


A Faith to Share  
What is the Gospel?

2022.1.30



# TALKING WALKINGPOINT

Leaders' Guide

A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

Talk together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and walk in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection or Discussion

- 1 Your neighbor—who does not attend church—stops you on the sidewalk and out of the blue asks: *"You're a Christian, right? Could you explain to me what that means?"*  
How would you answer her? How confident are you that you could explain the gospel to her?
- 2 Read together 1 Corinthians 15:1-11. Pastor Doug noted **four components** to the Christian gospel (see the [Sermon Summary](#)). Review and discuss them, clearing up any questions or confusion.
- 3 According to the following verses, what makes Jesus uniquely qualified to be our Savior from sin?  
2 Corinthians 5:21                      John 8:28-29                      John 10:17-18
- 4 According to John 19:30, what else did Jesus have to do to finish the work of salvation?
- 5 According to the following verses, what does it mean that Christ was our substitute?  
2 Corinthians 5:21                      1 Peter 2:24                      1 Peter 3:18
- 6 Pastor Doug noted that the gospel "puts us all on a level playing field".  
According to Romans 3:9, 10, 19, and 23, what makes us all equal at the foot of the cross?
- 7 According to 1 Corinthians 15:17-19, what would it mean if Jesus were still in His tomb?
- 8 Read 1 Corinthians 15:10 again. Concretely, what difference did God's grace make in Paul's life?
- 9 What difference has God's grace made in **your** life? How can you tell? How can your family tell?  
How can the people at work tell?
- 10 Read 1 Corinthians 9:16-17. What reasons did Paul give for preaching the gospel?
- 11 We are not just privileged to have received and believed the gospel; it carries with it a responsibility, a "stewardship." Discuss the weightiness of our responsibility. According to 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, **to whom** will we give an account for our faithfulness (or lack of) to this stewardship?

- 1 The **four components** to the Christian gospel (**I-IV** in the **Sermon Summary**) need to be present.
- 2 Make sure you're clear on them before your group meets. Point **II** may confuse folks.
- 3
  - He is without sin – 2 Corinthians 5:21
  - He always obeyed God perfectly, succeeding where we failed – John 8:28-29b
  - Only He could bear the full penalty, because He Himself is God – John 10:17-18
- 4 He had to die.
- 5
  - He took the punishment our sins deserved – 2 Corinthians 5:21
  - He bore our sins; by His wounds you were healed – 1 Peter 2:24
  - Christ died for sins; the just for the unjust – 1 Peter 3:18
- 6
  - before God, no religious/ethnic group is better than any other – Romans 3:9
  - none—*not even one*—are righteous before God— Romans 3:10
  - every mouth is closed, all the world is accountable, to God – Romans 3:19
  - *all* have sinned and fall short of God's glory – Romans 3:23
- 7 our faith is worthless; we are still in our sins; we are of all men most to be pitied – 1 Corinthians 15:17–19
- 8 God's grace strengthened Paul for tons of ministry
- 9 You likely will need to “prime the pump”, so be prepared with your own answer to this question. (But wait for others to think and answer. Check your watch—20 seconds feels like an eternity!) Make sure answers are concrete and specific; the temptation will be to stay vague.
- 10 Paul (and we) are obligated by God to share the gospel. But God, in his graciousness, rewards us if we willingly share the gospel.
- 11 We answer to God. He is Lord, we are slaves (also see 2 Corinthians 5:10-11). Yet he is a gracious slave-master, rewarding us for faithfulness (see 1 Corinthians 3:10-15).

# Sermon Summary (Key Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

Our faith is not personal and private—it is good news that is meant to be shared. The question is, How do you do that in a way that's transparent and honest and at the same time is respectful and promotes peace? What are the core beliefs of Christianity that we are to share? What must you believe in order to be a Christian? There are a lot of things Christians believe, but what are the core beliefs? Many people don't understand the Christianity they are rejecting. I'll often ask people, "Assuming that there is a God and a heaven and a hell, what do you think the requirements are to get into heaven? How does a person come into a right relationship with God?" People will respond by talking about the need to live a good and moral life. And as soon as they start answering that way, I know that they don't understand Christianity.

**I. The gospel is about Jesus** (v. 3). The word "gospel" means, "good news"; it is the good news about who Jesus is and what he has done. All of the other major religions contain narratives about their founders, but their founders are teachers, not saviors. Consequently, their life stories are not the core of those religions. Christianity is not advice about what you must do; it's good news about what Jesus has already done! The gospel transforms us into agents of reconciliation and justice and love in the world. It profoundly changes our character and the very structure of our identity. Yet these changes are results of the gospel, not the content of the gospel. The gospel is about Jesus. But it is also about sin and substitution.

