

01

THE CALL

Explaining a Life in Christ

THIS IS THE
GOSPEL

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01: The Call

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Introduction

Where does evangelism end and discipleship begin? The prevailing consensus has been that evangelism leads a person to Christ and discipleship develops a person in Christ. Based on that description, the dividing line would be the point of salvation.

However, what if the two concepts are not mutually exclusive? What if evangelism and discipleship are interwoven in one continuous exercise in the gospel? To see the merits of that theory, basic definitions of evangelism and discipleship are helpful.

- Evangelism is proclaiming and/or preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Discipleship is gospel-centered training that helps people know Christ and follow Him faithfully.

If the resources provided through *This Is the Gospel* are to make sense, it is important to see the full reach of the gospel. Many Christians associate the gospel only with evangelism, not discipleship. They see the gospel as what a person needs to believe to become a Christian, not what a person needs to practice to live as a Christian.

As you will discover in this guide, the gospel is not just the good news that saves; it is the good news that sanctifies. Pastor Dave Harvey said it best: “Everything in Scripture is either preparation for the gospel, presentation of the gospel,

or participation in the gospel.” Christians never outgrow the gospel; we grow into the gospel.

Another factor distinctive to these resources is the relational nature of the material as a guide to relationally-centered discipleship. The relational emphasis is not an attempt to approach discipleship from a different angle; it is an attempt to remain true to the heart of the gospel.

The gospel is about relationship. Humanity was created for relationship with God. Our sin separated us from that relationship. The gospel is the good news of what Christ has done on our behalf so that this relationship can be reconciled and enjoyed.

While many discipleship resources focus on the actions of a Christian (i.e., prayer, Bible study, witnessing, giving, serving, etc.), these resources will focus on the relationships of a Christian. As you will see throughout this guide, activity flows from relationship. If knowing God is not the focus of our Christian journey, spiritual activity will fall short of character change.

One final thought to keep in mind is that *This Is the Gospel* provides a compilation of four stand-alone resources. Each part fits together to provide the foundation and framework for discipleship. The resources are as follows:

- 1) The Call: Explaining a Life in Christ
- 2) The Relationship: Establishing Your Life in Christ
- 3) The Pursuit: Exploring Your Life in Christ
- 4) The Journey: Embracing Your Life in Christ

The Call (Part 1) provides evangelism training, essential theology, and a simple gospel presentation. This resource will help believers and unbelievers recognize the various conditions of the human heart, barriers to relationship with Jesus, and how a person might respond to the gospel message. **The Relationship (Part 2)** is a follow-up resource that guides a new believer through their first week in Christ or helps older believers make sure they have a strong discipleship foundation. **The Pursuit (Part 3)** is a

month-long devotional guide that emphasizes the four critical components of discipleship: love God, unite with believers, serve the world, and entrust the gospel. Each part is studied for one week. **The Journey (Part 4)** is a mentoring guide that provides a basic framework for Christian living. It’s designed to guide the conversation in follow-up meetings and reinforce key principles.

It is important to teach/share the material in order. Each part builds on the foundation of the previous resource(s). The material can be taught over the first 15 to 16 months of a Christian’s spiritual journey. If time constraints do not allow that much time, the material can be taught in two to three months. The key is to make sure the person (or group) understands the material at each level before moving to the next level. Without a clear understanding and a solid grasp of each part, it would not be beneficial to move ahead. Don’t rush this process, but trust God as He works in a person’s heart.

“The Lord looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men; from His dwelling place He looks out on all the inhabitants of the earth, He who fashions the hearts of them all, He who understands all their works.” (Psalm 33:14-15)

Jesus said in Matthew 28:19, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...”* Our mission is clear. Christ has commanded us to make disciples. If we’re not making disciples, we’re failing at our mission. Therefore, we need to know *what* a disciple is, *how* disciples are made, and *how* the gospel is central to everything related to discipleship.

The gospel is just as powerful to change lives today as it was 2,000 years ago. Our job is to equip people with the gospel, disciple them in the gospel, and then release them to share the gospel. The world will not be reached by simply adding people to the kingdom through the work of skilled evangelists. The world will be reached by making disciples who multiply themselves through others.

