

Session 4

HOW: GOSPEL CONVERSATIONS

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 1 Peter 3:15-16

Memory Verse

For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

– 1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-4, CSB



How: Gospel Conversations


THEOLOGICAL THEME: The gospel is a historical event with eternal implications. Christ died, was buried, and rose again. Adequate gospel conversations should focus on the Scriptures, not only on lived experiences.

No one ever has to ask a grandparent about his or her grandchildren. Grandparents will tell you about their grandchildren whether you want to hear about them or not. It has been said that grandchildren are the reward God gives to parents for putting up with their children.

Of course, the truth is that grandparents love their grandchildren so much that they can't help but talk about them. Talking about their grandchildren becomes second nature.

As we consider how we might engage more people in gospel conversations, we should work to make it second nature. Make conversations about Jesus as normal as conversations about grandchildren.

 What keeps you from having more gospel conversations?

 How can you connect the everyday experiences of your life to the gospel?



How often do you pray for opportunities for gospel conversations?

Session Summary

Our power rests in the good news of the gospel and in how that reality has affected us personally. We have been redeemed for a new, true, eternal purpose. Our hope is the resurrection, which foreshadows the future for believers, who will be raised to new life and everlasting community with the triune God and other believers. Our mandate is to bear witness; our triune God does the converting. Obedience is confident witness, not conversion.

We are called to sow the good news, but God will bring about the harvest according to His power and His will.

1. Look for Opportunities (1 Cor. 15:3; 1 Pet. 3:15-16)

Paul said that when he was with the Corinthians, he “passed on” the gospel. He shared it. He made opportunities to tell someone about the gospel. When Peter wrote, he told his recipients to be prepared to give a defense. But the defense was not for the anger within them, or the fear, or the vitriol. They were to give a defense for the hope within them.

Paul and Peter both also wrote about a lifestyle of gospel sharing. These are two sides of the same coin. Christians should look for opportunities to instigate gospel conversations. But Christians should also live lives that cause others to want to know their story. In a world filled with sin, strife, anger, and division, lives that display the fruit of the Spirit stand out.

Having gospel conversations can be as simple as explaining why you behave the way you do—assuming that you live as a follower of Jesus, of course. But the key ingredient in those gospel conversations must be “the gospel.” Paul was very clear with the Corinthians about what he shared. He shared with them the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. He didn’t tell them how Jesus made his life better—following Jesus nearly killed him. Paul simply shared the gospel and trusted in the power of the Word of God to work. You can trust in the power of God’s Word as well because He has promised that His Word will not return void. (See Isa. 55:11.)

Gospel conversations do not always have to be long and involved. They may be short. If you have an opportunity to see someone on a regular basis, consider an ongoing gospel conversation. If you buy coffee at the same place regularly, engage the server, ask about their story, and begin sharing the gospel with them slowly. You might not have 20 minutes for a full gospel conversation, or you might get a few minutes multiple times per week.

? Read Isaiah 55:11. What does this verse tell you about the Word of God? How does this promise give you hope when gospel conversations do not result in a salvation?

? Where are places you might look for opportunities to have gospel conversations?

? Application: How can you begin to pray for God to give you opportunities and the courage to share the gospel more often?

2. Keep the Main Thing, the Main Thing (1 Cor. 15:3-4)

Paul's method of discipleship was mentoring. He modeled belief in front of his people and encouraged them to follow his example. He was intentional and he was personal. But Paul was very clear about his intentions: "I passed on to you as most important" (v. 3). What was most important? "That Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" (v. 4).

What was most important? The gospel of Jesus Christ. There are other things to talk about, but only one thing is of greatest importance.

? Why did Paul emphasize the historical nature of the gospel? How do you understand the gospel differently when you consider it first as a historical event and second as a personal experience?

As you pray about and focus on engaging others with gospel conversations, work to keep the main thing the main thing. In a politicized age, certain church groups or denominations can get attached to political parties or candidates, but politics is never the main thing. In fact, as Christians try to talk with others about the Bible, all sorts of topics can come up, but no topic is as important as the gospel.

? What are topics that tend to derail you in your efforts to share the gospel?

Work to keep the main thing the main thing. Author, Jackie Hill Perry, who was saved out of a gay lifestyle, speaks of how when she married her husband, people applauded her marriage more than they applauded her salvation in Christ as if her marriage was what redeemed her.¹

Gospel conversations need to get to the gospel and focus on the gospel. The gospel is not the same thing as your testimony. Your testimony matters and is important, but it is the testimony of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection that saves. Keep the main thing the main thing. Get to the gospel and get the gospel to the lost.

? Application: How might you keep the main thing the main thing in the areas where you tend to get hung up or derailed in gospel conversations?

3. Trust the Holy Spirit (Gal. 6:7-9)

The responsibility to share the gospel has been given to Christians. The Great Commission is clear: Christians are to go and make disciples of all nations. But the work of salvation is not the responsibility or the ability of any man or woman. Jesus told Nicodemus in John 3 that he must be born again if he wanted to enter the kingdom of heaven.

