

CBC College +

GOSPEL: Kingdom Come

The Gospel

Week 2

“If last week’s content laid the foundation for the rest of the book, this week is your 101 class: like learning any new language, you’ll work through the A, B, C’s; you’ll build out a few charts; and you’ll practice, practice, practice. In these ways, this week may be the most technical of the entire Handbook, but purposefully so: if you don’t get the basic “grammar” down, you’ll never learn the language.

The True Story

Week 2, Reading 1

All of us are living our lives under a dominant story. We perceive the world and human interactions through the stories we know and believe. For most of us, that is our story of origin, our family story. This is a much smaller story inside the larger one, and often it leads us to wrong perceptions of God, ourselves, others, and the world around us. In some cases, we believe outright lies.

But there is a true story. It’s the story of God found in the Bible. It’s the story that redeems, heals, and completes our personal stories—the smaller stories within the true story. We will talk about the makeup of the gospel (like vocabulary) and how it has meaning for our lives (like grammar), but we first need to get the overarching story, because it is the true story that informs the meaning of the gospel.

Creation

“In the beginning God . . .” (Gen. 1: 1). That is how the story begins—with God. God eternally existed in community—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—one God in three persons, existing in perfect unity. Nothing else existed. In the beginning, God created by his word. He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing.

He spoke and it all came into being. God's word brought about God's work. The questions "Who am I?" and "Why am I here?" are not meant to be answered outside of what God says and what God does. Before we go any further, ask yourself: "Who or what do I look to—trust in, depend upon—for my worth?"

God called the man to trust him and obey him: "Believe who I say you are. Trust in what I've done to make you who you are. And as a result, do what I command"... [Genesis 1 and 2 displays a picture of perfect Creation]: a mandate to love, work, and rule in such a way as to show all of creation what God is like. A good and beautiful garden. A man and woman living in harmonious and pure love, naked and unashamed, daily enjoying each other, working and ruling over creation, and interacting with God in their midst. It was all very good! But that was about to change.

Fall

They didn't believe. They didn't trust God's word and work. The problem was unbelief. The action was sin. The result was death. The Serpent, the Devil, convinced the woman that God's word was a lie and his work was not good: "God knows you aren't as good as you could be. He knows that if you just took matters into your own hands, you would be much better. You can be like God if you just eat the fruit of the tree he told you not to eat of." She believed the lie and ate the fruit, then she gave some to her husband, and he ate too.

God had told them they were very good—they were made in his image, after his likeness. But they didn't believe him. Instead, they believed the Devil, the master of lies. God had told them they would surely die if they ate the fruit. But they didn't believe him. Instead, they believed the lie of the Devil, that they wouldn't die. As a result of their rebellion, sin entered the world and brought about death and destruction. The wages of sin is death—spiritual, relational, and physical. Sinful rebellion produces brokenness, suffering, and death. This is because rebellion against God is rebellion against the giver of life. And this rebellion began and continues to go on because of unbelief in the truthfulness of God's word and the sufficiency of his work.

Redemption

Thankfully, the story doesn't end with destruction and death. Even as the man and woman were being informed about the curse of sin and its effects on their lives and relationships, God also promised to put an end to the Serpent and the rebellion he had started. Through Eve's offspring, Satan would eventually be crushed (Gen. 3: 15). God would have the final word. He would save us from our sin. He would rescue us from

Satan. He would put death to death. His word is true and his work is sufficient.

[Adam and Eve had failed. As the Bible unfolds, generation after generation of God's people fail too.] God's plan, however, did not. He would still fulfill his word. Through the offspring, the world would be blessed. Another son—the true Son of God—would accomplish it. Jesus is that Son. Jesus came as the true and better Adam, the true and better Abraham, and the true and better Israel. God's full and final redemption to rescue us from slavery to sin and Satan came in the form of a baby. He is God's redemption plan. He always was—even before the creation of the world.

New Creation

Jesus was raised with a glorified body. He took on our sin at the cross, where he paid for it with his blood and destroyed its power. He overcame death and was given new life. And in his glorified, sinless body that can no longer be taken down by Satan, sin, or death, he has been given all authority in heaven and earth. He is the new and better Adam over a new and better creation. The church is Jesus' bride. We are God's new-creation people. All those who believe in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection go from having Adam as their authority and life source to having Jesus as the new Adam. Adam sinned, and everyone born since then was born into sin as a result. Everyone except Jesus.

