

# CBC College +

*GOSPEL: Kingdom Come*

## Introduction

“I’m an unbeliever. So are you.” -Jeff Vanderstelt.

We all struggle with unbelief on a daily basis, a battle to believe that God is really good and can really be trusted at all times.

This guide is meant to begin a journey of rediscovering our belief in the gospel as Jesus intended it to be understood. The first goal of this guide is to help us become fluent in the gospel - to help us move from unbelief to belief in any and every area of our lives where it is difficult to believe God’s promises. The second goal which is simply an overflow of the first is to help us speak the truths of Jesus into the everyday moments of life as we become a more gospel-fluent people.

This is meant to be an interactive guide to go through not simply as an individual, but as a family. Just as a family operates, what we put into it, we are going to get out of it; so get ready to lean it and let Jesus remind us of the gospel, remind us how he wants to transform not just our spirituality, but every aspect of our lives.

*\*Much of the material that is to follow is taken from Jeff Vanderstelt’s books, “Gospel Fluency & Gospel Fluency Handbook.” For more information you can visit [saturatetheworld.com](http://saturatetheworld.com) and check out the books.*

### **How to use this guide**

Every week, this guide will comprise of three readings and reflections which are meant to immerse us into the culture of the gospel that we might become fluent.

### **Personal Reflections before Diving in:**

1. How would you briefly define the gospel?
2. How would describe being “fluent” in something? In what areas in your life -

whether a language, skill, process, etc. - would you describe yourself being fluent?  
How did you become fluent in those areas?

3. Is your experience more that the gospel applies to all of life, or just certain aspects/portions? Whatever your answer, how do you think that belief has come about?
  
4. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-11
  - a. What are the elements of “the gospel” Paul lists here?
  
  - b. Why does he say the gospel is of first importance?
  
  - c. From this text or otherwise, what do you know of Paul’s life and belief - our unbelief - that would cause him to write that he is “the least of these...unworthy to be called an apostle”?
  
  - d. How did the good news of the gospel change Paul’s unbelief into belief?
  
  - e. In what ways does Paul’s example give you hope for your own areas of unbelief? (Belief is the goal of Paul’s final words above!)
  
5. Slowly read back through the text of 1 Corinthians: as you do, make it your prayer that God would help you remember - and believe and rest in- the truth. Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

## Gospel Fluency

## Week 1

This first week lays the foundation for the rest of our journey together as a family. While the readings & reflections contain some theological elements, we encourage you to jump in and be honest and personal since the subjective and experimental elements are equally important parts of this week's groundwork.

### Everyone is an Unbeliever

#### Week 1, Reading 1

Consider the following quote that was mentioned at the beginning of the introduction: "I'm an unbeliever. So are you."

You are probably thinking to yourself why would we create this guide and begin this journey if we do not believe? Most people believe that an individual falls into one of two categories: you are either a believer or unbeliever; you either believe in Jesus Christ and what he has done for us or you don't. Now after countless years in ministry, it has become obvious to us that every one of us, pastors included, are unbelievers in some areas of our lives.

Don't misunderstand me. I do believe there are some who are a part of God's family, and those that are not. There are those who have put all their chips in, given their lives to Jesus and now have new life. They have become new creations and have been given fresh starts because of their faith in Jesus Christ and what he has done for them. And I believe that there are others who are still dead in their sins and not yet truly alive in Christ.

When I say we are all unbelievers, I mean we still have places in our lives where we don't believe God. There are spaces where we don't trust his word and don't believe that what he accomplished in Jesus Christ is enough to deal with our past or what we are facing in this moment or the next. We don't believe. We are unbelievers...

It's very possible that even though you are familiar with Jesus you have yet to believe in Jesus for yourself, for your life. Or maybe you have come to faith in Jesus, but it hasn't really changed what you do daily or how you engage in the everyday stuff of life.

The apostle Paul said to the believers in Jesus in Galatia, "The life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God [Jesus], who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

They had started something else to make them right instead of Jesus. Paul called them back to an awareness that the good news about Jesus — the gospel — is for all of life; **Everything**. A life of true living is a life full of faith in Jesus, a life of believing in Jesus in the everyday stuff of life. God is intent on making everything about Jesus, because it is *through him* that all things came into existence and it is *in him* that they are sustained.

Every sin and issue that stands in the way of our faithfulness to God's design and Jesus' commands is ultimately a gospel issue. Since all sin is the outcome of unbelief in God, we can learn to apply the truth about him and the good news to every area of our lives. To do this, we will have to learn to trust God and others with our sin and the messiness of our lives.

