

# CBC College +

*GOSPEL: Kingdom Come*

## The Gospel in Me

Part 2

**Week 4**

This week is the second half of “The Gospel in Me.” Last week’s Readings and Reflections might have left you feeling a bit “low,” as they were designed to help you define specific areas of need for the gospel. Like a good doctor, last week’s goal was to examine the symptoms, define the problems, and bring us a diagnosis. This week’s Readings and Reflections are designed to be “the cure for what ails you”: as we continue fighting the war of the mind, Week 4 is a “remedy,” helping apply the sweet truths of the gospel to the lies, accusations, and temptations we each defined last week.

### Fighting for Truth

Week 4, Reading 1

As we saw last week, we are always in the midst of a deep, spiritual battle. Every moment we can be won or lost, as our thoughts are turned toward or against God and truth. Thus, the Bible tells us to 1) take our thoughts captive and examine them, 2) bring them into submission, 3) consider the fruit, and then 4) fight with gospel truths. Last week considered the first of these steps; today we turn toward the other three.

Once you’ve captured the thought, ask the Spirit to help you bring it into submission to Jesus. In other words, examine it enough to see if it lines up with what is true of God and his work in and through Jesus, and what is true of you as a result of your faith in Jesus. This is one of the reasons God sent his Spirit to us—to guide us into all truth, teach us what is true of Jesus, and regularly witness to us about these truths. He also convicts us of any unbelief in Jesus and reveals the lies we have believed (John 14-16).

When I first started to become aware of my need to grow in gospel fluency, this was not a

natural process for me. I had to practice preaching the gospel to myself first. I regularly rehearsed the truths of the gospel at the beginning of my day:

- God is perfect. Jesus lived perfectly for me. He is my righteousness.
- God loves me. Jesus died for my sins. I am loved and forgiven.
- God is powerful and mighty. Jesus rose from the dead. I am more than a conqueror in him.
- God is alive and present and with me. He sent his Spirit to be with me and in me. I am not alone or without the power to overcome.
- God is for me and not against me.

Then, throughout my day, I had to preach the gospel to myself over and over again. I didn't do this alone. I asked the Holy Spirit to teach me, encourage me, remind me of what is true of Jesus, and convict and correct me when I was going the wrong way in my heart and mind.

If you are going to grow in gospel fluency, you need to do the same. Just as in learning a language, you need to capture and examine your thoughts to see if they line up with the gospel, then bring them into submission to Christ by regularly rehearsing the truths of the gospel to yourself over and over again.

One of the ways we fight the war of the mind is by considering the fruit we're experiencing or the fruit we would experience if we engaged a particular thought or suggested action. When I am not experiencing the fruit of the Spirit or my life is not resembling the life of Jesus, then clearly my mind is not set on the Spirit. That means my mind is not in submission to Christ. Whatever is in submission to Jesus Christ begins to look like Jesus and the fruit of the Spirit.

When I am teaching people how to fight with gospel truths, I introduce some cues to help them discover the aspect of the gospel they may need to press into. For instance, if someone is struggling with guilt or shame for what he has done, I encourage him to go to the cross where Jesus died and remember his words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23: 34). We need the reminder that Jesus' death paid for all our sin, past, present, and future. He atoned for our sin, removed our guilt, and covered our shame.

If someone is struggling to overcome sin, I might encourage her to remember and believe

in the resurrection, where Jesus condemned sin's power. He gives us the same power to overcome by the Spirit who raised him from the dead. Some are dealing with feelings of inadequacy in their behavior and lean toward performance-based acceptance. If so, I direct them to remember Jesus' life, perfectly lived in their place, and the Father's words spoken over Jesus (words that are now ours in Jesus): "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3: 17).

Whatever the struggle, the life, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus give life, hope, and power. By faith in Christ, every attribute, characteristic, and blessing that belongs to Jesus is available and accessible by us as we depend on and submit to him. We are co-heirs with Christ, blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms, and he is present and ready to give us himself and anything we need to accomplish his will.