Everything has changed. Our identity and our purpose, as well as our understanding of the truths of God, have completely changed. We also have a future hope. The new creation is not just personal but cosmic. God will bring about a new heaven and new earth, which we will get to live in and enjoy forever. The true image of God, Jesus, will light up that world with his glory, and we also, with renewed resurrection bodies, will reflect God as redeemed, recreated, and resurrected image bearers, transformed by the glory of Christ. This is our story.

This is the story. This is the true and better story that can redeem and make new every other story. You want to change a culture? Give them a new story. Language will follow.

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 applications they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.

- Genesis 1–3

The True Story

Week 2, Reflection 1

To apply the concepts of this week's "Reading #1" in your everyday life, pray that God will open your eyes and guide you, then answer the following questions and complete the exercises.

1. Considering the content you read, what are the four key movements in the Story of God?

2. Think through various realities in life: from the Scriptures to personal experience, from the arts to nature, from history to your relationships, what are some ways you see, hear, and experience this story being re-told, over and over again, in everyday life?

3. Zoom in a bit: a) In the first column below, write some of the ways that each movement of the Story of God can display and remind us of God's hope and design for his people. b) In the second column, write some of the ways that each movement can point us specifically toward Jesus:

	Question	Objective/Biblical Answer	Area of Disbelief	Possible "False"
Creation				
Fall				
Redemption				

New Creation				
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4. The image of a father displays the various ways that our own stories define or redefine our worldviews. “All of us are living our lives under a dominant story. We perceive the world and human interactions through the stories we know and believe. For most of us, that is our story of origin, our family story. This is a much smaller story inside the larger one, and often it leads us to wrong perceptions of God, ourselves, others, and the world around us. In some cases, we believe outright lies.”

If we don’t view life through the lens of God’s Story, we view it in light of a lesser story. In the first column below, we’ve listed the dominant questions asked by each movement of God’s story. In the second column, we’ve listed some of the objective, biblical answers to those questions which come when God’s Story is our dominant story. In the third column, re-write a few of the areas of disbelief you struggle with, that you wrote down in Week 1*. In the final column, consider this week’s Reading #1 and write down one or two “other answers” those areas of disbelief may lead you to answer these questions, and a one-or two-word summary of the dominant story you may be believing more than God’s Story.

**NOTE: If you didn’t pick areas in Week 1, or if it would help you to start with less personal areas of disbelief, choose some common areas of disbelief in peoples’ everyday lives. Here are a few starting points: “We are Jesus’s people, who speak the truths of Jesus into the everyday stuff of life. Speak the truths of Jesus to rightly order our budgets. Speak the truths of Jesus for finding a spouse. Speak the truths of Jesus for how we respond to our employers or employees. Speak the truths of Jesus for how we parent our children. Speak the truths of Jesus into everything.”*

	Question	Objective/Biblical Answer	Area of Disbelief
Creation	Where is my Identity? What do I look to, trust in, depend on, for my worth?	Child of God, created in his image; my identity is in Christ alone; I am reliant/dependent on him	

Fall	What is Wrong? What is the real problem/ issue?	Sin Rejection of God Brokenness that's part of living in a fallen world	
Redemption	What can fix this? What will make this right?	Jesus	
New Creation	Where is hope? In what is my confidence found?	God's promises shown throughout history Eternity/Jesus' return	

We live as the redeemed people of God, becoming more and more like Jesus every day so that more and more people come to him through our visible and verbal testimony. This is our story. This is the story. This is the true and better story that can redeem and make new every other story.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect on this truth."

6. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read? Where have you walked in unbelief today?

7. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week? What can you do to begin walking in belief?

Power for Salvation

Week 2, Reading 2

When people say they are saved, what do they mean? Think of this chapter as a vocabulary lesson. To become fluent in any language, you must develop your vocabulary. So let's delve into the aspects of the gospel that are expressed in the person and work of Jesus more fully.

Belief in the gospel is not a one-time decision or a conviction that we need salvation only for our past lives and future afterlives. Belief in the gospel is an ongoing expression of our ongoing need for Jesus. The gospel is the power of God for salvation to all who believe (Rom. 1: 16). What do we believe? What are we putting our faith in?

