

THE GOSPEL

[basics everyone
needs for life]

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A Letter from our Pastor

I am so incredibly ecstatic that you are holding this material! That may seem like an overstatement but I promise you it is not. We believe that the Gospel is the *best good news*; that Jesus is amazing and that a relationship with Him will change your entire life.

Whether you do not believe, you just became a believer, or you are looking to learn how to grow in your faith – this guide is for you.

It is a simple material created to walk you through the basic Biblical truth of the Gospel and how that is applied in the life of the believer.

We pray that you would come to know Christ as your Savior and Lord, and that through this material you would be guided towards a deeper relationship with Jesus and His church.

Lovingly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David', written in a cursive style.

Pastor David

redeemersw.com

**WHAT IS
THE
GOSPEL?**

It Begins with God

The Bible's message begins with God (**Genesis 1:1**). In fact, the Bible says that the created universe around us is sufficient to demonstrate the existence of God (**Romans 1:18-20, Psalm 19:1**).

The Bible says there is only one God (**Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 43:10, 44:6-8 46:9-10, Psalm 86:9-10**).

He is the Creator of all that is (**Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16-17, John 1:3, Jeremiah 10:12**). He is not a part of creation, but is distinct from it. God existed prior to the created universe, and was under no compulsion to bring the universe into existence.

God is spirit and has always been. He never "started" at some point in time. He is eternal (**John 4:24, Psalm 90:2**). Because God has created all things, He is personal and creates with a reason therefore all things have purpose and meaning.

God is holy (**Isaiah 6:3, 5:16, Psalm 99:3; 5, 9**). He is the absolute standard of goodness itself. There is nothing evil or corruption in God (**1 John 1:5, Psalm 92:15**). Because He is holy, He must punish evil.

God is personal In fact, the Bible tells us that God is tri-personal. That means that the one being of God is shared by three eternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. [See note below regarding this doctrine]

And, though it is one of the greatest mysteries of all, we are told that God is loving, merciful, and kind (**Psalm 86:15, Lamentations 3:22-23**).

This teaching [the doctrine of the Trinity] is based on three Biblical truths: A) There Is one God (Isaiah 43:10); B) There are three divine persons described In Scripture (Matt. 3:16-17, 28:19-20), and C) Each of the divine persons has equality with the others (Colossians 2:9, John 20:28).

The Problem with Man

One of the main problems with man is the fact that he refuses to see himself as God sees him. God has given us guidelines by which we can see, if we are “functioning” properly. Many of these guidelines have to do with how we behave. For example these guidelines show us that we should worship only the one true God (**Exodus 20:3-4, 34:14**), that we should not murder, commit adultery (**Exodus 20:13, 14**), steal, or lie (**Exodus 20:15, 16**). The Bible wraps up all of these commandments by giving us the highest standard –

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind; and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” **Matthew 22:37**, *(also cited in the Old Testament in **Deuteronomy 6:5**)

Any honest individual, when faced with God’s standard, will admit to falling short. The Bible calls this rebellion or sin. All have sinned-none can escape that charge (**Romans 3:10-18, 23, Ecclesiastes 7:20**).

Sin separates us from God. And since God is the source of all life, the result of sin is death (**Romans 6:23, Ezekiel 18:4**). That death is both physical death on this earth as well as spiritual death, alienation from God both now and in eternity. God’s wrath is revealed against sin, and hence against sinners (**Romans 1:18, John 3:36**).

Man, separated from God, even while physically alive, is spiritually dead (**Ephesians 2:1**), incapable even of seeking after God (**Ephesians 2:1-14, Colossians 2:13, Romans 3:11**).

God's Means of Saving Man

God could have simply executed the punishment of the law upon rebellious man, but He didn't. God does not owe man even the first chance at salvation. God is under no obligation to man at all. Yet, He has not left us in our lost situation. He has an eternal plan to bring the greatest good out of man's evil. That plan is wrapped up in a person. The person of Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ was completely unique. He was not simply a prophet or a good man, **He was God the Son in human flesh, the God-man (John 1:1-18, 1 Timothy 3:16, Colossians 2:9, Philippians 2:5-11)**. He was totally without sin and He perfectly obeyed all of God's law. Hence, He was not under the curse of death. Death had no power over Him. Yet, He died. Why?

