**Evangelism – the gospel**

We have in recent weeks talked about the need for evangelism in Thames and we talked about how to start a conversation.

Today we come to the crunch of those conversations. The crunch is “WHY,” why have these conversations.

We have a message to communicate. Although a conversation without spiritual input is good but it misses the point.

As the NZ apologist Ray Comfort puts it: To speak up about abortion and other important moral issues yet not preach the Gospel, is to point to the wound, yet not supply the cure.[[1]](#footnote-1)

So today, we are going to look at how to go from conversation to gospel decision:

1. **First, we need to know what the gospel message is ourselves**

Maybe the reason why we do not share the Gospel is because we are unsure ourselves of what the message actually is.

Most of us can identify with his great commission, yet we struggle with where to start. Living out his call to share the life-giving Good News is a big challenge, and sometimes all we lack are some practical steps and tools to help us get going.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Mark Twain commented that "Few sinners are saved after the first 20 minutes of a sermon."

How succinctly can we express the Gospel?

E Stanley Jones, Methodist missionary to India, identified that “The Gospel lies in Jesus’ person – he did not merely bring the Good News – he was the Good News.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

The briefest summary of the gospel message is often said to be the word ‘love’ – and it is true that God is love.

Let me offer you a couple of options

A tried and tested method of giving the message of the Gospel is in four headings:

* 1. Creation
* 2. Fall
* 3. Redemption
* 4. Restoration

With this schema, it can help you to summarize the gospel in 30 seconds.

* **Creation** – God created everything. And humans as the best thing in his creation

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* **Fall** – God gave us free will so we could love, but we used it wrongly, and brought selfishness and suffering into the world.
* **Redemption** – but God loved us enough to provide a solution through Jesus.
* **Restoration** – and if we receive that solution, his plan for us is that we join him in his greater plan of restoring people’s lives, and also the entire creation.

But according to J O Fraser, a missionary to the Lisu peoples of China through the China Inland Mission, there are just four things that are essential in preaching the Gospel:

1) the crucifixion of Jesus Christ;

 2) the resurrection of Jesus Christ;

3) exhortation to hearers to repent of their sins;

4) promise to all who believe on Jesus Christ that they will receive remission of sins.

[He said] The Gospel preached to the unsaved is [to be] as simple as it could be.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Evangelism is the good news about Jesus. Unless the Jesus himself, who became the gospel through his death and resurrection, is the essence of our message, whatever we are doing is not evangelism.[[5]](#footnote-5)

All of these ways of conveying the message about salvation is not just information for the head of the hearer; it demands a response from the heart because this isn’t just a good thing to learn. It is a message from God – *for which he’s looking for a response.*

John E Hunter, author of over 20 books on discipleship, wrote: I do not simply come and believe the Gospel. The scriptural order is repent and believe. Before I do business with God, I put away the strange gods which are in my heart.[[6]](#footnote-6)

Even demons affirm that Jesus is the Son of God but they do not repent.

James 2:19 *You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*

Repentance is the key to inviting Jesus to be Lord of our lives.

At some point in the conversation, we need to ask a person ‘What do you think?’ And look for some response.

There are 3 words that I want spend a little time looking at:

The first is the word Sin.

Sin is essentially rebellion against the rule of God. That is why Jesus coupled the message of the Kingdom with the call to repent and believe. Faith and repentance, the opposite of rebellion, are the necessary human responses to the divine initiative of spiritual rebirth, resulting in salvation.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Many people will think of categories of sin – murder and the biggies down the scale to the little white lies but sin does not have such categories. Think of Jesus referring to looking at a woman in lust as being the same as adultery, cursing your brother as being the same as murder

Matthew 5:21 *You have heard that it was said to the ancients, ‘Do not murder’ and ‘Anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ will be subject to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to the fire of hell…27You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman to lust after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

There is no category for sin. Sin is sin.

Or people will say that they have not sinned. But…

Romans 3:23 *for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

We carry the sin of Adam within us.

The second is the word repentance – repenting of our sins.

Believing is a matter of words, but repentance is an act of the will and an attitude of the heart.[[8]](#footnote-8)

To repent means to change one’s mind.

It is to do an about face turn around, to start thinking and living differently.[[9]](#footnote-9) It means an 180 degree turn in our path.

