

INTRODUCTION

As Christians, it is our greatest command and highest privilege to proclaim the glorious Gospel of Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, most Christians do not share their faith. Why? Scripture is clear that believers should actively share their faith.

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Matthew 28:19-20

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” **Acts 1:8**

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” **Romans 1:16**

Sadly, many Christians are “ashamed.” Their testimony (or lack of) to others rarely includes the life-changing message of the Gospel. There are many excuses. However, I’m afraid that most of them will not be acceptable to our Lord and Savior.

Hope Missions strongly feels that a main reason why many do not share is that they do not clearly **KNOW** the Gospel. We often speak of the things we are most comfortable with or most passionate about. A sports fan may not know everything about his/her team. However, he/she commits themselves to learning and loving the team they follow. For the Christian, we must become students of the Gospel. We must also renew our first love (Revelation 2:4) with Christ. When this happens, Gospel conversation is not forced; it’s not canned; it’s natural.

“Religion is the story of what sinful man tries to do for holy God. The gospel is the story of what a holy God has done for sinful men.” **Roy Gustafson**

OVERVIEW

KNOW THE GOSPEL is not a “presentation.” It’s not a new gimmick to get you to share your faith. Instead, it’s a Biblical exploration into the key elements of the Gospel:

- The **CHARACTER** of God
- The **CONDITION** of Man
- The **REDEMPTION** of Christ
- The **RESPONSE** of Man

This study is not exhaustive. Our hope is that this study will give you a strong foundation to build on.

“Never lose heart in the power of the Gospel. Do not believe that there exists any man, much less any race of men, for whom the Gospel is not fitted” **Charles Spurgeon**

USING THE MATERIAL

There is a temptation to believe that the Gospel is for the lost and not for Christians. We think that the Gospel is a basic truth and that mature believers should move on to “deeper issues.” This couldn’t be farther from the truth. Instead, the Gospel is foundational to all truth. As believers, we must allow the Gospel to permeate our lives every day. Our prayer is that this study will ignite a fire within your spirit (and the ones you teach) to become a life-long student of the Gospel.

This Leader’s Guide is designed to help you effectively teach the curriculum. You will find Participant Guides (with blanks filled in) printed on your page. This will help you follow along with your students. Detailed notes, activities, and quotes are throughout the guide to help you prepare to teach. We strongly suggest that you consider purchasing Gospel-focused books or commentaries to help prepare yourself to teach this study. A list of suggested books can be found at KnowTheGospel.org. Most importantly - PRAY! Pray that God will give you the words to say and the students the ears to hear what God wants to teach them about His glorious Gospel.

This study is designed to use for weekly Bible Study or a short Retreat. It’s an ideal study for Students and Adults.

www.KnowTheGospel.org

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INTRODUCTION

The Gospel begins and ends with God. Having a proper understanding of God is critical to having a proper understanding of the Gospel.

The entire Bible is an autobiography of the glorious Character of God. His divine attributes are far too many to discuss in one lesson. Even more difficult is the task of finding a single passage of Scripture that adequately describes many of the attributes of God. However, Isaiah chapter 40 does give us a glimpse at the power and majesty of a God who loves and cares for His creation.

Isaiah is one of the Major Prophets in the Old Testament. It is also one of the most quoted OT books in the NT (over 66 direct quotations). Of the 27 books of the NT, 20 quote from Isaiah. The book of Isaiah has been called the "5th Gospel" because of its influence in the NT. Isaiah speaks of Christ's virgin birth, His character, His life, His death, His resurrection, and His second coming.

Isaiah can be divided into three major sections: Judgment (chapters 1-35), History (chapters 36-39), and Salvation (chapters 40-66).

Chapter 40 comes on the heels of Isaiah's prophesy of looming captivity from Babylon. It is a chapter of comfort and a reminder of The One who is really in control. The theme verse for chapter 40 is found in verse 9. READ John Piper comment. Let's now see the portrait of God that Isaiah gives us in chapter 40.