Let's say you are really effective at leading people to Christ, and you are able to lead a person to Christ every day of every year for 33 years in a row. In 33 years, you would have reached 12,045 people. That would be an incredible accomplishment and a blessing to be sure! But let's view this from a different angle. Let's say you were to effectively make one disciple a year, and at the end of that year, both of you effectively make a disciple for that year (four), and then the four of you make one disciple a year for the next year (eight), and then the eight do the same, and so on. If that continued for 33 years, do you know how many people would be reached? Over 8.5 billion people!

In the first 11 years, making disciples seems weak in comparison to evangelism alone. It's not until year 12 that the numbers almost become even, but at year 13 discipleship almost doubles the numbers of evangelism alone.

Discipleship moves to multiplication over time, but it happens even faster if you are discipling more than one person (see the D-4 Groups column).

Year	Evangelist	Disciple Maker	D-4 Groups
1	365	2	3
2	730	4	9
3	1,095	8	27
4	1,460	16	81
5	1,825	32	243
6	2,190	64	729
7	2,555	128	2,187
8	2,920	256	6,561
9	3,285	512	19,683
10	3,650	1,024	59,049
11	4,015	2,048	177,147
12	4,380	4,096	531,441
13	4,745	8,192	1,594,323
14	5,110	16,384	4,782,969
15	5,475	32,768	14,348,907
16	5,840	65,536	43,046,721
17	6,205	131,072	129,140,163

18	6,570	262,144	387,420,489
19	6,935	524,288	1,162,261,467
20	7,300	1,048,576	3,486,784,401
21	7,665	2,097,152	10,460,353,203
22	8,030	4,194,304	
23	8,395	8,388,608	
24	8,760	16,777,216	
25	9,125	33,554,432	
26	9,490	67,108,864	
27	9,855	134,217,728	
28	10,220	268,435,456	
29	10,585	536,870,912	
30	10,950	1,073,741,824	
31	11,315	2,147,483,648	
32	11,680	4,294,967,296	
33	12,045	8,589,934,592	

It is our prayer that these resources will be a valuable tool in developing many disciples of Christ.



How to Use This Guide

The material in this guide has been produced so that everything is written out completely. With the exception of personal reflections in the devotional resources, there are no blanks to fill in.

This decision is strategic. We want people to focus on the content and not become distracted by the blanks. We also want the material to be as complete as possible so that Christians without a mentor to disciple them can guide themselves through the process.

How can this guide be used? There are several primary ways to use the *This Is the Gospel* resources.

- Use for personal growth as a disciple: If you want to ensure the foundation of your spiritual life, or if you feel that you have plateaued spiritually, go through the material yourself.
- Use for one-on-one training of disciples: If you are discipling a new believer or new leader within your church, use this material as a basic guide. While every part of the Christian life is not covered in this guide, the important parts of discipleship are covered extensively.
- Use for small group training of disciples: If you are leading a small group or teaching a new believers class, this material

is an excellent resource to share in that setting. There are plenty of opportunities to pause, ask questions, and discuss comments.

- Use as a resource for laying the foundation of discipleship within the local church: While it may be impossible to print a copy of the resources and give them to every member of your church, it is possible to take the basic teachings and share them through sermons. As you grow comfortable with the material, you will see more and more opportunities to share these insights in a corporate setting.

This Is the Gospel guides are designed to be printed as needed. We encourage you to make copies. For example, if you are discipling five people each quarter, you only need to print the materials for that quarter. This option keeps costs low. If it is not possible to give the entire guide at once, you can print individual sections as you go. Encourage people to keep each section and put them together in a binder. The ability to go back and reference previous sections is extremely important.

For additional resources, please visit www.ThisIsTheGospel.com. Over time, more languages, contributors, and resources will be added to the site. The individual pieces of this guide are on the site. You will also find testimonies, messages, and other materials to help you grow as a disciple and make disciples.



Critical Components of the Gospel

Acts 8:25-40

Key Concept: Most questions about salvation are rooted in confusion over the gospel.

Acts 8:25-40 describes the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch. The story is rare because the conversion experience can be seen from God's perspective, the Ethiopian's perspective, and Philip's perspective. It's the complete picture.

The bigger theme of chapters 8, 9, and 10 is the spread of the gospel to all segments of society. In each chapter, we find a conversion story. In chapter 8, the Ethiopian eunuch comes to faith in Christ. According to genealogical records, the Ethiopians were descendants of Ham (see Genesis 10:6, where "Cush" refers to Ethiopia). In chapter 9, Saul of Tarsus is converted. Saul was a Jew and therefore a descendant of Shem (Genesis 10:21-31). In chapter 10, Cornelius (a Gentile) comes to faith in Christ. He would have been a descendant of Japheth (Genesis 10:2-5).