Jesus' life represents both the righteousness of God in human form and the perfect fulfillment of the standard of righteousness on behalf of humanity. If you want to know what the righteousness of God looks like, you look at Jesus' life, and if you want to be declared righteous by God, you need to have faith in how Jesus lived on your behalf, not just in how he died. We all needed a new human to give birth to a new humanity—a perfect man who is also the true image of God, fully displaying what God is like by living a fully submitted and obedient life before God. Jesus is that man. “He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1: 15). We need more than the humble life of Christ. We also need the victorious rule and ministry of Christ to overcome Satan's schemes, bring healing and restoration to the brokenness that sin produces, and provide reconciliation between God and man.

Jesus was betrayed, arrested, wrongly accused, and crucified. The perfect Son of God, the righteousness of God, the one who knew no sin, became sin at the cross so that we might become the righteousness of God in him. We needed a perfect substitute—one without sin, fully pleasing to God—who would die in our place. The Bible says, “For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6: 23). Our sin, our rebellion, every way in which we fall short of the glory of God, were put on Jesus at the cross. His perfect life was exchanged for our life of sin. Jesus died for our sins. He took our sins on himself—on his real physical, human body—and then died for them. Our sins were buried with Jesus. They were not just removed and put in another place. They were destroyed by his death. If your faith is in Jesus, your sins, past, present, and future, were terminated through Jesus' death.

[Jesus] was raised on the third day and appeared to more than five hundred people. He was raised with a glorified body, one without sin. This was a body for the new creation. The gospel doesn't just bring about forgiveness of sins and save us from hell. The gospel of Jesus Christ empowers us to live a whole new life today by the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead. After Jesus rose from the dead, he ascended to the right hand of God the Father, where he is now making intercession on our behalf. He is continually praying for us, willing to empower us by his Spirit in us, and speaking a better word over us than Satan, sin, or our past experiences speak.

After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, God sent his Spirit to wake us up from spiritual death, convict us of our sin, make the truths of the gospel clear to our hearts, grant us repentance and faith, and bring about new life as a result. By his Spirit, we are born again from the dead, spiritually speaking. We become new creations in Christ. Each of us has a new nature, a new identity, and a new purpose. And the Spirit in those who believe is a sign of all of this. The Spirit is also the means by which we have the power to live entirely new and different lives. He is the sign that we are forgiven and cleansed, changed and made new, chosen and adopted by God—he wants us, he chose us, he changed us, he empowers us, and he loves us.

All of this is a gift. It is all by grace. “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast (Eph. 2: 8–9).

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.

- Mark 1:9-11
- Romans 1:16-17, 3:21-26, 8:9-17
- 1 Corinthians 15:1-6, 15:20-23
- 2 Corinthians 5:16-21
- Philippians 2:6-8

Power for Salvation

Week 1, Reflection 2

1. Considering the content you read, define “salvation”, and explain what it is Christians believe we're saved from?

2. What stands out to you, or particularly strikes you, as you consider the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

3. In your own words, explain why each following element matters in general, and why each is vital to your understanding of the concept of salvation?

- Jesus' life (think through various biblical truths regarding Jesus' life on earth, and especially consider Jesus' obedience, sinlessness, baptism, humility Spirit-ledness, and kingship)

- Jesus' death (think through various biblical truths regarding Jesus' death, and especially consider the substitution, atonement, forgiveness, and propitiation offered through his death)

- Jesus' resurrection (think through various biblical truths regarding Jesus' resurrection, and especially his bodily resurrection, his ascension, and his sending of God the Spirit)

4. "Jesus died in our place to save us from the wrath of God and the penalty of sin, which is spiritual, relational, and physical death. He saves us from spiritual death and makes us alive in Christ. He atones for our guilt and removes our shame. He reconciles us to God so that we can also be reconciled to one another. And ultimately, though our bodies will fail and die, he will give us glorified resurrection bodies that will live forever."

Look back at the "possible false answers/ stories" you wrote down in Reflection #1. In essence, if we're finding our answers in any place but God—and the objective, biblical answers He gives to our questions—we're pursuing a false savior. Take some time and compare and contrast the possible false answers you wrote earlier this week to the implications of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection you wrote in today's Reflection. Where does each story find its power? What does each story promise? Historically, how has each proven to fulfill promises or let you down? Etc.