POINT #1

Often, God is portrayed as a God of strength and judgment in the OT. In verses 1-11, we see a God of Comfort. Paul emphasizes God's comfort in his letter to the Corinthians. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. Isaiah emphasizes God's comfort in three aspects: voice, word, and power

QUESTION: Has there ever been a time in your life when you have experienced the Comfort of God in a real way? Explain.

POINT #2

The first attribute of God that we see in Scripture is that of Creator. Genesis 1:1 proclaims, "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It's important to note that God did not have to create anything or anyone. It was out of His love that He chose to create. Isaiah highlights two of these creative aspects.

As Creator, God has always existed. Revelation 1:8 reminds us, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty." God being eternal creator reminds us that we are accountable to our Creator.

QUESTION: Have you ever attempted to "create" something? Describe how it felt to be involved in this process?

THE CHARACTER OF GOD

"Behold your God!" Isaiah 40

A God who Comforts (1-11)

Comfort in His Voice

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. (v. 1a)

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken. (v. 5)

Comfort in His Word

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever. (v. 8)

Comfort in His Power

Behold, the Lord God comes with might, and his arm rules for him; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him. He will tend his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms; he will carry them in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young. (vs. 10-11)

"Behold Your God!" is the most gracious command and the best gift of the gospel. If we do not see Him and savor Him as our greatest fortune, we have not obeyed or believed the gospel." John Piper

A God who Creates (12, 28)

Creator of the World

Who has measured the waters in the hollow of his hand and marked off the heavens with a span, enclosed the dust of the earth in a measure and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? (v. 12)

Creator of Eternity

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (v. 28)

POINT #3

A God who creates is also a God who controls. God did not just “set the top spinning” and walk away. God is sovereign ruler over all things. Isaiah reminds his hearers of four things that God is completely controls: wisdom, justice, power, and worship.

All of God's creation submits to His authority. All creatures obey his commands, except one – MAN. Sinful man struggles with accepting God's sovereignty. After all, doesn't man have free will? Isn't man in charge of his ultimate destiny? Man is free to willfully sin and rebel against God. However, rebellious man will never choose God in his current condition. We will look more into these truths in the next study. For now, it is adequate enough to know that God is sovereign. He is in total control over all of His creation, even Man.

Ironically, while sinful man wants to be in charge of his own destiny, he is very comfortable with God being in control of everyone else. Everyone longs for divine justice. Everyone wants wrongs to be made right. However, they don't want the same standard for themselves. READ Greg Gilbert's quote.

A God who Controls (13-26)

Sovereign in Wisdom

Who has measured the Spirit of the Lord, or what man shows him his counsel? Whom did he consult, and who made him understand? Who taught him the path of justice, and taught him knowledge, and showed him the way of understanding? (vs. 13-14)

Sovereign in Justice

Who taught him the path of justice, (v. 14)

Sovereign in Power

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are accounted as the dust on the scales; (v. 15a)

All the nations are as nothing before him, they are accounted by him as less than nothing and emptiness. (v. 17)

Sovereign in Worship

To whom then will you liken God, or what likeness compare with him? An idol! A craftsman casts it, and a goldsmith overlays it with gold and casts for it silver chains. He who is too impoverished for an offering chooses wood that will not rot; he seeks out a skillful craftsman to set up an idol that will not move. (v. 18-20)

“Nobody wants a God that declines to deal with evil. They just want a God who declines to deal with their evil.” Greg Gilbert

A God who Cares (27-31)

Caring through Understanding

Why do you say, O Jacob, and speak, O Israel, “My way is hidden from the Lord, and my right is disregarded by my God”? Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. (vs. 27-28)

Caring through Providing

He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (vs. 29-31)

QUESTION: How do you feel about God being in complete control over all things, including You?

