3, Hebrews 8.1-3).
 3. The Israelites, however, did not have faith to enter the promised land and chose the darkness of idolatry and rebellion.
 4. They wandered in the wilderness for 40 years until the next generation was ready.
- VI. David
- A. God picks a shepherd boy to lead Israel as their king
1. As time passed, Israel entered the land of Canaan with Joshua leading them.
 2. After Joshua died, however, they entered a destructive cycle.

- a) They abandoned God for idols and God sent punishment.
- b) They cried out to God for salvation and he sent “judges” to deliver them.
- 3. During the time of the last judge, Samuel, Israel decided that they wanted a king to rule over them like all the other nations around them.
- 4. The first king that God picked was Saul. He started well, but repeatedly disobeyed God, causing heartache to God and oppression for the Israelites.
- 5. Out of the darkness of Saul’s reign, God created light by raising up David.
- B. God’s promise: a son of David would sit on his throne forever (2 Samuel 7.8-16)
 - 1. David wanted to build God a temple, a house. But God turned it around and said, “I’m going to build you a house!”
 - 2. If you were king, you worried about whether your dynasty was going to last or not.
 - 3. God swore that He would establish David’s family in an everlasting kingdom.
 - 4. After David’s son Solomon died, it looked as if God would not be able to keep that promise - because the kingdom split into two (Judah & Israel) and became wicked.
 - 5. During this time, God sent many prophets to his people to try to turn them back to His covenant, but they refused to listen and were conquered by other nations.
 - 6. But, out of the darkness, God brought light. After 70 years, the Jews were allowed to return to their land and rebuild, but they were still waiting for their Messiah.

VII. Jesus of Nazareth, the light of the world

- A. God is recreating the world and fixing the problem of sin through Jesus (John 1.1-14)
 - 1. Notice how many things fit with what we’ve already seen in Genesis!
 - 2. “In the beginning” are the very first words of the Bible, as they are in John.
 - 3. God spoke words and the earth was created. Jesus is called the “Word” here.
 - 4. God brought light into the darkness in Genesis. Jesus is called the light of men.
 - 5. God brought life to the universe in Genesis. Here, it says that “in him was life.”
- B. What happened during Jesus time on earth?
 - 1. A man named John (talked about here) came and preached in the wilderness, telling people to repent of their sins and get ready for the Savior.
 - 2. Jesus came during John’s ministry, gathered disciples and 12 men whom he called apostles, and taught for 3 years until he was killed by Roman crucifixion.
 - 3. After three days in the grave, Jesus rose from the dead as He had promised, and his followers have been telling the world about Him ever since.
 - 4. His 12 apostles began baptizing people into Jesus and the rest of the New Testament is about telling how Jews and non-Jews came into Jesus’ family.

VIII. How do you and I fit into this story?

- A. Our purpose is to bring the light God to people still in darkness (Ephesians 5.7-14)
- B. The Devil’s lie from the beginning was that God keeps back good things from us.
- C. God’s message in the gospel is that he wants to recreate us again through His Son.
- D. We can only do that by letting his story become our story, dying to ourselves.

Lesson 2: What's The Gospel All About?