In essence, fighting with gospel truths is trusting in and putting on ourselves all that is true of Jesus, and therefore also true of us in Jesus. If you are going to become gospel fluent, you must be prepared to go to war. Take thoughts captive and examine them closely. Bring them into submission. Consider the fruit. Then fight with gospel truths.

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 14-16
- Romans 12: 1-2
- Galatians 5: 16-22
- Colossians 3: 1-4
- Ephesians 6: 10-20

## Fighting for Truth

### Week 4, 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. In your own words, what does it mean to "consider the fruit [of a particular thought or action]," and to "fight [lies, accusations, temptations, etc.] with gospel truths"?

2. Circling, starring, and/ or writing phrases in Week 3, Reflection #3 is one way to “capture” and “examine” our thoughts, and battle lies, accusation, and temptation: you’re paying attention to something untrue, and are calling it out. Once you have done this, the next step in the battle is “submitting the thought”: “ask[ing] the Spirit to help you bring it into submission to Jesus. In other words, examine it enough to see if it lines up with what is true of God and his work in and through Jesus, and what is true of you as a result of your faith in Jesus.” One at a time, look back at the phrases you starred or wrote in Week 3, Reflection #3. Under each statement, write an area of your life you feel it might need to be applied. In addition to the phrases already written, feel free to write a few other things you know to be true of God, that are particularly impacting as you submit your thoughts to Christ.

- God is perfect. Jesus lived perfectly for me. He is my righteousness.
- God loves me. Jesus died for my sins. I am loved and forgiven.
- God is powerful and mighty. Jesus rose from the dead. I am more than a conqueror in him.
- God is alive and present and with me. He sent his Spirit to be with me and in me. I am not alone or without the power to overcome.
- God is for me and not against me.

3. Without looking at the Bible, write down as many marks that Paul defines as the “work of the flesh” in Galatians 5, then as many marks that Paul defines as the “fruit of the Spirit.” It’s okay if you don’t get them all. (once you’ve written as many as you remember, read Galatians 5: 16-23 and fill in the rest).

Now look back at some of the phrases you starred or wrote in Week 3, Reflection #3, as still being areas of unbelief. Use the space below to write some of the lies, accusations, temptations, divisions, or isolations, and an area of your life you feel each might need to be applied—whether outwardly or even “secretly” (in your own heart and mind).

4. The Apostle Paul explains our weapon in the battle of our mind is the “armor of God” found in Ephesians 6: *Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil...*

*Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit. (Eph 6: 10-11, 14-18)*

These “pieces of armor” are not things that we, mere humans, can pick up and wield by our own power. The truth of this passage is that Jesus alone is the fullness of each piece of the armor of God. On the next page, write the ways that Jesus, through the gospel work, is the fulfillment of each phrase.

In the next column, write some specific ways that some of the armor above can especially help you battle the “work of the flesh” and produce “the fruit of the Spirit” in areas of unbelief.

Finally, write ways that seeing Jesus as the fullness of each piece of armor helps make us “strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might,” as we “stand against the schemes of the devil” and let God fight for us in the war of our minds.

Pause to thank God that we don’t go into war alone: God has created us to rely on his Spirit, and on each other, as we fight to love Jesus and as we battle sin, Satan, and our flesh. Read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “Remember, you don’t have to do this alone. You have the Spirit of God with you to develop you in the gospel. Invite him to help you, to teach you, to bring to your mind all that is true of Jesus.

You should also be in community with others who know and love Jesus, who can help you in the battle.” 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?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

# From Fruit to Root

## Week 4, Reading 2

Part of our job in growing in gospel fluency is paying attention to the overflow of our hearts. What comes out in the form of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors finds its origin inside of us. Too often, we focus our attention on changing the external rather than addressing the internal. But Jesus was very clear that what defiles us proceeds from inside our hearts—our beliefs and our motives. The fruit of our lives comes from the roots of our faith. Just as a thermometer detects a fever, what we see or experience tells us about the gospel health of our hearts. So we need to learn to trace the fruit back to the root.