God also wants to rescue you from unbelief and sanctify you to become like Jesus. *Sanctification* is just a big word for becoming more and more like Jesus through faith in Jesus. You *become* like what you *believe* in. So becoming like Jesus requires believing in Jesus more and more in every part of your life. Sanctification is moving from unbelief in Jesus to belief in Jesus in the everyday stuff of life. You're not there yet, are you? Neither am I. We're still unbeliever who need Jesus more — in more ways and more places.

We all face daily struggles and battles, sometimes from enemies we can't even see. We hear lies and accusations. We struggle with temptations and we are often deceived. We hear words that were spoken over us when we were younger, echoing in our hearts in ways that don't breed life to our souls. We look at our present situations and wish they were better. And many of us face uncertain futures that, without God, cause us to lead lives of anxiety, worry, and fear.

We all need help because we can come up with plenty of reasons not to believe, not to hope, not to trust God's word and work for us. We need the gospel and we need to become a gospel-fluent people. We need to know how to believe and speak the truths of the gospel—the good news of God—in and into the everyday stuff of life. In other words, we need to know how to address the struggles of life and the everyday activities we engage in with what is true of Jesus: the truths of what he accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection, and, as a result, what is true of us as we put our faith in him. The gospel has the power to affect everything in our lives.

**Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today's theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal application they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.**

- Matthew 28:18–20
- John 1:12-13
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- Ephesians 1:22-23, 2:1-10
- Colossians 1:15-20

## Everyone is an Unbeliever

### Week 1, Reflection 1

To apply the concepts of this week’s reading 1, into your everyday life, pray that God will open your eyes and guide you, then answer the following questions.

1. Considering the content you read, how would you define unbelief in God?
  
2. What does unbelief in God produce, in the way we think, talk, and act in our everyday lives?

The first reflection builds a foundation for the rest of the guide, by asking you to be 100% honest with God and with yourself: what struggles and battles; what lies and accusations; what temptations or words from the past, pull you away from trusting in God and believing his gospel? In other words, what are some areas of personal unbelief?.

Here are some examples to help get the ball rolling:

- “I have conversation with my wife, and when she points out something I’ve got to get better at, I hear the word *failure* in my head.”
  - “I try to lead a good conversation about the Bible at the dinner table with my children, but instead of eager beavers on the edges of their seats, I get slouched bodies and rolling eyes. *Bad father.*”
  - “I teach on being a good neighbor, one who knows the stories of the people who live on your street, but since I moved into my current neighborhood a few months ago, I know only the story of failed attempts to meet people. *Hypocrite.*”
3. What are 3-5 situations in your own life and the specific lies/accusations/unbelief

revealed by each?

As you look back at those lies and areas of unbelief, remember—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “God wants to rescue you from unbelief and sanctify you to become like Jesus. *Sanctification* is just a big word for becoming more and more like Jesus through faith in Jesus. You become like what you believe in. So becoming like Jesus requires believing in Jesus more and more in every part of your life. Sanctification is moving from unbelief in Jesus to belief in Jesus in the everyday stuff of life.”

4. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read?
  
5. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## Give them Jesus

### Week 1, Reading 2

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the church in Ephesus, states: “and he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Eph. 4:11-15).

It is God’s intent that every person who comes into a relationship with him through Jesus

Christ eventually grows up into maturity. And maturity looks like Jesus. He is the perfect human, providing an example of what we are meant to be. A mature Christian is one who resembles Jesus Christ in thought, attitude, emotion, and behavior. And one of the most significant ways by which we grow up into maturity is by speaking the truth in love to each other.

Many wrongly believe that speaking the truth in love is actually just speaking hard words to each other with loving hearts: “You have bad breath, but since I love you, I’ve got to speak the truth to you.” “We want you in our group, but you aren’t very kind to others, and as a result, people don’t want to be around you! I’m just speaking the truth in love!” But that is not what Paul is talking about here. Sure, we do need to speak truthfully to one another, and do it with love for each other, but Paul has something more in mind.

We need to read just a few verses further to discover what Paul means. He clarifies the truth that we are to speak to each other in verse 21. He states, “The truth is in Jesus.” “Speaking the truth in love,” for Paul, is shorthand for “speaking what is true of Jesus” to one another—that is, speaking the gospel to one another. Paul knows that if people are going to grow up into Christ in every way, they need to hear the truths of Jesus (the gospel) and learn to speak them into everything.

Too often, when giving people answers to their questions or solutions to their problems, we give them something other than Jesus. If they are struggling with their finances we give them the best budgeting plans we know of. If they are working through relational discord, we teach them communication techniques. If they are struggling with doubt, we challenge them to just believe, promising that all will get better if they do. But we fail if we don’t give them Jesus. Nobody needs another self help method, they need Jesus.