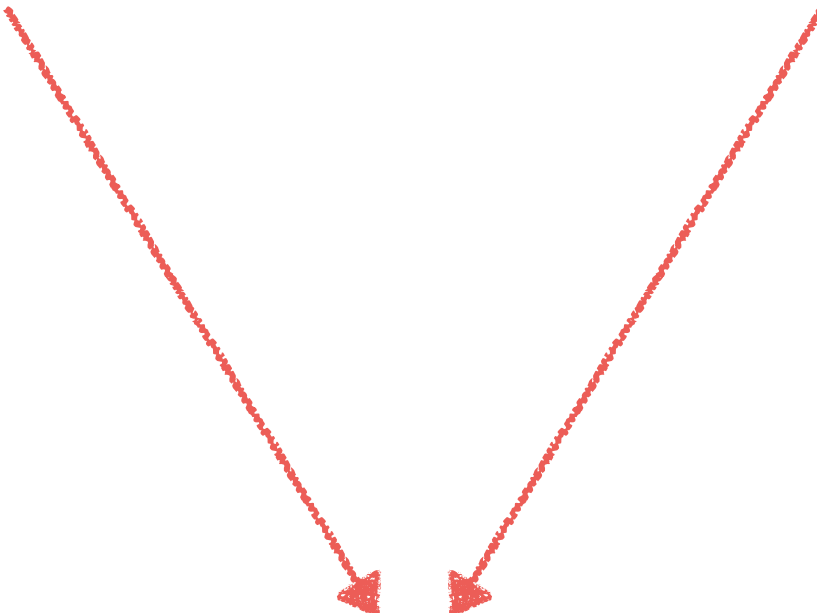
- I. Introduction
 - A. The book of Romans is perhaps the most complete layout of the gospel message.
 - B. The apostle Paul had never been to the church at Rome before, but he wanted to visit and use the congregation as a launching pad to go preach in Western Europe.
 - C. He knew that the Jews and non-Jews in this church were struggling to unite themselves together and so he
- II. Romans 1:16-17
 - A. These verses are the core message of the whole letter.
 - B. "I'm not ashamed of the gospel..."
 - 1. The word gospel simply means "good news" in the original language.
 - 2. It is the good news that God has chosen to direct his power toward us, not for destruction, but for our salvation, despite the fact that we were His enemies.
 - 3. Because the effectiveness of the gospel depends on God's power, not ours, our salvation is not based upon our great performance level, but on our belief in God's desire, ability, and plan to save us.
 - 4. Anyone, regardless of race or background, can be embraced by God into this salvation.
 - C. "For in it the righteousness of God is revealed..."
 - 1. Through the gospel, God is shown to be right(eous), which forever kills the lie Satan has told from the beginning that God is wrong (Adam & Eve, Job).
 - 2. If we want to live, we'll put our faith in his faithfulness (Habbakuk 2.4).
 - 3. Paul quotes from the Old Testament prophet Habbakuk, who was told to have faith in the faithfulness of God to save His people.
- III. Romans 1.18-23
 - A. "For the wrath of God is revealed..."
 - 1. We can't appreciate the good news until we understand the bad news.
 - 2. We need the gospel because God's wrath is aimed straight at non-Jews.
 - 3. As we just read, the "righteousness of God" is seen in the gospel, but the "unrighteousness of men" is seen by looking at the nations of the world.
 - B. "For what can be known about God is plain to them..."
 - 1. Although non-Jewish people didn't have the law of Moses, God was not completely hidden from their sight.
 - 2. Merely by looking at the glory of creation, we see evidence of a powerful God.
 - 3. Instead, the nations have worshipped the glory of creation instead of the Creator.
- IV. Romans 2.17-24
 - A. "But if you call yourself a Jew..."
 - 1. The Jewish people are also not exempt from the wrath of God.
 - 2. Although they had the revealed mind of God in the law of Moses, they still didn't obey. Their history is a long sequence of sin and corruption.
 - 3. It was not enough for them to know the law, instruct others in the law, and wear the name of Jew if their lives were full of hypocrisy and their hearts were far from God.

- B. "For, as it is written..."
 1. Paul quotes from Isaiah 52.5 to speak of how Israel brought shame to God.
 2. Other nations looked at the sinful Jewish people and scoffed at their dishonesty.
 3. God made repeated promises to Israel, yet Israel repeatedly failed to glorify God.
- V. Romans 3.21-26
 - A. "The righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law..."
 1. Our hopeless situation is clear. All of us (Jew and non-Jew) have rebelled against God and fully deserve His wrath.
 2. How can we be saved from God's anger when we are destined for death and unable to erase our sins? He Himself has chosen to save us!
 3. Our salvation couldn't be accomplished through the law of Moses - the law merely shows man how far he is from the holiness of God.
 - B. "The righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe."
 1. God Himself has chosen to save the entire human race! He has chosen to offer us a free gift, paid for at an awful cost of His own Son's life.
 2. Jesus became our "propitiation" - our atoning sacrifice that covered our sins.
 3. Because of our sins, we were all going to die (6.23). Jesus, however, died *instead of us* so that we could live. He stood between God's wrath and our sins.
 4. God's love, not just His wrath, is aimed directly at us.
- VI. Romans 6.1-11
 - A. "What shall we say then?"
 1. What's our response to this grace? Should we not worry about sinning because Jesus has paid the price on our behalf? Of course not!
 2. If we've died to sin by accepting the gospel, then we can't still live in it.
 3. Paul then describes how we die to sin - it's when we're immersed in water (baptized) into Jesus so he can save us.
 - B. "All of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death..."
 1. Paul uses the image of a burial to describe baptism.
 2. When someone is buried, they are completely covered with dirt and put down into a grave. When someone is baptized, they are also completely covered by water and the old life is put down in a grave, where Jesus washes all sins away.
 3. But just like a resurrection involves a body coming up out of a grave, in baptism a person is raised up out of the water to live a new life in Jesus.
 4. Although a Christian will still struggle with sin, he no longer lives in spiritual slavery, but is "alive to God in Christ Jesus," awaiting the final resurrection of our bodies.

