

CBC College +

GOSPEL: Kingdom Come

The Gospel in My Heart

Part 1

Week 3

Weeks 1 and 2 of our journey together focused on the foundation and basics of gospel fluency. Without understanding unbelief itself, and without knowing the Story of God and the power of the gospel, any hope of these concepts becoming real in our lives would be lost. The rest of the Handbook considers how to apply the concepts of Weeks 1 and 2 to ourselves (Weeks 3 and 4), as a community (Weeks 5 and 6), and as it relates to others (Weeks 7 and 8).

As you might expect from this week's title, "The Gospel in Me" asks you to be introspective: all three Week 3 Readings and Reflections are meant to be "diagnostic"—helping you define specific areas of need for the gospel. Week 4 will focus more on the "remedy," helping give you specific ways to remind yourself of the truths of the gospel, as you grow increasingly fluent over time.

Good News to Me

Week 3, Reading 1

I'm often asked why it's so hard for many people to talk to others about Jesus... I have come to believe that the main reason people don't talk about Jesus isn't that they lack training. I am convinced it is that they lack love. People need heart change—not just once, but over and over again, because their love grows cold. People need to be deeply affected by the incredible news of Jesus on a daily basis. What affects you greatly creates in you great affections. And those affections lead you to express verbally and physically what you love most, because you talk about what you love. Furthermore, you love what you talk about. And we all talk about what most affects us—what most powerfully works to affect change in our lives. Jesus said that it is out of the overflow of the heart that the

mouth speaks (Luke 6: 45). What comes out of your heart displays what's in it and what has captured it.

Do you talk about Jesus? Has he captured your heart? Do you love him? When you come to know and experience the love God has for us in Jesus; when you realize that God loved us so much that he was willing to suffer and die for our sins, even though we were his enemies; when you meet Jesus and experience him pouring out his Spirit into your heart, filling you with himself and his love, you can't contain it. You have to talk about it! The gospel is incredible! The word gospel literally means "good news." Is it good news to you?

What do you get most excited about? What has most captured your affections? Be honest for a moment. What is it? Who is it? And why has it or he or she captured your heart? And if your affections have been captured, how have you been affected? What do you do in light of your heart being captured?

Most importantly, has Jesus captured your affections? Why or why not? Are you impressed with him? It will show, you know. If he has captured your affections, you will not be able to stop talking about him.

Another reason I talk about Jesus is that I've found you not only talk about what you love, but you also love what you talk about. Sometimes our love grows cold. Our hearts lose affection. We forget what we have, so we drift from what we love.

If you lack love for Jesus and want your love for him to grow, start talking about how amazing he is. Talk to yourself about him. By the way, you won't be alone in this venture because he sent his Spirit to tell you what is true, good, and amazing about Jesus. The Holy Spirit is the best at bragging on Jesus because he has known him forever and is more impressed with him than anyone. Read the Gospels and watch him closely. I would encourage you to read at least one Gospel a year to regularly reacquaint yourself with the love of your life. As you read, slow down and pay attention to his actions and words. Observe how well and how much he loves. Watch for his kindness and gentleness. Don't miss his gracious love for the broken, the weary, and the sinful.

Then, as the Spirit shows you more about Jesus, talk about what you see and learn. Talk to your roommate about how amazing Jesus is. Tell your friends. Speak with your children about him. The more you do, the more you will love him. And the more you love him, the more you will want to talk about him. Never forget how he loved you first... Regularly go back to that day when his love for you first showed up on the front porch of your heart. Don't forget what it was like when you were first captured by his affection for you. In your thoughts, go back regularly to what life was like without Jesus, then

remember how he changed your life forever. If that has not yet happened to you, if your affections have not yet been captured by Jesus Christ, I pray that will change for you. As it does, tell others about his love. You talk about what you love and you love what you talk about.

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.

- Luke 6: 45
- John 3: 17-21
- 1 John 4: 7-21
- Revelation 2: 2-7

Good News to Me

Week 3, 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 "love." Additionally, explain why the gospel is regularly called "good news."

2. "What do you get most excited about? What has most captured your affections? Be honest for a moment. What is it? Who is it? And why has it or he or she captured your heart? And if your affections have been captured, how have you been affected? What do you do in light of your heart being captured? Most importantly, has Jesus captured your affections? Why or why not? Are you impressed with him? It will show, you know. If he has captured your affections, you will not be able to stop talking about him."

