



A Road Map for Gospel Conversations

Summary and Goal

To share the gospel, we must know the gospel and be able to articulate it to others.

Main Passages

Romans 3:10-12,23; 5:1,6-11; 6:23; 8:1,38-39; 10:9-10,13-14

Session Outline

1. All Have Sinned and Face Death (Rom. 3:10-12,23; 6:23)
2. Jesus Made the Way for Salvation (Rom. 5:6-11; 10:9-10,13-14)
3. Through Jesus We Have Peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1,38-39)

Theological Theme

The Book of Romans presents to Christians the essential truths of the gospel message and teaches us how to become Christians and live out our faith. Laced throughout the chapters of this book are key statements that also help us share the gospel with others.

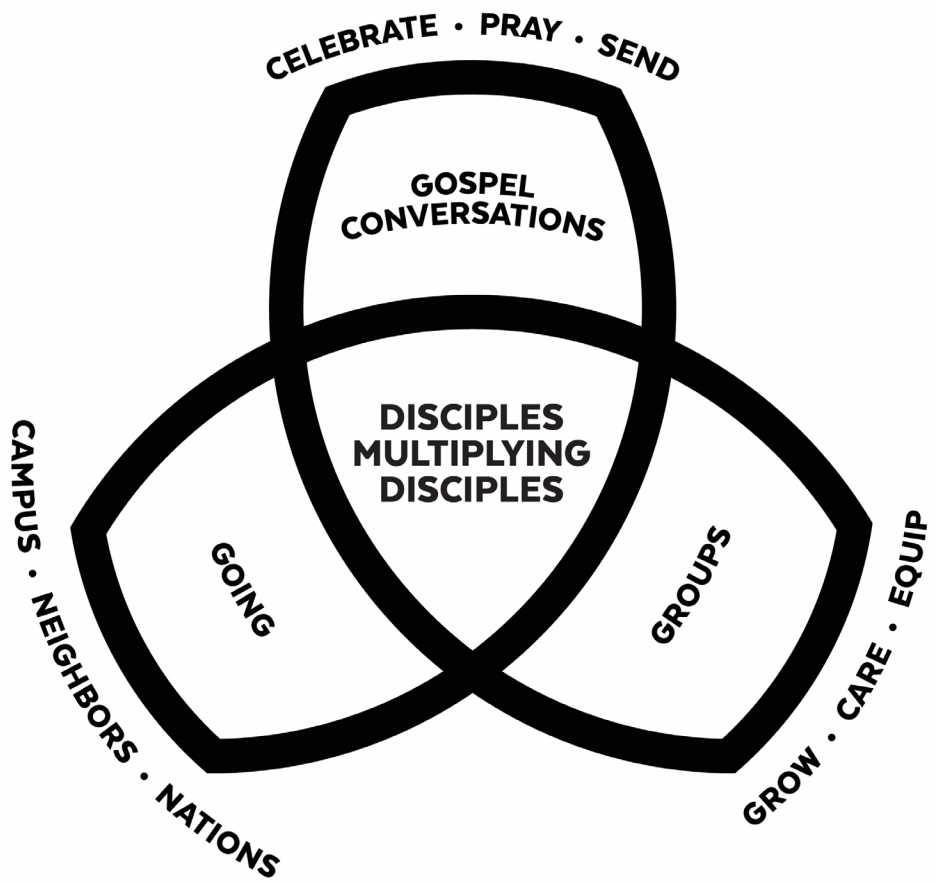
Christ Connection

Despite our sin and separation from God, Jesus has made the way for restoration through His life, death, and resurrection.

Missional Application

As believers, we are commanded and compelled to share the gospel with others, but we can't do this until we know the gospel.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



6

Session Plan

A Road Map for Gospel Conversations

? For Further Discussion

Try this experiment in your class or small group: Distribute notebook paper. Ask participants how many times they think they've heard the gospel. Some, if they've been believers for many years, may answer they've heard it hundreds or even thousands of times. Then ask them to write a synopsis of the gospel on the piece of paper you gave them. Spend a few minutes discussing whether or not this was an easy challenge, and ask a couple of volunteers to read their papers.

