

CBC College +

GOSPEL: Kingdom Come

The Gospel to Others

Part 2

Week 8

Our final week together brings us to some of the most difficult aspects of the Christian life. As we look again at “The Gospel to Others,” we dive into actually sharing the gospel, with our words, to those who don’t know Jesus. But our words are only meaningful if we consider the heart behind them: so while we consider our gospel declaration this week, we end our eight-week journey by looking at our hearts, and our own need for God’s love and wisdom.

Declare the Gospel

Week 8, Reading 1

I’ve found that when we live our lives intentionally as display people, we get plenty of opportunities to talk about why we do it. Lives full of grace and love; schedules rearranged to make space to listen and serve; budgets adjusted to feed and care for people; or words spoken to protect and build up all demand explanations. These things really don’t make sense apart from the gospel. Yet in our explanations to others, we so often forget to give them Jesus.

Paul says to the church in Rome, “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!” (Rom. 10: 14–15). The feet that run to carry our hands and faces that display the gospel must also bring along mouths ready to declare the gospel.

When we live Jesus like lives but don’t share the reason we can and do, we rob Jesus of

his glory. He deserves the credit for what we do, not us. I understand that we often experience fear or insecurity when opportunities like these come up. I know that it's not easy for many of us to share Jesus with others.

I believe there are many reasons for this. First, as I said in Week 3, we are in a spiritual battle, so the enemy of our souls tries everything possible to keep us from speaking about Jesus. He can intimidate us to remain silent lest we be mocked or accused. Second, many of us love what people think of us more than we love people. So, in our fear of rejection, we keep our mouths shut. I pray you will love people more than their opinion of you. Third, most Christians have never tried to share their gospel hope, and therefore have never experienced the Spirit of God giving them words and boldness. When you do step out in faith, it's amazing how he gives you what you need. Fourth, many Christians just don't know the gospel very well or, if they do, don't practice sharing it with other believers very often. They aren't gospel fluent.

I pray that this book has given you a better knowledge of the gospel and some tools for how to grow in your gospel fluency. But the fifth reason for our silence is possibly the most concerning. I have found that most Christians don't really believe that their neighbors, friends, and family members will spend eternity apart from God if they don't have faith in Jesus. Judgment is coming. Hell is real. And apart from faith in Jesus Christ, people will miss out on enjoying life with God forever. It is so important that people are given the good news of Jesus. It's not our job to get them to believe it. That's the Spirit's job. We are called to live lives that demand gospel explanations and, when we have the opportunities, to give people Jesus as the answer for our hope. We might show how Jesus is better than what they have been trusting in. Maybe we listen to their stories and help them find hope, healing, and redemption by filling in the gaps with the true story. Or perhaps, just by listening, we discover their deeper longings and show how Jesus can do for them what nothing and no one else can.

I can pray, display, and declare, but I can't save. That's God's job. So I will keep on listening, loving, blessing, sharing, and praying.

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 12:8-12
- Romans 3:21-26
- Romans 10:5-15

Declare the Gospel

Week 8, Reflection 1

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words describe the necessity of declaring the gospel, even in the midst of a life that displays what God is like.

2. Over the course of this handbook, you've considered several ways Jesus has changed you. Spend a few moments worshipping God by looking back on weeks 1-7 and reflecting on specific areas of sin, unbelief, poor/unwise habits, etc. that God has changed. Write a few down, and simply declare—with your mouth or your pen—praise to God for his work in you.

3. Reasons we hesitate to declare the gospel:

- First, we are in a spiritual battle, so the enemy of our souls tries everything possible to keep us from speaking about Jesus...
- Second, many of us love what people think of us more than we love people. So, in our fear of rejection, we keep our mouths shut...
- Third, most Christians have never tried to share their gospel hope, and therefore have never experienced the Spirit of God giving them words and boldness...
- Fourth, many Christians just don't know the gospel very well or, if they do, don't practice sharing it with other believers very often.
- But the fifth reason for our silence is possibly the most concerning. I have found that most Christians don't really believe that their neighbors, friends, and family members will spend eternity apart from God if they don't have faith in Jesus. Judgment is coming. Hell is real. And apart from faith in Jesus Christ, people will miss out on enjoying life with God forever.
- Looking back over those words, circle all the reasons you feel you've been personally hindered at some point from sharing the gospel. In the space below, write any other things you feel have hindered you.