These questions are similar to those that respected counselor Dr. David Powlison asks in his article, "X-Ray Questions." Originally published in 1999, "each question circles around the same basic issue: Who or what is your functional God/ god? Many of the questions simply derive from the verbs that relate you to God: love, trust, fear, hope, seek, obey, take refuge, and the like. Each verb holds out a lamp to guide us to Him who is way,

truth, and life. But each verb also may be turned into a question, holding up a mirror to show us where we stray. Each question comes at the same general question. In individual situations –different times, places, people—one or another may be more appropriate and helpful. Different ways of formulating the motivation question will ring the bells of different people.” 3 Powlison’s article includes 35 questions; we’ve included 10 below. Choose at least five questions to answer honestly, and please don’t pretend that your answer to each one is truthfully “Jesus.”

- What do you want, desire, crave, lust and wish for? What desires do you serve and obey?
- What do you seek, aim for, pursue? What are your goals and expectations?
- What do you fear? What do you want? What do you tend to worry about?
- Where do you find refuge, safety, comfort, escape, pleasure, security?
- What or who do you trust?
- On your deathbed, what would sum up your life as worthwhile? What gives your life meaning?
- Whose victory or success would make your life happy? How do you define victory and success?
- What do you see as your rights? What do you feel entitled to?
- How do you spend your time? Who are your priorities?
- What are your characteristic fantasies, either pleasurable or fearful? Daydreams? What do your night dreams revolve around?

3. Think about the things you answered in Question #2: write a few of them in the left column below. In the middle column, write a few of the reasons that thing is so precious to you. Finally, in the right column, compare each one to Jesus: are you more impressed with, excited about, and affectionate toward that thing/ person, or toward Jesus? Why do you think that is?

What you Love	Why you Love it	Love for that vs. Love for Jesus
---------------	-----------------	----------------------------------

--	--	--

4. What are some of the things that most amaze you, stir your affections for, and excite you about Jesus? What is about who he is, what he’s done in his life, death, and resurrection, that is especially “good news” to you right now? Write down at least five*, and pursue ways in the next few days to share each with someone else—maybe with someone who follows Jesus and someone who doesn’t.

**If this is new to you and you cannot think of specific things you love about Jesus: your close community has committed together to help each other as you journey together through this Handbook; be honest with them and ask them to help you with this, by remembering your story and pointing out things in your life they think may help stir your affections and excitement for Jesus.*

As you ponder the person and work of Jesus, and your love for him compared to other things, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “You will talk about [Jesus] if you love him. If you don’t, start talking about him, what’s he’s done, and what he’s done for you, and you will love love. And you’ll begin to see more and more clearly how wonderful his gospel is and how powerfully it works. As a result, you will talk about Jesus more and more. He is the best news there is.” 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?

We Talk About What Works

Week 3, Reading 2

We like to talk about what is impressive. We talk about what changes us. We talk about what works. We were created by God to work, and in Christ Jesus, we were re-created for good works that God prepared in advance for us to do (Eph. 2: 10). This is why we talk about what works. We like things to work. And when things work well, we talk about that. We also talk about what does not work for the same reason.

Now, stop and think again about what you talk about. What works in your life. What doesn't work. The gospel works, and it addresses what doesn't work.

It is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Through the gospel, God forgives, heals, fills you with love and power, sets you free, and enables you to live an altogether different life. You know this if you believe the gospel, because if you believe it, you know how well it works. The gospel of Jesus Christ changes you. And when it changes you, you talk about it.

If we are going to be fluent in the gospel, we need to stop and reflect on how the gospel works in our lives. What has God done in you? How has he changed you? How is he at work in you right now? Maybe you currently need the power of the gospel at work in your life. What work do you need God to do in you today? How might the gospel work to address that? It's possible you haven't yet experienced God's power to save you. Or maybe it's been a while since you have walked in the power of the gospel to save you today. For this reason, I decided to place this section, "The Gospel in Me," before the next one, "The Gospel with Us." You won't be fluent in the gospel if the gospel isn't really good news to you yet.

We have a far greater story to tell than [any other story on earth]. We were enemies of God, hopeless and helpless, enslaved to sin and Satan, being crushed daily by his destructive blows. For hundreds of years, the world needed a Savior. We needed to be set

free, forgiven, and restored. Jesus came, and it did not look good. He was from Nazareth, for goodness' sake! But he lived the life we couldn't. He went "undefeated" [by sin and death] for thirty-three years. Then, on the cross, it looked like it was over—and it was. But it wasn't a victory for evil. Jesus won as he rose again on the third day! Sin was paid for, Satan was crushed, and death was dealt a deathblow. Jesus made a public spectacle of Satan, sin, and death, and overcame for us.

