

## EVERY TRACK EVERY WEEK

### WEEK 19: Leader Study Guide

#### The Gospel for Christians

#### **-Welcome!**

**-Intro: Thanks for being here! Revisit last week's points**

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#### **INTRO:**

This week we are going to talk about why the message of the gospel is just as important for Christians to hear as it is for non-Christians. So, let's start here. What is the gospel? The gospel means good news. Good news is simply a message. More specifically a message about Christ and what he has accomplished for Christians. Christ lived a perfect life, died a gruesome death, and was resurrected from the dead proving that God received his work and validating that he is our only hope in this world.

By God's grace, He shows us that our falling short is exactly why we need Christ & that Christ has filled in all the gaps in our holiness. Further, He has shown us that His grace is completely free. By believing in and resting in Jesus, God sees us in light of his Son's work. This is incredible news! This is the most liberating thing for us to understand as Christians and it is vital that we share this message of the gospel not only with unbelievers but with Christians as well!

The key to progress in the Christian life is coming to a deeper understanding of the gospel message. Romans 2:4 says "Don't you realize that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?". And how does God show us his kindness? Romans 5:8 "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

**-Ice Breaker Question: Have you ever told someone something multiple times and yet they can't remember ever hearing about it? Why do you think that is?**



**-Question 1: Let's first talk about what the gospel IS. One of the most hurtful things we can do for the assurance (confidence of salvation) of other Christians is to *assume* the gospel. In other words, one of the most harmful things we can do for the spiritual well-being and confidence of salvation for Christians is to assume they have heard the gospel "enough" and that they no longer need to hear this pronouncement of good news. So, let's clarify here- What is the gospel?**

**\*Answer:**

1) Don't tune out!

First, I want to say to Christians, don't tune out! I know for me, there was a time (a really long time actually) in my life where I would tune out when I heard someone say anything about the gospel... honestly, I was convinced that I already had what I needed out of the gospel (salvation), so I would tune out, assuming the speaker was going to be talking to someone who still needed the gospel (someone who wasn't "saved"). Let me challenge you, if you're contemplating tuning out- this gospel message is not something you move past and onto bigger and better things or onto things that will be more instrumental in transforming your life. The Christian life is a struggle. It's not cupcakes and rainbows. It's a pilgrimage. It's hard. It's full of strife and doubt and hardship. And the gospel is the ONLY thing that will get you through. Resting in and being reminded of the gospel is the only thing that makes the struggle and toil bearable. But on top of all that, the gospel makes the struggle and toil productive and beautiful. It turns something that would otherwise be only negative and wholly unnecessary into something that is for our good and that we can find meaning in.

2) The gospel is what God has done, not what we have done or have to do.

We have done a couple episodes on "The Law/ Gospel Distinction" so we won't go too far into that today, but some things that are important to remember regarding the gospel are first that the gospel is an announcement of what has been done for us, by God. While the gospel will result in us doing certain things, the gospel itself does not directly have anything to do with any actions that we do. Second, the gospel in short is- God saving sinners. And while that is a true



description of the gospel, that short description is chocked full of meaning and depth that needs to be explored, but that the depths of can never fully be plumbed. And third, while it is absolutely true that the gospel means “the good news”, we must talk about WHY the gospel is good news. The gospel is good news because of some bad news.

### 3) The bad news.

The bad news is that God requires perfection from us. We see this all the way back in Genesis... the first book of the bible, when God requires full obedience from Adam (which he obviously failed in). From there, we see God give His Law in the 10 commandments. These commandments were not intended to save anyone. No one has ever been saved by keeping the law. This is because no one (other than Jesus) has ever fully kept the Law. In Matt 5:48 Jesus says, in his famous Sermon on the Mount, that “you must therefore be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Jesus lays out the exacting burden of the requirement of perfection in his dealing with the rich young ruler, in His sermon on the mount, and in numerous other places we read about in the bible. This is the bad news. God requires perfection and we can’t be perfect. The gospel is the good news of God saving us, in spite of our inability to be perfect because, (as Eph 2 puts it) we are dead in our sins and trespasses. Dead and completely unable to do anything about it. And yet God in His kindness gives us new life, causes us to be born again, and gives us the faith to trust that Christ has accomplished perfection and that we can obtain that perfection ONLY by trusting in Him and His finished work on our behalf... for us... given to us, as if we had actually accomplished it on our own.

### 4) The announcement of the good news!

So, the gospel is the announcement of the good news that God sent Christ to live the life of perfection that we were required to live but could not, and to die the death that we deserved as a consequence of our sin, for us, on our behalf, so that by faith alone we receive His perfection and are clothed in the perfect life and substitutionary death of Christ and by the merits of Christ alone, we are received by God and counted as sons. The gospel is the unimaginable good news that by



faith, Christ's perfect life and substitutionary death are credited to us and God sees us as if we had never sinned and as if we had always obeyed perfectly. And because of the work of Christ, received by faith, we can approach God with confidence.