God

Wrath

Love



Jesus Christ



Mankind (Jew + Gentile)

Lesson 3: Why Take God Seriously?

- I. Introduction
 - A. Does it really matter how we accept the salvation that God offers through His Son?
 - B. Is God particular about the worship we give Him?
 - C. If I'm generally a good person, won't that be enough to satisfy God?
 - D. As we studied in our first lesson, goodness is defined by God, not us.
 - E. The fact that we are allowed to approach God at all is a testament to His tremendous grace.
 - F. If we truly understand who God is and what He has always expected from His people, we will approach Him with the greatest possible care.
- II. God has always reserved the right to decide how people approach Him and has always given specific instructions on how to do that.
 - A. Genesis 4.1-5
 - 1. After Adam and Eve sinned and were banished from the garden of Eden, they have two sons - Cain and Abel.
 - 2. They had different roles in their family, but both of them brought worship to God.
 - 3. We're not told exactly why Abel's sacrifice was accepted and Cain's wasn't, but we are told that Abel brought the "firstborn of his flock and their fat portions."
 - 4. In other words, Abel brought the best he had, which fits the pattern we see throughout the rest of the Bible when godly people worshipped.
 - 5. Nothing similar is said about Cain's sacrifice.
 - 6. God was pleased with one and rejected the other, therefore we see from the beginning of time that people came to God on His terms and not their own.
 - B. Leviticus 10.1-3
 - 1. In this passage we see Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, attempting to offer incense to God after they were consecrated as priests.
 - 2. As a result of carelessness or rebellious disobedience, they offered "unauthorized" fire before God.
 - 3. They were possibly drunk (Lev. 10.8-9) and clearly failed to honor God in the presence of all the people.
 - 4. God consumed them with fire to show the people that He must be properly respected through worship and sacrifice.
 - C. 1 Chronicles 17.1-6
 - 1. King David desired to build God a temple to replace the tent in which God's holy objects lived. The prophet Nathan agreed with him before consulting God.
 - 2. Nathan had to return to David very shortly afterwards to tell him God's decision about the matter: He didn't want a Temple and was quite happy with His tent.
 - 3. God had never given any instructions about a Temple, therefore it was presumptuous of David to try to act without God's approval.
 - 4. Clearly, David had good intentions and assumed that God would want it, but he learned that a gift only brings joy to the recipient when it is desired.

5. If you get your wife a vacuum cleaner as an anniversary present, you might assume it's what she would want, but unless she likes vacuuming - you've made a mistake!
- III. The NT reveals that Jesus is our King and He gives His people clear instructions about how to approach Him
- A. Matthew 7.21-23
1. It is not enough to merely say that we follow the Lord Jesus. It is not enough to do good deeds in His name. We might claim to know Him, but He will not claim us unless we obey His specific instructions.
 2. Therefore, who is a Christian? Who will inherit eternal life?
 3. It's not just someone who claims to serve Jesus, but someone who has come to Christ in the way that God desires.
- B. Matthew 28.16-18
1. Because of his victory over death and evil, Jesus was handed the rule of the universe by His Father.
 2. When Jesus speaks of "authority" here, He's referring to his right to rule and direct His subjects as their king.
 3. As His ambassadors, His apostles were commanded to lead the world to Jesus by carefully teaching everything that Jesus had taught them. Therefore, the writings that we have from the apostles carry all the authority of Jesus Himself.
 4. We must look to the New Testament writings about the early church to determine how to accept the gospel, how to worship, and how to live under Jesus' name.