Jesus voluntarily laid down His life as a substitute (**John 10:14-18, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Peter 3:18, Isaiah 53:4-6**). Since He did not have to die, He voluntarily took the place of all those who believe in Him throughout the ages. By dying in their place, He takes their punishment upon Himself-He dies their death so that they can live His life.

In fact, the Bible says, that God sees us as if we died with Christ upon the cross of Calvary (**Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:1-10**)! Since the penalty of sin is death, and Christ has died that death, then sin is forgiven for all those who die with Christ!

This is how God has decided to bring about forgiveness of sins, through the death of Jesus Christ. Hence, all sin will be punished, either on the cross of Calvary, or in eternal hell. Where one's sins will be punished is dependent upon whether one is in Christ Jesus or not.

God has decided to save a people for His own sake (Titus 2:14, Matthew 1:21). In His grace, He has joined these people from all eternity to Jesus Christ, so that His death is their death (**Ephesians 1:4-6, Romans 8:31-34**). Jesus did not die indiscriminately for everyone universally, *He died only for those who believe in Him*. Not only this, but the Bible says that on the third day after His death, Jesus rose from the dead, He was resurrected never to die again (**Luke 24:1-36, 1 Corinthians 15:3-8**). And, since those who are saved died with Christ, they also have the promise of being raised up with Him in eternal life (**John 5:24, Romans 6:8-10**).

But who are these who are "in Christ" or who have died with Him? How can a person avail himself of this great plan of salvation? Doesn't the Bible say that man does not even seek after God? (**Romans 3:11**) Yes, it does say that. The answer is found in the very grace of God. God's grace is something He gives because He wishes to give it, not because we earn it, merit it, or buy it. Man has no claim upon God's grace. Grace, by definition, is given freely (**Romans 11:6, Ephesians 2:8-9**).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- What is the worst news you have ever heard? Think and consider why The Gospel is the greatest good news?
- Have you read John 3:16-21 and considered the incredible character, sacrificial love and grace of God?

TAKE A MOMENT:

- If you are a believer, take a moment to pray and thank God for the incredible truth and power of the gospel.

**THE
GOSPEL
BELIEVED**

Trusting Christ Alone

What does it mean when the Bible speaks of a person “believing” in the Lord Jesus Christ? It is far more than simply an intellectual acknowledgment that Jesus is Lord and Savior though that is a vital part of it.

It also involves a commitment to Him as Lord in one’s life; a willingness to turn all of one’s life, including one’s dreams, goals, and ambitions, over to the Lord Jesus, to follow Him wherever He leads. This kind of commitment can only come from the work of God in man’s heart, as we have already seen.

One might say, “if God is the one who saves, and it is only on the basis of His mercy that anyone can be saved, how can I personally be saved?” If the true desire of your heart is to trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and to commit yourself to Him as your Lord and then as your Savior, such a desire can only be placed in your heart by the Spirit of God (**Romans 8:5-8**).
“What, then, must I do?”

“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved”
is the Bible’s answer (**Acts 16:31**).

In faith toward the Lord Jesus, and a heart-felt desire to turn from anything which is against God’s will, commit yourself to the Lord Jesus, knowing that His death is sufficient to cleanse you from all your sin.

Hold only to the Lord Jesus and nothing else. Trust Him to save you and give to you eternal life. He has promised to do so.

Pray a heart-felt prayer of repentance and commitment. God has promised, "Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved." (**Romans 10:13**).

Trust in Christ is eternally important because simply hearing this good news is not enough. We must *confess* our sinful brokenness and stop trusting in ourselves. We don't have the power to escape this brokenness on our own. We need to be rescued.

Often it is claimed that one is saved because of a prayer they prayed, statement they made or a service they attended. God can powerfully bring about faith through these means, but on their own, they do not merit saving faith. It is Jesus Christ alone who saves (**John 14:6**).