Rebirth is a miraculous experience, made possible only by the Spirit of God. Your responsibility is to be obedient to the Lord and obedient in the Great Commission, but it is God's privilege and responsibility to save. Only He has the ability to do so.



Read John 3:1-9. What was necessary for Nicodemus to be born again?


When writing to the Galatians, Paul warned that we will reap what we sow. If you sow to the flesh, you will reap of the flesh. If you sow in the Spirit, you will reap in the Spirit. There is no greater spiritual seed casting than spreading the gospel through one-on-one personal evangelism.

You can trust the Lord that if you regularly share the gospel in the power of the Spirit, then God will be at work. God will change you and change others.

There is no need for threats, twisting of the truth, or false promises. You can trust the Holy Spirit to do His work. The Holy Spirit does not need you to add to the gospel promise or take away from it. The Holy Spirit will work according to God's promises through the power of the Word.



What are some ways we might wrongly share the gospel if we don't trust the Holy Spirit?

 Application: Think about your own life. How did the Holy Spirit save you? What do you know about yourself that was “unsavable” apart from the work of God? How can this give you confidence in gospel conversations with others?

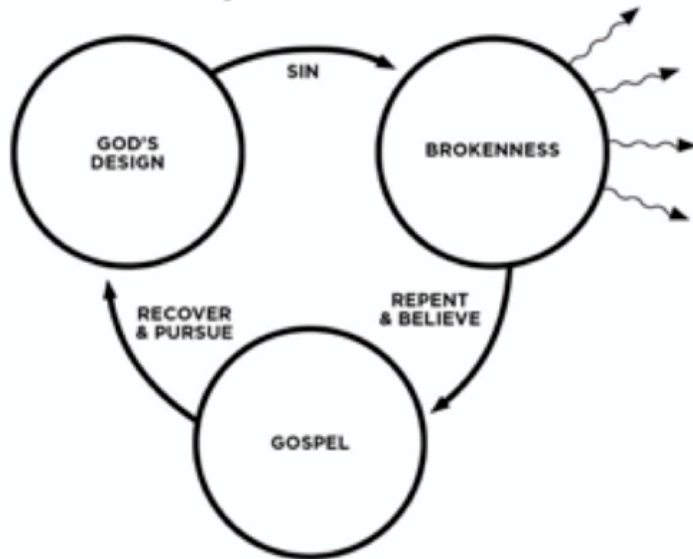
Conclusion

Gospel conversations should be second nature for Christians, but it is not always that easy. If you struggle in this area, you aren't alone. But you can improve. Begin by being open to opportunities to share the gospel. Pray for them. Search for them. Give a reason for the hope that is within you. Next, remember to keep the main thing the main thing. Theories about Revelation may be fun for Christians to argue about, but they are not the pure, simple gospel of Jesus. Communicate the gospel.

Finally, trust the Holy Spirit. Trust the Spirit to give you opportunities. Trust the Spirit to use you in those opportunities. Trust the Spirit to work through His Word, even after your gospel conversations.

In addition, make use of available tools. In addition to your personal testimony and the Scriptures, learn to use a gospel presentation tool. The value of learning a tool is that you can be ready anywhere, anytime with anybody to share your faith. The “3 Circles Gospel Presentation” offers a simple, easily reproducible tool to have gospel conversations. While you may supplement this tool with other resources and tactics, “3 Circles” will be the common language used by our pastors and will be a part of our core gospel conversations training.

DxD 3 Circles Gospel Presentation



❓ Ask someone in your group or another friend to hold you accountable to have gospel conversations each week. How many should you strive for? How might your relationships change if you make more effort to share the gospel?

❓ The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread loneliness and hopelessness. How can the “hope that is in you” of the gospel be a powerful apologetic in this lonely and depressed world?

? In just a few weeks, schools, colleges, and universities will resume classes. How can you pray for students, teachers, and staff to use their platform to engage in gospel conversations?

? What can you change about your weekly routine to give you more opportunities to share your faith?

CHRIST CONNECTION: When Christ is regarded as Lord in your heart, it becomes easier to share the gospel and to give a defense to anyone who asks about the hope that is in you.

MISSIONAL APPLICATION: Gospel means *good news*, but it is only good news if we share it. Paul says that the gospel is “most important.” As Christians called to live out the Great Commission, nothing is more important than sharing the gospel.



FOR NEXT WEEK

God is Good

Main Passages

- Genesis 1:26-31; Romans 8:28

Session Outline

1. The Goodness of God (Gen. 1:26-31)
2. Working for Our Good (Rom. 8:28)
3. Our Good Works (Rom. 8:28)

Memorize

For I passed on to you as most important what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures

- 1 Corinthians 15:3-4, CSB

Daily Readings

- Monday - 1 Corinthians 15:3-4
- Tuesday - 1 Peter 3:15-16
- Wednesday - John 14:6
- Thursday - Romans 1:16
- Friday - Acts 8:35
- Saturday - Psalm 96:3

References

¹[Christian Sexuality]. "Christian Sexuality - Interview with Jackie Hill Perry." Youtube video, 48:03, October 21, 2020. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pc_s2xItSsI.