Potential Power in Other Stories	Actual Power in Jesus (Life/Death/Resurrection)

As you consider the power of Jesus’ life death, and resurrection, and the power found therein for salvation and growth, end with—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: **“The gospel is the good news of the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, who is King. The gospel saves and brings God’s rule into our lives (his kingdom) in order to bring the good news of his power into the world. The gospel changes us from the inside out and spreads through our lives and lips to the world by his Spirit. This is the gospel that is the power of God for salvation to all who believe.”** Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect on this truth.

6. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read? Where have you walked in Unbelief?

7. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week? What can you do to begin walking in belief?

What's Faith Got to Do with It?

Week 2, Reading 3

We all live by faith in someone or something. And everything that we are and do is a result of what we believe. Our behaviors are the tangible expression of our beliefs. It is by grace you have been saved through faith... A gospel-fluent community that is growing in faith in the gospel is evidenced by people confessing their sins to one another regularly... A gospel-fluent community that is growing in confidence that Jesus fully atoned for our sins extends grace and forgiveness to one another. It is by grace—the gift of God in Jesus—that you are saved from the consequences and control of sin. And it is through faith—belief in Jesus' work on our behalf. Every sinful attitude, motive, thought, or action is a result of unbelief in God's word and work.

Paul teaches in Romans 1: 18–32 that we all, like Adam and Eve and all their descendants, have exchanged the truth of God for a lie and have worshiped the creation instead of the Creator. We put our faith in the things God has made or the things we can do instead of God. God gives us over to our wrong belief and lets it produce in us what all idolatry produces—sin, brokenness, perversion, and pain. He does this so that we will see the wretchedness of sin and turn back to him as the one who forgives our sin, cleanses us from unrighteousness, and heals our brokenness.

The gospel is not just the power of God to save, but also the revelation of God that we need to be saved and that the only one who can save us is Jesus. The Spirit's job is to reveal to us our unbelief, grant us repentance, and lead us to know and believe in Jesus. That is the work we do. We turn from unbelief to belief in Jesus. Unbelief can take several forms: 1) we don't believe because we lack the truth about God; 2) we believe lies about God; 3) we fail to put our faith in what we know to be true of God; 4) we've been wounded and need healing.

First, many don't know who God really is. They don't know what he is like or what he has done for us. A person can't believe in God if he or she is unaware of the truths about God. There is no salvation—no transformation—apart from knowing God. One of the reasons Jesus came—and one of the reasons why the gospel is such good news—was to reveal the truth about God and to bring us into relationship with him. In the gospel, we have the revelation of what God is like and what God has done. God is revealed through Jesus' life, Jesus' ministry, Jesus' death, and Jesus' resurrection. What is your God like? What do you believe about God? Growing in gospel fluency requires growing in our knowledge of God

as he is revealed in and through Jesus Christ.

Second, in some cases, our unbelief involves believing lies about God. Satan deceived Adam and Eve into believing lies about God, and we regularly buy into his lies as well. We might know certain truths about God, but fail to believe those truths because we are deceived into believing lies. Jesus came to dispel the lies. Regularly, we hear Jesus say, “Truly, truly I say . . .” He is replacing the lies we believe with the truths of God. Not only does he proclaim those truths verbally, but he is also the ultimate example and display of those truths. Growing in gospel fluency requires regularly replacing lies we have believed with the truths of God revealed in Jesus. One of the reasons God sent his Spirit to us is to reveal the lies and help us believe the truth about God. I regularly invite God’s Spirit to do this in my life. You can too.

Third, we often say we believe something to be true about God, but our lives show that we don’t actually believe it. We know a truth we should believe, but in actuality, we don’t. For instance, we profess belief in a God who forgives our sins through faith in the death of Jesus, but we continue to believe we need to behave better in order to make up for what we’ve done. When we do this, we are living in unbelief in the gospel. The gospel is the power of God to save us not only because our sin of unbelief is forgiven through Jesus’ death on the cross, but also because in the gospel we come to know and believe the liberating truths of God revealed in Jesus Christ. And through believing those truths, the lies we’ve believed are dispelled and the truth sets us free to really live.