True confession and conversion is where one turns from sin, confesses their need for their Savior (the Lord Jesus Christ) and turns to Him for life (**Romans 10:9**). So this means then that there is a completely different way of living from then on that is put on display for the church and the world.

Putting on Christ

Christians who have genuinely repented seek to live in the light (**1 John 1:5-7**) and avoid ungodliness because repentance requires not only forsaking sin but also putting on Christ (**Romans 13:14**). It demands that we turn away from debauchery and turn toward God by putting on Christ (**Colossians 3:1-17**).

Practically, putting on Christ involves serving the Lord and others, and studying God's Word. Putting on Christ means increasing fellowship, singing, praying, and setting our mind on the things above, primarily through fellowship in our local church. This process will take time, and we'll continue to make missteps. But, when God brings someone to repentance, the fruit will be evident over time (**Luke 6:43-45**).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Have you personally walked through the gospel; **repented** and **believed** upon Jesus (trusting in Him) for salvation?
- If you have made a confession of faith have you talked with a pastor, church elder or fellow believer to affirm and celebrate this with you?

RESOURCES:

Listen to Pastor David's sermon on Ephesians 2:8-10 from the series "The Dearest Place On Earth" at redeemersw.com/sermons.

**THE
GOSPEL
DISPLAYED**

Displayed in the Believers life

The gospel is not just good news that saves *us* but also good news that *guides us*.

That means that when we are saved, we are not just saved from something (the wrath of God) but saved to something (His family, the church).

For those who have repented and believed, they are those that have become part of the household of God (**Ephesians 2:19-22**). This means that the church community is not a place you go to, but a people that you belong to. So the community of the church is a way of life for the Christian.

Much like in marriage, the relationship between the husband and wife is cultivated and deepened by an investment of time, energy and commitment. This is much like the church. Jesus is the bridegroom and we are the bride and we are called to put this relationship on display to the world. *SIDE NOTE: this is what marriage reflects. (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The Gathering of believers

There is something unique that God does in the community of believers when they are gathered together corporately. This is what is often referred to in many church settings as the "large gathering", "weekend service", or the "corporate worship service". This time is the upward part of the churches community.

The focus of this time is for God to be gloried through His Word. So this means, all believers gathered, seek the unity of the body and the truth of

the gospel by singing the Word, reading the Word, responding to the Word, and preaching the Word (**Acts 2:42, Colossians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 14:26**).

At times we can get into routine and forget this important time together, but the gathering of the believers in local churches is an important practice and time that we should stir one another towards being committed (**Hebrews 10:24-25**).

The Ordinances

Baptism and communion (the Lord's Supper) are the two ordinances prescribed by our Lord Jesus Christ as visible symbols of invisible grace. They are discernible and tangible representations of both the invisible realities of the gospel and the Spirit's application of this gospel to our lives.

With both ordinances, believers have an opportunity to remember God's goodness and grace, especially as revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Both baptism and communion picture Christ's death and resurrection and our participation in His death and resurrection through union to Him in faith.

As we enter into the waters, or watch another do so, we are reminded that Christ was crucified and raised from the dead and that we too have died to the old self in order to live for Christ.

As we take the elements of the bread and the cup, we are reminded that Christ gave Himself for us by having His body broken and His blood poured out on the cross.

Read (for baptism), **Acts 2:37-38, 41, Acts 8:12, Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:27**

Read (for communion), **Matthew 26:26-28, Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:25-26**

A Closer Look at Baptism

Within the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries, the nature of the ordinances [or sacraments] were fiercely debated, even between the various Reformers. Without attempting to justify any particular position, it is important to assert, that baptism is in some mysterious sense a “means of grace,” in which God sanctifies and encourages His people. That said, it is important to bear in mind a few helpful truths regarding what baptism is *not* and *does not* do:

1. Baptism does not save.

Though grace is mysteriously mediated through the ordinance, it is not saving grace but rather sanctifying grace. We are more conformed to the image of Christ as we obey Him in the call to be baptized.