? For Further Discussion

Do you think most people recognize the desperate conditions of humanity? Why or why not? Spend a few minutes discussing the effects of sin in our world, creation, and your personal life.

Introduction

- ? What is the one thing that most often holds you back from sharing the gospel? In what circumstances is it easy for you to share God's love with others? In what circumstances is it difficult?
- ? What is the most memorable thing that has ever happened to you while sharing your faith?

Many believers are so unclear on the gospel that they cannot write it in their own words and in the simplest terms. How can we expect them to share the gospel in the world? The gospel must be clear to us before we can share it clearly with unbelievers. Feeling comfortable with the gospel message also helps alleviate many of the fears that come with the thought of evangelism.¹

1. All Have Sinned and Face Death (Rom. 3:10-12,23; 6:23)

God created us for a relationship with Him—a relationship that centers around praising Him and making His name known to the world. But the Bible doesn't mince words when it tells us that our relationship with God is broken. There was a time when Adam and Eve, the first humans, walked with God and lived in His presence. (See Gen. 1–2.) Genesis 3 describes the fall, or unraveling, of creation when sin entered the world.

- ? How is sin defined in today's society? What do Romans 3:10-12 and 3:23 reveal about who we are apart from God? How do you react to passages like this in the Bible?
- ? What is the result of slavery to sin? What is the benefit of slavery to God? Is it possible to be free from sin but still live like we're enslaved to it? Explain.
- ? Application: How does the very real weight of sin provide motivation and urgency for us to have gospel conversations with others?

2. Jesus Made the Way for Salvation (Rom. 5:6-11; 10:9-10,13-14)

Paul continued by demonstrating how great God's grace is. God redeemed us when we were at our worst. We were utterly helpless to earn our righteousness. He showed His unmatched love for us in Christ's death.

- ❓ What does logic say someone will die for? How was Christ different? For the visual learners in your group, consider writing these two lists of responses on a white board or large piece of paper as you discuss.
- ❓ How did Jesus accomplish this ministry of reconciliation? What impact does this have on our relationship with God? With others?
- ❓ Application: How do these verses speak to the idea that there are many ways to God? See John 14:6. How might you respond to others who hold this view?

3. Through Jesus We Have Peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1,38-39)

A person under condemnation is one who has been pronounced guilty and sentenced to punishment. Because of the fallen state of humanity, we all enter this world as those guilty of sin and deserving of death. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to have a relationship with God and receive the eternal life and grace He offers.

- ❓ From these passages, how would you explain the gospel to someone who feels they are not "good enough" for God?
- ❓ Application: What are you tempted to believe can separate you from the love of Christ? How do these verses bring you comfort in this area and also give you confidence to pursue gospel conversations with others around you?

Conclusion

- ❓ What general observations can you make about our city or your neighborhood regarding what people believe?
- ❓ What do you need to do to make yourself more available for God to use in having gospel conversations with those in your circle of influence?
- ❓ Make a list of challenging situations in which we might spread the gospel (family gatherings, workplace, community events, with close friends). Which of these situations challenges you the most? Why are these situations intimidating? How can we overcome this intimidation?

❓ For Further Discussion

According to these verses, how is a person saved, and to what result? What truth is foundational to the Christian faith? How would our faith be different if this were not true? Why is a verbal confession of faith important?

❓ For Further Discussion

Because of Christ, we are declared not guilty in God's eyes. Where do you see the ramifications/blessings of this truth in your life? How should the truth of these verses change the way we live each day?



Expanded Session Content

A Road Map for Gospel Conversations

Introduction

- ❓ What is the one thing that most often holds you back from sharing the gospel?
- ❓ In what circumstances is it easy for you to share God's love with others? In what circumstances is it difficult?
- ❓ What is the most memorable thing that has ever happened to you while sharing your faith?