Over the years, I have learned to ask four key questions in progressive order when forming people in the gospel: 1) Who is God? 2) What has God done (which reveals who God is)? 3) Who am I in light of God's work? and 4) How should I live in light of who I am? I encourage people to apply these questions to their Bible study and to all of their discipleship processes.

When I am seeking to discern unbelief in the gospel, I reverse the order of those questions: 1) What am I doing or experiencing right now? 2) In light of what I am doing or experiencing, what do I believe about myself? 3) What do I believe God is doing or has done? and 4) What do I believe God is like? In other words, I trace the fruit back to the root. If the fruit is not like Jesus, that is an indicator that our faith is not in Jesus. Remember, we're all still unbelievers in many areas of our lives (as we saw in [Week] 1). We do not always believe the truths about God as revealed in the gospel; therefore, we are living in unbelief.

How do we know if the fruit of our lives is like Jesus? Well, it helps to get to know what Jesus is like. This is why we need to continue to become more and more acquainted with him by reading the Scriptures, especially the Gospels, which describe how Jesus lived. The fruit of faith in Jesus is love for God and others. The gospel makes clear that this is not something we do on your own. Through faith in Jesus, each of us is made into a pure and holy dwelling place—a temple—where God's Spirit lives. Jesus foretold that he would send the Spirit to help us know, believe in, and be connected to Jesus, so that we could bear much fruit.

Tim Chester teaches that beneath every sin is a failure to believe a truth about God. I'm convinced the same applies to what we believe about ourselves. Because we believe lies

about God, we also believe lies about ourselves. We believe God is unloving, so we, in turn, believe we are unlovable—disposable, unwanted garbage. We believe God is not our Savior, so we have to be the savior to our friends, our spouses, or our children... We all fluctuate between the extremes of believing we are demigods sent to save the world and demons who are the scum of the earth, and everything in between. And the reason we believe what we do about ourselves is because of what we believe or don't believe about God.

We need to learn to speak our beliefs out loud. So often, we are not even aware of what we are believing in any given moment. We just go along, living in false belief, and, as a result, we continue to engage in sinful behaviors. I am so blessed to have a friend and partner in Jayne who encourages me to speak out loud what is going on in my heart between me and God. She is in good company with the psalmists and the prophets in the Scriptures. They knew that our transformation comes partly through our verbal proclamation of our faith—speaking out loud what we are believing in the moment. This is confession.

So often, when people are led to confess their sins, they only confess their sinful behaviors. In other words, they confess the fruit. They say: "I'm sorry I lied. Please forgive me." Or: "I looked at pornography. I know that's wrong. Please forgive me." The problem, however, is that they need to confess their sinful beliefs—the roots, the stuff below the surface that is motivating and producing their behaviors, the sin beneath the sins. All sin stems from wrong beliefs—lies we believe—and ultimately from our unbelief in Jesus. And because we generally don't go beyond the fruit to the root, we end up aiming at behavior modification instead of gospel transformation. In the gospel, we come to see that sin is wicked and our world is broken. People suffer and will suffer because of sin. We are not promised a pain-free, trouble-free, suffering-free existence. But we don't need more self-help and we don't need denial. We need deliverance.

When we address only the behaviors and push people to change what they do without a change in what they believe, the weight falls on us rather than God to handle the problems of the world and deal with the brokenness caused by sin. Instead, we need to trust in God's power to change us and change the world. [We need] gospel transformation, not just behavior modification. God's Spirit is our guide, teacher, and counselor. When those of us who belong to God confess out loud what we believe, the Spirit is right there with us to convict us of our unbelief and lead us to the truth that is in Jesus. This is how God grants us repentance. He convicts us of our unbelief and leads us to believe the truth.