Now we are free, forgiven, loved, and more than conquerors! Do you believe it? Do you love it? Do you love him? If so, tell the world! Tell your community. Tell your friends. Tell your spouse. Tell your children. Tell your neighbor. Tell your boss. Tell your coworkers. Tell your enemies. Tell them every day. Tell everyone that love has come to town and defeated death, hatred, sickness, and sorrow!

It's good news! It's great news! It's the gospel of Jesus Christ!

It starts in you and spills out of your heart through your mouth to the world, for it's out of the overflow of your heart that your mouth speaks. You will talk about him if you love him. If you don't, start talking about him, what's he's done, and what he's done for you, and you will love him. And you'll begin to see more and more clearly how wonderful his gospel is and how powerfully it works. As a result, you will talk about Jesus more and more.

He is the best news there is.

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 27: 32–28: 20
- Luke 23: 26–24: 53
- Romans 1: 16–17
- Ephesians 2: 1–10

We Talk About What Works

Week 3, Reflection 2

1. "We like things to work. And when things work well, we talk about what does not work for the same reason. Now, stop and think again about what you talk about.

What works in your life? What doesn't work?"

2. Look back at the things you wrote down in your answers to Powlison's "X-Ray" questions in reflection #1. How many of your answers stem from believing that your answer produces or provides something for you, or otherwise somehow "works"?

3. The Bible says that God created the world, and that before sin, the world and everything in it was good. Everything God created worshiped and glorified Him; everything on earth saw God as the one who produces anything good, provides the earth with everything good. In other words, God was the ultimate "Worker" in His creation. In previous weeks, we've seen this theme through a couple different lenses: in the Story of God, sin and brokenness are the ultimate, objective problems with the world—and the solution is Jesus. The "4 G statements (God is Good, Glorious, Great, and Gracious) are poignant because they remind us of truths in the midst of believing lies. In other words, "the gospel works, and it addresses what doesn't work." But if we're fully honest at times it's just so hard to believe that the gospel is the solution to every problem, and that God is the pinnacle of goodness, glory, greatness, and grace in our lives! In chapter 9 of Mark's gospel, a distraught father of a demon-possessed boy asking Jesus to heal his son declares, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (V.24) In his head He knew Jesus was the answer, but in his heart he could not believe it. When you and I find ourselves in the same position, we'll be glad to know that Jesus did not unload the wrath of God on this man; instead, he not only healed the boy, but literally raised him from the dead! This question may be difficult, but we'll ask you to be honest: prayerfully ask God to show you reasons you see other things "working" better than him, and reasons you don't think He "works" in your life. Write down your answers:

4. Whether Question #3 was easy or difficult for you, prayerfully ask God to help you rightly consider the following. Write down a few thoughts for each:
 - What has God done in you? How has he changed you? How is he at work in you right now?
 - What work do you need God to do in you today? How might the gospel

work to address that?

As you ponder the person and work of Jesus, and your love for him compared to other things, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “You will talk about [Jesus] if you love him. If you don’t, start talking about him, what’s he’s done, and what he’s done for you, and you will love love. And you’ll begin to see more and more clearly how wonderful his gospel is and how powerfully it works. As a result, you will talk about Jesus more and more. He is the best news there is.” 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?

Capturing and Examining our Thoughts

Week 3, Reading 3

We are at war! Bullets are flying. Bombs are dropping. The enemy is closing in. Destruction is all around. There are casualties everywhere. But in our war, you can’t see any of this. Well, you can see the effects of it all over the place in the brokenness, chaos, and pain around us, but this war is invisible.

We are not fighting each other. Our war is not against “flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6: 12). And we are not fighting with physical weapons. We fight what is unseen with weapons that are not wielded by human hands. Our battle is spiritual, and so are the weapons we use. The gospel is the power of God for salvation. And our enemies are the Devil, the world, and the flesh.

The Devil screams out: “God is evil. I hate him and I will do everything to oppose him and destroy what he has made.” The world screams out: “This world is best without God, and you are best when it’s all about you.” And the flesh screams out: “I don’t need God because I am god. It’s all about me and it’s all dependent upon me.”

So what are we to do in this battle? 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. Week 4 gets into the second, third, and fourth steps; for now, we focus on the first.

What is going through your mind? What do you regularly hear spoken in your head? What are you believing about God, his work in Jesus, others, yourself, and what you should do? This is why it is so important to know the gospel, rehearse it in our minds, and remember it. We cannot defeat the enemies of our souls without becoming more gospel-fluent. And part of growing in gospel fluency is learning how to recognize what is not from God—what is not in line with the truths of the gospel.