2. Baptism is not “necessary” for Salvation.

Without in any way diminishing the duty and delight of baptism for a believer, we must also warn against thinking, which suggests that salvation is dependent upon baptism. The gospel is one of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone.

How should a person be baptized?

Though other denominations and theological traditions baptize by pouring or sprinkling water, here at Redeemer we practice believer baptism by immersion. We do so in light of the following considerations:

1. The Greek word βαπτίζω (baptizo) literally means to plunge, submerge or immerse.

Our English word baptism is a transliteration of the Greek baptizo. Baptizo was used in Greek literature to describe the act of immersing something in water or another liquid. It later became a technical term that referred specifically to the Christian ordinance of baptism.

1. The representation of union in Christ's death and resurrection is best expressed through immersion.

Whether buried below or above ground, the symbolism of burial is still that of being placed under something. Likewise, resurrection is accomplished by coming out of something (whether grave or tomb). Immersion best symbolizes this reality by actually placing the believer under the water and bringing them out.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Have you been baptized as a believer?
- Do you understand and consider what Christ has done for you when you take communion; treating it as a "visible symbol of invisible grace"?
- Are you committed to a local church where you are serving and putting on display to other believers and the world what Christ has done in you?

**THE
GOSPEL
PRESENTED**

Sharing the Message

Every Christian should agree on the necessity of reaching out to the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ (**1 Timothy 1:15**).

The first two verses of a very popular Christian children's song tell a revealing truth about what should be the basic marks of our approach in sharing the gospel.

**“This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine.
Hide it under a bushel? No! I'm gonna let it shine.”**

As the church, we are living and active examples of the great Savior who saved us. We are light in a dark world that are called to shine that others may see our works and praise God (**Matthew 5:16**).

But this does not mean that we only share the gospel by doing works and showing mercy—while leaving out the message (**Romans 10:17**). The gospel is something we are to communicate with our mouths, as well as our lives.

In the English language we have two terms that are often used synonymously to describe the sharing of the Good News: **evangelism** and **outreach**.

Often we confuse these terms and consider them the same, but they are not the same. They are different terms that are inseparable.

Outreach is a great way for the church to display and illustrate to our local community what God has done for us and in us through Christ. This is outreach, which then must lead to evangelism.

This is important because we should never assume that because we show kindness or mercy towards others, this is what is preaching the gospel to lost sinners. We are to be kind and merciful, but that does not mean we have shared the good news and they have repented and believed.

The greatest difference is that evangelism is primarily a message while outreach is primarily a method.

Simply put, evangelism is telling others the good news about what Jesus Christ has done to save sinners, [ref. ch. 1] while outreach is serving others because of the saving affect of this good news.

The Heart of a Messenger [Hope of a Savior]

Often the struggle to reach out and share the gospel is the fear that we either 1) do not know enough about the Bible and theology or 2) we will be rejected when sharing.

But remember, when we share the gospel, we do not do the saving. It was stated in the first chapter that **“God has decided to save a people for His own sake.”** So we need to understand it is not that we save anyone. God alone saves sinners. We are to *present* and *persuade* those that are lost with the truth of the gospel message.

As we seek to reach others with the gospel and make disciples, Jesus gives us the most hope filled reminder in **Matthew 28:20b**, *“Behold, I am with you always.”*

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Have you shared the gospel with a neighbor, friend or co-worker recently?
- What does the Bible say about the importance of the church reaching out?

CONSIDER THIS:

Think about 1-2 people to begin praying for and think about ways to engage in meaningful conversation with them using this material.

**EVERYTHING
WE DO**

Spend any amount of time here at Redeemer and you will find that what we preach and teach is **the gospel of Jesus Christ**. The Gospel affects everything we do at Redeemer.