Often we think of large crowds, exciting music, stirring testimonies, and great preaching when we contemplate sharing the gospel. However, the New Testament makes it clear that every Christian should be an evangelist—one who shares the good news of Jesus Christ with others. Still, many Christians claim they don't know how to do so or leave that task up to others.

- ❓ Try this experiment in your class or small group: Distribute notebook paper. Ask participants how many times they think they've heard the gospel. Some, if they've been believers for many years, may answer they've heard it hundreds or even thousands of times. Then ask them to write a synopsis of the gospel on the piece of paper you gave them. Spend a few minutes discussing whether or not this was an easy challenge, and ask a couple of volunteers to read their papers.

Session Summary

Many believers are so unclear on the gospel that they cannot write it in their own words and in the simplest terms. How can we expect them to share the gospel in the world? The gospel must be clear to us before we can share it clearly with unbelievers. Feeling comfortable with the gospel message also helps alleviate many of the fears that come with the thought of evangelism.¹

1. All Have Sinned and Face Death (Rom. 3:10-12,23; 6:23)

God created us for a relationship with Him—a relationship that centers around praising Him and making His name known to the world. But the Bible doesn't mince words when it tells us that our relationship with God is broken. There was a time when Adam and Eve, the first humans, walked with God and lived in His presence. (See Gen. 1–2.) Genesis 3 describes the fall, or unraveling, of creation when sin entered the world. Sin is understood as missing the mark when it comes to God and His expectation for His creation. As a result of sin, we are all born separated from God and that separation has a cost.

- ❓ How is sin defined in today's society? What do Romans 3:10-12 and 3:23 reveal about who we are apart from God? How do you react to passages like this in the Bible?

No one is without sin; we all have sinned. Furthermore, as sinners we always and continually fall short of God's standard for us. Human sin was catastrophic in its consequences. Our only hope was for God to mercifully offer us a way of salvation in Jesus Christ, His Son. God never offered to sell salvation to people for a price. On the other hand, no human being could even begin to pay the equivalent value of eternal salvation. Not only can we never purchase salvation on our own, we are enslaved to sin and therefore we actually need to be purchased.

- ❓ Do you think most people recognize the desperate conditions of humanity? Why or why not? Spend a few minutes discussing the effects of sin in our world, creation, and your personal life.

We have all rebelled against God. It started with Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, and we've continued the streak of thinking our ways are better. We are rebels against our Creator. Paul said that because of this disobedience, we're considered dead as sinners—completely separated from God and under His judgment. Without God's grace, we're all spiritually hopeless.

- ❓ What is the result of slavery to sin? What is the benefit of slavery to God? Is it possible to be free from sin but still live like we're enslaved to it? Explain.

In Romans 6, Paul emphasized that Christians serve a new Master who liberated them from bondage to sin and empowered them to grow in faith. Paul summed up his argument in Romans 6:23. There are two ways set before us. Those who choose the way of sin earn its wages: death. Those who choose God’s way of salvation through faith in Christ receive God’s gracious gift: eternal life.

One of Paul’s most often-used terms (eighty-six times in his epistles) occurs eleven times in the Book of Romans (twice in chap. 6; vv. 11,23). In Romans 6 “in Christ” is closely tied to our identification with Christ through justification by faith.

Based on everything Paul taught in Romans 1–5, it is clear that the only way a person can be “alive to God” (Rom. 6:11) is through the intermediation of Jesus Christ. Because humankind is sinful, separated from God, and dead in trespasses and sin, men and women cannot be alive to God on their own. They must have righteousness imputed to them, and they must identify with the death and resurrection of Christ on their behalf as Paul describes in Romans 6.

- Application: How does the very real weight of sin provide motivation and urgency for us to have gospel conversations with others?