These groups represent the ethnological and geographical divisions made after the Flood. Ham, Shem, and Japheth were the sons of Noah. When God repopulated the earth after the flood, everyone became a descendant of one of these three. These conversion stories demonstrate how the gospel changes individual lives and reaches all three divisions of the human family.

Let's take the first of the stories and see three critical components of the gospel. These truths are universal.

I. The gospel is empowered by the work of God's Spirit.

If we fail to understand this truth, or reject this truth, we will always be confused over salvation.

There are three biblical truths that fight the heresy of man-empowered salvation.

1) No one is saved by their works.

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." (Ephesians 2:8-9)

(Additional verses: Galatians 2:16; Titus 3:5)

2) No one is saved by their righteousness.

A person is not saved because they are essentially good. Some people believe they will be saved because they've never done anything really bad. That is a misunderstanding about the nature of sin. If you steal a piece of candy from the store, you are labeled a thief. It doesn't matter if you took 100 pieces, 1,000,000 pieces, or one piece. The act of stealing immediately gives you the title of "thief." In the same way, it doesn't matter if you've sinned one time, 100 times, or 1,000,000 times. To sin earns us the title of "sinner."

Romans 3:23 states that *"all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."* It's not about the magnitude of our sin or the number of our sins. It is about the nature of sin itself. Sin separates us from God.

(Additional verses: Matthew 6:33; Romans 4:6; 10:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Philippians 3:9)

3) No one is saved by their decision.

"You did not choose Me but I chose you..." (John 15:16)

"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him..." (John 6:44)

*"For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father."
(John 6:65)*

Salvation is totally God's work. It originates in the sovereign will of God (Acts 13:48; Romans 8:29; Ephesians 1:3-7), and it is implemented by His grace (Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:1).

Apart from the issues we just discussed, there are two insurmountable barriers that keep humanity from attaining salvation through individual effort. First, we are spiritually dead and unable to respond to God. Ephesians 2:1 says, *"You were dead in your trespasses and sins..."* To be physically dead means a person is unable to respond to physical stimuli. To be spiritually dead means a person is unable to respond to spiritual stimuli. Dead men don't act!

The second insurmountable barrier is deception. Paul told the Corinthian believers that, *"And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving so that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God"* (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). Satan and his demons are actively involved in deceiving people so that they do not see the light of God's truth.

We need the Holy Spirit to quicken a dead spirit and illumine a deceived mind. Dead men don't act; and deceived men don't believe. The Bible clearly shows that God provided a way of salvation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to quicken a dead

spirit, illumine a deceived mind, and draw us to the Father in love.

In the story of the Ethiopian eunuch, the Holy Spirit is clearly at work. The Holy Spirit maneuvered Philip into a strategic position. Verse 26 says, *"But an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip saying, 'Get up and go south to the road that descends from Jerusalem to Gaza.' (This is a desert road.)"* Verse 29 tells us that *"the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go up and join this chariot.'"* The circumstances that led to the eunuch's salvation were specifically arranged by the Holy Spirit.

You could make the argument that the Spirit stirred the man's heart with questions, the Spirit prepared Phillip with the right answers, and the Spirit called the eunuch into salvation.

We need the Spirit of God to go ahead of us, prepare the way for us, ready a person's heart for salvation, quicken a dead spirit, remove deception, instill truth, and call a person into a relationship with God. Apart from the work of God's Spirit, there is no salvation.

II. The gospel is grounded in the truths of God's Word.

The Word of God is essential to salvation.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life..." (John 5:24)

"So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ." (Romans 10:17)

"In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise," (Ephesians 1:13)

"...for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God." (1 Peter 1:23)

The Holy Spirit reveals the work of Christ through the Word of God.

In this story, the eunuch was reading Isaiah 53. The text spoke of the Lamb of God, but the eunuch didn't understand it. Phillip asked, *"Do you understand what you are reading?"* (v. 30). The man responded, *"How could I, unless someone guides me?"* (v. 31). He invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Philip started where the man was and took him through the Scriptures, explaining who Jesus was and what He had done.

Philip did what Christ did in John 3, what Paul did in 1 Corinthians 9, what Apollos did in Acts 18, and what Stephen did in Acts 7. They knew the Scriptures well enough to meet people where they were. If all we know is a gospel outline, we will get confused when the conversation moves to something else. If we understand the gospel message, we can work with a person as they ask their questions.