Any response to Christ as Saviour which does not include a repentance from sin is in danger of producing a weak, colourless Christian witness, which will easily respond to the pull of the world once more.[[10]](#footnote-10)

Dietrich Bonhoeffer in his book The Cost of Discipleship railed against the lack of repentance as being cheap grace. He wrote “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance”

Repentance is a key step in accepting Christ as our saviour.

It is saying No to our old way of doing things and offering an apology to God for our actions. After all, our offence is against God.

And lastly, I want to look at the word salvation.

God’s salvation is not merely the forgiveness of sins, but the restoration of life in the person of the Holy Spirit of Christ.[[11]](#footnote-11)

To believe that Jesus is the Saviour of the world is not the same thing as believing that he is my Saviour. [[12]](#footnote-12) We need to own that he is our Saviour.

The ultimate purpose of our salvation is not that we should escape a coming judgement, but that we might live for his pleasure and to his glory.[[13]](#footnote-13)

Having some understanding of those concepts, let’s turn to…

**2. How to share this message in everyday life**

As I said last week, we do not need to seal the deal in every conversation. Sometimes we are just a cog in the wheel but at some point, we may be the cog that brings people to salvation.

Hopefully an opportunity comes up in which it makes sense to explain the whole Christian message – but we want to do so in only about 2 minutes if possible. Too long and people glaze over.

How might we do that?

**3. How to share the whole message concisely (2 minutes)**

Dave Mann, the founder of the Shining Light Trust who send out the Hope booklets and related stuff has given us a how to for a 2 minute message:

Let’s look at a video that Dave Mann put together

WEBLINK: <https://alltogether.co.nz/equipping-videos-members/>

So, if a person agrees that God could possibly be known, the next step would be to invite them to investigate the God of the Bible with you.

The questions at the end of that video are particularly important.

* Q1. Where do you think you are in this picture?
* Q2. Where would you like to be?
	+ (and then, if you don’t understand their answer you could ask, What do you mean by that?)
* Q3. Would you like to pray right now, to invite God to be in charge of your life?
	+ “No” - That’s fine. What might hinder you from that? (Then discuss)
	+ “Yes” - Then a prayer is as simple as A, B, C:
		- A – ask/admit/repent
		- B – believe;
		- C – commit.

**4. Sealing the deal**

Unless we are salespeople, then most of us have difficulty in sealing the deal. I know I do.

We do not want to offend so we go soft.

But if we have the cure for the world’s ailments (which we do), why do we hesitate?

Be brave and actually ask people if what they have heard makes them what to explore their faith, and whether they want to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour.

Romans 10:9 *if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

Acts 3:19 *Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord,*

What’s the worst that can happen? They say No. In that case you may not be the cog that seals the deal and there is another cog yet to come. Nothing lost.

**Summary**

We have talked about the importance of asking questions more than we talk, and less ‘telling’ people things.

We have talked about asking questions when there is disagreement, to understand why people believe what they believe – without creating tension. This can give us the opportunity to help them consider perspectives other than their own.

We have talked about the idea of our personal witness in daily life being a conversation rather than a confrontation.

And we learned how to use the 5 conversation expanders. Of what, when, why, where and how.

And we have learned how to bring it all back to the core message.

Because of love, God left heaven to come to earth, to enable us to be forgiven our wrongs, and to be restored as his friends.

And he is calling us to have that same love; that we would also leave our comfort zones to reach out to others through engaging in meaningful conversations.

Only through us will many people hear – and thus have the chance to believe for themselves.

Romans 10:14-15

*How then can they call on the One in whom they have not believed? And how can they believe in the One of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone to preach? And how can they preach unless they are sent?*

**In closing** I’d like to give an opportunity for anyone who would like to begin a journey in which they could get to know God personally to respond in some way….

1. Ray Comfort *How to Win Souls and Influence People* 52 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Garry Poole *The Three Habits of Highly Contagious Christians* 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. E Stanley Jones *The Unshakable Kingdom and the Unchanging Person* 71 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Taylor, Mrs Howard *Behind the Ranges: Fraser of Lisuland*, 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Michael Green *Evangelism through the local church* 9 [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. John E Hunter *Limiting God* 82 [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Charles Colson *Kingdoms in Conflict* 86 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Hunter 83 [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Mark Galli *Jesus Mean and Wild: the unexpected love of an untameable God*, 38 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Hunter 85 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Hunter 59 [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. David Pawson *The Normal Christian Birth: How to Give New Believers a Proper Start in Life* 34 [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Hunter 61 [↑](#footnote-ref-13)