4. The Apostle Peter encourages followers of Jesus, "always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15). Sometimes we don't know how to share the gospel because we haven't thought about it enough to prepare ourselves to speak it when

asked. If someone were to ask you about “the hope that is in you,” how would you explain the good news of Jesus, in your own words? In other words, write down your understanding of the gospel, in light of your hope.

Don’t forget, last week’s group exercise charged you to share the gospel with someone this week who doesn’t know Jesus. as you consider various ways to declare the gospel to others and plan to share with someone, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth, from the letter to the Romans: “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!’” (Rom. 10:14-15). Consider writing 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?

Grow in Love & Wisdom

Week 8, Reading 2

I hope that, through this book, you've gained more knowledge about the grace, mercy, and kindness of God through the good news of Jesus. I also pray you've become more fluent in speaking the gospel and listening with gospel ears. However, my greatest hope is that you love Jesus more now than when you started reading. Gospel fluency won't happen through you until it happens to you. You talk most about what you love most. I pray that I have helped you love Jesus more.

I also pray your love for people has grown. One of my concerns is that the tools and ideas in this book will become a hammer instead of a healing balm. The tendency of many well-intentioned people is to take a tool meant for love and instead hurt people with it by handling it without gentleness and care. We sometimes learn new truths and then think that if we just speak the truth to one another, that will be enough. But remember, Paul clarifies that we are called to speak the truth to one another in love (Eph. 4: 15).

While instructing the church in Corinth on how to handle the truths he had given them, as well as the gifts God had given them, Paul says: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing" (1 Cor. 13: 1–3).

We can have right knowledge of the gospel, faith in the gospel, power to proclaim the gospel, and all the tools in the world to creatively do so, but still lack love. And if that is the case, our proclamation will mean nothing. At the heart of the gospel is the love of God. And if we speak about the love of God without love for people, the noise of our lives will drown out the words coming from our lips.

Do you love people? More specifically, do you love those who are different—who don't live like you or believe what you believe? If not, I want to encourage you to ask God to grant you his heart for people. Ask him to give you love for your neighbors, coworkers, family members, and friends. Invite him to fill your heart with his love and then ask him to enable you to feel what he feels for people.

Remember, he loved you while you were still a sinner—his enemy. Jesus suffered and died to forgive you of your sins, make you a child of God, and pour the love of God into your heart by his Spirit. So ask him to give you his heart for people. If you do, be ready. You will find that his love is greater than you imagined and deeper than you know.

The more I ask God to give me his heart for people, the more pain and passion I feel. I have more heart and heartbreak. I shed more tears and have more joy. I feel more sadness and exude more happiness. I observe more crying and I hear more laughter. I see depths of brokenness and watch miraculous healing. I have found that love is not all warm and fuzzy. It also hurts. But the more God's love flows into me, the more my love grows for him and others. As a result, the more careful, gentle, and wise I want to be. This is because love is embodied in wisdom—which is really where I want to end.

Wisdom isn't just increased knowledge, because knowledge without grace leads to pride, and pride precedes destruction in our lives and the lives of others. Wisdom is knowledge applied so that we do the right thing, at the right time, with the right motive, in the right way. Wisdom is gracious, loving, kind, and gentle.

When Peter charges the believers in Asia Minor to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that is in them—to give a gospel explanation for their godly lives—he says they should do it with gentleness and respect (1 Pet. 3: 15). He then points to Jesus as the ultimate good news preacher (vv. 18–22). Likewise, Paul says to the church in Colossae: “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, 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). Wisdom is timely. Wisdom is gracious. Wisdom is seasoned with salt, because it is healing, life-preserving, and taste-enhancing. It makes life better, not worse; fuller, not lesser; and more savory, not more sour.

When I was very young in my faith, I read James 1: 5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” I knew I lacked wisdom, so I started asking God for wisdom almost every day, sometimes several times a day. Since he had promised to give it to those who know they lack it and ask for it, I did. Since then, I have found that friends, both Christian and non-Christian, seek me out for counsel. As a result, I get to share the gospel more often. Thus, I don't just have wisdom from God to share, I also see the fruit of wisdom in my life.

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.