Lesson 4: The Cost of Discipleship

- I. Introduction
 - A. Before we talk about the mechanics of how to approach God's offer of salvation, we must first understand the all-consuming nature of discipleship.
 - B. By definition, a "disciple" is a student. The Greek word means "one who is rather constantly associated with someone who has a pedagogical reputation or a particular set of views" (BDAG).
 - C. In other words, if we're going to link our lives with Jesus, we must completely embrace His way of looking at the world in order to be counted His student.
 - D. Are we willing to do that?
- II. Luke 9.23-27
 - A. "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily..."
 - 1. To deny yourself has the idea of saying no to your desires and wishes.
 - 2. Notice that this is not an occasional activity, but a "daily" process.
 - 3. When Jesus mentioned taking up the cross, his 1st century audience knew exactly what he meant.
 - a) In modern society, a cross is a popular symbol for the Christian faith, worn on necklaces and bracelets and placed on church buildings.
 - b) However, the 1st century, the cross was a symbol of excruciating physical torture and shame.
 - c) Jesus requires His students to willingly go through the crucifixion of our selfish passions, dearest hopes, and fervent goals when they conflict with His will - no matter what it costs us.
 - B. "For whoever would save his life..."
 - 1. Trying to grab at everything we think looks good is the surest way to lose our eternal souls.
 - 2. Ironically, giving up our pleasures and goals to follow Jesus is the surest way to gain eternal life.
 - 3. Even if a man succeeded in reaching the top of the ladder through following his own will, it comes at the cost of his eternal satisfaction.
 - 4. Nothing is worth giving up our relationship with God.
 - 5. We cannot expect to cower from Jesus in this life and expect Him to embrace us in the next.
- III. Luke 9.57-62
 - A. Following Jesus is more important than have comfy, cushy, convenient lives
 - 1. A nameless man voluntarily decided to join Jesus' cause.
 - 2. Jesus felt it was important to tell him about His own sleeping arrangements.
 - 3. If the animals were better off than God's Son, what can we expect if we follow Him?
 - B. Following Jesus is more urgent than things like burying your father
 - 1. Another man that Jesus tried to recruit responded with hesitation.
 - 2. A family emergency had come up and needed to attend his father's funeral.
 - 3. Why wouldn't Jesus allow him to go home and bury his father?

4. Although many of the specific details of this man's situation are missing from the passage, Jesus is clearly sending a strong message about priorities.
 5. Jesus' work must always rank ahead of anything else in our lives, even over personal matters we consider of vitally important.
- C. Following Jesus is more important than our relationships with close relatives
1. Another man responds to Jesus' invitation by deferring his discipleship until he can say goodbye to his relatives.
 2. Again, although the specifics of this man's life were left out, Jesus knew him well enough to determine what he should do.
 3. Because of the hands-on nature of 1st century plowing, it was impossible to properly plow a field while looking backwards.
 4. Likewise, we cannot concentrate on doing God's work in the present if we're still attached to relationships that were of 1st importance to us in the past.
- IV. Luke 14.25-32
- A. "If anyone comes to me and does not hate..."
1. In contrast to the personal conversations of the last passage, Jesus speaks these words to the "great crowds" that accompanied Him.
 2. Using stark language, Jesus speaks of the need to "hate" your close family members in order to become a disciple.
 3. Jesus does not want us to loathe or abhor our family; instead, he uses the word to speak of the degree to which we must love Jesus compared to our closest relationships on earth.
 4. This is what it means to take up the cross and sacrifice everything to follow Him.
- B. 1st example: counting the cost in construction
1. If you want to build a structure, it is necessary to carefully calculate all the costs that will you incur before embarking on the project.
 2. In the same way, a relationship with Jesus must be carefully weighed before it begins.
- C. 2nd example: counting the cost in war
1. If you're going to war, you're going to make sure you have enough troops to be successful in battle. Otherwise, make peace while you still can before battle starts!
 2. Similarly, before we accept Jesus, we need to make sure we're willing to put Him first.