III. The gospel is spread by the witness of God's people.

God has chosen to accomplish His sovereign work through human instruments (Acts 2:4, 14; 4:8, 31; 6:3-8; 7:55; 8:17; 10:1-48; 16:25-34). Philip was an instrument in the hands of God. When ordered to go, he went. When told to join the chariot, he joined it. When given the opportunity to share Christ, he preached Jesus. Philip was ready.

God uses His people to share this gospel message.

- In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His followers that they would be His witnesses. Philip was a witness to the eunuch.
- In Romans 10:14-15, Paul asked, *"How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher? How will they preach unless they are sent?"* Philip was sent by God and shared the message of God.

- In 1 Corinthians 1:21, Paul wrote, *"For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not come to know God, God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe."* God uses His people to proclaim the gospel, and He is well pleased to save those who believe.

In God's wisdom, He has chosen to share the incredible message of the gospel through His people. We have been given the task of sharing this message with all people. We have been entrusted with the good news of God, and we are instructed to take that message to the ends of the earth. He has given us His Spirit, He has given us His Word, and He has commissioned us to go.

How will the gospel reach the ends of the earth?
God's Spirit...God's Word...God's People



The Principles of Gospel Preparation

Mark 4:1-20

We are going to focus on the Spirit's work in preparing a person's heart for the gospel. One of the best texts on this subject was shared by Christ in Mark 4:1-20. It is the parable of the four soils.

When the Bible speaks of salvation, the most common analogy is farming. In this parable, Jesus mentions four soil types. Each soil represents a condition of the human heart and its receptivity to the gospel message. Likewise, each soil shows a different level of preparation by the Holy Spirit. By understanding the soil types and the Spirit's preparation, we are able to join with God instead of trying to push people towards Christ.

Jesus said, *"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and birds came and ate it up."* (vv. 3-4, NIV)

Picture in your mind, this man walking along the path with a seed bag slung over his shoulder, and he is scattering seed. As he slings the seed, some would fall on the path, some would fall in the rocks, some would fall in the weeds, and some would actually make it to good soil. This is the picture that Jesus used to explain the condition of the human heart and how it responds to the seeds of the gospel.

1) Hard Soil: Some people do not understand the gospel. (vv. 3-4, 15)

The Soil (vv. 3-4)

"Listen! A farmer went out to sow his seed. As he was scattering the seed, some fell along the path, and birds came and ate it up." (NIV)

The Explanation of the Soil (v. 15)

"Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them." (NIV)

The Characteristics of the Soil

This same parable is also found in Matthew 13 and Luke 8. In the explanation of Matthew 13, there is more insight into this first soil. In Matthew 13:19, Jesus said, *"When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path."* This person does not understand the gospel. In terms of preparation, their heart has not been prepared by the Holy Spirit. They are hardened to the things of God. John MacArthur described this person as follows:

"The reason he does not understand is not due to any deficiency in the message but to his own hardheartedness. He is the person often referred to in the Old Testament as stiff-necked. He is unconcerned with the things of God, completely indifferent to anything spiritual. The word makes no penetration into his mind or heart. He does not give the gospel the least consideration, thinking it to be total foolishness. He has so continually and consistently resisted anything that smacks of spirituality, that the soil of his heart has become pounded down until it is impervious and insensitive."

However, even though a person is turned off to the gospel today, it does not mean that we are excused from sowing seed.

How do we respond to this soil type?

- Pray
 - Pray for God to break the hard ground of the human heart with the Word of God. (Romans 10:14-17)
 - Pray that God will open their eyes to the truth. (Acts 17:18-20; 26:18; 1 Corinthians 1:18)
 - Pray that God will bring them under conviction. (Acts 2:37 - The men at Pentecost were "cut to the heart" when they came face to face with the gospel of Christ.)
- Sow Seed
Part of the hardness of this person's heart has come by witnessing the hypocritical lifestyles of many Christians. The world is looking for someone who has been changed by the power of God, living in accordance with that encounter. When God gives you the opportunity, graciously sow the Word of God into their life (conversations, books, cards, texts, etc.).
- Love Unconditionally
A person's spiritual condition has nothing to do with whether we love them or not. We must remember that they are not turned off to the gospel because they understand it; they do not understand the gospel. Love this person.