**-Question 2: That's incredible news, no doubt. The best news. So, in regard to navigating the gospel conversation with Christians, what are some of the ways well-meaning Christians get off base? Why do you think people neglect sharing and talking about the gospel with other Christians?**

**\*ANSWER:**

1) Sanctification - It seems as if this may be one of the biggest issues that we see today. As we talked about earlier, Christians tend to view the gospel as if it were only a message to hear for getting in the doors. And once we are there, we maintain and progress by our own efforts and wise schemes. We try to systematize our growth as Christians like we would our business. Systematizing is a great plan! ... For business. For physical fitness. For training in our sport, but we cannot (in a 1 to 1 relationship) try to apply that to our spiritual growth. Romans 1:16 says, "the gospel is the power of God unto salvation." We need to know that that word "salvation" is more than simply entering heaven. That word in its original language entails much more than we often give credit. Salvation is justification (being declared righteous), sanctification (growth into the image of God), and ultimate glorification that comes when the Kingdom of God is fully realized in the new heavens and new earth that we will inherit in its fullness in perfected bodies that will be unable to sin. It is the gospel that is the power of God for justification, sanctification, and ultimate glorification. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, "And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit." We could (and like will do a full episode on this in the near future), but essentially what Paul is saying here is, that we WILL (as we look to the gospel) be transformed (sanctified) into the image of God. It WILL happen. It IS happening. But where we often get this messed up is that we go back to that systematization mindset where we think it should all happen at



some specific, measurable pace that is the same for all Christians. This is simply not what the bible lays out. We see it all throughout scripture. The early church made it a priority to gather together to hear the gospel. To partake in the Lord's Supper and baptism (which are visible gospels). And they did that week in and week out. Over and over, because they knew what we need to know- the gospel is our only and best hope. Not only for entering heaven, but to be continually freed to love God and love our neighbor more and more.

2) Lordship Salvation. Here is another giant topic we could dive into... but for the sake of time we will just try to hit the high points. If you want to learn more about this, shoot us a message and we will provide you with some great resources. In short, Lordship salvation, can be summed up in statements like, "the true gospel is a call to self-denial", or "the gospel requires us to surrender all.". While these statements sound pious and holy, this is not the gospel. The true gospel is an announcement of what Christ has done. While some of the "results" of the power of the gospel in the individual believer's life will be self-denial, surrender, and repentance, those things are not the gospel themselves. And this is not theological hair splitting. When we credit anything that we do as equal to or a part of the gospel, we are essentially saying "my works are the power of God unto salvation." "my self-denial is the power of God unto salvation." This robs glory from God, attempts to put it on us where it doesn't belong, and in the end directs the believer to think that the source of their assurance of salvation is found outside of Christ and in themselves and their own ability to surrender fully... to make God Lord of all of their lives... and this type of thinking results in some form of pride or despair. Pride if the believer really thinks they are fully surrendering and despair if the believer comes to terms with their inability to do so. Only the gospel can keep our eyes on Christ and His accomplishment of full surrender to God... of his full denial of self when He came to earth, took on flesh, suffered and died.



**Question 3: So how do we helpfully, and winsomely steer the gospel conversation with Christians in such a way that is helpful? Why is it important that we have gospel-conversations with Christians?**

**\*ANSWER:**

- 1) This is a good question! And a tough one. The short answer is, it depends. One thing is for sure though- it will probably take a lot of time. In a lot of cases, Christians are so indoctrinated with some of the mistakes we talked about a little bit ago, that this true unadulterated gospel is offensive and foolish.
- 2) Paul says, in 1 Cor 1:18-31 <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."<sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach<sup>[b]</sup> to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.<sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards,<sup>[c]</sup> not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being<sup>[d]</sup> might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> And because of him<sup>[e]</sup> you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."
- 3) This is important for us to keep in mind in all of our gospel conversations, whether with an atheist, someone of another religion, or even our Christian brothers. The simple message of the gospel



seems to be foolish... In our American culture, we pride ourselves on pulling ourselves up by our own bootstraps... we are the masters of our own destiny... we work hard and reap the results from that hard work, and we are proud about that. But in the gospel, we do nothing but receive the hard work of another. And this is exactly why we need gospel-centered biblical community. We need our brothers and sisters in Christ there with us, ready to point us back to the gospel, when we get off base (and we WILL get off base) and try to start justifying ourselves again. We WILL revert back to trying to make our Christian lives progress by our own efforts... and in turn we will turn our eyes towards ourselves and our actions and away from Christ and His actions. This is not only detrimental for our lives and assurance as Christians, but it also robs God of His glory. He is the One who has accomplished redemption and perfection for us and is the only One who deserves credit for it.

**-Question 5: How should these facts drive our attitudes, our actions and our lives?**

**ANSWER:**

1) In Mere Christianity, C.S. Lewis talks about pride being the root of all sin. When we take the focus off of what Christ has done, the finished work of the Cross, the Gospel, and place it on the fact that we have willed ourselves to act as a Christian should act, that we have read the Bible in a year, that we have studied to give a great speech full of quoted scripture, or whatever.....when we feel justified by our efforts and pride wells up in us, we need to remember that “While we were yet sinners Christ died for us, that if you are guilty of one sin you are as guilty as anyone.” The Gospel reminds us to be humble and to seek God through the gospel. The Gospel also reminds us that in Christ we have hope, peace, freedom, and true victory. When sharing this truth with a christian remember that pride is a hard thing to deal with. Share the truth of the Word that is the Gospel and remind them that if you are in Christ you are a much loved child of God, remind them that the only good we have to offer is Christ in us, and remind



them that Christ's finished work and the Gospel message is the only reason that they can even be saved. If we had not heard the Gospel, we could not respond to it...more than that, without the power of God in the Gospel to draw us to himself, we would not have responded....we would not have the ability to respond. The Gospel doesn't try to beat down people and belittle them. It reminds us that we have value because Christ died for us, God saves us, and he is continuing to redeem us until the second coming of Christ. We respond to the Gospel because the power of God indwells in us, the Holy Spirit, and we long to glorify our father by walking in faith because the Gospel is continuing to draw us to himself.

**-Lets pray.**