**II. The gospel is about sin and substitution** (v. 3). We humans have lots of needs, but Paul wants us to know that most critically, we're sinners needing salvation. This is of the utmost importance! Sin is our most fundamental human problem. Now you may be wondering, "Why is that?" Well, it's a contrast between who we are and who God is. Sin is the teaching of the Bible that we don't live for God. We don't love him supremely. We don't love our neighbors. We live for ourselves. Jesus came to deal with the barrier our sin puts between us and God. How? By substitution. Jesus died **for** our sins. To have a relationship with a holy God you must share his righteousness. That is something that we don't have. But Jesus did have it. On the cross he became our complete substitute (2 Corinthians 5:21). In Jesus' day, if you had a debt you could not pay, you became an indentured servant to the person to whom you owed that debt. And you would remain their servant until the debt was paid in full. The Bible tells us that on the cross Jesus paid the price required to redeem us out of slavery.

Theologian John Stott says that the concept of substitution is crucial to understand both sin and salvation. If you want to understand the gospel, you have to understand the concept of substitution, because on the one hand, what is sin? It's you substituting yourself for God, putting yourself where only God deserves to be: in charge of your own life. You didn't make yourself. When you say, "I'm going to call the shots in my own life," what are you saying? "I'm my own creator." Sin is you substituting yourself for God. Salvation is God substituting himself for you, putting himself where you deserve to be. It's God going to the cross and taking your punishment. At the core of Christianity is this concept of substitution. We sinned by substituting ourselves for God, and in response, God substituted himself for us in the person of his son, the Lord Jesus. This idea that all of us are sinners, and that Jesus went to the cross as our substitute to satisfy God's wrath is not something we want to hear. At best we see ourselves as mistakers, not sinners who deserve eternal punishment.

The notion that Jesus' death was necessary to procure divine forgiveness is widely rejected, if not ridiculed as a primitive bloodthirsty doctrine. J.I. Packer, in his great book, *Knowing God*, astutely says, "No, no. Christianity is not anything like that; it's utterly different." In paganism, man propitiates his gods. Religion becomes a form of bribery. But it is different in Christianity, as God himself propitiates his own wrath through his own sacrificial action of love. God comes in Jesus Christ and takes his own punishment. It's utterly different from paganism. It's the reverse of ancient, primitive, bloodthirsty religion. But let me say something else about Christianity's doctrine of sin and substitution. It's radically egalitarian and democratic. The truth is all of us stand guilty before God. We are all sinners in need of God's grace. That levels the playing field. All of us are sinners, and out of his great love, Jesus gave his life for all of us. All are guilty, all are savable.

**III. The gospel is about history and the resurrection.** Jesus' resurrection answers the question, "How do I know that Jesus' death actually paid for sins?" I know because Jesus rose again; it is proof that God's wrath was satisfied (much as the receipt in your shopping bag proves to the store security officer that you paid for those items).

**IV. The gospel is about grace.** Paul uses the word grace three times in verse 10! The gospel is about grace, grace, grace. People don't understand that. People think, "If I'm good enough God will bless me." The problem is, "You can't be good enough." That would require sinless perfection. Only Jesus was perfect. Only He was qualified to act as our Savior (Ephesians 2:8–9).

Paul was once an enemy of the church, its most ardent persecutor. But one day he met the risen Christ and it forever changed his life. God's grace saved him and God's grace changed him. He said: "By the grace of God I am what I am." God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (John 3:16). How can we not share it? It is the best news the world could ever hear.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study"** (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage.*  
*We can use it to better appreciate the gospel...*

**Monday**—Read Titus 3:3. How were you described before you were saved?

**Tuesday**—Read Titus 3:4-5. What is the significance of the word "but" (v. 4)?

**Wednesday**—Read Titus 3:7. What two things became true of you in salvation?

**Thursday**—Read Titus 2:11-12. What does God's grace instruct you to do?

**Friday**—Read Titus 2:11 & 13. What does God's grace instruct you to do?

**Saturday**—*In preparation for worshipping the risen Lord with your church family,*  
read the Book of Titus.

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would **this text** answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]



**All four components of the gospel message are critical—and a bit complex!**  
**The test of understanding complex ideas is this: explaining them to a ten year old!**

**How can you explain that Christianity is about a person, Jesus, not a system?**

**Share an example of when "substitution" has taken place in your family—  
such as when somebody stepped in to finish a chore somebody else was supposed to do.**

**Tell of a time when evidence resolved a mystery in your household. Relate it to the resurrection.**

**Tell about a time when you, as a parent, received grace at work or at home.**