2) Rocky Soil: Some people do not understand the cost of following Christ. (vv. 5-6, 16-17)

The Soil (vv. 5-6)

"Some fell on rocky places, where it did not have much soil. It sprang up quickly, because the soil was shallow. But when the sun came up, the plants were scorched, and they withered because they had no root." (NIV)

The Explanation of the Soil (vv. 16-17)

"Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and

at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away." (NIV)

The Characteristics of the Soil

The second soil is where the primary part of the debate begins. This person received the Word with joy. Doesn't that mean they received Christ? This person grew for a little while. How can they grow unless life had occurred?

We need to be careful that we are looking for biblical signs of repentance. The Bible does not speak of growth as a sign of repentance; the Bible speaks of fruit as the sign of repentance.

John the Baptist scolded the religious crowd for desiring the baptism of the righteous without showing any signs of repentance: *"Produce fruit that is consistent with repentance!"* (Matthew 3:8, ISV)

Jesus taught that we could distinguish between good and evil people by inspecting the fruit in their lives. *"A good tree doesn't produce rotten fruit, and a rotten tree doesn't produce good fruit, because every tree is known by its own fruit."* (Luke 6:43-44a, ISV)

In John 15, Jesus said He is the Vine and we are the branches, and every branch in Him will bear fruit. Fruit is the outward indicator of being in Christ. Therefore, when we study a passage like this, our question must be, "Do we see fruit?"

The second soil mentioned is rocky ground. This description does not refer to loose rocks on the surface. When the farmer plowed a field, he would remove excess debris from the field before planting. Instead, the rock mentioned is the underlying bedrock that was not reached by the plow.

It is clear that a degree of preparation has taken place. The seeds that fell on the path (v. 4) were unable to penetrate the earth. The seeds that fell on the stony ground (v. 5) penetrated the soil, but only in a shallow fashion. When the seeds hit this shallow layer of dirt, *“They sprouted at once. . . But when the sun came up, they were scorched...”* (vv. 5-6, ISV). The roots were unable to hit water. This soil has not been cultivated enough to sustain life.

This person is described in detail in verses 16-17: *“Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away.”* (NIV)

The hard soil is resistant and does not understand the gospel. The rocky soil is receptive but does not understand the cost associated with the gospel. This individual makes an emotional decision (with joy) without a firm basis for understanding the cost of salvation.

John MacArthur notes, “Sometimes shallow acceptance of the gospel is encouraged by shallow evangelism that holds out the blessings of salvation but hides the cost—such as repenting from sin, dying to self, and turning from the old life. When people are encouraged to walk down the aisle, raise their hand, or sign a card without coming to grips with the full claims of Christ, they are in great danger of becoming further from Christ than they were before they heard the message. They become insulated from true salvation by a false profession of faith.”

The Holy Spirit is still preparing this soil. Instead of waiting until fully prepared, this person makes an emotional decision without understanding of the cost of following Christ.

What does the “stony heart” person look like? This person has the appearance of an emotional conversion. They may

quickly involve themselves in the things of God (i.e., church attendance, Bible studies, serving). However, when trials come, they don’t have the ability to connect to the life of Christ, and they fall away.

How do we respond to this soil type?

- Follow the same response as the first soil.
- Recognize eagerness, but fully explain the cost.
- Spend time with this individual and answer their questions.

3) Thorny Soil: Some people want the world more than God. (vv. 7, 18-19)

The Soil (v. 7)

“Others fell among thorn bushes, and the thorn bushes came up and choked them out, and they didn’t produce anything.” (ISV)

The Explanation of the Soil (vv. 18-19)

“Still others are like the seeds sown among the thorn bushes. These are the people who hear the word, but the worries of life, the deceitful pleasures of wealth, and the desires for other things come in and choke the word so that it can’t produce a crop.” (ISV)

The Characteristics of the Soil

Our first point of interest is the lack of fruit or a crop. The biblical sign of repentance is not growth, but fruit. (Additional verses: Matthew 3, 7, 13; John 15; Romans 7; Galatians 5; Ephesians 5; Colossians 1)

The second point of interest is the progressive nature of soil preparation. The first soil is completely hard and impenetrable. The second soil is tilled on top, but not deep enough to penetrate the bedrock. The third soil is sufficiently cultivated for growth. We know this because everything is growing. Weeds are growing, the seed of the Word is growing, and the weeds are big enough to choke out the good seed.