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.

- Matthew 22: 34-40
- John 14: 1-14
- Galatians 5: 19-23

## From Fruit to Root

### Week 4, Reflection 2

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words define "confession."
2. Take a few moments of personal worship and write down as many answers as you can, to each of the following questions:
  - Who is God (what are some things He reveals as His identity, especially toward his people)?
  - What has God done (in general, and especially through the person and work of Jesus)?
  - Who am I in light of God's work (what things does God declare to be true about our own identity)?
  - How should I live in light of who I am (how should answers to the other questions impact how we think or live)?
3. "When I am seeking to discern unbelief in the gospel, I reverse the order of those questions: 1) What am I doing or experiencing right now? 2) In light of what I am doing or experiencing, what do I believe about myself? 3) What do I believe God is doing or has done? and 4) What do I believe God is like? In other words, I trace the fruit back to the root. If the fruit is not like Jesus, that is an indicator that our faith is not in Jesus."

Look back at the first three weeks of this Handbook: considering as many areas of unbelief (Week 1), lesser stories (Week 2) and lies, accusations, and temptations (Week 3) you've identified so far. For the rest of this Reflection, practice the "fruit to root" process by walking through as many of those areas as possible using the following questions. Be honest: and it's okay if you can't fully answer every question, for every area of unbelief



you try; you'll have an opportunity to ask your close community for help at this week's meeting.

4. As you consider the root disbelief in each area above, turn your answers into prayers of confession to God. Ask his forgiveness not just for your behaviors, but for the beliefs—or unbeliefs—that lie at the root of each.

Now that we've deconstructed areas of unbelief, Reading and Reflection #3 reconstructs us with a right belief in God, based on the gospel of Jesus through the power of the Spirit. Read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “God’s Spirit is our guide, teacher, and counselor. When those of us who belong to God confess out loud what we believe, the Spirit is right there with us to convict us of our unbelief and lead us to the truth that is in Jesus. This is how God grants us repentance. He convicts us of our unbelief and leads us to believe the truth.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

5. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you from what you have read?

6. Based upon what you believe Jesus is telling you, are there any actions that need to be taken today or this week?

## From Root to Fruit

### Week 4, Reading 3

In Reading #2, we saw Jeff's four key questions to ask in progressive order when forming people in the gospel: 1) Who is God? 2) What has God done (which reveals who God is)? 3) Who am I in light of God's work? and 4) How should I live in light of who I am? I encourage people to apply these questions to their Bible study and to all of their discipleship processes. I encourage people to apply these questions to their Bible study and to all of their discipleship processes. I do this because we all do what we do because of what we believe about 1) who God is, 2) what God has done, and 3) who we are in Christ or apart from Christ. The roots of our faith produce the fruit of our life.

Reading and Reflection #2 asked those questions in reverse order, as a exercise that worked from outside in. But once we've discovered the root issue—the specific areas of unbelief—we're only halfway done. Once we've deconstructed falsehood and unbelief,

we now rebuild our faith with truth and right belief. In other words, once we've gone from "Fruit to Root," we turn and go from "Root to Fruit.": First we ask, "What do you believe about God? Who is God?" It may be helpful to write answers to this and forthcoming questions on the side of the tree trunk, starting at the bottom and moving up with each question (see Figure 4A below).

Once we answer the first question, we ask the second: "how do we know #1 is true? What has God done, that shows us who he is?") Before we move on, it is important to note how important this second question is. So often, when a Christian tries to encourage another person to believe or behave differently, he fails to proclaim the gospel—the good news about what God has done in Jesus Christ to reveal himself to us and to change us.