2. Jesus Made the Way for Salvation (Rom. 5:6-11; 10:9-10,13-14)


Paul continued by demonstrating how great God’s grace is. God redeemed us when we were at our worst. We were utterly helpless to earn our righteousness. He showed His unmatched love for us in Christ’s death.

- What does logic say someone will die for? How was Christ different? For the visual learners in your group, consider writing these two lists of responses on a white board or large piece of paper as you discuss.

Paul described the timing of Christ’s death as “while we were still helpless” and “at the right time.” Christ did not die for us when we were worthy of being saved; He died when we were wicked. Paul focused on the greatness of grace by pointing to the fact that it is illogical for someone to die for another person, especially an unrighteous person.

- How did Jesus accomplish this ministry of reconciliation? What impact does this have on our relationship with God? With others?

In light of the great work Jesus did, Christians are called to rejoice in God and praise Him for the grace they received. Paul emphasized that Christ's sacrifice was the demonstration of nothing less than divine love for sinners. God's plan of redemption was a demonstration of grace through and through.


 According to these verses, how is a person saved, and to what result? What truth is foundational to the Christian faith? How would our faith be different if this were not true? Why is a verbal confession of faith important?

We receive salvation and eternal life through faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The phrase "believe in your heart" refers to genuine faith, an absolute trust that God made salvation possible and available to all when He raised Jesus from the dead. Saving faith focuses solely on Jesus, the risen Lord. Our inward commitment and outward confession are to agree on the primacy of Christ.

In Romans 10:14, Paul shared how God saves people. It is not through seeing His handiwork in creation. (See Rom. 1:20.) It is not through our own good works. (See Rom. 9:32.) Instead, it is through the sharing of the gospel. No one will be saved apart from hearing the gospel and believing in Christ as Savior and confessing Him as Lord. We are God's chosen instrument through which God declares His gospel message to the world. Our friends and family members who do not hear the gospel will not be saved.

If we do not share the gospel with our lost friends, their only hope to be saved is to hear the gospel from someone else. Christians possess the best news in the universe; it has the power to change the eternal destinies of those we love. Why wouldn't we tell them the good news about Jesus?

God doesn't need us to deliver the gospel to the world. If He wanted, God could write the gospel in the clouds or proclaim it from the heavens. God doesn't need us, but He has chosen us as His instruments through which the gospel would be proclaimed to all nations. (See Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.) God chose to spread the gospel through us because He loves us and delights to share His work with us.

 Application: How do these verses speak to the idea that there are many ways to God? Read John 14:6 for further insight. How might you respond to others who hold this view?

Reconciliation

Reconciliation is one of the great words in the New Testament to describe salvation. It is a personal image in that it illustrates two estranged parties reuniting in a relationship. Prior to reconciliation we were enemies of God, deserving and receiving His wrath or His opposition to sin. Through Jesus Christ, God made the perfect sacrifice for our sins and thus opened up the way for our relationship with Him.

3. Through Jesus We Have Peace with God (Rom. 5:1; 8:1,38-39)

A person under condemnation is one who has been pronounced guilty and sentenced to punishment. Because of the fallen state of humanity, we all enter this world as those guilty of sin and deserving of death. We do not have the ability in and of ourselves to have a relationship with God and receive the eternal life and grace He offers.

In the Book of Romans, Paul sought to answer a basic question: How can people be righteous before God? Here he answered that in Christ we have no condemnation. We do not need to fear rejection from God. The focus here is not solely on the end of life. No condemnation means we have no reason to live with guilt in the present. To be in Christ means to be alive through Him. Christians lives are determined in Christ.

Salvation through Jesus Christ brings us into a relationship of peace with God. (See Rom. 5:1.) God's love provided salvation for the world through the gift and sacrifice of His Son, but salvation comes only to those who believe in Christ. (See John 3:16-18.) When we believe in Him, we are restored to a right relationship with God, no longer separated from Him or under His judgment. The result of this restoration is eternal life in the presence of God.