In some cases, we encourage them to read their Bibles or pray, which, of course, are wonderful things. However, if we don’t teach them to meet and know Jesus through their Bible reading and prayer, we are dangerously close to leading them away from Jesus through very good things. This is the heart of idolatry—taking a good thing and making it a “god thing.” We take something that God gave us to direct us to him and love it or depend on it more than him. As a result, we fail to come to him through it.

I have met too many people who love their Bibles yet have no genuine relationship with Jesus Christ. They don’t really know him. They don’t really love him. They don’t worship him. Instead, they worship their Bibles. They are not growing up into maturity because they are not growing up in Christ.

...If we fail to give each other Jesus, we lead each other away from Jesus. We might grow

in Bible knowledge, but not in love for Jesus. We might become the most religious pray-ers of all and yet be talking to the wrong god. We could have our finances in order while our hearts are completely out of order, because we are doing it all for the wrong reasons. We might be great at communication and conflict resolution, but if we are not reconciled with God through Jesus Christ, then our relationships will be shallow and temporary in nature.

Think of it this way—if we are to help one another grow up into Christ in every way, we need to learn how to speak the truths of Christ into everything—every aspect of life, every situation we face, and every issue we address. This is gospel fluency.

**Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today’s theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal application they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.**

- John 3:16, 5:39-40
- Romans 5:8, 8:32
- Ephesians 4:1-32

## Give them Jesus

### Week 1, Reflection 2

1. Considering the content you read, how would you define speaking the truth in love (Eph. 4:15)?
  
2. Reading Ephesians 4:11-15 and reflect on the passage and the contrast Paul builds between maturity and childhood, as you answer the following questions
  - The goal of v. 11’s various gifts and perspectives is to help other followers of Jesus grow into maturity. What specific phrases does Paul use to describe the maturity for which the body (God’s Church) is “equipped” and “built up”?
  
  - Consider each of the “childish” ways Paul lists that people try and grow in Christ: why does each one fail us?



- “Tossed to and fro by the waves”: what are some of life’s waves that can capsize your belief and hinder your growth in Christ?
  - “Every wind of doctrine”: how does mere mental ascent to biblical truths—without stirred affection for the God those truths reveal—hinder your growth in Christ?
  - “Human cunning”: how can trust in yourself, your abilities and your objective view of life, faith, and God, all let you down as you pursue growth in Christ?
  - “Craftiness in deceitful schemes”: what are some ways that you’ve been taught or encouraged to grow in Christ—maybe even by well meaning Christian leaders—other than a deepening belief in the gospel of Jesus? How do those ways fail you?
- Considering Paul’s comment that we receive “truth in love, we are to grow up *in every way*...in Christ”, what are some areas of life and faith that God has gifted you with belief and maturity? What are some areas of life and faith that you feel weaker and prone to disbelief? It’s in these areas that God’s “truth in love” might be most helpful at this point in your personal growth in Christ.
3. Look back at the areas of unbelief you identified in this week’s reflection: In what ways does God provide an answer to each area, specifically through the person and work of Jesus? It’s okay if you don’t fully know; you may ask a friend, or you may spend some time in the Bible or in prayer, asking God to show you truths of the gospel. For areas of gospel truth you do know, write a few words like those mentioned above, “speaking” truth to the specific areas of unbelief you wrote

down:

As you reflect back at the truths you applied to those areas of unbelief, remember—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “Jesus is the true and better human, and everything in life is better if Jesus is brought into it. He has done everything better. He can make everything better. And the truths about who he is and what he has done, when applied to our lives, are always a better answer than anything else. There is good news and great help for absolutely everything in life in the person and work of Jesus Christ.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

4. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you from what you have read?
  
5. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## Fluency

### Week 1, Reading 3

I have found that most Christians don't really know why we need the gospel, what it is, why it is good news, and what it actually does—at least not enough to apply it to the everyday stuff of life. It's not that they can't know it well, but most aren't being equipped to become gospel-fluent people. Most believers have become gospel-snippet people, who speak gospel catch-phrases. They're speaking gospelish, but not the actual gospel in a way people can hear and believe. They say: “Well, we preached the gospel, but they rejected it. People just have hard hearts and deaf ears”...

I'm not sure that we should just write ourselves an excuse when we preach what we believe is “good news.” It may not be good news to our hearers if we don't take time to listen, understand, and then speak the gospel to the real brokenness and longing of their souls in a way that they can hear—a way that sounds like the good news of Jesus for them and their present situations. We must do better at this.

You gain fluency in a language when you move from merely translating an unfamiliar language into a familiar one to interpreting all of life through that new language. It happens when you can think, feel, and speak in a language. In a sense, the new language becomes the filter through which you perceive the world and help others perceive your world and theirs.