So we ask this second question, and praise God for the tangible ways he shows us—in our lives, in the Bible, and throughout history—his truth. It may help to ask and answer these first two questions multiple times, as we declare different truths about God, and remember and celebrate ways he's proven those things: "what else do you believe about God? ...How do you know that? What has he done to show us this is true?" As we continue to speak out loud the truths of God reveals to us through the gospel, [we experience] a change. [We are] transformed by the renewal of her mind, just as Paul says in Romans 12: 2. This wasn't just behavior modification. This [is] much deeper. This [is] gospel transformation, which always leads to behavioral change.

By now our answers are working their way up the trunk of the tree, to the fruit produced by our newly-rooted right belief. So we ask the final two questions, over and over, and we celebrate God's work in the answers He brings to mind by his Spirit. "What are you believing about yourself now? Who are you in light of God's work?" And "What are you experiencing? How should I live as a response to this?" We are not saved just once in our past. We continue being saved in the present. God's salvation didn't just happen to us. It is also continuing to happen. He is actively saving us. The gospel is good news for our sanctification—the ongoing work of God saving us and conforming us daily into the image of Christ. Our activity in this process is ongoing repentance from unbelief to belief in the gospel.

Since Readings #2 and #3 work together, I encourage you to begin paying close attention to the fruit of your life, but don't make the mistake of engaging in a self-change project. With the help of the Spirit, and ideally in community with others who love Jesus and believe the gospel, practice tracing the fruit to the root. Examine what you have been believing and where your beliefs are not in line with the truth of the gospel. Confess what you believe out loud. What is the sin under the sins? What sinful beliefs have you

been holding?

Once you trace the fruit to the root, invite the Spirit to reveal the truth of who God is and what he has done for you in Christ. Ask him to give you the ability to see and believe the truth, repent from lies or unbelief, and turn to God in faith through Jesus. In other words, work your way from root to fruit. This will require knowing the gospel and spending regular time reading the Bible so as to be more equipped to speak the truth of God to the circumstances or situations you find yourself or others in.

If you begin to do this more often, you will find yourself being transformed more and more into the image of Jesus Christ. As a result, you will also become more and more fluent in the gospel, because the more you are changed by the gospel, the more you will want to talk about it. We all talk about what most affects us. And as you do, you and others will become more fluent together.

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.

- 2 Corinthians 3: 4-18 (and you might look back at Galatians 5: 19-23 again)

## From Root to Fruit

### Week 4, Reflection 3

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words define “repentance.”
2. Reflection #2 ended with deconstructing some specific areas of unbelief. But deconstruction is only half the process. For the rest of today's reflection, we reconstruct a right belief of God as it relates to those specific areas of unbelief.

Paul said that as we repent and believe the gospel—as we turn to, look at, and believe in Jesus—we are transformed, increasingly becoming more and more like Jesus: “And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit” (2 Cor. 3: 18).

Pick a few of the areas of unbelief you deconstructed in Reflection #2. Then spend the rest of today's reflection answering the following questions as they relate to each specific area of unbelief.

<b>Areas of Unbelief or Struggle</b> —————>			
<b>Who is God?</b> List as many things as you can about God's identity that specifically relate to this area of struggle/disbelief.			
<b>What has God done?</b> How has God proven each answer to the previous question in his work in the world and especially through the person and work of Jesus?			
<b>Who am I in light of God's work?</b> List as many true statements about who you are that you can think of.			
<b>How should I live in light of who I am?</b> What beliefs are you experiencing in light of the first three questions? How do you see them changing you?			

As you wrap up this week and ponder the truths of the gospel as a means of battling unbelief in God, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “Once you trace the fruit to the root, invite the Spirit to reveal the truth of who God is and what he has done for you in Christ. Ask him to give you the ability to see and believe the truth, repent from lies or unbelief, and turn to God in faith through Jesus. In other words, work your way from root to fruit. This will require knowing the gospel and spending regular time reading the Bible so as to be more equipped to speak the truth of God to the circumstances or situations you find yourself or others in.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect.

3. In a sentence, what do you think Jesus is saying to you based on what you have read?
4. 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?