- ❓ From these passages, how would you explain the gospel to someone who feels they are not “good enough” for God?
- ❓ Because of Christ, we are declared not guilty in God's eyes. Where do you see the ramifications/blessings of this truth in your life?
- ❓ How should the truth of these verses change the way we live each day?

Paul affirmed that nothing has the power to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. The list of potential separators in verses 38-39 includes physical danger, spiritual beings, present and future occurrences, and powers above us and below us. To clearly indicate that absolutely no thing or person can come between the Lord and His people, Paul concluded his list with “any other created thing.” Absolutely nothing can come between us and our Lord. Nothing can remove us from His family.

- ❓ Application: What are you tempted to believe can separate you from the love of Christ? How do these verses bring you comfort in this area and also give you confidence to pursue gospel conversations with others around you?

Conclusion

As followers of Jesus, we are commanded and compelled to share the gospel with others, but we can't do this until we know the gospel. When familiar to us, the passages we've walked through today can help us clearly communicate the gospel with others.

- ❓ What general observations can you make about our city or your neighborhood regarding what people believe?
- ❓ What do you need to do to make yourself more available for God to use in having gospel conversations with those in your circle of influence?
- ❓ Make a list of challenging situations in which we might spread the gospel (family gatherings, workplace, community events, with close friends). Which of these situations challenges you the most? Why are these situations intimidating? How can we overcome this intimidation?

Prayer of Response

Pray that you will be empowered by the Holy Spirit to share Jesus with your family, work, and social contacts. Pray for the willingness to participate in sharing Christ regularly. Give thanks to God for choosing to involve you in the expansion of His kingdom.

Additional Resources

- *Turning Everyday Conversations Into Gospel Conversations* by Jimmy Scroggins
- *Tell Someone* by Greg Laurie
- *Tactics* by Gregory Koukl

For Next Week

Session Title

- God is Holy

Main Passages

- Isaiah 6:1-8

Session Outline

1. Worthy of Worship (Isa. 6:1-2)
2. Holy, Holy, Holy (Isa. 6:3-4)
3. A Living Sacrifice (Isa. 6:5-8)

Memorize

For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

-Romans 6:23

Daily Readings

- Monday - Romans 3:10-12,23
- Tuesday - Romans 5:1, 6-11
- Wednesday - Romans 6:23
- Thursday - Romans 8:1, 38-39
- Friday - Romans 10:9-10
- Saturday - Romans 10:13-14

Historical Context of Romans

Purpose

Paul's purpose in writing Romans can be identified from his direct statements in the text and inferred from the content. He expressly wrote that he wanted to impart spiritual strength to the believers at Rome (1:11–12; 16:25–26). He asked for prayer for the difficult task he was undertaking (15:30) and that he might be able to come and see them (15:32). He hoped to enlist the Roman churches to support a mission to the west (15:23–29). The content of the letter shows that the churches experienced tensions between believers from different backgrounds. Paul wanted them to be united and to avoid dissension and false teaching (16:17–18). The content also reveals his exposition of what is essential Christianity and what are matters of indifference.

Author

Paul the apostle is the stated and indisputable author of the book of Romans. From the book of Acts and statements in Romans, we learn that Paul wrote this letter while he was in Corinth and on his way to Jerusalem in the spring of AD 57, to deliver an offering from the Gentile churches to poor Jewish Christians (Ac 20:3; Rm 15:25–29).

Setting

All of Paul's writings grew out of his missionary/pastoral work and were about the problems and needs of local churches. The book of Romans is also of this genre, but it is the least "local" in the sense that Paul had not yet been to Rome. This letter was his opportunity to expound the good news message (the gospel). He could discuss the essence of sin, the salvation accomplished on the cross, the union of the believer with Christ, how the Spirit works in the Christian to promote holiness, the place of the Jewish people in God's plan, future things, and Christian living or ethics. Though Paul did not write Romans as a systematic theology, his somewhat orderly exposition has been the fountain for the development of that discipline.