Finally, for some of us, disbelief isn’t primarily an issue of knowing, believing, or repenting. Some of us struggle with the things of God because we’ve been wounded, and healing is needed as we consider what faith looks like. In the gospel, God offers people forgiveness, eternity, adoption, and many other blessings. But the gospel also promises that “by his wounds you have been healed” (1 Peter 2: 24). Without faith, we can often operate out of our flesh. Without healing, we can easily operate out of our brokenness. That brokenness might drive us toward sinful thoughts and behaviors. If this theme resonates with you, know that whatever happened—whatever burden you’re carrying and whatever pain you’ve experienced—Jesus is sufficient. As one who was despised and rejected, mocked, beaten, and killed, there is no wound so deep that Jesus cannot relate; there is no pain so large that God cannot heal; there is no heart so broken that the Spirit cannot help and comfort. God is good, and he extends healing to you.

So what do you believe? The gospel won’t fluently come out of you to others unless it’s changed you first.

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 applications they prompted. Make these words a prayer to God.

- John 6: 28-29
- John 14: 1-14
- Romans 1: 18-32
- Romans 3: 22-25
- Col. 1: 15-19
- Eph. 2: 1-10
- James 2: 17

What's Faith Got to Do With It?

Week 2, Reflection 3

1. Considering the content you read, define "faith," specifically as it relates to God.

2. "Tim Chester, in his book *You Can Change*, asserts that underlying every sinful behavior and negative emotion is a failure to believe a truth about God. He then suggests four liberating truths as a good diagnostic tool for addressing sin in our lives:
 - God is great—so we do not have to be in control.
 - God is glorious—so we do not have to fear others.
 - God is good—so we do not have to look elsewhere.
 - God is gracious—so we do not have to prove ourselves.

"Let's take the first as an example: If we believe God is great—that he is in control—then we can trust him and be free from the need to take control or manipulate situations. On the other hand, if we feel anxious or have an urge to take control, it is because we have believed the lie that God is not great—that he's not really powerful and in control—so we have to be. In the gospel, we see just how great God is as he overcomes every enemy we face, including death.

“Jesus came to dispel the lies. Regularly, we hear Jesus say, ‘Truly, truly I say . . .’ He is replacing the lies we believe with the truths of God. Not only does he proclaim those truths verbally, but he is also the ultimate example and display of those truths.”

Looking back at the areas of unbelief you’ve been wrestling with since Week 1, and the various readings and reflections, is there one “theme” that seems to be central to your difficulty? If you can, identify which of the four truths is, in general, the most difficult for you to regularly believe about God. (It’s OK if there’s more than one)

3. “Unbelief can take several forms: 1) we don’t believe because we lack the truth about God (we don’t know what God is like or what he has done for us); 2) we believe lies about God (our unbelief involves believing lies about God); or 3) we fail to put our faith in what we know to be true of God (we believe something to be true about God, but our lives show that we don’t actually believe it).”

Look back at the areas of unbelief you’ve been working through over these past couple weeks. For each one, can you identify one of these three forms as the source of your unbelief? Write a few of the areas of unbelief, and put a check in the box (or boxes) you feel might be its source. In preparation for your Group Discussion, use the right column to prayerfully write any questions or thoughts it might be helpful to work through when you meet your community this week.

Area of Unbelief	Source?	Question/Notes To Discuss
	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> Believe Lies <input type="checkbox"/> Life Doesn't Display Belief	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Don't Know <input type="checkbox"/> Believe Lies <input type="checkbox"/> Life Doesn't Display Belief	

	<p>Don't Know</p> <p>Believe Lies</p> <p>Life Doesn't Display Belief</p>	
	<p>Don't Know</p> <p>Believe Lies</p> <p>Life Doesn't Display Belief</p>	

As this week ends, and before our Handbook takes a more practical turn, we pause again to consider the answer to our every unbelief: “grace through faith” in the person and work of Jesus Christ*. That’s the power of the gospel; that’s the climax of God’s true, best story. Read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “The gospel is the power of God to save us not only because our sin of unbelief is forgiven through Jesus’ death on the cross, but also because in the gospel we come to know and believe the liberating truths of God revealed in Jesus Christ. And through believing those truths, the lies we’ve believed are dispelled and the truth sets us free to really live.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

5. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read? Where have you walked in unbelief?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week? What can you do to begin walking in belief?

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?