Lesson 5: How Can We Come To God?

V. Introduction

- A. Now that we understand God's plan for the world, His gospel message, the seriousness with which we should come to Him, and the cost of being His disciple, how can we accept His salvation?
- B. There are many different opinions about how to come to God. Let's simply allow the Scriptures to speak for themselves.

VI. Acts 2.14-41

A. Vss. 14-21

1. The Jewish feast of Pentecost (or firstfruits) was 50 days after the Passover feast, when Jesus was crucified.
2. While all of Jesus' apostles were together, the Holy Spirit came rushing into the room and gave them all the ability to speak in languages they had never learned.
3. The apostles were able to preach the gospel to the diverse crowd of Jews.
4. Peter addressed the crowd, assuring everyone that they weren't drunk and quoting the prophet Joel to speak about how the current events were foretold.
5. The time of the Holy Spirit was here; He had been poured out and now "all flesh" could call upon the name of the Lord and be saved from sin.

B. Vss. 22-36

1. Jesus of Nazareth is the one through whom salvation comes.
2. He performed miracles while He was on earth, demonstrated His power, but the Jews killed Him.
3. Peter doesn't pull any punches: "*you* crucified and killed..."
4. This happened exactly according to God's plan. It was no accident.
5. Psalm 16 is quoted: a psalm of David which talks about resurrection. Since David died and experienced decay, the psalm has to be talking about someone else.
6. Psalm 110 is also brought in. It prophesied Jesus' authority and power. God has made him the Lord and Savior, "*this Jesus whom you crucified.*"

C. Vs. 37-41

1. Can you imagine what it would be like to be in the audience, understanding for the first time that you're guilty of killing God? Would instant death be next?
2. Isn't it ironic that the very first people to receive and obey the gospel message were the very ones who killed Jesus Himself?
3. God shows us that no one is too sinful to be rescued, even this particular crowd.
4. What did Peter say is necessary to do in order to have their sins forgiven?
5. How is this different from what religious leaders teach today?
6. How long did these people wait before they were baptized?
7. What did God do when these people were baptized?

VII. Colossians 2.11-12

A. Baptism is compared to two things here: a burial and a surgery.

1. We've already talked about the burial image from Romans 6. Let's talk about the surgery image in greater detail.

2. If you were diagnosed with a life-threatening cancer but the doctor said they could immediately operate and remove it if you came to the hospital tomorrow, what would you do? You wouldn't delay, take a vacation, or think you're already cured.
3. Once the surgery was over, who would you brag on? Yourself, for driving to the hospital and hopping on the table? Surely you would give all the glory to your surgeon, who operated on you and saved your life!

B. Questions to think about:

1. Who is the surgeon in this passage? God, Christ.
2. What is he cutting off? The flesh, the old life of sin and death.
3. When does God cut off our sins? Baptism is the point when we get on the surgery table and we let the Lord operate on us.
4. According to this passage, can baptism be apart of our salvation by grace? Yes, since God is doing the working. It's a surgery "made without hands."
5. Would you say that baptism is a work that we do, or a work that God does to us? It's something that we *submit* to! It's a passive activity on our part.

VIII. Acts 19.1-5 (If needed)

- A. The baptism of John and the baptism of Jesus looked exactly the same. Both involved immersion in water for spiritual reasons.
- B. Since both baptisms looked the same, why did they need to do it again?
- C. It mattered what their understanding was at the time they did it. They needed the right kind of belief and comprehension, they needed baptism in Jesus' name, therefore they were baptized again.

IX. Acts 22.12-16 (If needed)

- A. In Acts 22, Paul is recounting for an angry mob of Jews why and how he became a Christian.
- B. Many people would say that Saul was saved on the road to Damascus. But by reading vs. 16, when were Saul's sins washed away?
- C. Saul had 1) seen the Lord, 2) heard the Lord's voice, 3) been blinded by the Lord, 4) fasted and prayed for three days, 5) was healed of blindness by God. Yet, after all of this, Saul did not yet have his sins forgiven.
- D. Therefore, Ananias spoke with urgency when he told him to get up and have his sins washed away.