The origin of the Roman house churches is unknown. The founding of the Roman church likely goes back to the "visitors from Rome," "both Jews and converts" who came to Jerusalem at Pentecost (Ac 2:10). Many of these visitors converted to Christianity (Ac 2:41), some of whom very likely hailed from Rome. In Acts 18:2 Luke mentioned Aquila and Priscilla, who left Rome because emperor Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave the city (AD 49). This exodus was caused by strife among Jews over "Chrestus" (Christ). The remaining Christians in Rome would be from a Gentile background. The Jewish-Gentile tensions in Rome had a long history. These tensions are somewhat reflected throughout the letter, most specifically in chaps. 2; 11; 14–15.

Special Features

Paul's letter to the Roman house churches has been preeminent among the New Testament writings for its theological and pastoral influence. It focuses on the doctrine of salvation, including the practical implications for believers as they live out the salvation given to them through Jesus Christ.

Extended Commentary

Romans 3:10-12, 23

3:10–18. In these verses Paul linked seven OT passages to demonstrate that all of humanity is under sin’s dominion. No one is righteous; no one understands (Jn 8:43–44; 1Co 2:14), and no one ... seeks God. Since Adam and Eve’s fall, people have hidden from God, but God sent his Son “to seek and to save the lost” (Lk 19:10). All have gone astray (Is 1:2–4; 53:6), and in God’s sight none are right. Paul cited Bible passages that show the extent of corruption. As Jesus taught, “from within, out of people’s hearts” (Mk 7:21) come all sorts of evil. Humans are quick to shed blood. During the past century more than thirty-nine million people lost their lives in wars. And by conservative estimates, human governments killed an additional 125 million people—led by Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Hitler, and others. The root problem is that humans are often practical atheists even when they profess belief in God. They choose against God’s will and show no fear for it.

3:23. All have missed the mark that God intended for the human race and have lost the glory of the original creation (Ps 8:5). Believing the good news starts the process of the restoration of glory (Rm 8:30; 2Co 3:18).²

Romans 6:23

6:20–23. As slaves of God, believers produce fruit (see Jn 15:1–8). This is the work of sanctification or holiness in their lives, and the final product is eternal life. Lest the figure be misunderstood as a payment for merits earned, eternal life is a gift of God through Christ. One master (sin) pays an earned wage of death; the other master (God) pays in unearned grace, resulting in eternal life (Jn 17:3).³

Romans 5:1, 6-11

5:1. Commentators differ over whether chap. 5 belongs thematically to the first major section of Romans or to the Christian life section, chaps. 6–8. It has connections to both. Paul in 5:1–11 uses “we” and “us” as he explains the benefits that those who are justified possess. Justification is just one of many ways of speaking about salvation. In this division, Paul showed how justification involves reconciliation. Justification speaks to our sound legal status before God while reconciliation describes our repaired relationship to God in more personal terms. We were at war with God, relationally alienated from him, but he reconciled us by his Son (v. 10). We have peace in some manuscripts can be read as “let us grasp the fact that we have peace.” This peace is an objective, settled fact because Jesus has accomplished it once and for all.

5:6–8. We can be sure of God’s love since he did so much for us when we were helpless. We were ungodly, we were still sinners, and we were his enemies (v. 10). Jesus died for that kind of person. The word translated “for” is the Greek preposition *huper* used in substitution contexts. Jesus died in our place. God freely chooses to love us and by doing so confers worth on us through our faith in him.

5:9. No debt of wrath remains for those who have now been declared righteous through faith in Christ.