For this person, God is one among many interests. They are not turned off by God, but they are not captivated by Him either. They view God as a great addition to their life, but He's not their life. We know this because when they are forced to decide between the world and God, the world wins. This individual is so consumed with the daily affairs of life (mortgages, the workplace, raising a family, the economy, hobbies, cars, etc.) that they have no time to dwell upon the eternal truths of God. The things of God are choked out by the things of the world.

Chances are that this person is somewhat advanced in age. A child is not concerned with *"the worries of life, the deceitful pleasures of wealth, and the desires for other things"* (1SV). This description is of someone who knows the truth of the gospel, but they choose to pursue things other than Christ.

This person is partially interested in God but primarily interested in the world. This person is spiritual but lost. They have religion without relationship. The telling sign is not emotion, activity, church attendance, or even a prayer for salvation. The telling sign is a lack of fruit.

God's fruit is not produced through their life. There is no joy in various circumstances, no peace during the hard times, no patience with people, no gentleness with others, no humility in their walk, no passion for holiness. There is no indicator of the fruit of the Spirit.

How do we respond to this soil type?

- Love this person unconditionally and do not take a judgmental tone.
- Pray for conviction and clarity.
- Pray that God would remove all distractions from this person's life and bring them face to face with the reality of their spiritual condition.
- Continue to be a godly example before them.

4) **Good Soil: Some people are receptive to the gospel.** (vv. 8, 20)

The Soil (v. 8)

"Still other seed fell on good soil. It came up, grew and produced a crop, some multiplying thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times." (NIV)

The Explanation of the Soil (v. 20)

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred times what was sown." (NIV)

Characteristics of the Soil

The fourth soil is away from the path. This soil has been cultivated to a sufficient depth. It has the ability to sustain good plants free of weeds. Due to the conditions, it is able to produce a crop.

The amount of production from this soil is what is truly amazing. Jesus was not just making a simple comment about a bountiful crop. Historical evidence indicates that during the first century, the average ratio of harvested grain would have been less than eight to one. The ratio Jesus refers to can only be described as supernatural. He speaks of 30 to one, and 60 to one, and 100 to one return. That description parallels His teachings in John 15 when He spoke of fruit, more fruit, and much fruit.

The fruit of God is so apparent, you don't have to wonder if a person is a Christian. You see God's hand all over them. When genuine conversion happens, a person continues walking with Christ and maturing as a believer.

How do we respond to this soil type?

- Clearly share the gospel with them and help them understand how they can repent of their sin by placing faith in Christ.

When we take all of the information together, we see that some people don't understand the gospel, some people don't understand the cost of following Christ, some people are captivated by the world, and some people are receptive to the gospel. The one who sows seeds will sow on every type of soil. The one who reaps must specialize in the good soil.

This does not suggest neglecting others. It is simply a reminder not to force, coerce, manipulate, or drag a prayer of repentance out of anyone. By understanding the conditions of the soil, we can effectively witness to each state of the human heart.



Presenting the Gospel

This final section of the introductory material contains two components: a simple gospel presentation and an expanded gospel presentation. The goal is to study the statements, understand the parts of the gospel, and then use this format when presenting the gospel to others.

Sharing the gospel according to the simple gospel presentation will create a smooth transition into the follow-up material. The gospel is about relationship, and the follow-up material emphasizes that relationship.

By repeatedly sharing the gospel in this format, the statements will stick in the minds of your church, your small group, those you are training, or those who are unsaved. The goal is to remove confusion by repeating the same truths in the same sequence. Over time, people will know the gospel because they've heard the same statements over and over. It is important to study these statements and be familiar with the corresponding passages. You don't have to memorize each passage, but it is helpful to mark the passages in your Bible. Keep a copy of the simple gospel presentation in your wallet, in your Bible, and on your phone. To familiarize yourself with this format, study the expanded gospel presentation. Each statement is followed by a more detailed explanation. It is imperative that you know each part and why they are essential to the gospel. If you share

the gospel and that person is not ready to place faith in Christ, leave a copy of the expanded gospel presentation with them. Pray that they will look over the sheet at another time. The extra explanation is very helpful, and it also contains the website for additional resources.



Simple Gospel Presentation

What is the essence of the gospel message?