So how do you know if what you’re thinking lines up with what is true in the gospel? Well, remember that the gospel literally means “good news.” So ask yourself: “Is this good news that I’m thinking? Is it tearing God down or lifting him up? Is it tearing others down or building them up? Is it tearing me down or encouraging, exhorting, or equipping me?” The enemy of our souls [lies: Satan] brings to our minds thoughts and words that are lies about God... One good way to learn how to discern the truth from a lie is to continue reading Scripture. If what you hear disagrees with the Bible, it’s a lie.

Satan also accuses: He loves to tear us down with accusations. And most often he tries to deny what is true of us in Christ—what Jesus has done to change us. He doesn’t want us to live boldly for Jesus, so he accuses us of things that are not true of us so that we will cower in fear, guilt, and shame... He also tempts us with promises of fulfillment through sinful pleasures or pursuits. He tries to convince us that God’s ways are not good. And he loves to offer seductive short-cuts to fulfill our longings and desires. He often tries to make sin look attractive to lure our hearts away from obeying God... The enemy also loves to divide and isolate through gossip, slander, and bitterness.

The means vary, but our enemy loves to get us to turn against one another. He loves to erode our trust and give us reasons to separate or divide. And one of his greatest schemes is to isolate us as he does it. He wants us alone so he can pick us off one by one with no one around to encourage us or speak the truths of Jesus into our lives. Watch out for the schemes. In all of them, our enemy is dead set on our destruction.

The first step is to capture the thought and examine it. Train yourself to regularly stop and closely examine what you are thinking, feeling, or believing in light of the truths of the gospel.

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 11: 12–14
- Romans 8: 1–11
- Ephesians 6: 10–20
- 1 Peter 5: 8–11
- 1 John 2: 15–17

Capturing and Examining our Thoughts

Week 3, Reflection 3

1. Considering the content you read, define the three things that we're at war against.
2. In your own words, what does it mean to "take thoughts captive and examine them"?

The list below, from chapter 8 of Gospel Fluency, are some of the common lies, accusations, temptations, and means of divisions and isolation Satan puts in peoples' minds. Circle all those that you have believed at some point. Then put stars by the ones you find yourself still believing at times. In the spaces below, write some of those you've been working through up to this point in this Handbook.

Some of the lies you might hear are:

God doesn't really love you.

He's out to get you and destroy your life.

God has left you. You're all alone and he doesn't care. You're not that important to him.

Besides, even if he did love you, he couldn't help you. He's not that powerful.

He can't be everywhere, you know.

And even if he could, the stuff you're dealing with doesn't matter to him.

Satan also accuses through thoughts like:

You really blew it this time! You should be ashamed of yourself.

It shouldn't surprise you, however; you always do stuff like that. You're such a loser!

How many more times do you have to fail to realize it?

You're never going to amount to much of anything.

It's all because you're a filthy sinner. It's what you do. You're no saint, that's for sure.

He also tempts us with promises of fulfillment through sinful pleasures or pursuits, such as:

Look at this image—you know it will make you feel powerful or desired or aroused.

Go ahead, take one more drink. It will make all your trouble go away.

God knows this is enjoyable. He just doesn't want you to have any fun.

You deserve better. You've worked so hard, what's wrong with a little reward?

You know you need that. And if you get it, everything will change for you.

The enemy also loves to divide and isolate through gossip, slander, and bitterness:

Go ahead, say it. You know it's true.

Everyone else should know how much they've messed up as well.

Besides, think about how good it'll make you feel to be seen as better than them!

Put some spin on this one. Make the story a little juicier. People love scandal.

They really did hurt you! They deserve to suffer for that. Don't let it go.

They should pay. It's about time they got what was coming to them!

4. Look back at three or four of the phrases you starred or wrote in Question #3.

Prayerfully ask yourself the following questions for each one, as you practice examining your thoughts. Write down answers that come to mind for some of these questions, for each phrase you consider.

- Is this really true? Or is it a lie?

- Is this from God or someone else?
- Does this sound like the Devil’s accusation or the Spirit’s conviction?
- Does it line up with the gospel of Jesus Christ? • What am I hoping in right now? What do I believe this hope promises to give me?
- Why am I considering this behavior? What will be its outcome?
- In all of this, what is true of Jesus? What is true of who I am in him?
- How did Jesus do better for me? How did he speak a better word over me?
- What about Jesus do I need to remember and believe right now?

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: “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. 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.” Consider writing out your thoughts and prayers as you reflect on this truth.

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

2. 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?