5:10–11. If by the death of Christ we were reconciled to God, how much surer must the good news of salvation be now that he has risen and lives forevermore!⁴

Romans 10:9-10, 13

10:9–10. Jesus is Lord is a confession of faith. “Lord” is the translation of the Greek word *kurios*. This is the regular way of translating the Hebrew name for God (Yahweh) in the Greek OT (the LXX). Jesus is not only the Messiah (Gk Christ = Hb Messiah), but he is also Lord (1Co 8:6). Not only do we believe that the man Jesus was raised . . . from the dead, but we also believe that he shares the same nature with God. This is the start of the understanding of Christ’s two natures, as articulated at the Council of Chalcedon (AD 451). Jesus is fully human and fully God. Christians by definition believe and confess this truth.

10:11–13. Paul cited biblical support for the universal offer of salvation. Salvation is for both Jew and Greek (i.e., Gentiles) since the same Lord (Gk *kurios*, v. 12) richly blesses all who call on him. The promise is for all who call on the name of the Lord (*kurios*, v. 13). As the prophet Joel said, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Jl 2:32). Jesus is the Lord.

10:14–15 What must occur for someone to call on the name of the Lord? Someone must first be sent to proclaim the gospel message, and then listeners must pay attention and believe. In the absence of any one of these factors, no one can call on the name of the Lord.⁵

Romans 8:1, 38-39

8:1. There is no condemnation for believers because they are not under the law (6:14), and they have been released from the law (7:6). They can now serve God in the “newness of the Spirit” (7:6).

8:38–39. Paul’s “grand persuasion” (Gk *pepeismai*) is in the perfect tense, which indicates a past action that has ongoing impact. Having been persuaded (by God), he stood firm in the belief that nothing could separate him from the love of God. Jesus conquered death and Satan on the cross, ensuring that nothing can change God’s love or purpose for us. We “are being guarded by God’s power through faith for a salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time” (1Pt 1:5).⁶

References

1. Adapted from Donald S. Whitney, “The Gospel and the Discipline of Evangelism: Donald S. Whitney: Spiritual Growth,” (Lifeway, January 1, 2014), <https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/spiritual-disciplines-gospel-evangelism-witnessing-missions-salvation-sharing-faith>.
2. Edwin A. Blum et al., eds., *CSB Study Bible* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2017).
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.

Author Bio

Donald Whitney (*The Gospel and the Discipline of Evangelism*)

Don Whitney has been Professor of Biblical Spirituality and Associate Dean at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY, since 2005. Before that, he held a similar position (the first such position in the six Southern Baptist seminaries) at Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, MO, for ten years. He is the founder and president of The Center for Biblical Spirituality. Don is a frequent speaker in churches, retreats, and conferences in the U.S. and abroad.

Jimmy Scroggins (*Turning Every Day Conversations Into Gospel Conversations*)

Jimmy Scroggins serves as the Lead Pastor of Family Church in West Palm Beach, Florida. Jimmy is married to Kristin, and they are blessed with eight children—James, Daniel, Jeremiah, Isaac, Stephen, Anna Kate, Mary Claire, and Caleb. Jimmy earned his PhD from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, KY. Jimmy is dedicated to building families in South Florida through a network of neighborhood churches. His vision is to see each Family Church campus on mission to help people in their community discover and pursue God’s design. The Family Church Network has a vision to plant one-hundred churches in South Florida.

Greg Laurie (*Tell Someone*)

Greg Laurie is the senior pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside and Irvine California. In 1990, Laurie began holding large-scale public evangelistic events called Harvest Crusades. Since that time, more than 5,242,000 people have attended Harvest Crusades events around the United States and in Australia and New Zealand. More importantly, more than 439,900 people have registered professions of faith through these outreaches. Greg and his wife, Cathe, have two sons, Christopher and Jonathan, and five grandchildren.

Gregory Koukl (*Tactics*)

Gregory Koukl holds MA degrees in both apologetics and philosophy. He’s spoken on over eighty university campuses and hosted his own radio talk show for thirty years defending “Christianity worth thinking about.” Greg is founder and president of Stand to Reason (str.org) and serves as adjunct professor of Christian apologetics at Biola University.