I spent the second semester of my junior year in college in Spain to fulfill my language requirement. Prior to leaving home, I took a crash course in Spanish, learning some basic grammar and common phrases. [Once in Spain] I lived in a home where my host mom knew no English. Some of my professors spoke only Spanish, and the majority of the people in the town where I lived were unable to speak English at all. For the first month, I went to bed exhausted every night. Communication was tiresome. I had to listen very closely to people as they spoke Spanish (way too fast at first), process every word and phrase, translate to English, think about what I wanted to say in English, translate that back to Spanish in my head, and then speak it while trying to remember how to maneuver my mouth to say every word correctly. It was exhausting! So, during this time, I learned to listen a lot and talk very little, because talking was just too tiring.

After a few months of being immersed in constant Spanish for every moment—hearing it everywhere I went, reading it on every sign, listening to radio and television broadcasts in Spanish, and speaking it most of the day—I woke up one morning realizing I had been dreaming in Spanish. Something had changed. It became more normative for me to see something and describe it in my head with Spanish words and ideas... Gradually, I stopped translating every word and phrase because I started thinking in Spanish. I was becoming more fluent.

I believe this is what God wants his people to experience with the gospel. He wants them to be able to translate the world around them and the world inside of them through the lens of the gospel—the truths of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus. Gospel-fluent people think, feel, and perceive everything in light of what has been accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

They see the world differently. They think differently. They feel differently. Most significantly, those who are growing in gospel fluency are experiencing ongoing transformation themselves. They are experiencing ongoing change as the truths of the gospel are brought to bear on their thoughts, beliefs, emotions, and actions, transforming them into greater Christlikeness every day. They are growing up into Christ in every way because they are learning to hear and speak the truths of Jesus Christ into everything.

You do need to receive some formal training in the basics of the gospel, just as learning a language requires knowing the basics of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure... However, formal training alone does not make one fluent. You become fluent through immersion in a gospel speaking community and through ongoing practice. You have to know it, regularly hear it, and practice proclaiming it.

Language fluency requires immersion into a community of people who speak the language consistently. Gospel fluency requires immersion into a community of people so saturated with the gospel of Jesus Christ that they just can't stop speaking the truths of Jesus wherever they go and in whatever situations they find themselves in.

**Thoughtfully read the following passages of Scripture related to today's theme. Take a few moments to write down words and phrases that particularly struck you, as well as any thoughts or personal application they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.**

- 1 Cor. 1:18, 2:14
- Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15
- Colossians 1:15-20

## Fluency

### Week 1, Reflection 3

1. Considering all the content you've read this week, how would you define "gospel fluency"?
  
2. Considering reading 3, what are some examples of "gospelish" you've experienced in your own life? In what ways are they different than, and insufficient for, true "gospel immersion"?

"God wants his people to be able to translate the world around them and the world inside of them through the lens of the gospel—the truths of God revealed in the person

and work of Jesus. Gospel-fluent people think, feel, and perceive everything in light of what has been accomplished in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

“They see the world differently. They think differently. They feel differently.

“When they are listening to people, they are thinking: ‘How is this in line with the truths of the gospel? What about Jesus and his work might be good news to this person today? How can I bring the hope of the gospel to bear on this life or situation so this person might experience salvation and Jesus will be glorified?’”

3. The Apostle Paul encourages followers of Jesus to “walk in wisdom toward outsiders [those who aren’t followers of Jesus], making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Col. 4:5-6). Consider this poignant charge, on a few different levels:
  - Paul first encourages a life in which followers of Jesus live among those who aren’t followers of Jesus. List the names of people in your life who don’t follow Jesus, who you’d consider close friends.
  
  - What are some of the qualities of actual salt, that Paul applies to our speaking with those who don’t follow Jesus? (It may be helpful to answer in light of the posture Peter calls Christians to, in 1 Peter 3:15-16)
  
  - Answering each person connotes personalization. It means there is no single right way to speak the truth of the gospel, whether to yourself, to other Christians, or to those who don’t follow Jesus - what does *good news* sound like to that individual?
    - Among the countless beautiful truths seen in the gospel, which was/were most impactful in the way that God made the gospel real to you in your salvation?
  
    - List some of the truths of the gospel you think might be most impacting a) to a few close friends in your Christian community, and

b) to the friends you listed above, who don't yet believe in Jesus

As you look back at your first steps into seeing the world through the lens of the gospel, remember—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “You gain fluency in a language when you move from merely translating an unfamiliar language into a familiar one to interpreting all of life through that new language. It happens when you can think, feel, and speak in a language. In a sense, the new language becomes the filter through which you perceive the world and help others perceive your world and theirs.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect on this truth.

4. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read?
  
5. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## LOOK BACK

After completing your readings and reflections, take a few moments to look back on what has happened: what have you learned? How has God shaped and impacted you? What do you especially want to remember, do, and/or share with your community this week?