We assume that most people have not heard or thoughtfully considered the deeper implications of the Gospel. We exist to bring things “in line with the Gospel” (**Galatians 2:14**); here are some of the ways the Gospel changes us:

GOSPEL FAITH

The Gospel centers all truth in the person and work of Jesus. Naturally, we stop being prideful in our own good work or despairing in our bad work. Our faith is not in how we walk or will walk in this life, but in how Jesus already walked in His.

GOSPEL LOVE

We move from an impersonal “boss-employee” relationship to a personal “Father-child” relationship; from a fear-based, self-interested way (seeking to be moral) to a love-based desire to delight in our God. All of this comes from the radical love that God proved he had for us on the cross. That love for God, IN Christ, cannot help but overflow into a love for others LIKE Christ.

GOSPEL HOPE

The Gospel reminds us that our hope rests in the reality of Jesus’ resurrection and His return. This is not our home, the king is returning, and one day we will live in his presence forever. The Gospel also teaches us to have hope for non-Christians. No one is ever seen as “too far away,” since every conversion, including your own, is a supernatural miracle of the heart.

GOSPEL UNITY

The Gospel tells us that God did not die for a person, but for a people—the church. Through the cross, we enter into God’s family. And within this Gospel Community, we use all that we have, our experiences, time, talent, and gifts to help build up that body. It is within this community that God intends for us to grow and exhibit His incredible wisdom.

GOSPEL OBEDIENCE

We are saved by His grace at such an infinite cost to Him—one we could never equal. **We no longer obey to be accepted, we are accepted, and so we obey.** He can, therefore, ask anything of us and we can serve Him joyfully. We are convinced that our Father desires only our good, so we rejoice in obedience even when it confronts our emotions, intellects, or experiences.

GOSPEL APPROVAL

We no longer take our identity from what we or others think of us but from what God thinks of us in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:3-4). The Gospel produces neither an inferiority complex (since we are a treasure in Christ), nor a superiority complex (since we are sinners standing only by grace). This unique boldness and humility at once is a sign of the transforming power of the Gospel.

GOSPEL REPENTANCE

We approach our sin honestly. The moralist says: “repent, you are not living right”. The Psychologist says: “you must accept yourself just as you are”. The Gospel says: “only Jesus can be your functional savior and give meaning to your reality.” With every problem then, we must consider whether we are looking to something other than Jesus for our meaning, hope, or joy.

GOSPEL SUFFERING

We approach suffering with an entirely different perspective. We know that God uses trials to build our faith and make us look more like His Son—that we might glorify him. If we are going to have a life like Christ, it will include suffering in our efforts to glorify God. Because Jesus’ suffering was not senseless; neither is ours. We now have the power to follow His example and entrust ourselves to God.

GOSPEL RELATIONSHIPS

In the Gospel, Christians become a new people of God, united to Christ and to each other like a family. We rejoice in our diversity and our relationships become things of beauty, driven by love (Galatians 5:6) in which we are neither using people nor overly “needy” of them. Instead we are freed to serve, affirm, or confront – whatever is best for the moment.

GOSPEL WORSHIP

Worship is the process by which we continually attribute the most worth to Jesus. Many other things compete with Christ for this place of worthiness, and the Bible calls them idols. John Calvin referred to our hearts as “idol factories,” constantly manufacturing new objects of worship. As individuals and as a unified body, we highly value the identification of idols

that compete with the one true God. Once these idols are identified, they are exposed (repentance) as unworthy and unfulfilling and then destroyed.

GOSPEL LIVING

Through an emphasis on the Gospel, we seek to promote this ongoing process in the private lives of those we serve. On the corporate level we hope to see people go through this process as we gather to celebrate the “good news.” If there is no personal transformation occurring in the body, then corporate worship will be like a lifeless committee meeting instead of an encounter with the living God. If, on the other hand, we are being personally transformed, then our worship will be alive and outsiders will be attracted to what is happening (1 Corinthians 14:24,25).

GOSPEL RESPECT

The Gospel humbles us, compelling us to have a deep respect for others, especially non-Christians. Since we are saved only by grace, it is our responsibility to humbly demonstrate our own reliance on Christ, and live out our security and peace as we boldly tell His story.