POINT #4

Finally, we see that God cares for us. This is pictured throughout Scripture as a Shepherd who cares for His Sheep (Psalm 23, John 10, 1 Peter 2, 1 Peter 5, & Revelation 7). God loves us, therefore He cares for us. Isaiah shows that God cares through understanding and providing.

QUESTION: Does it comfort you to know that God cares for you?

CONCLUSION

Having a healthy understanding of God is foundational to having a healthy understanding of the Gospel. God is in complete control over all of His creation. He loves, comforts, and cares for them. Next we will look at the Condition of Man.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Depending on the format of your study, you may want to do an “ice breaker” at the beginning of the lesson. Here is an idea that may be helpful.

Get one poster board per 3-5 students. Write **GOD** in bold letters in the center of the board. Leave enough space around the border to allow plenty of writing. Have students spend 5-10 minutes writing every Attribute of God that comes to mind. Encourage them to also list Scripture references with each attribute. Allow a few minutes to discuss their answers prior to beginning the lesson. Materials needed: poster board and markers for each group.

INTRODUCTION

The Gospel reveals man's hopeless condition before a holy God. Until man realizes his condition, he will see no need for a Savior.

Ephesians was written by the Apostle Paul between 60-62 AD. It's important to know that Paul was imprisoned in Rome for preaching the Gospel when this letter was written. Ephesians is one of four "Prison Epistles". Colossians, Philippians, and Philemon are the other three. Understanding the context of a passage is necessary in order to have a proper understanding.

Paul spent much time with the church in Ephesus (approximately 3 years). Ephesus was a very difficult for a church to prosper due to the pagan influence. However, this little church had a huge impact under Paul's leadership. In the book of Acts (chapter 19, verse 10) we see that, "all of the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord."

Chapter 2 is a frightening exposition of the Condition of Man. It's also a humbling look at God's grace in spite of man's condition. Having a proper understanding of man's condition is necessary to having a proper understanding of God's grace. READ David Platt's quote. Ephesians 2:1-10 will help us get an accurate revelation of who we are apart from Christ.

POINT #1

Man is Separated from God. This was not man's original condition. Genesis tells us of how God and Adam fellowshiped together in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, because of Adam's sin, all of mankind has suffered the consequence of separation. Luke 16:26 gives us a picture of this separation.

Paul gives us two explanations of this separation in verse 1. First of all, we are separated by our Condition. Man (apart from Christ) is in a hopeless condition. Verse 1 tells us that we are "spiritually dead." We see more examples of man's condition throughout Scripture. Ultimately, we are separated from God because of Sin. The Law of God is very important in revealing man's sin. Paul tells us in Romans 7:7, "if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin." Romans 3:19-20 goes on to shed more light on this truth. Having a proper understanding of the law helps man have a proper understanding of his sinfulness.

QUESTION: Have you ever taken an in depth look at the law? Do you think you have kept the law? Are you a "good person"? Let's look at the commandments.

Here are some questions to consider: How many lies have you ever told (#9)? What do you call someone who tells lies (answer: Liar)? Have you ever stolen (#8) anything, regardless of size (a pen, answer off a test, music off the internet, etc.)?

THE CONDITION OF MAN

Ephesians 2:1-10

¹ And you were dead in the trespasses and sins ² in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— ³ among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹ not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

"God's revelation in the gospel not only reveals who He is, but it also reveals who we are." David Platt

Man is Separated from God (1)

And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us. (Luke 16:26)

Separated by Our Condition

Slaves to Sin (Romans 6:17) Spiritually Blind (Ephesians 4:18)

Enemies of God (Romans 5:10) Spiritually Dead (Ephesians 2:1)

Separated by Our Sins

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (Romans 3:19-20)

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS - Exodus 20

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| #1 - No other gods | #6 - Do not Murder |
| #2 - No Idols | #7 - Do not Commit Adultery |
| #3 - Honor my Name | #8 - Do not Steal |
| #4 - Honor my Sabbath Day | #9 - Do not Lie |
| #5 - Honor your Parents | #10 - Do not Covet |