- 1 Corinthians 13:1-3
- Colossians 4:2-6
- 1 Peter 3:15-22
- James 3:13-18

Look again at how the Apostle Paul spoke to direct areas of need and question in Acts 17:16-34

Grow in Love & Wisdom

Week 8, Reflection 2

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words define “love” and “wisdom,” and describe why both are necessary in our declaration of the gospel.
2. How did god display love toward you, as he—through whatever or whomever he used—declared the good news of Jesus to you? How did he display his wisdom, in the specific way in which he saved you?
3. Every week’s group discussion has reminded us of Ephesians 4: 15, which encourages us to “speak the truth in love.” We can have right knowledge of the gospel, faith in the gospel, power to proclaim the gospel, and all the tools in the world to creatively do so, but still lack love. And if that is the case, our proclamation will mean nothing. At the heart of the gospel is the love of God. And if we speak about the love of God without love for people, the noise of our lives will drown out the words coming from our lips. Think back to your non-believing friends from last week’s Reflections. Considering your relationship with each, the lesser stories they live, and their areas of unbelief, in the columns below write ways that would be unloving, then loving, if you were to share the gospel with them. Maybe it’s certain words; maybe it’s situations or places; maybe it’s the activity happening while you’d share. Whatever it is, how would they feel unloved, then loved, as you shared the gospel?
4. Biblical wisdom can be defined as “knowledge applied so that we do the right thing, at the right time, with the right motive, in the right way. Wisdom is gracious, loving, kind, and gentle.” Spend some time praying that God would reveal areas of your life that don't reflect this (they might be defined by "unwise" or "foolishness"). In what specific areas, relationships, or ways doesn't your life reflect biblical wisdom? Write down at least three

ways, then pray for wisdom. Feel free to invite others from your close community into your prayers.

As you consider your own need for love and wisdom, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth, from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians: “If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing!” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). 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?

Conclusion

Week 8, Reading 3

The apostle Paul says that Jesus is the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1: 24, 30). He is the true and better wisdom. He is also the means by which we get wisdom. The book of Proverbs advises us that the wisest thing we can do is get wisdom (Prov. 4: 5, 7). It also instructs us that in order to get wisdom, we need to get wisdom. In other words, we need to obtain wisdom to understand and apply wisdom. We can’t make sense out of wisdom without the wisdom to do so.

How do we do this? How do we get wisdom to apply wisdom so we can show and tell the good news of Jesus graciously, lovingly, and gently? We have to get Jesus. If you want the wisdom of God but haven’t yet received God’s wisdom for you in Jesus Christ, I invite you to surrender to him now. Receive what he has done for you in his life, death, and resurrection. Ask him to forgive you of your sins; cleanse you and make you clean; and come and dwell in you by his Spirit.

Maybe you believe you’ve already done that. Fine. However, don’t neglect to ask God to keep giving you wisdom. You don’t have enough yet. None of us does. We all need more wisdom from God to work through the situations, struggles, and opportunities that we face every day. As James says, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.” Ask God for wisdom and he will give you Jesus. And if you get Jesus, you will get everything you need for every part

of your life. He is good news for the everyday stuff of life.

Don't put your confidence in your knowledge or skills. Don't just look to the principles or practices of this book—or any other book—to make you more effective. What you need, what I need, what we all need is Jesus. That's where wisdom begins. That's where wisdom ends.

That's the heart of this book. If you get Jesus, you get wisdom. Get wisdom from Jesus and you get everything else as well. He is better than everything else, and if you have him, then you'll give him.

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.

- Proverbs 4:5-9
- John 1:1-18
- 1 Corinthians 1:20-31

Conclusion

Week 8, Reflection 3

1. Considering the content you read, in your own words describe how Jesus is the very wisdom of God himself.
2. What are other things you've looked to for wisdom? Create three columns and write at least three other sources you've pursued in the first column below. In the second column, write some of the fruit—both good and not—each has produced. In the final column, describe how Jesus is a greater source of wisdom.
3. What skills, knowledge, or abilities have you relied on instead of God to live a meaningful, productive life? Create three columns again in the space below and write at least three other sources you've pursued in the first. In the second column, write some of the fruit—both good and not—each has produced. In the final column, describe how Jesus is a greater source of wisdom.
4. In what ways have the principles, practices, readings, reflections, discussion, and

exercises of this Handbook helped train you in knowledge and skill, but also wisdom and love, in speaking the gospel, to yourself, your community, and to others?

As you wrap up your final Reflection of this Handbook, read—and pray that God will help you believe and rest in—this truth: “Don’t put your confidence in your knowledge or skills. Don’t just look to the principles or practices of this book—or any other book—to make you more effective. What you need, what I need, what we all need is Jesus. That’s where wisdom begins. That’s where wisdom ends. That’s the heart of this book. If you get Jesus, you get wisdom. Get wisdom from Jesus and you get everything else as well. He is better than everything else, and if you have him, then you’ll give him”. Write out your thoughts as you consider these ideas and turn them into 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?

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?