GOSPEL EVANGELISM

The Gospel prevents us from defensiveness and the need to win arguments and prove ourselves through witnessing. Not only do we not take things personally, we now evangelize out of a desire to glorify God. In other words, telling God’s story becomes primarily an act of praise for what he has done regardless if anyone listens. A secondary (and important) benefit is that people are not saved by our evangelism.

GOSPEL GIVING

The Gospel makes us generous – which heals the social brokenness. For people with means, it gives us a model of sacrificial giving in Christ (2 Corinthians 8:2) which we now owe to others (Matthew 18:21-35), even to those who are undeserving, like we were (Isaiah 64:6; Luke 6:32-35). One of the marks of a heart truly touched by grace is a life poured out in deeds of mercy (James 2:12-14).

GOSPEL WORK

The Gospel clears out religiosity and makes so called “secular” work as valuable and God-honoring as Christian ministry. When you use your gifts in work – whether by practicing law, tilling the field, mending broken bodies, or nurturing children – you are answering God’s calling to serve the human community. The Gospel also shapes and affects the motives and methods we use in our work. In other words, not only does our work matter to God, but God matters in all of our work.

**QUESTIONS
& NEXT STEPS**

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED

- 1) **Can we earn salvation?** Certainly not. Man, being dead in sin, is unable to save himself, or to contribute anything toward his own salvation. God's way is to save completely and fully in Jesus Christ, and in no other way. Any other teaching is not the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Romans 4:1-5, Galatians 1:6-9, 2:21, 3:24)**
- 2) **Are there any too sinful to be accepted by Christ?** No, none at all. Each of us was at one time dead in sin before we were raised up by God. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ is sufficient to cleanse from all sin. **(Ephesians 2:1-6, 1 John 1:7)**
- 3) **But what of the cost of following Jesus?** Yes, there is a cost. Not a cost to being saved, but a cost of living as a disciple of Jesus Christ. He calls us to live a holy life, separate from the sinful attitudes of the world. The standards of Christian living are very different than those of the world. As men and women who have died with Christ, our outlook on life should be different. The glory of God should be our highest priority rather than the fulfilling of personal desires. **(1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 John 2:15-17, Romans 6:11-18, Colossians 2:7-8)**
- 4) **How can I persevere? What if I fail?** When God saves, He does so completely. It is not in our power that we persevere, but in the power of God. It is His promise that He will complete the work He has begun in us. The Bible says, "God, who has called you into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful." It is the faithfulness of God that brings about the faithfulness of the Christian. **(Philippians 1:6, 1 Corinthians 1:30-31, John 10:25-29, Romans 5:1-2, 1 Corinthians 1:9)**

WHAT NEXT?

The Bible speaks of Christ's "church." The church, in its most general sense, is not a single organization or group or denomination. **It is the entire company of God's elect that is to be found in every organization that worships God, teaches and preaches the Bible, and leads others to the true Jesus Christ.**

It is vital that you find a **local church** that believes that the Bible alone is God's Word; that teaches the truth about God and Jesus Christ. If that is Redeemer, we would be happy to speak with you about the work the Lord has begun in your life.

Also important, is the continued study of God's Word, the Bible. Find a good, modern translation of the Bible (such as the English Standard Bible or the New International Version) and read from it every day. A good place to start is with the Gospel of John.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

- Are you a committed member of a local church?
- In your understanding, is the local church a vital part of living out the gospel?

CONSIDER THIS:

If you are not a member of a local church and you are not sure where to start, the best thing to do is to find a local church that is closest to the Bible. We are often prone to find friends and groups closest to us in proximity or preference, but doctrine and devotion (centered on the Word) is what marks a healthy church.

RESOURCES:

Listen to Pastor David's four part teaching series on the Gospel Guide online at redeemersw.com/beliefs.

**1 Now I would remind you,
brothers, of the gospel I preached
to you, which you received, in
which you stand, 2 and by which
you are being saved, if you hold
fast to the word I preached to you—
unless you believed in vain.**

1 Corinthians 15:1-2



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