- **Humanity was created for relationship with God.**
(Genesis 2-3; Leviticus 26:12)
- **Our sin separated us from that relationship.**
(Isaiah 59:2; Romans 3:23)
- **There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.**
(Ephesians 2:1-9)
- **Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.**
(Romans 5:8-10; Ephesians 2:13-16; 1 John 4:9-10)
- **Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life.**
(1 Peter 1:3)
- **Jesus offers eternal life (a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Jesus Christ.**
(John 3:16; 17:3; Acts 2:38)



Expanded Gospel Presentation

What Is the Purpose of Life?

This question has been asked for centuries. The Bible gives us a clear answer: Life is about relationship. From the book of Genesis through the book of Revelation, the Bible shares a relational message. This message is called the gospel or the good news.

When a person understands the message and embraces God's offer of eternal life, they not only discover the purpose of life, but they also discover Life itself. *"Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life...'"* (John 14:6)

- **Humanity was created for relationship with God.**

Genesis 2-3 tells us that Adam was created in the image of God and given the capacity for relationship with God. The story reveals conversation, cooperation, partnership, and relationship between Adam and God.

God's desire for relationship was not limited to Adam. He also entered covenant relationship with Israel: *"I will also walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people"* (Leviticus 26:12). Jesus stressed the importance of relationship by instructing His disciples to abide in Him (John 15:1-10), by promising to reveal Himself to those who love Him (John 14:21), and by referring to His followers as friends (John 15:15). Each passage shows God's desire for relationship.

- **Our sin separated us from that relationship.**

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Sin is breaking God's law, and there's a penalty for sin. Romans 6:23 tells us the punishment for breaking God's law: *"The wages of sin is death."* Wages are what we earn for what we've done. According to the Bible, we have all earned death.

When the Bible speaks of death, it speaks primarily of separation. When we die physically, our spirit is separated from our body. In similar fashion, when we died spiritually because of sin, our spirit was separated from God's Spirit. *"But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God,"* (Isaiah 59:2).

- **There is nothing that we can do to reconcile this relationship on our own.**

Many people believe good deeds will make them right with God. Unfortunately, there is no definitive marker for "adequate goodness." The Bible doesn't say, "If you are good most of the time, you are acceptable to God," or, "Three good deeds will offset one bad deed." Without a definitive standard for goodness, how good is good enough?

The Bible helps us see that our problem is not a lack of goodness; our problem is the effect of sin. We could never reconcile our relationship with God because sin brings death and deception. Ephesians 2:1 teaches that without Christ, we were dead in trespasses and sins. Second Corinthians 4:3-4 reveals that without God's intervention we are blinded to the truth by the god of this world. We can do nothing to reconcile with God because dead people don't act, and deceived people don't believe.

- **Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin.**

The penalty of sin was death. Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sin. His sacrifice made reconciliation possible. *"For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life"* (Romans 5:10).

- **Jesus rose from the dead that we might have life.**

While Jesus' death paid the penalty for our sin, it is His resurrection that brings us the hope of eternal life. *"Blessed be the God and Father...who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,"* (1 Peter 1:3). Jesus' death paid our sin debt; Jesus' resurrection makes relationship a reality.

- **Jesus offers eternal life (a reconciled relationship) to those who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Jesus Christ.**

Jesus spoke often of eternal life (John 3:15-16; 4:14; 5:39; 6:40). Many people assume that eternal life is going to heaven when you die. But that's not what Jesus said. In John 17:3, Jesus said, *"This is eternal life, that they may know You."* Eternal life is to know God. It is to experience a reconciled relationship with God. According to the Bible, eternal life is given to those who will turn from their sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. The Bible describes the act of turning from sin as repentance. It does not mean a person will be sinless. It means they desire God more than sinful activity.

How Can I Receive Eternal Life?

John 3:36 tells us that *"he who believes in the Son has eternal life."* A person receives eternal life by placing faith in what Jesus has done for them. What did Jesus do for them? He died on the cross for their sins, He rose from the dead that they might have life, and He offers eternal life to anyone who will repent of their sin by placing faith in Christ.

Following Christ is a journey that never ends, but it can begin with a simple prayer of confession. Use this prayer to guide you. *"God, I know that I've sinned. I recognize that my sin has separated me from You. I believe that Jesus died on the cross for my sin and that He rose again on the third day. As best I know how, I turn from my sin by placing faith in what Jesus has done for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen."*

If you have placed faith in Christ today, we encourage you to share this decision with others. For more resources on this new relationship with God, visit www.ThisIsTheGospel.com.

Welcome to the family!

"Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God." (Galatians 4:7)

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